

Hpowellsmith Patreon by Thomas Bell

(23/August/2021 - 31/December/2023)

[Upcoming content: September](#)

[Aug 23, 2021](#)

Hello there, and thank you for stopping by! If you're curious about what subscribers will get to see in the next few weeks, you're in the right place.

Newsflash subscribers: three indepth progress reports with behind the scenes snippets (August 27, Sept 10, Sept 24)

Sneak Preview subscribers: everything above **plus** an early access Royal Affairs update (Sept 1) and access to September's answer post (Sept 15)

Bonus Supplement subscribers: everything above **plus** question submissions for Q&A (Sept 1), poll voting for October's bonus content (Sept 8) and any sneak peeks about what I'm making for October

Spicy Section subscribers: everything above **plus** an NSFW Q&A post (Sept 15)

[August 27 Newsflash](#)

[Aug 27, 2021](#)

I've been working on **Chapter 5** and **Chapter 6** of **Royal Affairs** and have been making superfast progress!

Current wordcount: 125837 words

**

Current average playthrough length:** 37862 words

In Chapter 5 I've written the entrance of a character you'll recognise from Creme de la Creme and there are some dodgy dealings going on! You'll have some time in your leadership class, sorting out some

Student Council business, practising for your play, or training for the Athletics tournament. You'll also get to spend some quality time with Asher, Dominique, or Trevelyan for friendship or romance. There's potential kisses with each of them! And... under some circumstances Asher hulks out.

In Chapter 6, I've written up an outline for the plot. I usually do this in a notebook first, in a pretty chaotic way that's funny to look back on. For example: "Ask someone out: intro scene. If romantic, they're into t. This may be the last point you can initiate romance? or maybe that can be Ch 8." Thank you, Hannah, for those very cogent notes, no doubt Future Hannah will love them.

Right now I'm working on coding Chapter 6. That's where I do all the ChoiceScript scripting with placeholder notes like "Do a bit of Athletics team stuff. A practice match. Everyone's tense. Give a pep talk. Do your best / Break the tension / Get them fired up". Over the years I've found it very useful to get the code down first, test that it all works as I go, and then do the writing.

I've also been working on an outline for a **secret thing** for Choice of Games. It hasn't been greenlit yet so I'm keeping it secret for now, but I'm really excited to share more when I can!

I got most of my **Chapter 5** draft down in less than two weeks - really, it was more like a week - which is extraordinarily fast for me. Certainly when I was last fulltime freelancing, I wasn't going nearly so fast! I think it's a combination of being in the zone of working to tough deadlines (which I was doing at my day job), and acting like my own producer, setting up detailed time estimates in Jira and getting into a pomodoro routine, and all that juicy time management stuff.

Other things:

Crème de la Crème was featured on [Smart Podcast Trashy Books](#)! I was so thrilled to hear that they liked it, and for my game to be mentioned in company like Dream Daddy, Hatoful Boyfriend, and Ladykiller in a Bind!!! SWOON.**

Behind the scenes:

**The summer has been very weird and difficult for a lot of reasons, including getting [laid off](#) from my day job under [circumstances](#) that, this fortnight, ended up making national news. I have nothing but awesome things to say about my fellow laid-off colleagues, they're absolutely amazing and deserve the best. As for the rest, I'm not in a position to comment but it has been absolutely wild and very stressful.

In other news I've been playing **Disco Elysium** for the first time and let me tell you, it's incredible and also A Lot. I can't play it for longer than about an hour at time because of it being So Much but I like it a great deal. It's immensely *confident* - more so than any game I've played in a long time. And it's all immensely overpowering. Just really, really good.

On a totally different topic I went out to the forest this fortnight, and swam in a river! It was really lovely to get away from the screen and have some fresh outdoor air.

Sneak peaks: this screenshot's from the start of Chapter 5, when you're returning to school at the start of the new term. During the Hearthlight holiday (which happen in Chapter 4), Asher's been staying with their parents so you haven't seen them in a little while.

**

Cutting room floor:** this is some of the code skeleton I made for Chapter 5 before writing the actual content. This is what the pre-writing chapters look like before I do the words, like I mentioned about Chapter 6 above. In this case, Dominique was going to have a problem that the MC could help them with, but I realised I wanted Dominique to be a bit more empowered in this chapter. They're a bit bad at life, but not *that* bad at life, so I trimmed this when writing.

Thanks for reading and I'll see the **Sneak Preview** pledgers on Wednesday September 1st for some early access Royal Affairs and a question post! Catch you later!

[sneakpeek.PNGcuttingroom.PNG](#)

[Creme de la Creme Universe Worldbuilding Section](#)

[Sep 1, 2021](#)

Have a peruse of the worldbuilding and character wiki [here!](#) This will be updated frequently with lots of delicious content!

[Royal Affairs Early Access Demo v4.3](#)

[Sep 1, 2021](#)

[Welcome to the latest early access demo for Royal Affairs!](#) This demo leads you into Chapter 3, a beautiful lakeside school trip, and a chance to get to know your friends, rivals, and/or romances better outside of the strict rules at Archambault. I hope you enjoy, and please let me know what you think!

Note! If you have a non-early-access game saved, you'll need to start a new one for this demo.

[Bonus Supplement Poll \(October\).](#)

[Sep 8, 2021](#)

In October, I'll be making a bit of bonus content centred around a particular Royal Affairs character. Who would you like it to be about?

You can vote until 1st October, when I will start working on it!

Asher

31%

Beaumont

23%

Dominique

15%

Hyacinthe

0%

Javi

23%

Trevelyan

8%

Poll ended Oct 1, 2021 · 13 votes total

[Sept 10 Newsflash](#)

[Sep 10, 2021](#)

This fortnight I've been dividing my time between **Chapter 6 of Royal Affairs** and work on **The New Thing** which I'll go into more below!

Royal Affairs current wordcount: 132,821 words

Current average playthrough length: 39,077 words

Royal Affairs has pretty consistently been bigger than Blood Money, and smaller than Creme de la Creme. Creme de la Creme is a behemoth, so I feel good about RA being more of a manageable size, and it bodes better for release schedules!

My **Royal Affairs** work has been mostly focused on the Chapter 6 coding, and also on Chapter 5 difficulty balancing. A combination of exhaustion and... well, mostly exhaustion meant that I didn't do balancing for Chapters 3 and 4, which meant that by the time Chapter 5 rolled around, the difficulties were all over the place!

For example: it was unintentionally really hard to get high Entertaining or high Calm (good for socially awkward characters with no chill, but not for others!), and as for the grades, it was impossible to get an A grade based on the difficulty threshold. So I took some time out from writing to get that sorted out and make the game fairer.

I have been doing some writing work on Chapter 6 too. Everything I've done requires a bit too much context to give a satisfying peek, but this chapter has a lot about the drama club and the play performance in it!

The rest of this fortnight has been focused on **The New Thing** which got greenlit on September 1st! I'm so thrilled.

The New Thing is:

- Set in the **same universe** as Creme de la Creme and Royal Affairs
- Set a couple of years after Creme de la Creme
- **A completely standalone story**
- Focused on clandestine romance and friendship under strange, confined circumstances
- Set in Jezhan, and **not** in a school or other educational institution
- About people in their early/mid twenties

The keywords I put in my pitch to Choice of Games for this project were: clandestine romance, memories, gilded cages, deceit, crumbling majesty.

New Thing current wordcount: 10,983 words

Current average playthrough length: 6363 words

So this fortnight after it was greenlit, I outlined, coded and wrote Chapter 1 and sent it to my editor in a flurry of unusually fast activity. (It won't be that fast going onwards - I happened to have a nice confluence of time and energy that aligned!) I've also outlined and coded Chapter 2. I'm so excited to share more as it progresses!

****Behind the scenes:**

****Yesterday** was my last official day at my dayjob, where I used to work on Love Island the Game, a romance game based on the TV show. [My post here, and my colleague's Twitter thread, sum it up nicely.](#) It wasn't at all how I expected my summer to go, but I'm trying to look ahead to the future and focus on nice things on the horizon.

I've been taking time to watch some things tangentially related to writing projects! I've done the Mia Wasikowska **Jane Eyre**, the Natalie Dormer **Picnic at Hanging Rock** series, and just recently **We Have Always Lived In the Castle**, based on Shirley Jackson's book that I adore. I broadly enjoyed all of them, though Hanging Rock got a little bleak for me by the end. I kind of wanted Sebastian Stan in We Have Always Lived In the Castle to be Matthew Goode in **Stoker**, but that's hardly his fault. So as far as clandestine romance and weird mansions go, you may be able to discern some things about what I've been working on!

****Non writing:**

****I took my child to the beach on the last week of the summer holidays and raced in and out of the water, which was absolutely glorious. Really nice to get away from a screen, since that's where I do most of my work.**

Sneak peeks: this is some writing from Chapter 1 of **The New Thing**. Enjoy!

Cutting room floor: a Chapter 6 I coded and then realised the chapter was already incredibly long! It was going to be about hanging out with pets and one of your classmates in preparation for later pet sport events, and as you see, Beaumont was going to be very cuddly with their pet. I will probably use this in a later chapter, but this chapter had so much going on already.

Thanks for reading, and I'll catch the **Sneak Preview** subscribers on September 22 for the answer segment of the non-NSFW September Q&A. Take care!

[cuttingroom.PNGsneakpeek.PNG](#)

[September Answer Post](#)

[Sep 22, 2021](#)

Welcome to September's answer post, which is Asher central!

SPOILERS BELOW, you have been warned!**

How would asher react to everyone being surprised that they haven't realized the mc has a crush on them and insisting that its obvious?

Asher would be REALLY awkward about it and would probably try to avoid talking about it as much as possible! Someone like Dominique who is both a teaser and good at observing relationship dynamics would likely tease them about it and Asher would blush and shuffle their feet a lot, and excuse themselves. If the MC was there at the time, it would be even worse! They would just stammer and skedaddle away. I think even if an MC was really obvious about it (being physically affectionate or overtly flirty or romantic towards them) they would assume that it was purely friendly unless the MC very clearly said "HEY ASHER, I'M INTO YOU." They don't think they're in the MC's league and wouldn't want to presume anything!

Does Asher feel resentful of having their career chosen for them? What would they want to do if they weren't a bodyguard?

This is a complicated question for Asher, and I think they wouldn't quite know the answer themselves because they're so immersed in the culture they've been brought up in. Some of it depends on their Diffident/Bold score - depending on the MC's actions towards and around them, and how the MC encourages them, they may have less or more of a sense of independence or drive to do something else. For example, in the first choice you make, the "as long as we're in one piece" and "go faster!" options increase their Bold level. That stat sometimes changes their behaviour in a flavourful way, but later on it'll affect how they handle plot situations.

All of which is to say, Asher feels proud of their career and doesn't (at least for the first half of Royal Affairs or so) see an alternative. They genuinely like the MC and their family, and are so driven by their upbringing that opening up other choices is quite challenging for them. They like travelling and meeting people in other places, but at the same time I could see them finding it being really fulfilling to be a homemaker (and stay-at-home-parent if they had kids). It would also depend a lot on whether they have a romantic relationship with the MC or Hyacinthe - their drives and opinions would influence Asher a lot as they don't tend to put themselves first.

I guess the first question that occurs to me is if we'll be encountering Teranese or Jezhani characters later in Royal Affairs, if that's something you've got planned or not at this time.

****Teran is going to play a fairly background role in Royal Affairs, as the Zaledo and Westerlin political**

relationship is more in the forefront. I have distant ideas that aren't quite plans for things to happen in Teran later down the line. As for Jezhan, if the Creme de la Creme MC doesn't marry Rosario, Rosario gets married to Prince/Princess/Heir Darian of Jezhan, and I have written a section where you can meet and hang out with them a bit during Royal Affairs. There may be a few others sprinkled through later on. Jezhan is also the setting of The New Thing so you'll get to spend more time there and meet more Jezhani characters in that story!

Thank you for the questions, everyone, and I'll be posting a new Q&A post and form on October 1. In the meantime, I'll have September's last Newsflash post coming up on Friday 24th. See you then!

[24 Sept Newsflash](#)

[Sep 24, 2021](#)

I've been working on **Chapter 6 of Royal Affairs** and a tiny bit of **Chapter 1-2 of The New Thing** this fortnight!

Royal Affairs wordcount: 140954 words

Royal Affairs average playthrough: 40615 words**

The New Thing wordcount:** 11024 words**The New Thing average playthrough:** 6405 words

Royal Affairs Chapter 6 continues apace.

Chapter 6 is doing... something to me, all right. I'm at the juiciest part of the chapter, which is the Festival of the Birds! This also means outrageous amounts of branching as we have six separate friendship and romance scenes plus one for the polyamorous trio. It's a Lot. It's also complicated because of the way I've (foolishly? bravely?) chosen to structure the romances in a way that aims to be more organic and flowing. Frankly, I'm reaping what I sowed. But I'm firmly swimming in those scenes now, which is a good place to be.

The New Thing's first editor notes came back and I've done my Chapter 1 revisions. I've also coded Chapter 2. I love this thing a ton. Every time I make a new project, I realise how much I've learned and it's truly a joy.

Behind the scenes:

NEW JOB. This is huge news obviously! After the layoffs at my last workplace, life has been really

anxious this summer, and of course applying for work is a full time unpaid job in itself. I'm now working as a Narrative Designer at [Tributary Games](#), some of whom worked on the frankly incredible [Over the Alps](#). I'm so pleased and happy and a glorious part of it is that I get to to work with one of my colleagues who [wrote such a nice thing](#) on Twitter that I practically bawled. I feel proud and lucky all at once. It means I have less time to work on my IF projects, which is a bit of a wrench BUT it also means I have a steady paycheck and get to be working in a wonderful team again! (It also means my IF projects are more sustainable, which makes for happy creators and players alike.)

****Non writing:**

****This fortnight** has been so monumentally full of Things both good and bad that I have ... mostly been sleeping when I can. This is a sign that I need to give myself a bit of a break in some fashion.

Sneak peek: a little snippet of an Asher scene that I'm in the middle of.

Cutting room floor: a tiny section about Hyacinthe having sandwiches. Sorry, Hyacinthe, no sandwiches for you.

[sneakpeek.PNGcuttingroom.PNG](#)

[Upcoming content: October](#)

[Sep 30, 2021](#)

Hello there, and thank you for stopping by! Here's where you can find out what subscribers will get to see in the next few weeks.

Newsflash subscribers: two indepth progress reports with behind the scenes snippets (Oct 8, Oct 22)

Sneak Preview subscribers: everything above **plus** early access to more Royal Affairs demo content (Oct 4) and access to October's non-NSFW answer post (Oct 29)

Bonus Supplement subscribers: everything above **plus** question submissions for Q&A (Oct 1) and October's bonus content, a story about Asher from Royal Affairs! (Oct 31)

Spicy Section subscribers: everything above **plus** an NSFW question post (Oct 8) and answer post (Oct 29)

See you tomorrow!

[Royal Affairs Early Access - Full Chapter 3!](#)

[Oct 4, 2021](#)

[Welcome to the latest early access demo for Royal Affairs!](#) This demo completes Chapter 3, during which you can go to the party of the season, the Archambault Winter Ball. What will you wear? Who will you go with? Will the Student Council manage to put something good together for the occasion? All this and more in this demo update! I hope you enjoy, and please let me know what you think!

Total wordcount: 90,000 words

Playthrough length: 26,000 words

[8 Oct Newsflash](#)

[Oct 8, 2021](#)

This fortnight I've been working on **Chapter 2 of The New Thing**, and **Chapter 6 of Royal Affairs**. Has it really been two weeks since the last Newsflash? It's gone by in a ... drumroll ... flash!

Royal Affairs wordcount: 142,882 words**Royal Affairs average playthrough:** 40,962 words**Total**

Royal Affairs wordcount progress: 1928 words**

The New Thing wordcount:** 23,494 words

The New Thing average playthrough: 11,117 words

Total New Thing wordcount progress: 12,470 words

What on earth is that?! Over 14,000 words around my day job? I'm incredulous.

Chapter 2 of The New Thing has been a delight to write. In it, a new romance interest shows up! And you can get to know them, plus the other two, better. Though this game is heavily focused on relationships and romance, I've taken great joy in having the romance interests be disastrous in a variety of ways. Chapter 2 is my opportunity to showcase some aspects of their disastrousness and tell the player "this is what you're signing up for with these people".**

**Chapter 6 of Royal Affairs has been on the other end of the spectrum. You're having your one-on-one (or two-on-one) friendship or romance hangouts with people you're getting closer to, they're opening up more, and feelings are expressed. Or emphatically not expressed, if you're a character who doesn't like

feelings!

In practice it's involved a lot of writing feelings, denial of feelings, kisses, and (gasp!) an intimacy scene for one of the characters (you can guess who it is if you want; there will be two in Chapter 6 but I've only written one so far).

I also spent some time adding an option for the MC to be grey aro; Sneak Preview subscribers will be able to access that currently, and the public version of the Chapter 3 demo will be going up on October 14th.

Behind the scenes:

If you want to get into the Royal Affairs zone, do you fancy [listening to this playlist?](#) This is what I almost always listen to when I'm writing that project. I make new playlists for each one - [here's my one for Creme de la Creme](#), and [this is the one for Blood Money](#).

****Non writing:**

****I** have been massively getting into Star Trek: Deep Space Nine recently. Much of it holds up really well! I remember only the tiniest amount of it from watching during the 90s so it's quite a delight.

Sneak peek: one (1) kiss. A Beaumont kiss! Chapter 6 is the first time you can kiss them in the game. I hope you enjoy!

Also, to celebrate the fact that I got New Thing Chapter 2 to my editor ahead of time, here is a tiny snippet of it. I plan to put some or all of Chapter 1 up in early November so brace yourself!

Cutting room floor: this was a bit of a wrench, and cutting this section is a reason why my Royal Affairs wordcount progress isn't higher. But I'd given myself a ton of work by including one branch where you're hanging out in public vs other branches where you're in private. It quickly turned into a nightmare to keep track of and make sure everything flowed. HOWEVER, this fancy restaurant segment will most likely be repurposed later in the game, because who doesn't like fancy restaurants?

[beaumontkiss.PNGcuttingroom.PNGnewthingpeek.PNG](#)

[Oct 22 Newsflash](#)

[Oct 22, 2021](#)

This fortnight I've been carrying on working on **Chapter 6 of Royal Affairs**, and **Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of The New Thing**.

Royal Affairs wordcount: 147,782 words**Royal Affairs average playthrough:** 41,463 words**Total Royal Affairs wordcount progress:** 4900 words**

The New Thing wordcount:** 23,494 words

The New Thing average playthrough: 11,117 words

Total New Thing wordcount progress: 12,470 words

I reached some major milestones this fortnight! I sent in The New Thing Chapter 2 for edits and did my revisions, and sent in Chapters 5 and 6 of Royal Affairs in for editing too.

Chapter 2 of The New Thing has been a lot of fun, bringing in a new major character and enabling the MC to get to know them and the others better, with some hints of romantic tension simmering along.

Chapter 6 of Royal Affairs has, as we know from the previous Newsflashes, been a LOT of kisses, romance, friendship... and some hints of where the characters are headed. A lot of Royal Affairs is about figuring out where you stand when things get tough and weird, and helping other characters do the same. Because many of the main characters are at Archambault, which is all about LEADERSHIP and RESPONSIBILITY (though in practice you can be like Dominique and snooze through your classes if you like!), a lot of them are on the edge of making big life decisions and many aren't sure how they're going to handle it. So Chapter 6, around the middle of the game, is a good point for them to come to the fore.

**Behind the scenes:

**I have been almost entirely off Twitter this fortnight, having blocked it on most of my browsers and given myself a strict time limit (enforced by Leechblock) on the only unblocked one. This was a bit hard because The Game Industry(tm) is extremely online and I'm still in a bit of "must see everything in case I miss something important!" crisis mode from the Layoff Summer... but! it has massively helped my mental health and general calmness which is lovely.

**Non writing:

**Tonight I'm going (safely) to the ballet! I'm so excited - it's a ballet company I absolutely love, at a theatre I really like going to, with a friend I've seen in person once in the last almost-two-years. I can't wait!

**Next up:

**I'll be putting up the October bonus content for Bonus Supplement subscribers on October 31, and Chapter 1 of The New Thing on November 1 for Sneak Preview subscribers! All patrons will get to see more about The New Thing on November 5.

[October Answer Post \(non NSFW\)](#)

[Oct 29, 2021](#)

Thanks for the questions, everyone! As you see, there are 8 this month - don't be shy about throwing more my way next time!**

blaise brainrot ,, feel free to answer or not answer any qs !! sorry for all the romance asks blaise really on the mind lately 🥹

Oh don't worry! I'm glad Blaise is bringing you joy!

blaise w an oblivious s/o whose acquaintance blatantly has a crush on them?

I'm going to assume the s/o is the MC for the purposes of this one. Blaise is... how shall I put it... protective of the MC once they're together, even if they don't display it all the time and they often unpredictably want their own space. If an acquaintance was starry eyed over the MC, Blaise would be *waspish* about it. They'd be a bit passive-aggressive towards the acquaintance, veering into aggressive-aggressive if the acquaintance actually acted on their feelings. They'd likely tell the MC in a dramatic way when trying to compliment them:

Blaise: "don't be silly, everyone loves you! Look at Acquaintance, they're obsessed with you!"

MC: "what"

****What would be going on underneath would be that they're pretty insecure and would find it hard to see someone else being blatantly into their partner.**

****them meeting the mc's ex fiance that they can leave for blaise in one of the endings lmao (i feel like theyd be pretty smug if it were hartmann or august considering their status/having beaten them as prefect/their mom throwing them into the mines and such <3)**

****Oooh, this would be really dramatic and angsty! The ex fiance would probably try to avoid them (if it was a less dramatic character) or would have a fight (if it was someone like Max or Delacroix, or even Hartmann might confront them). It would be very hard for the fiance because they'd likely still have feelings for the MC; Blaise would be quite brittle about it too, because they might be worried that the MC could change their mind. But they'd likely cover up any worries/insecurities by being smug and sassy: that's how they roll.**

mc telling them theyd had a crush on them since theyd bumped into them in the train or even be that assuming theyd met in passing w their familys being friends before

Depending on their mood, Blaise would either be like "don't be ridiculous" and roll their eyes about the MC being overly sentimental, OR go "well, obviously I'm very compelling". Either way, they would be genuinely surprised despite their reaction. They didn't expect the MC to have such feelings even when they expressed them.

****hcs for a crushing stage!blaise w an engaged mc? but like the engagement is obviously not going well (probably w august,, their mom having,, complicated matters maybe)**

****I could see this being hard for Blaise... they have a LOT of feelings about pretty much everything after their mine experience and they would assume that the MC wasn't interested in them that way. They might try to be a friend to the MC while their engagement wasn't going great, being a shoulder to cry on, still be hoping despite themselves, but then feel bad because under some circumstances they used to be friends (eg Hartmann, even Max).**

Maybe with the right character and MC configuration they could end up polyamorous? But that would require a massive amount of feelings-work and building up trust, and that would take a long time. It might be that the MC and fiancé might break up before that happened, or that Blaise distanced themselves to help defuse the Feelings.

****how was blaise in the mines? (e.g. what kept them going, how they felt during the outing where their former classmates were like. right There, how it changed/affected their mindset)**

****They spent a while feeling incredibly furious and betrayed, grieving their relationship with their Aunt Violette - who they trusted! and were close to! - and their energy would have ebbed and flowed in waves. A few times they probably tried to escape but when they didn't manage to, they became more lethargic. They made friends with Gaspard, which helped them along during the early stages, and found it incredibly difficult when he died. That would have been their lowest point.**

What kept them going... spite mostly, and wanting revenge on Lady Renaltd. When Mr Blanchard/Miss Dalca got thrown in as well, that gave Blaise a bit more hope because they figured that if adults were being put there, someone else will notice. The teacher who got thrown in tried to support Blaise as much as they could, giving them some of their rations and standing up for them when times were tough. So that was a small kindness that helped Blaise think there was hope for the future. Overall, though, it was hideously traumatic and it would take a long time for Blaise to recover from it.

Since Javi is asexual would it still be possible for them to be physically intimate if the MC wanted to? I don't know a lot about the aspec, but I am not sure if they're entirely repulsed by the idea of sleeping together or not. Would they be ok if the MC found pleasure elsewhere, either autonomously or with

another individual?

**

I'm not going to go into too much detail on this as it verges into NSFW territory, but Javi will not be sleeping with the MC in RA. However, you can have a casual (romantic or physical) relationship with Dominique as well as romancing Javi, and there will be conversations with Javi in the future about the MC about whether in general the MC would like to go elsewhere for physical intimacy.

**So in CDLC if you chose to romance Auguste and you take Lady Renaldt down, they seem understanding, but also conflicted about the whole situation...how do you realistically think that this might have affected their relationship with the MC in the future? Especially if Lady Renaldt was sent to jail?

**Auguste feels horribly conflicted about the whole situation: they broadly want justice and they recognise that what their mother did was terrible, but when it affects their life so directly, especially when everyone knows about it, it's hard to feel great about it. They also used to deeply admire Lady Renaldt, were close to her, and it's a huge change in how they feel about her. I could see it being a source of contention in the future, particularly when it came to things like whether Auguste visited Lady Renaldt in prison (they would want to; the MC might have feelings about that) and whether they'd resume contact once she was released.

Auguste is quite a proponent of [dumping out](#), however. They understand that Lady Renaldt made others, sometimes including the MC, suffer hugely, and wouldn't complain to the MC about it. Indeed, it might be quite a challenge for the MC to encourage them to talk about it, if the MC wanted to.

**In the world of CDLC and RA, same sex relationships are common and celebrated, which is great, but how does that work in the case of the Royal family's, like for example Westerlin, where generally things like 'passing down the family name' is important. Do they adopt outside of the family? Do they use a surrogate? Or is this not really considered to be an issue at all like it is in our world?

**Yep, surrogacy is a thing as is adoption, and both are considered as legitimate ways of passing down a title as shared genetics.

Surrogacy is *generally* less common in Westerlind aristocracy, which tends to be more rigid in that way, and generally more common in Zaledo people, where "family" has a much broader definition culturally. Adoption is similarly common, though in Zaledo it's more common to bring birth parents (where appropriate to the situation) into the family circle. In Jezhan, where polyamorous marriage is legal, royalty has a High Consort who carries the title (Prince/Princess/Heir Darian, who Rosario can marry, is the offspring of this) and then multiple Consorts whose kids are royal but can't be heirs.

But yes, the short answer is that titles are important but genetics aren't so much.

[Oct 29, 2021](#)

Your regular reminder that the below has NSFW content and that this tier is for 18+ subscribers only, so please click away if that's not what you're here for!

Thanks for the questions! Remember I'll answer up to 10, so next month feel free to throw some more at me!**

Reaction from Royal Affairs RO's if the MC gave them bedroom eyes in public?

Asher would flush a bit, and try to keep composed, but they'd find it difficult.

Beaumont would give them a very intense look that's almost a glare, and maybe grab the MC and kiss them right then and there.

Dominique would get touchy-feely, putting their arm around the MC's waist and maybe running their fingers up their arm; they're happy with PDA!

Hyacinthe would be very Correct in their response and would cough a bit; they'd be a bit embarrassed, but enjoy it nevertheless.

Treveylan would give them bedroom eyes right back and try to extract the MC from whatever public thing they were doing, so they could have a private moment with them.

Would any of the CDLC RO's be into pegging? If so, most to least favourable?

Most of them wouldn't have had the opportunity/privacy to try it, but in principle...

Karson, Max, Florin: knows what it is, has maybe tried it, would be into either giving or receiving.

Rosario, Freddie: knows what it is, hasn't done it, would be into it in principle.

****Hartmann: wouldn't have had time/privacy to try it, probably doesn't know what it is in CdLC, but would be into either giving or receiving in principle.**

Delacroix: knows what it is, hasn't done it, may not be into receiving, may be into giving.

Blaise, Auguste: doesn't know what it is, probably not into the idea in general.

****What romance/sexual experience do the RA ROs have?**

****Asher doesn't have any sexual or romantic experience before Royal Affairs.**

Beaumont has slept with people on a one-off basis before Royal Affairs but very much kept their partners at arm's length and has been very careful to avoid having feelings about them; they didn't want a romantic partner, neither did they want a friend with benefits - the "friend" part was the bit they didn't want.

Dominique has slept with people before, and has also been with people romantically. They've likely gotten quite serious with people before - perhaps someone in another building at Archambault - but it didn't last.

Hyacinthe hasn't had sexual experience before - they want to save that for when they're engaged or even married - but they have had some low key romance. Think exchanging cute notes or holding hands on the way to lunch in their pre-teens. But as they've got older they've been a lot more focused on their life ambitions and haven't had time for anything like that.

Trevelyan has romanced people before Royal Affairs, and I haven't decided yet how much physical intimacy they've had before. I think they have kissed/made out a few times - maybe done some heavy petting? - but haven't slept with anyone, and haven't got as much experience as Beaumont and Dominique as the other "experienced" characters.

****Who's dominant or submissive?**

****Submissive: Asher, Hyacinthe**

Dominant: Trevelyan

Switch: Dominique, Beaumont (with very strong inclination to Dominant)

Do the RA RO's have fantasies?

Some of these are less conscious than others - it's not something that, say, Asher thinks about all that much. For all of these you can assume that it's all within a consent framework where everyone's agreed what they're comfortable with!

Asher would enjoy being really pampered - like romantic rose petals, massage, all that jazz - just lying

back and being totally looked after in a sexy way.

Beaumont would really get off on being in control - getting to order someone around to do whatever they want would be really exciting for them.

Dominique would love to do something clandestinely in public - the thrill of the risk of getting caught really intrigues them.

Hyacinthe would like to be blindfolded and surprised with things like ice cubes on their skin - they'd love to give up control and give themselves over to trusting their partner.

Trevelyan loves the idea of physical intimacy with multiple people - they've never done it or been close to it but they've read a LOT of sexy books and they like the idea of such an intense experience.

[Relationship Management](#)

[Oct 30, 2021](#)

Patreon keeps throwing phrases at me like "relationship management" which, ugh. It reminds me of the use of corporate titles like "People Team" to make "HR" sound less scary [they're still the people who tell you you're fired though! Hahaha.] It's also telling me that patrons like being sent welcome messages when they subscribe.

Is that a thing? As a patron my personal preference is to hit Subscribe and then scuttle away like a startled antelope to nibble upon the delicious Unlocked Content. As a creator I don't want to make you feel like I'm waiting to pounce on subscribers saying "HELLO NICE TO MEET YOU HERE ARE SOME SNACKS" like an overzealous party host. (I don't host many parties.) But not everyone is me, and I'm curious to know how you wonderful lot feel!

Right, now back to my fictional management of relationships, which is much less corporate and much more about getting caught in a storm and failing to lockpick a door!

I'm not fussed

I'd rather be left to nibble my Unlocked Content in peace

I'd like a DM when I subscribe to tell me where to look for the Content

I'd like a DM when I subscribe about something else (please tell me what would be useful in comments!)

33 votes total

[October Bonus Supplement](#)

[Oct 31, 2021](#)

You are Asher Garnett, royal bodyguard, and you are fifteen years old, and unlike most days, you have nothing to do.

[Play Silk Handkerchief, an angsty Asher story, at itch.io.*](#)

*Password: bonus_interact_pre_2023

[The New Thing Early Access Demo v0.1](#)

[Nov 1, 2021](#)

After you dropped out of university with neither a rich spouse nor rich family to support you, your old professor pulled strings to secure you employment as a live-in conversation partner for a lonely Jezhani aristocrat. When you arrive to the desolate, isolated Isle of Teteriuk in the depths of winter, you discover a near-derelict estate and an intense conversation partner with a nose for trouble.

Life in this foreign mansion can be exciting - or claustrophobic. As relationships grow in strength and intensity, how will you handle the dangerous secrets you uncover? When your companion's behaviour grows more erratic, will you pull them back from the brink or stride headlong into peril with them? Who can you trust, and can you find love far from home?

Noblesse Oblige: an Etiquette and Intrigue Adventure is an interactive novella of clandestine romance, unfettered spirituality, gilded cages, and crumbling majesty. I've just finished the first draft of Chapter 3 and it's approx 36K words. The first chapter is 10K words. [Play Chapter 1 here!](#)

[Newsflash: Nov 5](#)

[Nov 5, 2021](#)

So much. Many things. This fortnight I finished drafting **Chapter 3 of The New Thing**, did my revisions for **Chapter 6 of Royal Affairs**, and planned **Royal Affairs Chapter 7**.

Royal Affairs wordcount: 150,490 words**Royal Affairs average playthrough:** 41,926 words

Total Royal Affairs wordcount progress: 2708 words

The New Thing wordcount: 36,532 words

The New Thing average playthrough: 14,876 words

Total New Thing wordcount progress: 13,038 words

I've been scribbling copious notes about what's going to happen in Royal Affairs Chapter 7, and am partway through coding that chapter. Mostly, I've been racing away at Chapter 3 of The New Thing.

For folks who aren't on the Sneak Preview tier - and just for anyone who's interested! - here's the concept pitch I wrote for The New Thing! There were three that I sent off, and CoG decided on this one. This was what I put together before solidifying any of the outline or more detailed thoughts about the game. In general it's pretty accurate, though I developed a lot more specificity as I started my outlining.

Etiquette and Intrigue, by the way, is my shorthand for the Things Set In The Creme De La Creme Universe. I guess it's the series name now, unless I come up with something else down the line!

Noblesse Oblige: An Etiquette and Intrigue Adventure

Having left school in Westerlin with neither a rich spouse nor money for university, you have found employment as a live-in conversation partner for a lonely aristocrat living with their elderly cousin in an aging mansion in Jezhan.

Will you start digging up secrets? Why is their relative keeping your conversation partner sequestered so far from... well, anything? Does the housekeeper know something you don't? Will you succumb to the charms of a flirtatious visitor who promises a way out of tiresome employment - if you feed them information?

Life in the foreign mansion can be exciting - or claustrophobic. As relationships grow in strength and intensity, will you take your first steps into dangerous games of power and influence? Who can you trust, and can you find love far from home?

Keywords: clandestine romance, memories, gilded cages, webs of influence, crumbling majesty

**

Sneak peek

**When the Festival of the Birds comes around, there's a little scene where you see the Creme de la

Creame MC doing something if they're a teacher. I wanted to have a little acknowledgement if they're in a romance, and this is one of them (where they're romancing someone who isn't on campus with them, ie Hartmann or Karson). I've had a lot of questions about how major a part the CdIC MC plays, and the answer is always "not massive", because I want Royal Affairs to be its own thing - but I like including these little flavour moments!

**

Cutting room floor

**An almost-kiss with Asher. It didn't work for the scene to have Asher there in the end, so it got trimmed.

**

Next:**

I'll be finishing up coding Royal Affairs Chapter 7, and then code Chapter 4 of Noblesse Oblige. Once I've figured out how large each is going to be and how long they'll take, I'll make a decision about which to write first. My instinct is that I'll go for Noblesse Oblige, as the chapters are more streamlined and the next deadline for that one is earlier, but we'll see!

[cuttingroom.PNGpeek.PNG](#)

[Bonus Supplement Poll \(December\)](#)

[Nov 8, 2021](#)

In December, I'll be making a bit of bonus content centred around a character from my games. Who would you it to be about?

You can vote until 8th December!

Beaumont (Royal Affairs)

23%

Dominique (Royal Affairs)

23%

Hyacinthe (Royal Affairs)

8%

Javi (Royal Affairs)

31%

Trevelyan (Royal Affairs)

8%

Danelak (Noblesse Oblige)

8%

Pascha (Noblesse Oblige)

0%

Poll ended Dec 8, 2021 · 13 votes total

[Newsflash: Nov 19](#)

[Nov 19, 2021](#)

I'm so excited that [Noblesse Oblige](#) is now out in the world! Thank you all so much for your support!

Royal Affairs wordcount: 154,657 words

Total Royal Affairs wordcount progress: 4167 words

Noblesse Oblige wordcount: 45,316 words

Total Noblesse Oblige wordcount progress: 8784 words

This fortnight I coded Royal Affairs Chapter 7! It's ready and waiting for me to get writing the content, probably sometime next week. I'm pleased about this one - it's quite a calm-before-the-storm situation with some ominous foreshadowing, but in general it's pretty slice of life.

I did my slightly chaotic notebook planning for Noblesse Oblige Chapter 4, and then less chaotic coding. I'm about halfway through writing the chapter now. In this chapter you'll get to meet some rich Jezhani people and go hunting! In this chapter someone may cry, someone may make out with someone who isn't you, and someone may drink some blood!!

This isn't a vampire story, I promise.

Behind the scenes:

You may be interested in what I was watching and reading in the summer while preparing to make Noblesse Oblige! All of these are relevant in various ways to the game, whether for atmosphere, genre, and so on!

-Jane Eyre (Mia Wasikowska)

-Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier (reread; I last read it when I was a teenager)

-We have always lived in the castle (Alexandra Daddario) (I adore the book, but hadn't seen the film before now. I wasn't sold on some of the adaptation aspects but I enjoyed it)

-Stoker (Mia Wasikowska) (I didn't actually watch this in the summer but it's often on my mind for various reasons, mostly it being about A Fancy Mansion With Weird Residents)

I've been recommended The 39 Steps (one day I will do a full fledged spy game and it will be a delight), The Dig, and Villette by Charlotte Bronte for relevant Vibes. I've just started Villette - I'm looking forward to it.

My wife and I are going to have a movie night tonight where we watch Crimson Peak, though it's entirely more supernatural than Noblesse Oblige, because I've been intending to for years! To be honest I could watch Mia Wasikowska being in a weird mansion for days and be perfectly happy.

I don't have anything cut this fortnight, but I do have some **sneak peeks** from Noblesse Oblige: one is a description of a visit to a town, and the other is some placeholder text that, when I returned to it, made me chuckle.

Next up, I'll be carrying on with Noblesse Oblige Chapter 4, and then Royal Affairs Chapter 8! Can you believe it's getting this far already?

[sneakpeek1.PNGsneakpeek.PNG](#)

[November Answer Post \(non NSFW\)](#)

[Nov 29, 2021](#)

Your regular reminder that this post contains SPOILERS, so please click away if that's not what you're here for!

Will a high bold Asher result in a public declaration of his/her/their feelings and intention towards MC?

It will depend on the vibe of their relationship and how happy the MC is with everything being public, but if the MC is into it and you've gone down that path, YES. There will be some friction in the family about it, so be warned!

Are Pascha and Danelak a poly option?

Yes, but it isn't as major a part of their routes as, say, the Max/Delacroix/MC or Beaumont/Trevelyan/MC paths are - it will be something that may arise later in the game. It will also be harder to access due to... mystery reasons, by which I mean plot. Basically there will be opportunities for you and Danelak/Pascha to totally trash the third person's ambitions and under those circumstances they won't be compatible!

Follow up question, a bit on the angsty side... what would their reactions be if the the MC died? Would they retreat into themselves? Lash out?

Danelak tends to try to power through suffering and put on a brave face, but they just... wouldn't be able to summon up the energy. Pascha would very much withdraw, which would be really bad for them because they get lonely so easily. Neither of them would handle it at all well, especially given the journey they would have ended up going through during Noblesse Oblige to be with the MC.

Will Asher's fathers make an appearance on their route?

Yes!

While the two of them descend into bickering, Asher's parents step forward from the crowd. Tristan looks a great deal like Asher: tall, heavily muscled, and blond. Raimund is shorter and wirier, with dark skin and graying black hair. Both stand as straight and alert as Asher.

Tristan comes forward first, and bows deeply to you. "It's marvelous to see you again, Your Highness," he says, before turning to Asher and taking \${asher_his} hands formally.

"I hope Asher's behaved well while you've been away?" Raimund says.

What are the zodiac signs of the Royal Affairs crew? Any fellow Cancerians? 🐚

As ever this is based on a very scientific "what zodiac sign should you be" personality quiz... still, I always use the same one so there's consistency there, right?

Asher: Virgo

Beaumont: Capricorn

Dominique: Gemini

Hyacinthe: Taurus

Javi: Aries

Trevelyan: Sagittarius

For Javi (although this isn't really NSFW), is there any physical place that they are ok with being touched that relaxes them? Or makes them more prone to be affectionate with the MC?

I swiped this out of the Spicy Section questions as it's non NSFW - Javi especially likes having their neck and shoulders rubbed! They forget to roll their shoulders or move their neck around when they're concentrating, so that area gets a bit tense, and it being given attention really makes them melt and chill out.

They are pretty physically affectionate with people they like, so will generally enjoy snuggling up on a couch together, having or giving backrubs, and so on - it's just that so far in Royal Affairs they are rather prickly and they don't like to show vulnerability. YET.

[November Answer Post \(NSFW\)](#)

[Nov 30, 2021](#)

Your regular reminder that this post contains spoilers and NSFW content, and that this tier is for 18+ subscribers only, so please click away if that's not what you're here for!

i saw your answer on the RA RO's fantasies, what about the CDLC RO's? do they have any fantasies?

Blaise, Freddie, Rosario, Karson: I feel like they're fairly vanilla - passionate certainly but maybe not heavily into fantasies.

Hartmann: rebellious Hartmann is into being more submissive, non-rebellious Hartmann is into being more domineering. In CdLC they are VERY much not in a state of mind to explore that much but maybe later they would!

Max: public PDA or sex. Not so much into exhibitionism - more the the danger of being discovered is quite a thrill.

Delacroix: outdoor shenanigans. Again not really exhibitionistic, but definitely enjoys the idea (and sometimes in practice) of outdoor sex.

Florin: is up for many things! I wouldn't say *everything* but they'd certainly be adventurous about exploring kinks, more so than others, and in general knows more about kinks than the others do. They would definitely enjoy group sex.

Auguste: they're inexperienced but later I could see them being into roleplay scenarios.

Which RA ROs would be the most sensual in terms of their love making style?

Ooh, interesting... I'm not sure about comparing them to each other but I will give a little summary of each character's demeanour/approach, which are the key concepts I stick to when writing these scenes.

Asher: exploratory, gentle, generous

Beaumont: intense, unpredictable, fervent

Dominique: eager, heated, communicative

Hyacinthe: joyful, sensitive, precise

Trevelyan: assertive, energetic, sincere

Are all ROs (particularly with MLM in mind) vers by default in the bedroom or do some have preferences?

I'd say in general they're vers, yes; I don't think there are characters with particular preferences either way. I don't go into anatomical detail when I'm writing CdIC or RA (the Noblesse Oblige scenes will be more detailed! but even so I probably won't go as heavy on detail as, say, the Werewolves series - it'll be more on a level with Heart of the House) but even so, it tends to be fairly focused on what the MC is interested in/feels comfortable with, so I tend to fit scenes around the MC.

Which CdIC RO has had the most sexual partners prior to meeting MC?

Florin, Max, and Rosario have all slept with multiple people (in order from most to least)

Hartmann and Karson have both slept with one person (I think; I may have said Karson had slept with more than one...)

Freddie and Blaise have done physical stuff and makeouts.

Auguste and Delacroix haven't had any physical partners.

Is there anything specifically that the MC can do to fluster or beguile the CdIC/RA ROs? Does playing in someone's hair cause goosebumps? Does the subtle show of a collarbone cause one's breathing to hitch? Or do they need more obvious hints, like some sort of innuendo in speech or a crude gesture?

Ok but like. What's the one thing that's guaranteed to make the RA Ro's flustered (if you know what I mean)

Ones who get flustered over a subtle look or hint: Asher, Hyacinthe, Auguste,

Ones who especially like an intense look: Blaise, Delacroix, Hartmann, Karson, Beaumont, Rosario

Ones who especially enjoy an innuendo or physical touch: Florin, Max, Dominique, Trevelyan, Freddie

What are the RAs erogenous zones?

Asher: neck, especially at the side and in the hollow of their collarbone

Beaumont: they especially like the sides of their hips being touched

Dominique: the small of their back, but they are also pretty quick to get excited wherever they're touched

Hyacinthe: the inside of their wrist; they really like light stroking there and enjoy the shivers

Trevelyan: hair/neck; they like having their hair tugged and the nape of their neck being stroked or lightly scratched

Who is the loudest in bed for the CdIC ROs? Something is telling me that Delacroix and Hartmann (when seriously having their guard down) need a gag of some sort.

From least to most:

Auguste

Karson

Blaise

Rosario

Freddie

Delacroix

Hartmann

Max

Florin

you mentioned that Beaumont might like to boss others around, does the mc's status being royalty add to that? or would they act as they would with anyone else?

Beaumont would find it an additional thrill to boss around the MC as they're so powerful!

Most to least kinky of the CDLC RO's?

Most to least:

Florin

Max

Delacroix

Hartmann

Karson

Blaise

Freddie

Rosario

Auguste

[Newsflash: Dec 6](#)

[Dec 6, 2021](#)

I've been disastrously organised this fortnight; please expect normal service to resume soon.

Royal Affairs wordcount: 154,657 words

Total Royal Affairs wordcount progress: 0 words

Noblesse Oblige wordcount: 50757 words

Total Noblesse Oblige wordcount progress: 5441 words

A bit weird seeing relatively low wordcount increases, but part of it is because I was able to cut down some stuff with a bunch of subroutines - hooray efficiency! Anyway, the headline news is that this fortnight I finished up with Chapter 4 of Noblesse Oblige and sent it off to my editor! Noblesse Oblige has officially dived into some juicy plot revelations, clandestine makeouts, and maybe most importantly, A Party.

Behind the scenes

I'm tentatively looking ahead to future projects once these two are done (this is what I often do when I'm at a fiddly halfway stage - it's fun to think about simpler things!) I think whatever comes next will be something not set in Westerlin, and probably set in Zaledo or Teran with a Zaledoan or Teranese protagonist. It's been so good to branch out into other areas of the setting with Noblesse Oblige that I can't resist doing that again! If I end up doing another shorter game like Noblesse Oblige, it'll probably not be in a school, but a longer game will likely be in a school or at least education-establishment-adjacent.

Sneak peek

An MC/Trevelyan/Beaumont moment from Chapter 6!

Non writing

I've been ill in a variety of ways (a bad cold, shoulder aches making desk work difficult) this fortnight which has sadly meant less writing and less organisation of Patreon-ing, hence the late post. November and December are historically tricky for me, as the darkness makes me rather lacking in energy and focus, and the illness didn't help matters. But I'm on the mend, and I'm doing my best to treat myself gently so that I don't get into a shoulder-pain situation again.

Next up: it's back to Royal Affairs Chapter 7, and sports day! I've had fun making sure this chapter has similarities to the Creme de la Creme sports day while being its own beast. This is when your pet will get her time to shine! ...and Javi's pet Silver will very much not, because Silver is adorable but very incompetent.

I'll be putting up the usual Q&A posts and a Royal Affairs early access update soon. Thank you again for your patience with the delay!

[sneakpeek.PNG](#)

[Royal Affairs Early Access - start of Chapter 4!](#)

[Dec 6, 2021](#)

[Welcome to the latest early access demo for Royal Affairs!](#) This demo has the first chunk of Chapter 4, during which you're going home for Hearthlight! It's time to meet your family for the first time in months, but are problems stirring?

Total wordcount: 97,000 words

Playthrough length: 30,000 words

[Newsflash: Dec 17](#)

[Dec 17, 2021](#)

I did my Noblesse Oblige edits! I'm now ready to rock on Chapter 5 (!!) once I'm done on my big Royal Affairs chapters.

And speaking of, here we are going through Chapter 7 of Royal Affairs. There are some sweet and spiky moments with your leadership class, as well as receiving some juicy gossip from the royal palace!

I'm not going to do the wordcount update this fortnight because it's a bit measly and I want to emphasise that creativity isn't always linear, rest is needed, etc, etc. All the things that get said a lot - and, at least for me, I nod sagely and go on to try to power through anyway.

Because it's time to admit that I've hit burnout, which is horribly common for the game industry and for everyone in general really in These Times. This year has been wild! There's been the pandemic and its attendant anxiety, burnout early in the year, major injuries in my family, [work stress at my previous job followed by the shock layoff](#), months of applications and interviews, my previous job [announcing their launch](#) of the project that the laid-off-workers created (wow) and more family-related things that aren't really mine to share.

ANYWAY. I've been working on CoG projects pretty intensively around my fulltime contracted day job, which isn't really sustainable. So this fortnight I got sick, and I've been needing to take a break rather than choosing to, which isn't ideal.

However, I'm inching towards a real break for the holidays. I'm looking forward to:

- walking gently around the countryside
- occasionally petting a sheep
- taking baths
- reading some actual books

- doing some embroidery
- delightedly forgetting what date it is

Which is to say that I'm going to be cosplaying as an effeminate, indolent Regency gentleman.

I hope that you are having as comfortable and gentle times as you can. The winter season can be really rough for a lot of reasons. I'm thinking of you.

[December Answer Post \(non NSFW\)](#)

[Dec 29, 2021](#)

Your regular reminder that this post contains SPOILERS, so please click away if that's not what you're here for!

If you decided to have your MC teach back at Gallatin, what are some other subjects for them to teach? Do they take over for whoever is the headmaster at the college if Lady Renaldt is gone, or, if she is still there, and so are the others, how does their dynamic change going from student to coworker? I can see someone trying to call Mr. Griffith "Sinclair" and he isn't too happy.

Ooh, I could see a Gallatin-teaching MC having a variety of subjects to choose from. I think as with Archambault-teaching-MCs, they'd focus on the younger students - as younger teachers, they'd have more authority that way. I think it would depend on the MC's skills. Maybe someone with high Spirit, or who was on the lacrosse team, would go for Athletics (either replacing Mr Blanchard or teaching alongside him). Someone with high Wit might teach Philosophy in the same way, or might specialise in a different academic area; someone with high Poise might teach Etiquette.

Although Lady Renaldt is fairly rigid, she would likely match subjects with the MC's skills - Miss Dalca or Ms Vogel would create a syllabus around the teachers' skills if the MC was especially skilled in a particular area.

Miss Dalca would be pretty enthusiastic about being the MC's colleague, if they got on well during Creme de la Creme! She'd be a bit pointed towards them if they got her in trouble, but they only end up colleagues if the MC got rid of Lady Renaldt, so she'd respect them on that level, and if the MC ended up in the mines with her, she'd also be pretty amicable towards them. She'd tease a particularly formal MC a bit if they found it hard to call her by her first name!

Mr Blanchard would be polite but a bit awkward - there would probably be points where he was blatantly trying too hard to treat the MC like a friend/colleague ("call me Raphael, please") but once he settled

down, he'd be a good ally to the MC. He's gone through the process of teaching at the school where he attended, so he'd likely share some insights.

Mr Griffith would be a bit sardonic and forbidding, and would probably try to scare the MC a bit if they call him Sinclair without asking! But the MC would come to realise that he puts on a very severe face for the students - he says that it's the only way you can stay sane teaching at a boarding school, so they don't follow him around and bother him - and actually he's quite witty and funny when he wants to be.

While we know the current MC is pretty much expected to marry Javi as a royal alliance (I'm so trying to make this happen!), was Josiane also expected the same thing? Or does being the current crown royal exempt her for it? In the same thought, would it be expected of little Ollie to wed a high ranking spouse, or is he free to choose?

Big spoilers here!

Josiane is romancing a Westerlind aristocrat called Lady Yael Forster who's very wealthy and from a long-lived, prestigious family (say about equivalent to Dominique or Beaumont in terms of fanciness). The Queen very much approves of this - Josiane's age doesn't quite match with Javi, as Javi's younger, and Rosario was snapped up by either the Creme MC or Prince/Princess/Heir Darian of Jezhan. The Queen really wants Josiane to get married quickly, but Josiane's ambivalent about whether she wants to get married sooner or later (or at all). This will be something that the Royal Affairs MC can interact with and nudge in different directions.

Expectations of Oliver will vary depending on the Royal Affairs MC's actions! If the RA MC gets together with Javi, and things are stable with Zaledo, that's good news for Westerlin and Oliver will have more freedom to choose. If the MC gets together with someone else (Asher, Hyacinthe, and Trevelyan are the most controversial choices in a variety of ways), Oliver will have more pressure on him to make a favourable alliance - perhaps internationally, or with a very fancy Westerlind person like Josiane.

Will there be anything akin to the romance of Miss Dalca and Mr Blanchard among the staff at Archambault? MC casually strolling in to say hello amidst one of their trysts in was a particular highlight haha 😊

Ahaa I did love writing that scene! I do have points currently where you can walk in on Teacher!CremeMC and Teacher!Hartmann/Groundskeeper!Karson. But I don't have anything as complicated or detailed as the Dalca/Blanchard/Griffith situation currently. I might do something like that for future projects!

[December Answer Post \(NSFW\)](#)

[Dec 30, 2021](#)

Your regular reminder that this post contains spoilers and NSFW content, and that this tier is for 18+ subscribers only, so please click away if that's not what you're here for!

Do you see Max and Hartmann ever hooking up? The potential for electricity there, whew!

Oh man, this was a plot point that I originally considered but it ended up on the cutting room floor! In the original Creme de la Creme outline, I planned something where you could matchmake them during the Festival of the Birds (perhaps something where Max asked them out "as a prank" but then it turned into something real). But by the time I reached that point, I had started the Max/Delacroix and Max/Delacroix/MC romance plotlines, and the potential Hartmann/Auguste relationship, and it was just too complicated to implement, brain-wise and time-wise. Plus I didn't want to accidentally make a Max/Delacroix/Hartmann/Auguste love square, because that would have been OUTRAGEOUSLY complicated!

All of which to say: yes, I could totally see that. Maybe they had a charged moment back when they were friends, but nothing quite ended up happening??

Any particular bodily feature that certain ROs find most attractive/alluring?

This is really hard to answer - partly because the way the ROs interact with the player physically is not always described in detail due to generally not specifying lots about what the MCs body is like physically. You can assume that the allosexual characters are into the obvious areas.

But!

Freddie likes paying attention to the neck and collarbone area.

Delacroix likes paying attention to legs/thighs.

Florin pays particular attention to the chest area (regardless of whether the other person has breasts or not)

Dominique especially pays attention to the waist and hipbone area.

Hyacinthe admires hands in particular; so does Rys (from Noblesse Oblige, not yet appeared)

Trevelyan appreciates people's lips in particular, as does Pascha.

I'll have to think about this some more once I've written more steamy moments - at the moment I've only written sex scenes for two of the Royal Affairs romances so I'll get more of a feel for it as I go...

Since Javi is asexual, have they ever engaged in some sort of sexual activity to define their preference, or have they always had an inkling growing up?

I don't think they thought much about it when they were younger, but they would have noticed peers getting interested in sex (doing it or talking about it) and noted that they didn't feel any great draw to the whole idea. They did some kissing with a few different people back home, probably in their mid teens or so, and didn't find it to their taste. I could see them speaking with other ace people about it, or reading ace people writing about their experiences, and then it clicked for them - nowadays they feel very solid and certain about their orientation.

[Newsflash: Dec 31](#)

[Dec 31, 2021](#)

Royal Affairs wordcount: 170,071 words

Happy end of 2021, everyone! I will personally be happy to see the back of this year, but there are some really lovely things that I can take forward and feel good about such as: some nice family news, a lot of positive gender developments, an unexpected new project (Noblesse Oblige has been such a breath of fresh air that has helped me feel more inspired with Royal Affairs too!), [working with awesome people on something](#) I'm really excited about, and more.

Writing

My intention to be an indolent Regency gentleman for the holidays has partially succeeded in the most charming of ways; I've spent time recuperating from burnout (and getting a vaccine booster), and have also found renewed energy to write, which has been lovely! I've been almost entirely working on Royal Affairs Chapter 7, which is over 21,000 words long now, plus some small Noblesse Oblige edits (mostly clarification of choices plus some reshuffling of the name section so you can choose from Jezhani names to reflect your mother's origin).

In Chapter 7 of Royal Affairs, the bit I've just been working on is an awkward lunch with you, your closest friend/romance interest, and Fabien. For a lot of characters it's awkward! I have a lot of fondness for writing meet-the-family situations.

I've also - hopefully - fixed the pernicious savegame bugs in Royal Affairs, so it will squash that particular save issue. Depending on variable changes, I can't guarantee that they'll work every time going forward, but at least that problem's sorted out!

The Javi Bonus Supplement story will be a bit late, I'm afraid, as the holidays and the vaccine booster have put me a bit behind on everything. I'll do my best to forewarn better about delays in the new year. But when it's ready I'll put it up, and hopefully you'll enjoy it!

Also if you haven't seen it already, my guest appearance on the [Talking Simulator](#) podcast is out! It was so lovely to chat to Jordan about Crème de la Crème and interactive fiction!

Non writing

Being in a very rural area is lovely! Even if it's raining, I just love being in the fields and woods, and seeing all the birds. The place where I live is pretty suburban (though with a nice amount of green space) so it's lovely to be out and about in the proper countryside. I've also been watching the Christmas Prince and Princess Switch trilogies for the first time which was a very joyous and ridiculous experience.

Next up

I'm aiming to complete the Royal Affairs Chapter 7 draft during the first week or so of January, and hopefully will get some playtesting done - the more I do, the better it gets, and I always notice points of improvement. I'll also be putting up the Javi Bonus Supplement as soon as I can. There will also be the usual monthly Q&A posts, plus the regular newsflash posts.

I'll also be putting up Chapter 2 of Noblesse Oblige for Early Access on January 3rd, and then public access on January 17th!

Best wishes, everyone. Whether or not you found 2021 hard, I wish you all the best for the coming year!

[Early Access Demo Update](#)

[Jan 3, 2022](#)

Welcome to Noblesse Oblige Chapter 2, in which you venture into the great outdoors and a newcomer arrives at Teteriuk Hall...

[Play the new early access demo here!](#)

[December\(ish\) Bonus Supplement](#)

[Jan 9, 2022](#)

You are Javi del Quiros, Zaledoan royal, and you are not happy with your outfit.

[Play Grey Jacket, a Javi story, at itch.io](#)

Thank you for your patience, dear Bonus Supplement subscribers!

Password: bonus_interact_pre_2023

[Sneak Preview Master Post](#)

[Jan 11, 2022](#)

Good morning, Sneak Preview subscribers! I hope you're safe and well today. For admin purposes, here is a reference post for your ongoing content.

- [Play the Honor Bound early access demo here](#)
- [Read the Etiquette and Intrigue wiki here](#) (this is a live document and is updated periodically)

[Bonus Supplement Master Post](#)

[Jan 11, 2022](#)

Good morning, Bonus Supplement subscribers! I hope you're safe and well today. For admin purposes, here is a reference post for your ongoing bonus stories.

- [Silk Handkerchief](#) (Asher Garnett POV interactive story)
- [Grey Jacket](#) (Javi del Quiros POV interactive story)
- [Tizari Square](#) (Auguste Renaltdt interactive story, MC POV)
- [Shiny Shoes](#) (Hartmann interactive story, MC POV)

Password for the above: bonus_interact_pre_2023

- [Varenn Korzha, 1754](#) - Korzha story
- [Matia Frasada, 1748](#) - Matia story
- [Fiore Roldan, 1752](#) - Fiore story
- [Tomi Danelak, 1755](#) - Danelak story
- [Savarel Lopes, 1760](#) - Savarel story
- [Cezara Dalca, 1754](#) - Gallatin teacher triad story (F/M/M, explicit)

- [Florin Kraemer, 1757 - Wartime AU](#) - Florin story
- [Raffi Claudian, 1759](#) - Raffi story

Password for the above: amatothecat

- [Hartmann/MC & Cooking drabble](#) (Jan 2025)
- [Raffi/MC & Stargazing drabble](#) (Jan 2025)
- [Beaumont/MC & Waking Up Together drabble](#) (Feb 2025)
- [Fiore/MC/Savarel & Too Hot drabble](#) (Feb 2025)
- [Rys/MC & Coffee Shop drabble](#) (March 2025)
- [Denario/MC/Savarel & Eyes Meet drabble](#) (March 2025)

Password for the above: prompts_q1_2025

- [Auguste/MC & Holding Hands drabble](#) (April 2025)
- [Danelak/MC/Pascha & Flowers drabble](#) (April 2025)
- [Hyacinthe/MC & Bathing drabble](#) (May 2025)
- [Fabien/President Faraci \(M/Nbi, explicit\); Fabien & President Faraci \(SFW\) stories](#) (May 2025)

Password for the above: prompts_q2_2025

[Newsflash: Jan 14](#)

[Jan 14, 2022](#)

In the first fortnight of 2022, I finished drafting **Chapter 7 of Royal Affairs**, and planned **Royal Affairs Chapter 8**.

Royal Affairs wordcount: 179,156 words

Royal Affairs average playthrough: 47,352 words

Royal Affairs playthrough is nearly at novel length! I'm really, really pleased with progress - the pre-holiday overwhelm hit me rather hard and so I'm a little behind where I'd prefer to be, but I'm very happy to have polished off Chapter 7, and to have somewhat belatedly done [December's bonus supplement](#). Chapter 7 turned out to be the second-largest chapter in the game, second to Chapter 3!

Even more pleasingly, I've outlined Chapter 8 in detail, and have done a broad strokes plan for Chapter 9... and figured out some big plot stuff that needed poking. Basically a plot element I'd planned out

originally didn't quite work for all types of protagonists, and I strongly dislike when an MC is shoehorned into caring about something they don't! So I've added a plan for another big branch that accounts for MCs at the other end of things. It's not quite... a fully evil route? But it definitely CAN be if you want it to be. (To be fair, the original one has some pretty juicy evil stuff that you can get up to.)

So I'm forging onwards and coding up Chapter 8, which is your Verdancy break.

Non-writing

I watched Greta Gerwig's Little Women! I enjoyed it soundly, especially the Jo and Amy dynamic and

Cutting room floor

I haven't been trimming as much as I sometimes do, but this is a little outlined bit which was about Beaumont being worried. When I got to actually writing it I was like "actually Beaumont isn't worried about this situation!" So in the bin it goes.

Sneak peek

This isn't a screenshot because I haven't written it yet, but when I was planning out late game Royal Affairs I was delighted to have an idea! SPOILERS BELOW:

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-
-

There are going to be some bad things afoot as the plot hots up, and I realised that, under various circumstances the perfect person to ask for help would be the Creme de la Creme MC if they're a teacher at Archambault or Gallatin. SO there is going to be the possibility of seeking help from them when things get rough. I'm pleased I thought of it, as in general the Creme MC takes a fairly background role!

[Capture.PNG](#)

[January Answer Post \(SFW\)](#)

[Jan 25, 2022](#)

Your regular reminder that this post may contain SPOILERS, so please click away if that's not what you're here for!

Would any of the CdIC ROs feel enamored at the MC having a favor them? Like a small portrait, a piece of clothing/handkerchief, or a possibly a small bottle of their favorite perfume/cologne?

Hartmann would be a bit bashful about it. They'd keep it somewhere really safe, making sure no one could get at it.

Max would show it off whenever they could... perhaps to a degree where they might lose it or get it damaged. If they did, though they'd be genuinely apologetic and would get the MC something nice as a gift in return.

Freddie would be a little embarrassed and might say they don't need presents, but if the MC made it clear that it wasn't a pity gift and more a token of affection, they'd thank them and be pleased.

Delacroix would enjoy it, and would store it away somewhere - maybe using it as the focus of a good luck ritual or similar.

Blaise might be a little spiky about it - saying "I've got what I need, I don't need things like this" or similar, but would keep it somewhere safe nevertheless.

Karson would be very touched. They wouldn't make a big deal out of it, but would keep it in a pocket as a habit, and if the MC wanted, they'd give them something as an exchange.

Auguste would be polite and thank them, but would be a little confused about what they're expected to do with it; they'd put it away somewhere safely but might forget about it in the long run. Still, when they found it again it would make them smile.

Florin would love it and would show it off to anyone interested (or indeed, not interested). They might tease the MC a little bit for being soft-hearted.

Rosario would be very enthusiastically grateful and would make sure to give the MC something equally meaningful (and possibly expensive) in return.

What would be the best type of self-care for Karson and Hartmann. I know my MC would love to spoil them both for the amount of hard work they do with a meal and possibly a bit of a spa day (bath, shampoo their hair, massage, etc.)

Karson finds it hard to sit still and do something relaxing, but they really like to chill out outdoors, so maybe a trip to some hot springs or an outdoor hot tub would be nice for them. They'd also be very into

a petting zoo!

Hartmann takes a while to unbend enough to be spoiled but secretly really likes it. They would totally enjoy a full on spa day with a ton of pampering time, once they settled into it - it would be a bit of a challenge to get them to do it (more on that below) but when they're more comfortable to admit that they'd be into it, they'd love it.

I know that the MC can have food allergies and restrictions, but is there any other ROs that have any? I feel like Gonzalez would be lactose intolerant for some reason haha

I don't think I want to retroactively say either way especially since I don't want to contradict myself but If Gonzalez was lactose intolerant they would definitely be someone who's like "sure I'm intolerant but I can't resist the delicious cheese". (Shoutout to several friends who do just that.)

****Slightly romantic, but how would Javi respond to receiving a poem from the MC detailing their love and admiration before they step out together or officially become engaged?**

****Javi would be extremely conflicted! They might well pretend they didn't get it, or if they can't do that, they might be a bit sniffy about the MC's poetic technique. Eventually, later on, they might admit that they found it flattering, but it would take a bit of time and comfort to do so. MUCH later on, they would admit that they kept it for safekeeping. It would end up being a precious keepsake for them.**

With Dominique and Beaumont rooming together, which of the two is more neat? Are they both kind of lax about the dorm, assuming that there isn't a daily check, or does Beaumont have to constantly remind Dominique to pick up after themselves?

The usual dynamic is that Dominique is really messy and Beaumont tells them off about it... a lot. Dominique is someone who has "a system" for finding stuff and they're terribly disorganised, often getting late for things because they're trying to track down something they need.

But sometimes when Beaumont is right in the middle of something important, they get extremely focused on it and very much not on their surroundings. So they'll end up with half-drunk cups of coffee lying around with a load of mould in them, ends of sandwiches that are clearly liable to get up and walk around... etc etc. Beaumont swears Dominique to secrecy about such a thing, though.

Which CdIC ROs would be most excited to have an MC surprise them with a picnic? This can be either during or after Gallatin

Karson, Max, and Rosario love being in the outdoors and would be very appreciative!

Auguste might be a little surprised about doing something so *rustic* but actually would really like being outside and getting to have alone time with the MC.

Freddie, Blaise and Hartmann would be pleased to spend time with the MC, but aren't so outdoorsy so it wouldn't be their first choice.

Delacroix would very much enjoy it - they like being away from prying eyes and again, getting time alone with the MC.

Florin is very not outdoorsy and would be a little bit snobby about the idea (they like showing off in front of other people!), but would throw themselves into it nevertheless.

If Beaumont and Delacroix ever met, and we're close enough, how would a conversation about families go? Would Delacroix try to help Beaumont reach out to their parents via a seance or Ouija board?

I think it would be unlikely that they'd get close enough to talk about emotional things - not unless it was several years later, and if they were both more level headed. Certainly if Delacroix started talking about ghosts, Beaumont would be furious. Beaumont doesn't have any spiritual beliefs and would find it really objectionable - they'd likely storm off and be as distant from Delacroix as they could.

I think they could possibly be friendly if they met when they were a bit older, as they're both pretty intellectual - but having said that, Delacroix enjoys intellectual things for their own sake whereas Beaumont enjoys them for the use that they can be. So they would likely end up at loggerheads either way. As above, I'm not sure Delacroix would really want to open up to them as they'd be quite intimidated by them.

With Florin now being moved into the military, would they still be a flirty menace to those in the service, or have they started calming down a bit to just a few interests?

Florin has, I think, been fairly wild at least at the start of their military service, but with a bit less joy and complacency than they were at school. They're realising that they now have obligations for pretty much the first time, and they do not like it. I think they likely threw themselves into some unwise attachments, partly to act out, and may have calmed down a little - perhaps because of experiencing a lot of drama.

I have considered having Florin appear in something in the future; I've also considered enabling a future MC to have a fling with them. But that isn't set in stone by any means! I know some people are really fond of Florin in Crème and might find it sad if a fling with a different character becomes available. So it's a balancing act!

******How would Hartmann and Beaumont respond to a very doting MC? One that isn't smothering, per se, but makes sure that they're taking breaks, keeping a realistic expectation of themselves and their worth, eating and sleeping regularly, etc? I know we get a small peak of it in CdIC and a little in ch. 4 of RA, but in the longtime romance, how would that work out?

So, both of their instinctive reactions to such a dynamic is prickly and a bit defensive, but with different undertones!

Hartmann is concerned that if they look like they need help, or do need help, they're failing. They hold themselves to very high standards and the way they see it is that their job is to be effortlessly competent and anything less puts their reputation on the line, and challenges their perception of themselves. They will find it easier to relax in private with someone they trust than to do so in public but when it is in private, they would learn to enjoy being looked after once it becomes more of a habit. It would take a bit of work because they've had a lot of practice at being in their particular mindset, but they would be able to use that as a stepping-stone for learning to look after themselves too.

Beaumont is desperately afraid of being vulnerable - they care about how they appear too, and how people see them, because they really want to put up a front of being extremely resilient. They're scared of seeming, or being, what they consider weak. So with an MC who wants to dote on them, they find that very challenging indeed because part of them likes the idea and would like to let that wall down, but a major part of them wants to reject that entirely and be their own independent, self-reliant person. This is something that will be explored later in the relationship, and the MC will be able to engage with it - Beaumont just doesn't like to admit that they need anything or anyone.

What is one way that Beaumont and Trevelyan each like to show affection to their partners when in the poly relationship?

You'll get to have plenty of makeouts and affection with Beaumont and Trevelyan if you like once you're with them! There will be some negotiation - the MC can set boundaries about what intimacy they're comfortable being around, etc. So the below is assuming that the MC has said they're comfy with it!

Trevelyan really likes messing around with their partners' hair, and would enjoy taking time to comb, brush or style their partners' hair, whether the partner is chilling out or doing something else. I could see them doing that while the MC and Beaumont were reading or studying!

Beaumont doesn't lean towards affection in general and finds it quite strange and unsettling being the centre of attention in terms of physical affection (see above about wanting to avoid vulnerability and such!), but having said that! They do enjoy giving shoulder massages - fairly firm ones - and might well do things like testing a partner on exam questions while doing it. They're also likely to do things like telling a partner off about not bringing a coat, and might give them theirs.

[Newsflash: Jan 28](#)

[Jan 28, 2022](#)

We're nearly finished with January! Time... has very little meaning anymore. But I did write a bunch of **Royal Affairs Chapter 8!**

Royal Affairs wordcount: 187,444 words

I'm around a third through Chapter 8. This is the Verdancy holidays, where you go home to Fenburg to hang out with your family. Meanwhile, Parliament is voting on what to do about suffrage! Here the player can make a big difference to the future of Westerlind, and cause a lot of drama whatever they choose. Some of these actions will change the plot in totally different directions for the upcoming chapters, so I'm excited to set them all up!

There is also a WHOLE BUNCH of discussing your love life and marriage plans (or lack thereof) with Queen Estell. Here's where you get the gossip on who she approves of, who she really, really doesn't, and how you can persuade her to get onside.

Behind the scenes

I've been thinking about a couple of overarching things for Royal Affairs. One may be interesting for game design reasons - I'm wondering whether to get rid of the ruthless/softhearted stat as it rarely gets tested and often other stats would work in its place. Another is about how the Asher/Hyacinthe relationship is handled - I've had a few comments suggesting that players feel like even when Asher's romancing them, they feel Asher's interested in Hyacinthe. I've tweaked it a bit, but am pondering whether it needs a slightly different approach.

Non writing

My online roleplaying group has restarted our Scum and Villainy space opera game! This has been on hold while we play other games for *two years* so I'm extremely excited to carry on with it. My character is an affable ex-hitman in his forties (after a big breakup when his husband found out that he was a hitman, he quit to become a non-assassinating bounty hunter with a ragtag crew) who is superhumanly strong but is starting to manifest psychic powers. He... does not know how to handle that as he is very much a down-to-earth kind of guy. It's really lovely to be back in this setting with these characters again!

Next:

Next week I'm going to put up the NSFW answer page for Spicy Section subscribers. Then the rest of Royal Affairs Chapter 4 will be up for early access. I'll be carrying on writing Chapter 8, and hoping to finish the draft by mid February, when I'll swap back to Noblesse Oblige for a bit. Fingers crossed!

[January Answer Post \(NSFW\)](#)

[Jan 30, 2022](#)

Your regular reminder that this post contains spoilers and NSFW content, and that this tier is for 18+ subscribers only, so please click away if that's not what you're here for!

From CDLC, who is most dominant and who is more submissive?

Freddie and Rosario are enthusiastic about either dynamic; they're not especially extreme though either way. In general none of them express this ingame in any major way, but it's something that might come up more consciously once they were older and more experienced.

Hartmann: more submissive if more rebellious, more dominant if less rebellious

Max: dominant

Delacroix: this was difficult to figure out. They're pretty physically confident and forthright... but I feel like they would be more on the submissive end of the spectrum

Karson: dominant

Blaise: veers towards submissive

Auguste: very vanilla, wouldn't feel confident with major inroads into either dynamic unless they were extremely comfortable with their partner

Florin: happy either way, very enthusiastic about pretty adventurous dynamics

Since Asher technically rooms with MC, is it possible, or has it ever occurred, where they've walked in on the MC changing? I would think that they would be more self-aware, but to err is human.

Yes they will have - the MC has probably done the same too. Before a romantic tone has been established, Asher would be apologetic but straightforward. But if things were romantic between them and the MC, they would be VERY flustered in their apologising.

If there is erotic art/pornography in Westerlind (which I can see this being a bit taboo so please forgive my forwardness), how would Asher and Hartmann react to having a photo of the MC given to them? Contrarily, what about Florin and/or Max?

There are indeed erotic art/drawings and photography in the setting, though it's not something that arises ingame.

Asher: would be a blushy and a bit overcome by the fact that the MC wanted to do that! but would be very flattered, and would keep it extremely safe so that no prying eyes could get a glimpse of it. They'd take a look every so often when they were away from the MC.

Hartmann: this would be quite intense for them! They wouldn't really know how to respond, I think, and would be a bit overwhelmed. Not that they'd be stressed or offended or anything, just that they're not sure how best to react (and they like knowing How To Act About Things). I feel like they'd feel more comfortable writing sexy letters, at least at first.

Florin would be very enthusiastic, and would give the MC a photo of themselves too in response - probably a pretty glamorous boudoir sort of thing. If they were long distance, they would definitely send a sexy letter to the MC saying in a lot of detail about how much they enjoyed seeing it.

Max would love it too! They would also give the MC a photo of themselves - probably something less polished and more amateur than Florin, but maybe with a bit more of their personality. They don't really mind how hot they look, but end up looking especially hot because they're having a good time.

What kind of lingerie would Blaise and Hartmann like on the MC?

Hartmann might be a bit flustered, but in an enjoyable way, by the MC in super revealing/overtly sexy underwear. But I think both they and Blaise would be thrilled to be seeing the MC in their underwear whatever they were wearing! I can imagine the sort of underwear that characters might like wearing themselves, but I don't see Hartmann or Blaise as having a particular preference.

sorry if this is gross, but how do dominique, beaumont, and trevlyan feel about grooming? who prefers clean shave vs natural vs trimmed?

Not gross, but I'm not sure how I'd answer this... similarly to the above, question I think they'd be delighted to be getting anywhere near someone in that way and wouldn't have an aesthetic preference!

What are some secret fantasies Karson and Asher may have about the MC, and would they ever have the courage to ask them about it?

Karson: [I realise that I said previously](#) that they're fairly vanilla and might not have fantasies in a major way, but upon reflection, I think they would enjoy the idea of being dominant with the (entirely willing and enthusiastic) MC. Perhaps something on the slightly rougher side, holding the MC in place, that sort of thing. It would be something that they might express once they were a bit older and had been with the MC in a long-term relationship.

Asher: they would love the idea of being pampered by the MC, lying down for a luxurious massage and being able to be lost in a sensual experience - not necessarily sexual but definitely would love it if it moved in that direction. They look after the MC, and are constantly thinking so much that they would enjoy the chance to totally relax and give themselves up to pleasurable physical sensations, not having to think about anything.

[Royal Affairs Demo Update](#)

[Feb 8, 2022](#)

Apologies for the wrongly scheduled post that went up yesterday - it went up before I had a chance to sort out the post and uploading the update! But now [here we are with the early access Royal Affairs demo, including the completed Chapter 4.](#)

I'd love to know what you think (and especially if anything goes wrong). Thank you for playing!

[Newsflash: Feb 12](#)

[Feb 12, 2022](#)

Good evening, everyone! This fortnight was on the slow end of progress for Royal Affairs, alas, due to a variety of things but mostly shoulder pain. Desk work for the day job sitting on a less than supportive chair and then sleeping on a less than great pillow means that working on Royal Affairs/Noblesse Oblige after work difficult. Which is a real drag, and of course puts a dampener on mood - I love writing, and it's hard when I can't just sit down and power through it.

In happier news though, your subscriptions have enabled me to a) get some physio soon and b) order a better chair, both of which should improve my situation! The chair should arrive on the 18th and I cannot wait. Thank you, as ever, for your support - it's honestly far beyond anything I hoped for, and it really means more than I can say.

All that said, I have been carrying on with Chapter 8 of Royal Affairs and am almost at the point where the suffrage vote happens! I'm so excited about this bit. The way the MC handles the situation, and how the vote goes, will massively change the rest of the plot of the game. It's those diverging points that I find really exciting when making games!

The other nice thing is that I have the upcoming week on holiday from my day job. Which means less desk work, no meetings, hopefully less pain, and way more time and energy for Royal Affairs writing! (SOON I will get to a particularly intense Trevelyan romance scene that I've got planned out and it'll be so much fun!)

In other news, would you like some book recommendations? Things I read recently and loved:

- **Gender Euphoria** edited by Laura Kate Dale: a collection of nonfiction pieces from a wide variety of trans authors examining gender through a lens of joy and fulfilment. Often moving, always interesting, and a breath of fresh air to see trans lives being explored away from a cis-focused and/or tragic gaze.
- **Lord of the Last Heartbeat**, **The Immortal City**, and **The Calyx Charm** by May Peterson (the **Sacred Dark** series). I've barely read fiction for a while but these books stole my heart and reminded me how much I love fantasy books. Beautiful prose, sweet and sexy queer romances between flawed characters who are doing their best, terrifying villains, and vividly imaginative worldbuilding... I struggle to find anything I dislike about these books. Absolutely brilliant. As well as not reading much fiction, I haven't been reading all that much for the last couple of years but I just inhaled these three. I'm now desperate for more May Peterson books!

In subscriber related news, just some reminders:

- For Sneak Preview subscribers and up, a Royal Affairs demo update is [here](#)
- For Bonus Supplement subscribers and up, the February SFW question post is [here](#)
- For Spicy Section subscribers and up, the February NSFW question post is [here](#)

Thank you for reading this rather chaotic newsflash update! I hope to get more Royal Affairs work done this coming fortnight. Catch you soon and I hope you're having a comfortable February!

[Beginning of March Newsflash](#)

[Mar 2, 2022](#)

I hope things are as good as they can be with the world doing... all of the things it's doing, and that you are safe.

February ended up being chaotic in a lot of ways and there's been a lot going on between The World, my work, and personal life. Hence this non-Friday news post! I've taken a deadline extension for my next Royal Affairs milestone which I hoped not to have to do, but as ever my editor is really understanding about it. I'm afraid Patreon ended up slipping through the cracks a bit during February but I'm hoping to keep things back on track during March and not bother you with scheduled posts that haven't been filled in yet!

Some good news is that I've got my new chair and it's really helping my back! The last few days I've been able to do some nice juicy writing after work - some of it involves the Royal Affairs MC's family, some involves finding out what plans Asher's parents have for them, and some involves what's going on with Dominique's family situation. Verdancy is a time for families and this chapter is no different! However, in the case of Royal Affairs it's also a time for political upheaval, so that's ALSO going on. As a result of the upheaval, the MC can have some friendly, romantic, or EXTREMELY antagonistic time with Trevelyan.

This week I will be putting up fresh Q&A posts and a new early access update for Noblesse Oblige! I will also be working on a Hartmann-themed Bonus Supplement which will be going up as soon as it's done (this was due to go up in February but then... February happened).

Take care everyone!

[Noblesse Oblige Early Access Update](#)

[Mar 11, 2022](#)

Here we are with a delicious [Chapter 3 of Noblesse Oblige!](#) You have a day off for the first time since you arrived on the Isle of Teteriuk. Who will you spend your time with, and what will you get up to?

[Bonus Supplement Time!](#)

[Apr 9, 2022](#)

Thank you for your patience waiting for this interactive short story. I very much hope you enjoy it.

In Shiny Shoes, it's time to visit Hartmann at university. Set after Creme de la Creme, it allows for having befriended or romanced Hartmann, and works whether or not you went to Gessner with them. There are Feelings (mandatory) and a Kiss (optional).

[Play it here!](#)

password: bonus_interact_pre_2023

[Next Bonus Supplement Content Vote!](#)

[Apr 24, 2022](#)

I really enjoyed making the post-Creme Hartmann snippet, so I'm going to do a post-Creme snippet again with another character or characters, aiming to get it done during May (poll ends May 15th). Who would you like this one to be about? (Delacroix and Blaise included this time, as this is a peek at post-game life)

Gonzalez

0%

Max

8%

Freddie

0%

Delacroix

0%

Max and Delacroix (romantic)

15%

Blaise

23%

Karson

15%

Auguste

23%

Florin

8%

Rosario

8%

Poll ended May 15, 2022 · 13 votes total

[Royal Affairs early access update!](#)

[May 9, 2022](#)

[Here is the first half of Chapter 5 of Royal Affairs!](#) In this chapter we return to Archambault, catch up with friends and enemies, work on our leadership projects, and meet a minor character from Creme de la Creme a few years on!

[May Newsflash](#)

[May 9, 2022](#)

Long time no... write. I've had a pretty stunning few weeks and I'm still processing it all. For one thing in mid-April I had a major (non-worrying, much-needed) surgery and spent a bunch of time in bed watching What We Do in the Shadows. For another, once I had the brain for it but was still in physical recovery I spent a LOT of time racing towards the end of my first draft of Noblesse Oblige.

And can I tell you a secret? That not even my editor knows yet because she's busy editing the penultimate two chapters?

IT'S DONE.

The final chapter is ready for editing. And once I've done the revisions for the final three chapters, THEN it will be time to go to beta testing.

I'm so pleased. It's 100,000 words of gothic drama, claustrophobia, and clandestine romance with people who are distinct bad ideas (and, if I'm honest, a lot of smut), and I'm really, really proud of it.

My wife Fay has played through the full thing three times and gave me invaluable feedback to whip it into shape before it goes out to the wider world; in only one of the playthroughs was there a gamebreaking bug so I was pleasantly surprised by that.

So now it's just a case of getting those edits done. While I wait for them, I'll be turning my attention back to Royal Affairs, and the May bonus content for Patreon, carrying on with recovery, and getting into being back at my day job.

Speaking of Royal Affairs, if you're on the Sneak Preview tier you'll have seen that the first half of Chapter 5 is up! As part of my Chapters 7-8 edits, I'm going to be doing some fairly significant reworks to some Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 content, mostly to do with Trevelyan and beefing up what the MC knows about their role in the suffrage movement. So I'm looking forward to revisiting that and sharing the results.

Finally, unrelated to my work but extremely related to me: my wife's Heart's Choice game, [Heart of Battle](#), where you can find love as a gladiator in a terrible fighting pit, is out in beta! It's heartwrenching, tense, action-packed, and hot. I love it so much! You can [sign up for beta testing here](#) and [wishlist it on Steam here!](#)

Thank you for reading and I hope you're having a decent Monday. Take care!

[Royal Affairs Chapter 5 Update](#)

[Jun 19, 2022](#)

Hello there! I'm pleased to let you know that I've got a Royal Affairs update for you! It contains a bunch of bugfixes, plus the rest of Chapter 5. [Enjoy!](#)

(as ever, save slots may be dicey as variables may have changed or been added since your save file was created)

[Bonus Supplement: Auguste](#)

[Jul 11, 2022](#)

[Here's a snippet](#) about visiting Auguste in Jezhan after the events of Creme de la Creme. Enjoy!

Password: bonus_interact_pre_2023

[Tier Update](#)

[Jul 20, 2022](#)

Dear everyone, I hope you're having a good July so far and are able to keep hydrated!

Good news: Noblesse Oblige is in copyedit, and hopefully will be released soon. And I've been able to get on with a bit more of Chapter 9 of Royal Affairs - I'm towards the end of the chapter now, with some intense romantic scenes within!

Bad news: I've realised that I need to remove some of my Patreon tiers to enable me to keep steady progress on Royal Affairs. When I first started the Patreon I was working one job, which meant the structure was more manageable. I'm now working two, plus I'm a parent and have been dealing with some medical things - all of which means that making extra content isn't sustainable right now. I don't want to keep piling pressure on myself, and I also don't want to leave you hanging while I struggle to catch up. I completely understand this being disappointing and I'm sorry for letting things drag on this long - I've been trying to keep up with all my commitments but just haven't been in a position to do so, for time and health reasons.

I will be unpublishing the Bonus Supplement and Spicy Section tiers today (July 20th), meaning that new subscribers can no longer join them. On July 30th, I'll delete the tiers - I recommend moving to a different tier so you're not paying for something you're not getting. The password to the bonus content on my itch.io page will remain the same so Bonus Supplement subscribers and above can still access the short stories.

Again, I'm sorry for not doing this sooner. I will carry on providing early access to demos and Q&As here, and will be aiming to keep better on top of news posts and previews.

I may reinstate these tiers in the future when I'm able to focus on them fully, and you will be the first to know. Thank you so much for all your support.

[Newsflash: late July](#)

[Jul 23, 2022](#)

In case you missed it elsewhere, [Noblesse Oblige](#) is due to be released on August 25th and is available to wishlist on Steam! I am absolutely over the moon.

Royal Affairs continues - more slowly than I'd like, because of various medical things and the heatwave in the UK, but I'm making progress. I hope to get the draft of Chapter 9 done in the next week or two, so fingers crossed! I'm currently at 221,533 words, which is a whoooooole lot. Noblesse Oblige is 137,000 words long. How have I ended up writing an average of 119,000 words a year on these projects in the last 3 years??? Outrageous.

Anyway, here is a screenshot of a Trevelyan kiss, because I've been writing a lot of sad Trevelyan scenes lately and this is a more romantic moment...

May the weekend treat you well!

[trevkiss.png](#)



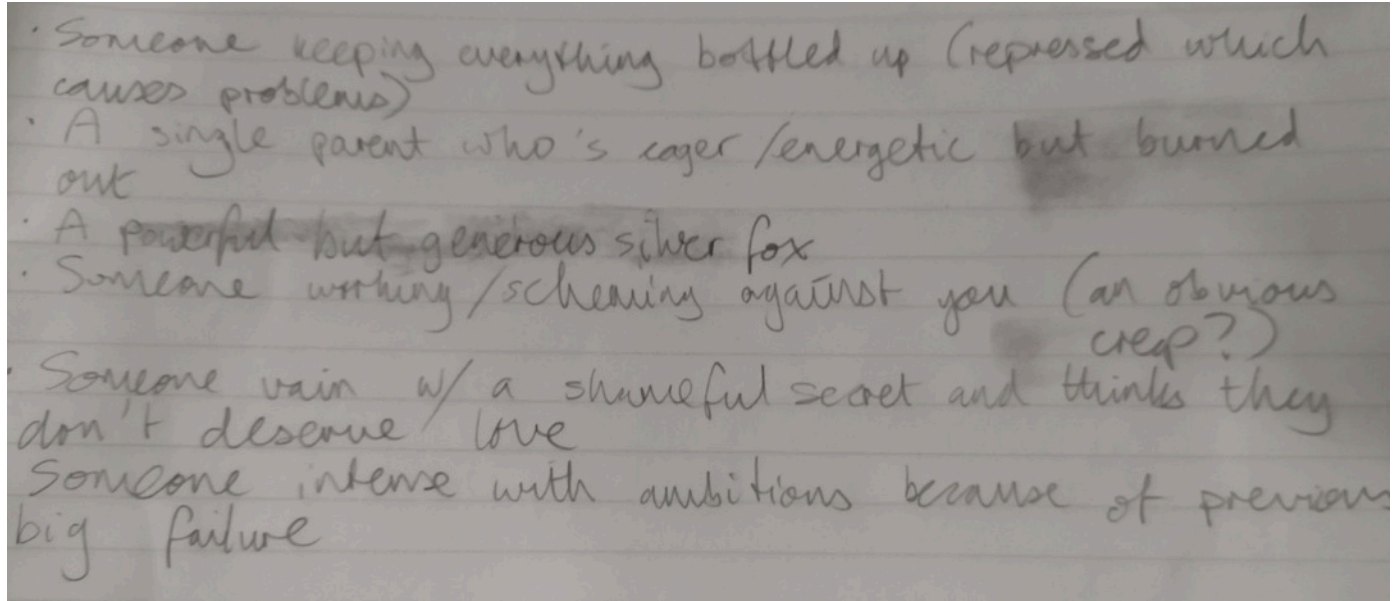
[Full Noblesse Oblige cover art!](#)

Jul 26, 2022

Can I stop staring at this? NO. Am I delighted by Danelak's dungarees? YES. Look at that gorgeous sepia tone and the warm light of the fire! Look at Pascha's untucked shirt and Rys's delicious coat!

The artist is Adrien/ne Valdes and I am just absolutely overjoyed with their work.

IT'S SO BEAUTIFUL.



very vague future character ideas

Jul 29, 2022

thinking about Them (extremely vague character concepts for extremely vague future game idea(s), you saw it here first)

- Someone keeping everything bottled up (repressed which causes problems) (ed: interested in whether this results in quietness or anger; would depend on the balance of other characters I think)
- A single parent who's eager/energetic but burned out (ed: probably parent of a smallish child, would have points where you engage with their ex, uh oh)
- A powerful but generous silver fox (ed: I almost wrote PILF and I'm not sure I want to make that happen. I think this would probably be "powerful" as a demeanour or general power rather than direct authority over the MC.)
- Someone working/scheming against you (an obvious creep?) (ed: I would enjoy ramping up an intense rivalry romance, maybe this person could be a villain in some circumstances??)

- Someone vain with a shameful secret and thinks they don't deserve love (ed: this is my catnip. flamboyant but sad on the inside. excellent.)
- Someone intense with ambitions because of previous big failure (ed: I want to distinguish this one from the repressed one, maybe this one is more of a noisy leader where the repressed one is a follower. More thought needed.)

Maybe these will end up being something!

[Newsflash: August 5](#)

[Aug 5, 2022](#)

It's August! When did that happen?? I've been working on Royal Affairs - more sporadically than I'd have liked because of some medical issues (this is beginning to become a refrain, which is very annoying - but though unpleasant I've recovered).

ANYWAY, medical stuff aside, I've been doing lots of work on romantic and friendship scenes for Chapter 9 and Royal Affairs is now at 225,253 words. The pace of the game is going to pick up massively at the end of the chapter, which is going to be a big cliffhanger, and Chapter 10 - so this is when you can have some emotional time with the characters before everything kicks off.

I went through a lot of back-and-forth about what sort of thing to have in these scenes. In the equivalent Creme de la Creme chapter, Engagement Season, there are a lot of engagement scenes with each of the characters and I started off thinking it would have the same pattern - I even outlined it in code that way. But as I started writing, I realised that didn't work for all of the characters, and wouldn't quite feel right; it also felt repetitive when I was writing. So there are now two characters who you can get engaged to in this chapter, and a few whom you can sleep with if you want, but others have different sorts of conversations. All the scenes are about developing emotional connection and intimacy in some way, and I really feel like I've learned something. Some of the characters have spent a lot of the game being careful to put across a particular image and not necessarily being fully open with the MC - Hyacinthe and Javi in particular - and in this chapter I've felt able to peel into what's really on their minds.

And also you can make out with the characters a bunch if you want to. Hyacinthe and Beaumont especially have tended to be quite restrained in that regard and it's interesting writing them in that sort of moment.

My goal for the next fortnight is! To! Finish! Drafting! This! Chapter! It's been a long one and I'm eager to get into sorting out MANY plot threads that I've been busy setting up. I can't believe I'm getting towards

the end - this chapter has been a lot of inching up the rollercoaster slope to get to the top, and Chapters 10-11 will be zooming down. It's just been a case of sloooooowly getting to that high point!

[Newsflash August 21](#)

[Aug 21, 2022](#)

I finished the Chapter 9 draft for Royal Affairs!!!

This chapter has been such a slog, not because it's been hugely complicated, but it was tough going from the mindset of editing Noblesse Oblige to making completely new material, especially because a large chunk of my day job was devoted to editing at that stage. And then several times the points where I set aside time to work on it, I got sick. So it took a disproportionate amount of time but now it's DONE (well, with my editor, and then I'll revise, and when the whole thing's done I'll revise again, and then beta testing... but for now it's done!)

And now I'm on Chapter 10. It's the penultimate chapter! Things are getting tense again and big things are happening! All of it is very spoilery so I'm not going to go into a ton of detail about it here, but there's going to be a lot of rallying friends together, ferreting out evidence, potentially calling on the Creme MC for help (if they're around), and various scheming, intimidation, and villainous actions that you'll be able to take too. The last few days I've been plotting out the chapter and have started the code. Right now, with plenty of code still to do and without any actual writing, it's over 3000 words so I foresee it being a big one. Which is quite right, really - I want it to have a lot to it so that players feel like it's a fun conclusion to the game!

[Royal Affairs update: Chapter 6](#)

[Sep 24, 2022](#)

[Here is an update!](#) This is the whole of Chapter 6, in which there is some Drama Club... drama, and this year's Festival of the Birds in which you can have some friendship or romance time (and some makeouts and sleeping together if you like!)

I'd love to hear what you think, and whether everything is working as intended! In particular if you hit one-on-one conversations that repeat from earlier in the game, that's important to hear about (it can be a little tricky to test and replicate).

Note: this update will most likely not work with a loaded game as I needed to make some big changes to how a bunch of variables are set in preparation for the release. If you find a bug please let me know whether you're loading a saveslot.

Royal Affairs has sailed past 250,000 words which is both surreal and a delight. At the moment I'm deep in Chapter 10, which is currently devouring a very large portion of my brain. It is absurdly complicated but that's what'll make it fun to play! It's also a lot of fun (and challenging) to write the Creme de la Creme MC (CremeMC? CreMC? Cremsona?) from the point of view of another character, because it's so important that I don't make players feel alienated from their own character. So that's taken up a big chunk of the writing, because on some paths, where appropriate, the Creme MC can be brought onboard to help with the plot.

Things have been very busy, and I'm aware I haven't posted as much as I'd have liked. Shortly after the last post, I found out that my day job contract will be finishing up after October, which along with Chapter 10 has been a bit consuming. It isn't a situation like the one I was in last year, but is of course still a stress.

All that said, I hope to put Chapter 7 up here for early access during October. See you again soon!

[Upcoming IF panel!](#)

[Oct 6, 2022](#)

Next weekend I'll be sitting down with Eric Moser (Community College Hero series, Zip!), Jim Dattilo (Zombie Exodus series, A Wise Use of Time, VTM: Out for Blood), and Zachary Sergi (Heroes Rise and Versus series) and doing a video chat about writing interactive fiction. We're opening up questions to our patrons for us to answer - so if there's anything you'd like to know about the writing process, our games, or the glamorous life of making IF (spoiler: it's not glamorous) please post here!

[Royal Affairs Early Access Demo Update](#)

[Oct 27, 2022](#)

I'm delighted to say that I'm onto coding the final chapter of Royal Affairs - what a surreal thing to say after such a long journey, but I'm so grateful for everyone who's stuck with me along the way. Once I've

finished drafting I've got a big stack of feedback to chew on and implement before the game goes into beta (large-scale things like stat clarity and balance, foreshadowing certain things earlier on, and making some of the failures of stat tests more fun), but we're in the home stretch. I can't wait!

To celebrate that (and also that the current public demo is more stable), [here is Chapter 7](#) - in which Sports Day will arrive, and which puts the playthrough length at around 47000 words!

Your save slots should work with this one as long as the saved games are newer than the Chapter 6 update. Older ones will crumble under the pressure, I'm afraid.

I hope you enjoy!

[A small celebration](#)

[Nov 25, 2022](#)

Dear all, I'm so pleased to say that I have one (1) functional first draft of Royal Affairs!

Right now it's 323,000 words, with an average playthrough of 70,000 words - both are going to go up a lot during testing, I can tell you that much - and QuickTest and RandomTest WORK. That doesn't preclude continuity bugs, naturally. And I'm just about to turn around and do a bunch of edits before the beta - I have a BIG document of things to look at. Mostly they're things I thought of while writing and things I noticed from playtesting myself; some are larger-scale changes from player feedback that I wanted to leave until I had the whole thing down so I could see the big picture.

The main thing that you and others who've played the demo will notice once it's done is that I'm reworking the Josiane storyline that starts in Chapter 5 - currently she's not sure whether she wants to get engaged to her girlfriend, but it's going to shift. She will be sure about getting engaged, but has some conflict with the Queen about their plans afterwards - which the MC will be able to influence.*

It's very much not over yet, but I wanted to recognise this moment and thank you so much for your support. Royal Affairs has been a long wild ride, through layoffs, job changes, a plethora of other personal things, a pandemic... and I really appreciate your help. Making Royal Affairs would have been far more stressful without it. Thank you!

*a special spoiler for those who want it:

and under some circumstances you will be able to be in a joint engagement ceremony with your own partner...

[small celebration #2](#)

[Nov 30, 2022](#)

As November comes to an end, I've submitted my full first draft of Royal Affairs to my editor! It's currently a total of 333000 words, and an average playthrough of 71000 words (longer than any of my other CoGs).

It's been intense. I've added about 10000 words in 4 days doing the following:

Small changes/fixes:

- tweaked wording of MC height choice
- added a little more context to initial Politics class
- added a playful option in Chapter 5 towards Asher
- added option to not support either teacher in Chapter 5 with associated choices and outcomes later in the chapter and Chapter 6
- reduced difficulty of getting a perfect inspection score in Chapter 5 so now it's challenging but possible
- Many many small fixes, continuity fixes, typos

Stats:

- put NPC stats back on the stat page and renamed/reworded some of them
- renamed Underhanded stat to Cunning (reflecting noticing agendas/subtlety/craftiness rather than purely deceptive/treacherous)
- balanced skill power levels so each skill is tested more evenly (in practice this meant adding a lot of options)
- standardised what the action skills are used for, mostly in early game sections
- reduced difficulty of getting top grades (previously 2% likelihood on RandomTest!)

General:

- reworked Josiane's storyline
- made Rosario's marriage to CremeMC mutually exclusive with CremeMC being a teacher
- Added some narrative description for breaking up with other characters if you've committed to someone else in late game

- News articles throughout to reflect public opinion and the state of the world
- Achievements
- Lots more romance and friendship time without stat tests

[End of Year Roundup: 2022](#)

[Dec 31, 2022](#)

Thank you so much for your support this year. Between various health things (positive and negative), big (positive) family milestones, and work changes, it's been quite the rollercoaster. It really means a lot and I so appreciate your patience when I've needed to dial things back or slow down to deal with burnout.

The biggest thing this year was [releasing Noblesse Oblige](#) in August! It was an extraordinarily fun thing to make in its own right and I learned a lot doing it - from controlling scope, to sorting out creative priorities in an intentional way, to finishing something over a shorter period of time, to plotting in a different way, to responding to more indepth tester feedback. It didn't build up quite the same buzz as Creme de la Creme did, but I was expecting that - and those who love it really do love it, which is wonderful. I adored writing the major characters and delving into their backstories and flaws. And publishing way steamier scenes than I had before!

Making Noblesse Oblige also built my confidence in making [Royal Affairs](#) which has been in progress since the start of the pandemic. Sadly, thanks to the pandemic and overload of work commitments, I suffered burnout several times during Royal Affairs and it felt so sprawling at times that it was hard to manage and felt overwhelming. Making and completing Noblesse Oblige helped me fall back in love with writing Royal Affairs (and writing in general) and meant that I was in a much better place to get the first draft done.

During most of 2022 I was also working on [King of the Castle](#) with Tributary Games, which was announced in October! It's a multiplayer narrative game about scheming to topple the monarchy in a silly fantasy-medieval world. It was an awesome project with a lovely team, and it's been fantastic seeing the reception from streamers. I'm so looking forward to its launch next year, and I found out today that it's been written up in Edge Magazine! My 18 year old self (and indeed my present day self) are full of shock and delight that something I worked on is in there!

Towards the end of the year, after my contract with Tributary ended, I started working with [Sassy Chap Games](#) on [something secret] which has been a great experience so far and I'm excited about what we're making, though I have no idea when I'll be able to talk about that more.

What I *can* talk about is that once I finished with Tributary, I had more time to spend on my **Choice of Games** work - I finished my Royal Affairs first draft and am currently deep in beta testing. It's always nerve-wracking to open a draft up to more eyes but as ever it's been tremendously valuable and I so appreciate the feedback. I've already been making some content additions and expansions based on what people have been saying, and I'm really looking forward to seeing how I can improve the game further over the next few weeks.

What I've also been quietly (or sometimes not so quietly) doing is thinking about future CoG projects. At the moment I'm focusing on ideas which are in the Creme de la Creme setting with a different protagonist, probably set at least a year after Royal Affairs. All the current ideas have adult protagonists, though I haven't set exact ages in stone yet. With the caveat that none of these are in any way set in stone, here are a few concepts I'm looking at developing further:

- You and your friend have set up a school in a small factory town in Jezhan focusing on giving working-class children more opportunities. As teachers, you have the chance to help the town's kids develop skills they might not have even known they had. It's quite a scrappy underdog situation, but you're getting by - just. But when problems strike and teachers start leaving, what will you do to protect the school and your town? Keywords: warmth, community, bringing people together, dealing with bigwig meddling, (in)justice, cupping hot chocolate in crisp weather
- You're the research assistant to a prestigious History professor at a fancy university in Teran, working with a team to reach an ancient artifact before a group from a rival university gets there first. Caught between ambitious teammates and backstabbing rivals, where will your loyalties lie? Can you claw your way to fame, fortune, and prestige in academia? Will you betray your colleagues, your country, or both? Keywords: backbiting, corruption, discovery, academia, adventure, espionage, coffee gulped down for all nighters or drunk suavely waiting for clandestine meetings
- You're the adult bodyguard for the ambitious young teenage child of a famous Teranese inventor, who's learning at an academy for children of famous artists, scientists, and military heroes. You must keep them out of trouble and keep an eye on their and their parent's competition. Will you encourage your charge to behave or let them cut loose? When they run into trouble thanks to their own mistakes, how far will you go to protect them? Keywords: hype, peacocking, celebrity culture, ambition, loyalty, job demands, martini glasses and the tiniest spicy snacks
- Your university roommate is outrageously rich, immensely bored, and is to be married by the end of the summer. You've gone with them and your other friends on a luxury cruise holiday, your last hurrah before they settle down. How will you spend your summer? Will you go off the rails or be a calming influence? Will drama in your friendship group spill over to your fellow passengers? When disaster strikes, will you step up or will this holiday be a horrible memory? Keywords: disastrousness, glamour, partying, perilous nosedives, friendship breakups, intense group drama, elaborate but horrible tasting cocktails

We'll see whether I end up fully developing one of these, or something entirely different, in 2023!

If 2022 hasn't been kind to you, throw it in the trash and I hope 2023 goes better. If 2022 was good, long may that continue! Best wishes and joy for 2023. I hope you have a lovely time in the coming months.

Released 3 days early for members.

[Royal Affairs Portrait Commission](#)

[Jan 15, 2023](#)

To celebrate Royal Affairs being out soon, I'm considering commissioning a portrait of one of the main characters. I don't know when it'll happen due to artist timings, but I wanted to let you know first so you can fill out the poll before I make it public. I'd love to hear who you'd like to see!

Edit: poll is now open to all!

Male Trevelyan

4%

Female Trevelyan

0%

Nonbinary Trevelyan

0%

Male Javi

11%

Female Javi

5%

Nonbinary Javi

4%

Male Hyacinthe

0%

Female Hyacinthe

9%

Nonbinary Hyacinthe

1%

Male Dominique

4%

Female Dominique

4%

Nonbinary Dominique

0%

Male Beaumont

1%

Female Beaumont

4%

Nonbinary Beaumont

3%

Male Asher

31%

Female Asher

16%

Nonbinary Asher

3%

Poll ended Feb 7, 2023 · 75 votes total

[PATREON HIATUS ANNOUNCEMENT](#)

[Jan 25, 2023](#)

If you are interested in subscribing: please be aware that £6+ subscribers can view old bonus content and Q&As here, but there is currently **NO EARLY ACCESS CONTENT HERE**.

Because [Royal Affairs](#) will be released soon, I have taken down the Patreon-exclusive early access demo today and have **paused all billing from February 2023 onwards** until I have a future demo to share with you.

I will keep patrons in the loop about what I'm up to - I hope it won't be too long before I have something interesting to tell you about! I'll let you know when another demo is going up and when billing will restart.

[Royal Affairs is out next week on March 30th!](#)

[Mar 23, 2023](#)

And to celebrate, here's a small story about one of the Royal Affairs side characters, Fabien. He's an old friend of the PC's mother, the queen of Westerlin. Here's a moment many years before Royal Affairs during which he, the PC's mother, and the PC's father graduate from university.

*

Inside, the Gessner graduation party's still going strong. Students and their companions and families spill into the lamplit summer evening, their laughter rising over the gardens. Full glass in hand, Fabien's deliberating between the ballroom and the garden when out of nowhere Estell grabs his hand and tugs him through the sparkling glass doors into the rosy sunset light.

"You can't be by yourself. You're a graduate now," she says, and he doesn't follow the path of logic there, but he falls happily into step with her.

Estell links arms with him, dragging him close against her. He spent a year away studying linguistics at Caltari in Jezhan, and when he returned, she insisted that they spend their final university year grabbing all the time together that they could. Before he left they'd been close, of course, spending nights talking and talking until their throats were sore and their eyes were sandy, but since his trip away there's been a greater intensity to her demand for him to be at her side.

Not that he minds. Those first lonely weeks in Jezhan, he'd wait eagerly for the morning post and stow her letters in a pocket for the day until he had time to savour them in the evening, imagining her scribbling in her beautiful Gessner suite. When his work grew more intense, when his days became

fuller, when the Westerlind Ambassador strolled by to ask for a favour, when he learned to make friends and pretend to stumble over Jezhani vocabulary so people would laugh kindly and offer to teach him - that was when he became more comfortable, and Estell loomed less in his mind. But even so, he missed her, and when, on his return, she flew at him to give him the biggest hug she'd ever given him, he found his eyes stung as he laughed.

Now, though: they make their way down to the lake. He steps carefully with his shiny-buckled shoes and she gathers her huge layered skirts, sliding on her slippers. The heavy pink and white water lilies have nearly closed, but the scent remains hanging in the air.

And there's Georges sitting at the water's edge, his tie loose and his jacket discarded, his shoes sitting beside him and his feet dangling in the water. He waves enthusiastically, his graduation certificate clutched in his hand. "Fabien! Come here! You did so well! How on earth did you do it?"

Fabien's own first-class Linguistics certificate is in the inner pocket of his jacket. It's true: thanks to all his extra credits he far outstripped both Estell, who wouldn't have scraped her second-class History degree if she weren't the crown princess, and Georges, who got a middling third in Politics. "I told you to pace yourself," he says. "You can't get a decent grade if you do all-nighters every time."

Georges laughs. "You're entirely right, and I hated the whole thing," he says. He tosses the certificate in the air. "No more reading, no more exams. No more horrible studying!"

Estell flops down beside him and pulls Fabien to sit on her other side. "You didn't hate the whole thing," she says, sliding an arm around Georges's waist. Her other arm drapes over Fabien's shoulders, holding him tight.

"Not the whole thing," Georges concedes. "The social life was very decent."

They all laugh as Estell slips off her shoes and swishes her feet in the water, splashing up to Georges's rolled-up trousers. For a second Fabien feels so fortunate that his breath catches. Because it wasn't always so simple. It was Fabien and Estell at first; he happened to be living in the corridor beneath hers. He knew she was a princess, of course, and he was curious to know her. His parents suggested that it would be most useful, but he didn't particularly care about that. More so, he was interested in her cautious gaze, her restraint, the way she assessed everyone she spoke to. Fabien had a perfectly solid spread of people approving of him - but with Estell, he knew her approval was worthwhile. And when she assessed him and thought him worthy, that was that. They quickly fell into the kind of friendship where you never run out of anything to say.

Georges happened later, while Fabien was away. The same day the Westerlind Ambassador asked him for a chat about what his professor was teaching, Estell wrote to say that she had a new study partner and disliked him intensely. "He's not nearly as intelligent as you," she said. "He's tall and he's on the rowing team. I have nothing to say to him." Fabien cheerfully wrote back to say that perhaps Georges had hidden depths and thought little more about it, but when Estell's next letter described how good Georges was with the horses, he felt the sting of jealousy. A month later, the Westerlind Ambassador asked him, casually, to attend a couple of student politics meetings and let her know who was there too,

and the day after that, Estell wrote about Georges walking her home after a dance and how "it felt so warm and right talking with him, Fabien, you wouldn't believe, it was just so natural", and Fabien was so furious that he waited a week to write back.

It wasn't - he reasoned - that he cared for Estell that way, but she was so far away, and he was desperately afraid that she'd decide that she'd rather spend time with Georges instead. He was also - he reasoned - concerned that this attractive rowing prodigy who liked horses was manipulating his friend so he could get closer to royalty. He went to the Westerlind Ambassador to ask what she knew about the Honorable Georges Oberle, and she smiled and said she'd look into it when she had a moment, and he was even more furious when it turned out that the Honorable Georges Oberle was a charming, if empty-headed, Politics student whose worst crime was accidentally kicking a rugby ball into his teammate's face when they were fourteen and giving them a black eye.

When he returned from Jezhan, he was ready to despise Georges, but Georges was so keen to hear all about Fabien and ask about his time away and even arrange lunches together without Estell so they could get to know each other that Fabien was quite disarmed. Within a month the three of them had become friends without Fabien even realising it.

Fabien's mind has wandered. He pulls it back. "We should go to Zaledo after this," he says. "I've never been."

"Would your parents let you?" Georges says, his hand on Estell's back; then, looking up at Fabien, "And the diplomatic office?"

Fabien shrugs, jostling Estell; she makes a protesting noise. "I'm sure we can arrange something. I want to see Merenil."

"Merenil's boring," Estell says, splashing her feet in the water again.

Fabien leans his head on her shoulder. "It was boring when you were ten years old. Imagine going out at night. Exploring properly."

"You want to sleep with Prince Mateo," Estell says, nudging him in the side, and he laughs, letting them think it's true. It's easy to let people fill in the gaps if you're good-humoured enough, so you don't have to bother making up a lie to get caught in: the Westerlind Ambassador showed him that.

"I'll come with you if Estell can't," Georges says. "I want to ride a Zaledoan thoroughbred. See the western desert. The stars are meant to be beautiful."

They all start making jokes about who wants to ride what. As usual, Georges is the first to get bashful and embarrassed. Estell's laughing so hard that she's doubling over and hitting Fabien's leg, Georges is steadying her so she doesn't fall in the water, and in that moment Fabien is so overfull with joy and so entirely in love with the pair of them that he could absolutely burst into tears.

[Royal Affairs is out!](#)

[Mar 30, 2023](#)

I can't quite believe I'm saying this, but [Royal Affairs is out!](#)

It's been such a journey, and I wanted to say how grateful I am for your support. I appreciate it so much, and when times were tough it was incredible to know that you were looking forward to my work. Being able to spend money on things to help me work better, like a chair and desk that meant my shoulders and back weren't getting destroyed by prawnlike posture, was such a massive help and meant I could keep working consistently to get Royal Affairs finished.

Thank you so much, and when I can share more about what I'm cooking up next, you will be the first to know.

[Upcoming Plans and New Project Announcement!](#)

[May 9, 2023](#)

Dear subscribers, thank you for your patience while the Patreon has been lying fallow. I'm going to be restarting payments and regular updates on here from June because... drumroll... I will be putting up a brand new early access demo on June 6th.

And while you wait, here is an early announcement for what that new demo is going to be!



Honor Bound: book 4 in the Crème de la Crème series

You're a promising officer in the Teranese military, a force which has not seen major engagement in decades but which holds vast influence. Thanks to an injury, you're no longer in the field. Thanks to the circumstances of that injury, you've been quietly reassigned.

Now you're to be the bodyguard to the child of a famous scientist who is attending a wilderness boarding school for the children of the richest and most powerful figures of Teran society.

According to your commanding officer, it's an easy assignment. The school sits close to your own hometown, so you'll be familiar with the area; you can recover your health and get your career back on track. What could go wrong?

Bond with those around you or impress with aloof competence. Be a kind, trusted confidante to your charge, or a strict, stern caretaker. Work hard for glowing reports from your charge, your military superiors, or the Headteacher to get your life back on track - or risk it all as you uncover secrets that put you and everyone around you in peril.

- Play as male, female, or non-binary; cis or trans; gay, straight, or bisexual; asexual and/or aromantic; allosexual and/or alloromantic; monogamous or polyamorous

- Befriend or romance a severe military officer, a bold, easygoing outdoors expert, a determined and overworked priest, an earnest but airheaded fellow bodyguard, or the anxious, serious single parent of your charge.
- Shape the school life of your teenage charge: encourage her to make friends or sabotage her rivals, let her slack off or push her to achieve.
- Protect the school, town, and your charge from natural disasters and criminals, or use chaos to further your agendas. Build a warm community, stand apart to focus on yourself, or push tensions higher in a place where gossip is rife.
- Negotiate a cushy promotion, or open other doors, through heroic or devious actions. Or become such a disaster that only bandits will give you the time of day.
- Unearth and thwart shadowy schemes, or enact them yourself for your own ends.

This tightly-knit desert boarding school is a sanctuary for artists and scientists of the future to flourish. But as danger closes in, how far will you go for your ambitions, your commanders, and your country?

Playable Prologue

As a sneak peek before the first chapter goes up here, I've made a short playable prologue which takes place several months before the start of the game. It won't be part of the demo or full game, but instead is a little introduction to your MC, their situation, and the setting.

[Here it is!](#) I'd love to hear what you think!

[Project Hotsprings Newsflash](#)

[May 12, 2023](#)

I'm going to try to get back into the swing of doing these twice a month, as it helps keep me accountable about what's going on and I do like to share and track things!

Since the start of April, I've been working on Chapter 2 of Honor Bound. It's a chunky one!

Current wordcount: 87948

Average playthrough wordcount: 23388

Behind the scenes:

This fortnight I've been preparing a lot of Patreon early access character intro posts! And starting to post about Honor Bound! I'm really looking forward to sharing more with you about the Honor Bound characters. I've also been working on [Platinum Package](#), a game mostly not by me but for which I'm

doing revisions and additional content. It's in beta testing at the moment and - fingers crossed - it's getting to a point where the bug reports are fewer and less complicated, which is great.

Sneak peek:

From Chapter 2:

You wake at dawn in the largest and most luxurious bed you've slept in for a good long while. The hospital beds were comfortable, of course, but they had that hospital smell, and were designed more for function than relaxation. The sheets are crisp and cool, and the mattress is just the right balance between firm and soft.

Gentle pink sunlight filters through the circular skylight above your bed, though not so bright that it gets in your eyes. Kass must have had @{{hb_rebel > 50} an expensive|a good} architect to create this place.

For a moment it's strange to wake in a bedroom so much larger than the one in the hospital. A glass door shielded with a pink curtain leads outside; beside it is a nook with a bookcase, couch, and armchair artfully arranged around a coffee table. An elegant bronze vase containing dried flowers sits on the table; the sunlight through the curtain lights it very prettily. Your trunk has been placed at the foot of your bed.

My favourite bit:

I've been writing some very early flirts with some of the main characters and getting a feel for how they respond and/or initiate these interactions. It's lovely to see characters coming to life in that early-romance stage and making sure they're all distinct from each other and feel real.

Released 7 days early for members.

[Character Intros: Fiore and Catarina](#)

[May 16, 2023](#)

As parent and child, Fiore and Catarina are strongly linked, and their relationship with each other is tracked as well as your relationship with them as individuals. In order to get very close with Fiore, you'll need to have a solid relationship with Catarina too; Fiore won't want to be close with someone who isn't kind to their daughter.

Fiore:

Full name: Honored Fiore Roldan

Age: 35

Gender: selectable between trans man (he/him), trans woman (she/her) and nonbinary (they/them)

Background: an eminent scientist awarded a title for their contributions to agricultural science, though they haven't done much of note since then. They grew up in the capital of Teran, New Belmir City, and still live there in a luxurious but empty house. They married young, are now widowed, and their only child, Catarina, is fourteen.

Personality: serious, anxious, intelligent, protective

MBTI: INFJ

Fiore and Catarina: Fiore truly wants nothing but the best for Catarina but is finding it difficult to let go and allow her to spread her wings. Concerned for her wellbeing, they don't want her ambitions to push her into burnout; they're also anxious for her safety in the light of their fame.

Appearance: mid-height and heavily built, with dark skin, black-brown eyes, and black tightly coiled hair.

Style: Fiore currently wears their hair in braids and carefully tied back. Their clothes are tastefully expensive and not entirely practical. They like the colour lilac.

At their best: intellectual, measured, caring

At their worst: fussy, indecisive, overcautious

You'll like Fiore if you like... someone quietly smart, who's eager to be liked, who (over)thinks before acting, for whom still waters run deep, who cares fiercely and is a devoted parent but who sometimes finds it hard to connect.

You'll like romancing Fiore if you like... a slow burn, shared support in the face of old regrets and new problems, forming a new family, reconciliation, facing up to mistakes, intense long-repressed emotions, being looked after, and someone who will take charge in a caring way if you're into that.

Catarina:

Full name: Catarina Roldan

Age: 14

Gender: cis girl (she/her)

Background: Catarina grew up in New Belmir City with her parents Fiore and Jaime. When she was 8, they divorced, with Fiore taking primary custody; when she was 10, Jaime was killed in a road accident.

Catarina has a keen mind and is unafraid to tell people when she thinks they're wrong. Her dearest goal is to go into scientific research related to the young field of computing.

Personality: ambitious, perfectionistic, contrary, enterprising

MBTI: ISTJ

Catarina and Fiore: it's been a tough few years for the two of them. Although they've had support from family and friends through the divorce and bereavement, they have found it difficult to connect and are often at odds. In particular, Catarina finds Fiore's anxiety patronising, and chafes at the idea that "it's the taking part that counts, not the winning". Why would she not want to win?

Appearance: plump, going to be taller than Fiore, with dark skin, dark brown eyes, and tightly coiled black hair.

Style: Catarina currently wears her hair in two puffs. When not wearing the golden Ozero school uniform, she likes to wear wide-legged trousers and turtleneck sweaters.

At her best: friendly, determined, eager

At her worst: stubborn, seeing things in black and white, inconsiderate

Released 7 days early for members.

[Character Intro: Varenn Korzha](#)

[May 23, 2023](#)

Full name: Captain Varenn Korzha

Age: 41

Gender: selectable between cis man (he/him), cis woman (she/her), and agender (they/them)

Background: Korzha grew up in the capital of Ravella, one of the largest of the Teranese Islands, and has not been in touch with their family there for many years. They remained in the military after completing their Teranese Service while also doing a part-time Biology degree at university. Since then they've moved between departments, doing some research and development and then joining the training corps to train up recruits. For the last few years they've been working at the school as a Science teacher.

Personality: quiet, austere, wry, dedicated

MBTI: ISTJ

Appearance: very tall and fit, with light brown skin, dark grey eyes, and short black straight hair.

Style: Korzha usually wears a tan-coloured field uniform. When off-duty, they tend to wear corduroy trousers, a shirt, and a formal jacket. Rarely will they be seen wearing anything particularly informal.

At their best: focused, unflappable, quick-thinking

At their worst: inflexible, unapproachable, untrusting

You'll like Korzha if you like... working together to make the world a better place, coming to a place of mutual trust, pushing an uptight person to let their hair down or being uptight together, no ego getting in the way of communication

You'll like romancing Korzha if you like... being a competent power couple, getting past emotional defences, strong and silent types, someone who isn't used to letting others in but will make an exception for you, who understands this may not be a good idea but realises how much both of you need it

[Honor Bound Newsflash: May](#)

[May 26, 2023](#)

This fortnight I finished my draft of Chapter 2 and started planning and coding Chapter 3. [Here is a song from my writing playlist that I've been listening to!](#)

Chapter 3 is turning into an absolute beast. I keep saying this, but each chapter I make is turning out larger than I expected... I'm nearly at the end of coding it and it's already nearly 10,000 words just with code and placeholders! I hope the next newsflash will include me being triumphant about the code being done.

Current wordcount: 105998

Fortnightly wordcount increase: 18050

Average playthrough wordcount: 29296

Behind the scenes:

I am wrapping up work on [Platinum Package](#) this week, which I've been doing additional content and edits for. I've spent a few months on this project so I'm pleased that it's getting towards the end!

Sneak peek:

From Chapter 2:

As is usual when the weather allows, the archway is left open to symbolize that all are welcome—and, on a practical level, to allow parents with rowdy babies to leave, or latecomers to slip in more easily. Sunlight sparkles down through the glass roof, while the breeze from the door and open windows stops things from feeling overheated. But the church is nearly full now.

The hubbub of voices begins to settle as Savarel rises to the pulpit, dressed in layered blue linen robes. `!{sav_their}` blue fern pendant, the symbol of the Church of Teran, glitters on `{sav_their}` chest.

My favourite bit:

Related to the above excerpt, I've been enjoying fleshing out the religion of Teran. Westerlin and Zaledo don't have widespread organised religion in the same way, and I really like showing the similarities of the Church of Teran and the Church of Jezhan as seen in Noblesse Oblige. It's helping me feel like the world is a connected one, which is a great feeling to have.

[Upcoming plans for June](#)

[May 30, 2023](#)

Just a quick heads up that the monthly Patreon payments will be restarting on June 1st. I'm going to be putting up the early access Honor Bound demo on June 6th for Sneak Preview subscribers, and continuing with the Newsflash posts and early access to the character intro posts for all subscribers. For those who are on the Cameo Star tier, I'll be restarting the month counter and will be in touch about your character once you've been paying for that tier for 4 months.

Thank you all so much as always for your support!

Released 14 days early for members.

[Character Intro: Matia](#)

[May 30, 2023](#)

Full name: Matia Frasada

Age: 44

Gender: selectable between trans man (he/him), trans woman (she/her), and genderqueer (they/them)

Background: a former Specialist in the Exploration Service, Matia spent most of their adulthood travelling to remote, dangerous parts of Teran scouting for resources and surveying unexplored regions. In the last ten years, though, they've returned to Elene's Prospect to care for their aging parents, help run their grocery store, and be a maintenance person for the school.

Personality: forthright, brash, easygoing, down-to-earth

MBTI: ESTP

Appearance: short, squarely-built, and muscular, with brown skin, dark eyes, and long, straight, black hair with thick streaks of grey.

Style: Matia currently wears their hair in a messy bun. They wear rough, practical clothes, usually in muted colours: often overalls over thick shirts, and prefer a long, battered coat and fingerless gloves in cold weather. They wear several rings, as well as many earrings in both ears (studs and hoops).

At their best: grounded, direct, smart

At their worst: rude, easily-bored, quick to anger

You'll like Matia if you like... someone no-nonsense, who's keen to get the job done, who's down-to-earth, who likes to have fun, who will crack jokes to break tension, who has roots in their community and is happy to extend that community to newcomers.

You'll like romancing Matia if you like... someone who's upfront about what they like and want, who will take charge if you're into that, who is straightforwardly affectionate, who will enjoy indulging you, who will cheer you up when times are tough.

[Honor Bound Early Access Update: Chapter 1](#)

[Jun 6, 2023](#)

HONOR BOUND PATREON UPDATE

It's here! [Play Chapter 1 now!](#)

Chapter 1 is around 30,000 words in total (longer than the first chapters of my other games!).

I'd love to hear what you think - any bugs or strange behaviour in the game of course, but also about how it feels to play and what you like and don't like in it! (I'm especially interested in the timing of when you specify how your character got injured - does it feel too soon, too late, or about right?) I'll keep an eye on any comments here and have also made an [anonymous feedback form](#) if you'd rather not share your name for any reason, or would like to comment but aren't sure what to say.

Thank you for playing! I'm really excited to share this today.

...and if you're interested to know a bit about what to expect from this chapter before jumping in, in this chapter you will be able to:

- get to know and customise your MC, their previous assignment, what went wrong, and how they were injured
- settle into a new part of the Creme de la Creme setting!
- meet your new boss and their child and try to make a good impression (or not)
- take a beautiful train journey to the school which will be your new home, dealing with complications along the way
- meet some of the major Honor Bound characters
- encounter a cat, and pet it if you like

[Q&A Question Post - June](#)

[Jun 8, 2023](#)

Hello everyone, I hope you're well! I'm so thrilled to have been able to put up the Honor Bound demo for you, and I hope you've enjoyed it. I've had some really helpful feedback from people already which is an amazing bonus!

Around this time last year, I stepped back from doing Q&As as it wasn't getting questions, but as the Patreon has restarted again and become more active, I thought I'd try it out again.

My plan is to answer your questions in an answer post by the end of the month.

If you have a question that you'd like answered please do! You can post in the comments here, or [on this anonymous form](#).

A couple of housekeeping notes:

I will be on the fence about answering questions about: sexual content (I probably won't go very detailed or specific if I do answer on this topic), what-if scenarios (if it's very detailed it's probably better-suited for fanfiction!), major spoilers about Honor Bound (simply because it's very new; I will consider answering spoilery questions though!).

I will definitely not answer questions about: pregnancy, self-harm/suicide, graphically violent or sexual content, non-consensual intimacy, teacher/student relationships, incest, or teenage/adult relationships.

Thank you! I look forward to hearing what you want to know!

[Honor Bound Newsflash: June 9](#)

[Jun 9, 2023](#)

This fortnight I finished coding Chapter 3 and started writing the prose! I also did edits on Chapters 1 and 2. While I was reading through Chapter 3, I deleted about 2000 words of code because it really was a bit too large without enough substance and some of it was repetitive. I was very happy to streamline things and it will help the pacing no end.

I'm just about halfway through writing Chapter 3 now and have done some dramatic confrontation scenes which I enjoyed a lot!

And I was so excited to put up the Chapter 1 demo on here! I was nervous but I'm so pleased to have done it, and it's been so helpful hearing people's thoughts on it.

[Here's a song from my playlist that I've been listening to while writing!](#)

Current wordcount: 116600

Fortnight's wordcount: 10598

Average playthrough wordcount: 32562 (longer than *Noblesse Oblige*! what!! I had to double check *Noblesse Oblige* to see!)

Behind the scenes:

I took a week's break due to family commitments and then had to miss a day (again due to said commitments) so this is more of a week update than a fortnight one. I have been learning not to try to split my time when my child is at home during the days which is sometimes challenging but means I don't hit burnout in the same way. Hooray for looking after mental health!

I read *Real Life* by Brandon Taylor this fortnight and I adored it. If you like melancholy campus fiction you may like this. It wasn't... a happy experience but it's beautifully written. I have *Filthy Animals* on order from the library and I can't wait!

I also read *The Enigma Game* by Elizabeth Wein. It's chronologically second in the *Code Name Verity* sequence, a series of thrillers about young people in World War 2. While not as heartbreaking as some of the others, it is... very heartbreaking in places. I loved it too.

Sneak peek:

From Chapter 3:

Amid chatter from the students and families, the bus draws up at the campsite. It's upstream of the school and sits by a wide creek, overlooked by a @{(hb_surv > hb_surv_mid) bristlecone pine} forest of huge, gnarled trees that must be centuries old. Beneath the trees the ground is rocky and uncomfortable-looking, ranging in color from light gray to umber. But beside the creek is a wide plateau of soft grass: better for outdoor sleeping.

While Savarel herds the group of students and their families off the bus, Matia and \${varenn} unload the camping supplies, piling the tents in one section and setting the more delicate cooking equipment in another. They work together with ease, without needing to say much to each other: this must be something they've done a lot since working here.

\${varenn} stands in front of the group. The bronze pips on \${var_their} collar gleam in the sunlight. Andie's relative, the young man, straightens up with his hands clasped behind his back, standing to attention.

My favourite bit:

This chapter involves a lot of showing how characters interact with each other, whether that's in a friendly way or bumping up against each other's rough edges. Because of Ozero having such a communal atmosphere, it was important to me to show how the MC involves themselves in the characters' dynamics and relates to the characters in a group setting. One of the characters has said that they think of another as a little sibling that needs to be pushed to do the right thing, which I enjoyed writing a lot!

Released 7 days early for members.

[Character Intro: Raffi](#)

[Jun 13, 2023](#)

Full name: Rafferty/Raffaella/Rafaele Claudian

Age: 25

Gender: selectable between cis man (he/him), cis woman (she/her), and nonbinary (they/them)

Background: originally from a coastal village on one of the smallest Teranese Islands, Raffi graduated from Teranese Service five years ago, and since then have had many different jobs: wagoneering, bartending, working as a bouncer, and a brief stint as a clothing model. Now, they've landed a job as a bodyguard with a private security company and have been assigned to Simone Morarre, a girl in Catarina's year at school.

Personality: ditzy, loyal, easily-led, adventurous

MBTI: ESFP

Appearance: tall and muscular, with light, tanned skin, nearly-shoulder-length dark brown straight hair, and hazel eyes. They have the look of someone who spends a lot of time outdoors and physical activity.

Style: For work, Raffi wears a bright blue uniform reminiscent of your field uniform but with extra golden flourishes. When out of uniform, they tend to wear athletic gear, or for formal occasions, outfits that show off their physique (whether that's shirts and trousers, or dresses), often in bright colours, though nothing very expensive.

At their best: considerate, fun-loving, guileless

At their worst: directionless, foolish, lacking principles

You'll like Raffi if you like... a thembo, who will look out for you and always have your back, who can work with you to keep others safe, who is easygoing, who is up for all kinds of adventure, who loves making connections with others, who has a goofy sense of humour, who you can call upon to get things done when you need them.

You'll like romancing Raffi if you like... someone uncomplicated, who won't play games with you, who is very physically competent even if not so competent at thinking things through, who will always be clear with you about their feelings, who is open-minded, who will bring you home to their family (or have a fling with you), who is keen to broaden their horizons.

[Small Honor Bound Demo Update](#)

[Jun 16, 2023](#)

I don't always post when I do early access edits but this one adds various variables and therefore may not play ball with your save slots so I wanted to give you a heads up!

Thank you for the feedback you've given so far, it's so so helpful! And hearing that you're enjoying it is so lovely!

[Here's the link to the current early access demo.](#)

Most of the edits I've made are corrections, under-the-hood stuff, or changes to variables that will come up in later chapters. The June 7th update corrected some typos, and the June 14th update fixed male Fiore's verb agreements and some more typos. This update fixes some typos and also the bug where the pre-game quiz would sometimes skip answering about Royal Affairs.

-

The main thing I've added is a small but important bit where you can specify whether you're taking hormones as a trans person, at the same point where you choose to say that you're trans. That gets tracked, and also records some things behind the scenes about the PC's anatomy. In the next chapter, you'll be able to specify surgeries you've had if any, which further tracks what the PC's body is like.

My aim with including some optional details about medical transition is so players who want to, can explicitly play as a character who has done this; what I very much don't want to do is suggest that this is the only way of being trans, that anyone is more trans than anyone else, etc. So there are other options to pick which are non-medical too and if you pick that you're a trans person, you're treated as such no matter what (eg Matia treats you in the same way, etc, no matter your experience).

I don't intend to go into a ton of detail about dysphoria in the game, but I wanted to include some physical specificity so that if and when MCs' anatomy becomes relevant, it can be reflected in the narrative.

(edited to add for code-divers: in my commented-out notes, there are some anatomical terms used for my reference, but those words won't be used in the narrative; I'm using different terms when descriptions come up in-game)

I'd be very happy to listen to feedback on this topic especially as those descriptive moments start to happen in-game.

-

Phew! Thanks for reading all that. As I say, I don't tend to do big posts about updates that aren't content-heavy - but this felt like one where I wanted to tell you a bit more about what I was doing and what my goals are.

Released 7 days early for members.

[Character Intro: Savarel](#)

[Jun 20, 2023](#)

Full name: Savarel Lopes

Age: 28

Gender: selectable between cis man (he/him), cis woman (she/her) and agender (they/them)

Background: having grown up in a recently-built town in the rainforest, Savarel remained in the military after completing Teranese Service, trained as a medic, and joined a disaster relief team as a medic and, later, as a priest as well. They were recently discharged with honours thanks to their aid work in the wake of tsunamis on the Teranese Islands. Now, they divide their time between being a priest in Elene's Prospect, assisting the town doctor, and being a nurse on hand for the school.

Personality: driven, warm, principled, hard-working

MBTI: ENFJ

Appearance: of medium height and narrowly built, with light brown skin and dark eyes, and wavy black hair that reaches to around their chin with a few grey hairs here and there.

Style: Savarel usually wears loose, comfortable, flowing clothes in undyed or lightly dyed colours. They always wear a pendant depicting a blue fern, the symbol of the Church of Teran, but no other

accessories or ornamentation.

At their best: earnest, ethical, meticulous

At their worst: workaholic, independent to the point of harm, self-righteous

You'll like Savarel if you like... mutual support, shared experiences of trauma and recovery, teaming up to work for something bigger than you, unpacking layers of obligation and survivor's guilt; someone who will do what they're certain is the right thing at cost to themselves or their reputation.

You'll like romancing Savarel if you like... looking after someone who finds it hard to look after themselves, being looked after at the same time, exploring vulnerability that isn't revealed to others, someone who will go all in on you, who wants to connect but struggles to feel they deserve it.

[Honor Bound Newsflash: June 23](#)

[Jun 23, 2023](#)

Well, it's been a couple of weeks of working hard on Chapter 3! I've now completed the first draft, done some playtesting (both of Chapter 3 and the earlier chapters), and have got a solid outline for Chapter 4. Next week I'm going to start coding Chapter 4. It was quite a challenge to get this next chapter clear in my head, because it's a big departure from the events and tone of the earlier ones, but it's feeling more concrete now.

Chapter 3 is very branchy, very character-focused, and has a lot of early-stage friendship and romance developments in it! There are also some very steamy scenes for those players who want to move fast with a couple of the romance interests. They're much more detailed than the ones in the other games (even than Noblesse Oblige, which was a significant step up in detail compared to my other ones) and I feel proud of them. I won't share it out of context to save my blushes, but I hope folks find them fun once they're in the demo.

I will say that if you're interested in writing kissing (or more), [Passion and Play by Michelle Clough](#) is absolutely fantastic. It's pricey, but you can also find [free talks](#) by the author [and from her and others](#) on this subject; at some point I will write up how the book's helped me understand my characters and keep them varied - not just in those scenes but across the board when thinking about how they flirt, what kinds of MC behaviour they respond most affectionately to, and so on.

[Here's a song from my playlist that I've been listening to while writing!](#)

Current wordcount: 136147

Fortnight's wordcount: 19547

Average playthrough wordcount: 34144 (these three chapters are now pretty much the equivalent of Noblesse Oblige in total size and playthrough! whew! This is what happens when I'm working on something almost-full-time and I'm feeling confident about what I'm doing!)

Behind the scenes:

I read *Filthy Animals* by Brandon Taylor this fortnight and it was great and gritty by turns. I now have *The Late Americans* ordered from the library and will be a little lost once I've consumed it.

Sneak peek:

From Chapter 3:

Amid chatter from the students and families, the bus draws up at the campsite. It's upstream of the school and sits by a wide creek, overlooked by a @{(hb_surv > hb_surv_mid) bristlecone pine} forest of huge, gnarled trees that must be centuries old. Beneath the trees the ground is rocky and uncomfortable-looking, ranging in color from light gray to umber. But beside the creek is a wide plateau of soft grass: better for outdoor sleeping.

While Savarel herds the group of students and their families off the bus, Matia and \${varenn} unload the camping supplies, piling the tents in one section and setting the more delicate cooking equipment in another. They work together with ease, without needing to say much to each other: this must be something they've done a lot since working here.

\${varenn} stands in front of the group. The bronze pips on \${var_their} collar gleam in the sunlight. Andie's relative, the young man, straightens up with his hands clasped behind his back, standing to attention.

My favourite bit:

Chapter 3 involves a lot of showing how characters interact with each other, whether that's in a friendly way or bumping up against each other's rough edges. Because of Ozero having such a communal atmosphere, it was important to me to show how the MC involves themselves in the characters' dynamics and relates to the characters in a group setting. One of the characters has said that they think of another as a little sibling that needs to be pushed to do the right thing, which I enjoyed writing a lot!

[Q&A reminder](#)

[Jun 26, 2023](#)

Just a quick reminder that I'm going to be posting answers to [this month's Q&A](#) by the end of this week. I have a few questions lined up but there are room for more so if you have anything burning you'd like to know, please let me know on the linked post or through the anonymous form.

See you tomorrow, when I'll be posting some more detailed Honor Bound lore!

Released 14 days early for members.

[More Honor Bound Setting Details](#)

[Jun 27, 2023](#)

Teran

Teran is a warm, resource- and technology-rich sprawling archipelago far to the west of Westerlin and Jezhan. A belt of independent islands sit between Teran and Zaledo, some of which have always been separate and some of which seceded over the centuries (the most recent was Dahaika, which seceded around 50 years ago).

While Teran used to be a monarchy, a military coup 300 years ago known as the Teranese Revolution resulted in transferral of leadership to a President and Parliament and dissolution of the aristocracy. Now, Teran is prosperous, with some technological advancements beyond those commonly seen in Westerlin, and sees itself as a meritocracy.

A mountain range bisects mainland Teran; on one side is bountiful rainforest and fertile plains, while on the other the rain shadow of the range makes the land more arid. The current Teranese President is President Faraci, who has been in office for eight years (a presidential term is five years long, and there's no limit on the number of terms a President can serve).

Religion

The Church of Teran is polytheistic and worships a large number of deities (eg. Elene is the deity of the sun, Alvir is the deity of protection, etc). Private shrines with offerings are usually set up in people's homes, as well as regular communal worship taking place in churches.

Though they worship the same gods, the Church of Teran is a different denomination and split from the Church of Jezhan as part of the Revolution. Tenets of the Church of Teran include valuing personal ambition and striving, wonder and curiosity, and harmonic unity.

The deities of the Church of Jezhan and Teran include:

- Elene, deity of the sun.
- Alvir, deity of protection.
- Veslua, deity of the ocean.
- Tecuzi, trickster deity of the night.
- Baresha, deity of the hunt.
- Hierat, deity of good fortune.
- Balan, deity of medicine and plague.
- Crinn, deity of water.
- Revek, shapeshifter deity.

The Teranese Military

Presidents and parliamentary ministers leave the military to take office, but because Teran holds military service with such respect, decorated officers are popular with voters. For centuries Teran has had mandatory two years' military service known as Teranese Service for almost everyone aged between ages 18-20 which involves basic training and assignment across the Teranese islands or the mainland.

The Dahaikan Secession was the last time a major military operation occurred, but Teran maintains a large, highly-trained army assigned to emergencies, policing, and disaster relief. Most people leave the military on an ordinary discharge, which opens few doors; if someone is particularly impressive they will be discharged respectably, gaining a better pension. Being dishonorably discharged means being blacklisted from many jobs, vastly reduces opportunities, and generally results in social censure.

Modern Aristocracy

After the coup, the noble classes were officially dissolved. However, the President recognises individuals commonly known as Elites with the title Honored (which also bestows a yearly stipend high enough to live a very comfortable upper-middle-class lifestyle) or the higher level title Esteemed (whose yearly stipend enables a luxurious upper-class lifestyle).

These titles are awarded for exceptional military, scientific, artistic, academic, philosophical, philanthropic, or otherwise highly notable endeavours.

The main Elite characters encountered so far are Fiore, who was awarded the Honored title several years ago, and Kass Quintal, who was awarded the Esteemed title around a decade and a half ago. Many of the students at Ozero are from Elite families - though they will not inherit any title, and instead will need to earn it through their own achievements.

Elene's Prospect and Ozero School



Deep in remote, vast grasslands, Elene's Prospect is a small, sleepy town. For some time it was struggling with young people moving away, either to the military or to other ambitions, and was waning in fortune.

Around ten years ago, some time after you moved away, Esteemed Kass Quintal, a renowned sculptor, set up Ozera School, an exclusive combined boarding school and ranch for promising wealthy students with interests in art and science. It greatly rejuvenated Elene's Prospect, which is a couple of hours' drive (or about a day's horseback ride) from the school.

With state-of-the-art science and art facilities, a community focus, and a dose of eccentricity - students pitch in on the farm and run local festivals for class credits - Ozera School is in-demand for children of the rich and famous. It's now coming up to the school's tenth anniversary, and you're going to be living there for the coming year.

[June Q&A Answer Post](#)

[Jun 30, 2023](#)

Welcome to June's Q&A post! Enjoy!

I was just wondering if you were going to write any future works highlighting Genneser. I was just rereading "noblesse oblige" and it came across as if Genesser university was the ideal place to go to in the... continent? Creme de la creme world... I'm sorry 😊

Gessner definitely thinks it's the ideal place to go, and so do a lot of Westerlind aristocrats! It's one of the oldest universities in the world and has a very prestigious history. I see it as similar to Oxford or Cambridge in our world - very rarefied and with a lot of name recognition, but not right for everyone or for every subject.

It has big expansive college buildings, garden quadrangles, student rooms in towers, and so on. There are probably whole suites available for some students, especially Music students who need space for practising their instruments. I could totally imagine writing something set there, though when I was thinking about Honor Bound, I knew I wanted a break from Westerlin.

I haven't quite put together a university idea yet. Although actually, one of my concepts in the collection that contained the Honor Bound concept involved the PC being involved with archaeology at a university in Zaledo (though not technically studying), and one involved the PC being a Jezhani student doing a project. One day maybe! One of the sticking points is that the subject the PC is studying needs to be both easy for players to grasp even if they haven't studied it themselves, while being fun to write about and sparking off lots of scenes. Writing essays and having discussions, which was what my undergrad experience mostly consisted of academically, isn't all that thrilling to play through.

That said, the dark academia of it all does really appeal and I'm very enthused by campus fiction in general (as is probably obvious!)

now I want to ask if your going to give the world/continent a name.

O, maybe one day... but not today. Kind of for the same reason why I haven't made a map - I haven't figured out all the pieces of the world yet and don't want to pin things down before I have a game in which I need them. Trivia: did you know Thedas, of Dragon Age, came from the placeholder title "The Dragon Age Setting"?!

**** (Spoilers below about Dominique in Royal Affairs!) ****

First, in your interactive fiction games I generally choose the romantic option that puts out and generally has the best lines. Surprisingly in Royal Affairs, this was Dominique, who won the put out section by quite a bit and then held on by being a generally good person. Anyway how does she fare in the Westerlin military? I kinda speculate that she might give the top brass some headaches since they can't be super mean to her since the Queen might take her calls. Anyway do they put her under Florin Kraemer and make her his problem? I think Dominique and Florin would be total buds.

Aww, I'm so glad you had a nice time with Dominique! I really enjoyed writing them - they and Beaumont were the major characters where I most commonly found their dialogue and actions "flowing" the most smoothly.

I don't know if even Westerlind brass would be silly enough to put Dominique with Florin, haha! I could see them being total liabilities!

I could see them being friendly with each other though. Dominique is generally so easygoing that they wouldn't necessarily care much when Florin is spiky... and I do think Florin is pretty spiky when they first join because they don't like being there and aren't there by choice. (Neither is Dominique really, but at least they have some hopefulness about it, whereas for Florin it's framed as rather a punishment.) I have so many thoughts about what direction Florin might go in!

I'm not sure that Dominique would be super happy at first because they find it hard to be in a routine-heavy environment - but at the same time they don't have to organise themselves and their time is parcelled out for them, so at least they don't have to think about that. They would enjoy the travelling aspect but would struggle with all the physical endurance and such - they're just not very disciplined or possessing much aptitude for physical challenges. But: unlike Florin they are good at making friends and keeping them, and I could see them forming close bonds with those around them even with all that.

If they were romancing the Royal Affairs PC, I don't see them staying in the military all that long but they would want to keep in touch with the friends they made. I could see the Queen potentially stepping in to get them out of trouble in some situations too!

Second should I be getting Colorado/ rural American West vibes from the Teran landscape. By this I mean a dry windy place with cobalt blue skies and snow clad mountains in the distance?

Rural American West yes! Colorado I'm not so familiar with, but I have been taking a lot of inspiration from landscapes in Southern California and Southwestern US including plains, mountains, lakes, bristlecone pine forests, and hot springs. Elsewhere it varies a lot across the landscape - there are a lot of temperate rainforests and some very cold inhospitable mountains, and on the islands it goes more towards subtropical and tropical climates - but the Elene's Prospect is inspired by some areas of Southern California, and the size/geography of the town itself is strongly inspired by Bishop, California.

What are some of the inspirations behind Honor Bound?

Teran originally comes from a short tabletop roleplaying campaign that my wife, the author of Heart of Battle and Asteroid Run, ran for me and a dear friend about ten years ago. (It was much more fantastical, with mysterious psychic powers, and Teran was currently at war with its neighbour Messimera, a country which now appears in the Heart of Battle universe. It also had a Queen rather than a President, among other things.) A few years later, she graciously allowed me to steal the whole setting for a novel I never finished, about an ex-soldier being assigned to an ambitious politician. In Crème de la Crème, I amused myself with an offhand reference to it - and then, when I started fleshing out the world further with Noblesse Oblige, I realised I wanted to go all in on it and include it in the world properly.

As for Honor Bound specifically, when I was starting to put concepts together around Christmas 2022, I knew I liked the idea of playing as a bodyguard. I went through a few different ideas - being an "Asher" type of younger character with a peer, being a political aide like in my unfinished novel, and then I semi-settled on being the bodyguard to a young Jezhani Potentate or other royal, in a boarding school in which the town was going through some grim worker rights troubles. But! As I started getting on with that, I found that the worker abuse storyline was too dark for my liking and it also didn't quite draw the PC in enough.

So then I diverted down a route where there was rebellion in Jezhan and the royal you're looking after wasn't happy and wanted to disown their family. Again I quite liked that, but it didn't totally click and I wasn't too keen on returning to royalty straight after Royal Affairs. (I do think Jezhan is moving towards something historically dramatic, though. Maybe next game.) So I wondered about being the bodyguard to the child of a luminary of some sort. I liked that idea. I could set it in Zaledo!

Meanwhile I had been thinking of a university-set game set in Teran which involved archaeology. Astute readers will find this concept familiar from a few paragraphs up. As I developed both ideas, neither were quite clicking with the cultural stuff I knew about both countries. When I swapped them round it felt just more right.

Then I took some time thinking about what kind of school I wanted it to be. I didn't really want it to be explicitly a military school, especially as I wanted a younger teenage student to be your charge. I wanted a solid age gap between you and your charge to steer clear of anything inappropriate, and to also make use of the particular brand of chaos produced by fourteen-year-olds, and to make it feel different to the older students in Creme and Royal Affairs.

I thought of quite a few different options before recalling that I really love the landscape of Southern California and also Deep Springs exists. That was when it fell into place for me: a rarefied and very fancy environment but very different to the Gallatin and Archambault schools, and a place where you could befriend or romance staff around you. (One day I will maybe make a game about being a teacher. I'm not sure I'm ready for that yet.)

I was very interested in making the school and its surroundings have a cosy, if maybe stifling for some, community and to be entwined in a way Gallatin town isn't. So when I was thinking of major characters, I wanted to have some of them be explicitly connected with the town itself, and - as will become apparent - there will be plot concerns around it too. I had a bunch of character ideas that had been floating around for a bit and figured out which ones I wanted and developed them into something more fleshed out.

After my first outline draft, my editor pointed me towards strengthening the story of the PC. In the first draft they had simply been assigned to this post after an injury and needed to do well to keep their job going: she nudged me towards the idea of being from the town originally, and of having a reputation problem to overcome around the circumstances of the injury. Without her input - and Fay's continued assistance with untangling me when I'm tying myself up in knots, being a great sounding board, and for

coming up with the setting in the first place and letting me steal and change it - it would be a very different beast indeed.

So the short answer is that it came from a lot of places and went through a lot of changes, big and small, before settling into what it is now!

[Small Chapter 1 update](#)

[Jul 2, 2023](#)

I've pushed another update for the early access demo which adds and changes a few variables. It's mostly things which will become relevant later, some of which are more plot-relevant and others are things like setting an initial hairstyle which can then be changed and for the change to be referenced (basically in a later bit that I'm writing, you can get a haircut and I wanted people to be able to go "wow, that's a big change!")

...this is a very serious game which takes its hairdressing commitments very seriously.

I also added a few more choices in which you can shift and boost your stats - some internal responses to the situation around your injury, and a couple of interactions when going outside with Raffi or Matia.

And finally I decided to make the player able to choose which gender-related surgeries they've had when they pick that option, rather than leaving it until the next chapter which I had done previously. I don't love having lots of customisation options in one go but I also didn't like the idea of someone playing a trans character, picking "I had surgery" and then being left in limbo for half a chapter wondering what exactly that means and whether/when they'll get to choose specifics. I think that section will go through quite a few iterations before it's settled, but it feels better now I think.

You can play [here](#).

I'm going to post Chapter 1 publicly on 4th July, and will keep updating this early access version in tandem with it so feel free to play either version or both (you technically get twice the number of save slots!).

I'll be continuing progress updates with previews as well as Q&A through July, and am planning to post Chapter 2 here on 1st August.

Happy Sunday, all!

Edit: oh! The silliest part of the update is that I changed the name of one of Kass's cats, as I realised that she shared the name with a major character from another IF (I, the Forgotten One) that came out

the other week! So, Darin is now known as Amato.

Here is her face claim:



[Honor Bound Newsflash: July #1](#)

[Jul 7, 2023](#)

I'm excited about Honor Bound Chapter 1 being out in the wild! I so appreciate the comments on it during June - it really helped me refine it before other people got their eyes on it - and I'm really looking forward to sharing Chapter 2 in August for Sneak Preview subscribers and above. If you have any other thoughts you'd like to share about Chapter 1 I would love to hear them - on this post, on [the form](#), on [my Tumblr](#) or on the [CoG forum thread](#), whatever suits you best!

It's always strange, though exciting, putting up a new thing - I was a bit nervous about whether people would enjoy it, plus it always feels a little odd going back and doing edits while also writing a new chapter - but I'm really pleased to have done it.

Along with doing some small fixes and tweaks to Chapter 1 and sifting through feedback, I've been coding and writing Chapter 4 this fortnight. I took some time to do difficulty/stat balancing in which I spent most of a couple of days looking at numbers, writing them down, tweaking things, looking at numbers again, wondering why they hadn't changed as much as I hoped, and tweaking them again.

It was as thrilling as it sounds. But I have balanced the stats! No longer is it inexplicably much harder to get high Survival!

[Here's a song from my playlist that I've been listening to while writing!](#) I added this one to the playlist because it makes me think of a particular character (and indeed some MCs). Guess who...? Granted it's not entirely fair, since this character hasn't displayed a lot of this song's vibes, but...

Current wordcount: 153033

Fortnight's wordcount: 16886

Average playthrough wordcount: 40911 (I literally gasped when I saw that number, oh my gosh)

Behind the scenes:

This week was weird because some (non CoG) work I was doing ended unexpectedly early. Honestly it's been a bit rough and was very sudden. I'm now doing my CoG work full time - which is what I love most, honestly. I'm very fortunate to have reached a point where I can do that, at least for the moment.

In other news, I read *Ten Steps to Nanette* by Hannah Gadsby which I liked in some ways but had mixed feelings about in others. Which is a bit of a wishy-washy comment but there we go.

Much less wishy-washy was reading *Terry Pratchett: A Life With Footnotes* by Rob Wilkins. Terry Pratchett books were a constant during my teenagerhood and they really helped me step out of a very formulaic fantasy reading rut that I'd fallen into. I honestly love his work and reading about his life in such a warm, unromanticised way was wonderful. I cried a whole bunch. Highly recommended.

Much less... overtly positive was that over the last few months, my sibling and I have been very slowly watching the *Twilight* films on second-hand DVDs got from the charity shop on a weekly basis - sometimes less often, and sometimes in chunks thanks to my baby nephew needing assistance. This fortnight we finished *Breaking Dawn: Part 2*. I hadn't seen any of the films since the first one at the cinema, and vaguely recalled some of the plot points but not in any great detail. It was... a journey. I am forever changed.

Sneak peek:

This is a bit spoilery for what's going to happen in Chapter 4 so if you want to go in totally fresh, look away now!

With clouds of darkened smoke billowing past the window of your compartment, the train has reached the outskirts of New Belmir City. The trees are green and full now, and the jacarandas lining the railway line are heavy with purple blossoms: the weather teeters on the brink of summer, about to tip over.

It's late afternoon, and your journey with Captain Korzha has taken up most of the day.

My favourite bit:

I am really enjoying describing characters' clothes! I loved doing it in Noblesse Oblige too, but in Creme and Royal Affairs it was usually describing them during fancy occasions and usually the characters and PC were in school uniform. So it's lovely to think much more about what people are wearing at different times.

Here's a little peek, since I'm embarrassed to have realised that I forgot to put a new one on the last post!

Savarel hoists a bag of snacks and water onto `{sav_their}` back. `!{sav_their}` outdoor gear is more hardwearing than their usual clothing, which tends towards loose, pale, and draping; today, `{sav_theyre}` wearing a long gray coat and chunky walking boots. Matia looks much the same as ever in `{mat_their}` dark blue overalls and coppery leather jacket. `!{mat_their}` golden hoops sparkle all the way up `{mat_their}` ears.

[Q&A Question Post - July](#)

[Jul 8, 2023](#)

Hello and welcome to the July question post! If you have a question that you'd like answered please do! You can post in the comments here, or [on this anonymous form](#).

A couple of housekeeping notes:

I will be on the fence about answering questions about: moderate sexual content (I probably won't go very detailed or specific if I do answer on this topic), what-if scenarios (if it's very detailed it's probably better-suited for fanfiction!), super major spoilers about Honor Bound (simply because it's very new; I will consider answering spoilery questions though!).

I will definitely not answer questions about: pregnancy, self-harm/suicide, graphically violent or sexual content, non-consensual intimacy, teacher/student relationships, incest, or teenage/adult relationships.

Thank you! I look forward to hearing what you want to know!

[July Newsflash #2](#)

[Jul 21, 2023](#)

Lots of Chapter 4 writing this fortnight, and today I finished the first draft of it. Hooray!

This was the most challenging chapter I've done so far in Honor Bound because there are some big differences in tone and environment, and there was a lot of concepts to introduce in a short space of time. But I'm pleased with what I've put together.

In non Honor Bound news, you can now make saves at the end of Creme de la Creme and Noblesse Oblige, and import them into Noblesse Oblige and Royal Affairs respectively! This was something I realised I wanted shortly before Royal Affairs came out, but I was nervous about implementing it at launch without having had time to test it. It is now possible! There are now also some small references to your Creme character in Noblesse Oblige - and to some of the things that can happen in Noblesse Oblige in Royal Affairs.

You can also answer questions about or randomise what happened in Noblesse Oblige at the start of Royal Affairs if you don't have a save file or don't want to import.

Current wordcount: 173340

Fortnight's wordcount: 20307

Average playthrough wordcount: 46169

Behind the scenes:

I read *Ducks* by Kate Beaton of *Hark! A Vagrant* fame - I am old enough to remember Livejournal being hyped about her work - and it was absolutely amazing. Content warnings for sexual harassment and assault, depression, and difficult workplace dynamics, so it won't be everyone's cup of tea. But I found it stark, beautiful in places, and a real thoughtful experience. I loved it.

In other graphic memoir news I read *Gender Queer: a Memoir* by Maia Kobabe. It was a really nice, and sweet in many places, exploration of the author's life so far as a gender queer person.

I also watched *The Beguiled* (2017) because I was promised a creepy boarding school and the suffering of a Colin Farrell character. I was not disappointed! I feel Nicole Kidman in this movie and Natalie Dormer in *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (2018) could be friends. Or horrible, horrible enemies. Or something more...?

BRB writing sinister blonde headteacher fanfic...

Sneak peek:

This is the introduction of a new character for Chapter 4:

Between a brief train trip and then another, longer one, on a rattling tramcar along the river, the journey across the city takes a couple of hours. By the time you reach the Aladea Club you're hungry, and your @{\hb_injury hip|lower back|head|knee|BUG} is aching again.

Still, the dark paneled walls and the floral wallpaper in moss green and dull gold, along with the low, warm lights help you feel less frazzled after the noise and bustle of the tramcar. You're welcomed by an impeccably dressed waiter who draws you into what feels like a snug nest of squashy leather armchairs, deep bookshelves, and murmured conversation.

Mandriotti is not in uniform, but is wearing a loose, bright blue shirt and a pendant showing the blue fern of the Church of Teran. He's dark-skinned, and slightly-built but square-jawed; his thinning hair is nearly all black, but you'd place him around Alva's age.

He's sitting at a mahogany table with partially-finished lunch plates and two companions: a couple of wealthy-looking women, one in a frilly gray dress and the other in a suit whose jacket is made of a fabric in shifting oil-slick colors. A birdcage containing a canary sits upon the table. One of the women occasionally feeds it more seeds from a dish in front of her.

My favourite bit:

It feels goofy but in Chapter 4 you can get a haircut, and it's a bit fiddly to code because of checking your previous hair length, checking how short you can get it based on that, and checking what's changed, but it was fun. I feel like I rarely see characters or MC's making a big appearance change, and I liked doing that here.

OK and there are a couple of other favourite bits which I'm not going to spoil too much, but a couple of characters have a pretty bad time in this chapter and have some emotional outbursts which the MC can interact with/have feelings about (or not!), and I enjoyed writing them a whole lot.

Next up:

Heads up that August is going to be *much* slower than previous months as it's the school holidays. If I can get Chapter 5 coded and a bit of it written that will be awesome. But for subscribers on the Sneak Preview tier or higher, I'll be putting up Chapter 2 on August 1st. Hooray!

PS - sneak preview subscribers, if you have any questions you'd like me to answer, the post and link to the question form is [over here](#). I haven't had any yet but if I don't get any submitted, I'll just roll it over into August - no worries!

PPS - I've made some minor tweaks and fixes to Chapter 1 in response to player feedback - mostly smoothing out some descriptions, adding in some other options, and fixing small errors. The [public demo](#) and [early access demo](#) both contain those updates.

PPPS - I have been considering moving the historical Dahaikan Secession to a more recent year; the PC wouldn't have been in the military during the conflict, but could have a stronger memory of it as a

child or teenager - rather than it always being something they didn't experience. I'm still pondering how I want to do that!

[Honor Bound Early Access Update: Chapter 2](#)

[Aug 1, 2023](#)

HONOR BOUND PATREON UPDATE

Dear subscribers, thank you so much for your support!

Here is the next Honor Bound update: [play Chapter 2 now!](#)

This new demo is around 90,000 words in total. I hope you enjoy!

As ever I'd love to hear what you think. I'm holding off on making another feedback questionnaire until I've put up more chapters, but please do post comments, send messages, or contact me on my [Tumblr](#) or on the [CoG forum](#) about what you think. Your feedback has been incredibly useful so far!

I'm always interested in what you think of the characters, who appeals to you best, whether your choices feel like they matter, whether anything feels dragging or rushed, and all that good stuff.

What you can expect from this chapter:

- settle in at Ozero, get a feel for how it works, help or cause havoc, and befriend or offend more of the teachers
- take part in some emotionally laden religious ceremonies, or not
- visit your old hometown and have feelings about it (or not. You are made of stone and do not need to feel anything)
- meet Catarina's cast of classmates and do some student-wrangling. Will you be too cool and aloof to throw yourself into classroom activities, or will you try to make friends?
- spend more time getting to know Matia, Raffi, Korzha, and Savarel, characters, maybe bond with them, maybe do some flirting??
- encounter an unwelcome? welcome? figure from your past

Good luck!

(PS: I haven't made changes to the timing of the Dahaikan Secession yet; I'm still mulling it over.)

[August Newsflash #1 and Special Announcement](#)

[Aug 4, 2023](#)

I've been doing lots of bits and pieces this fortnight. Chapter 5 is outlined and I've been doing work on coding it, I wrote a little character study for one of the Honor Bound characters, and I did some quick fixes on Elite Status: Platinum Concierge which came out last week. (Elite Status: Platinum Concierge by Emily Short used to be called Platinum Package, and over the last few months I did some work editing it and taking it through beta. It's lovely that it's now out in the world!)

It doesn't look terribly good on a wordcount tracker, but sometimes it's like that!

Current wordcount: 180312

Fortnight's wordcount: 6972

Average playthrough wordcount: ...something in the realm of 46000, but I don't have a version that passes RandomTest currently, so we will get an accurate number next fortnight

Behind the scenes:

I read *The Late Americans* by Brandon Taylor and enjoyed it quite a bit. It reminded me of *Filthy Animals*, though keeps the campus-novel feel of *Real Life* - more tightly-knit than the short stories in *Filthy Animals*, but still very spread between lots of characters. I didn't love every aspect of it - mostly the bits I wasn't so keen on were about how it hung together as a whole - but I really enjoyed the chapters on a smaller scale. Either way I always find his work interesting.

Special Announcement:

Last week I signed the contract to do an **extended epilogue** for Royal Affairs which will add a free extra chapter to the game. I'm really excited about it! I was happy with where Royal Affairs ended, but as I made inroads into Honor Bound, I realised that some of the elements left open kind of... needed to be closed when the Royal Affairs PC is so important and it affects the world so much.

I could have added a couple of questions to the intro questionnaire in Honor Bound - but no. I wanted to make it more fun and enjoyable.

So. In this extra chapter which will take place a year after Royal Affairs, your MC will be:

- following up on some of the life plans they made at the end of the game

- going on holiday and having an adventure with their siblings
- hearing or catching up with how their friends have been doing in the meantime

and, if applicable:

- planning a wedding and getting married (platonically or romantically) with Estell's blessing, or eloping... including options to elope with Beaumont/Trevelyan or Dominique/Javi

So far I've made an outline for this, and my goal is to have it released by the end of this year. I'll keep you updated on progress!

[Small Chapter 1-2 update](#)

[Aug 14, 2023](#)

[I've made a small update](#) - mostly typos, but also a couple of tweaks. You can now have had a negative relationship with the foster family in the orphan background, and I've reworked how asexuality is set. Previously I was intending to set grey ace or demisexuality later on via later conversations, but although I liked those conversations, I realised it didn't quite work because they weren't conversations you always have, so the game wasn't able to always be responsive to, say, demisexuality in the way I wanted. One of those things I'd have liked to realise first time around but it'll be helpful going forward.

I haven't done a fresh feedback survey for Chapter 2 and am not sure whether to do one now or to wait until the next chapter. I didn't want to give everyone questionnaire fatigue, haha! But... I also want to make sure I've got avenues to report things or give feedback that everyone's happy with (not everyone's on the forum, not everyone wants to be posting under their name, etc).

So I'm a bit stuck and not totally sure. If you like or don't like the idea of a feedback survey per chapter, please let me know!

[Honor Bound Chapter 2 Anonymous Feedback Survey](#)

[Aug 19, 2023](#)

By popular demand, (and also my own demand, haha) I've made [a fresh survey for Chapter 2!](#) It has some new questions to fit the new chapter - if you have a moment and have thoughts to share, I'd love to hear them. Hope you have been enjoying [the new chapter!](#)

I had a couple of comments about the asexuality choices; those options have been tweaked and expanded, and moved to a different scene so you're not pushed to state your asexuality while chatting

with Kass (which felt like a bit of a weird tangent even to be internally considering it). Once talks about romance start happening, there are further discussions about what MCs' asexuality and/or aromanticism mean to them, how you you want to navigate it in your relationship and so on!

[August Newsflash #2](#)

[Aug 19, 2023](#)

As you'll see from the numbers on this one, I haven't been doing much new writing, or much work at all, as I've been on holiday!

What I've done on the game itself is do an update including a few fixes/tweaks/clarifications as well as reframing the asexuality choices in Chapter 2. What I've done outside of Honor Bound is start another small character study; right now I've written ones for Savarel, Korzha, Raffi, Danelak, and the one I've just started is for Matia. I haven't quite figured out what I want to do for Fiore yet.

Current wordcount: 181374

Fortnight's wordcount: 1062

Average playthrough wordcount: 47515

Behind the scenes:

Is anyone playing Baldur's Gate 3 or Stray Gods?? They both came out while I'm away and not able to play them... but I have some mighty hankering. Liam, the co-founder of Summerfall Studios, is a dear friend from my teenage years, I had the pleasure of giving feedback on a very early version of the game, and I cannot even say how proud I am of the whole team for making such a wildly inventive and gorgeous game. But I cannot play it yet!! As for BG3, BG2 was what introduced me to interactive writing via modding during my teenage years (I was an extremely cool teenager), there are a bunch of people who worked on it who I massively admire, and I am so excited to return to a world that's brought me a ton of joy. And I cannot play it yet!!

I have, however, been reading some incredible books. *Wrath Goddess Sing* by Maya Deane is an *Iliad* story in which Achilles is a trans woman and the gods are grotesquely alien. I absolutely loved it. *Summer Sons* by Lee Mandelo is a Southern gothic about a student literally haunted by his best friend and trying to solve the circumstances of his death while steeped in generational and personal trauma. I literally had to keep reading! Both of these were fantastic books about queer people who were absolute hot messes.

In other news there is a pig field near where I am staying. I snuck into said field to pet the pigs but although they were keen to be petted, they also started menacing me trying to chew my feet and herd me into the hedge. I escaped with my shoes intact but as my child said, "the pigs know you now, they either want you to stroke them or they want payback". Here they are, now safely on the other side of the fence.



[September Newsflash #1](#)

[Sep 1, 2023](#)

This should be the last of the "I have been very busy with family things and have not been working much" newsflashes for a while. Although being on holiday was truly lovely, all-day childcare for six weeks is a lot and I'm eager to get back to full-time writing.

[Here is a song from the Honor Bound playlist](#) to enjoy!

I've finished the Matia character study, and have been making slow inroads into a couple of other things (one of them is a very early-stages secret IF collaboration with my wife and another is a non-CoG thing) as well as doing a more detailed outline for the Royal Affairs extra epilogue. I also sent off lots of ideas for marketing descriptions to CoG as well as a... five-page document about cover art ideas and references. I may have gone a bit overboard.

On impulse I have started an IF advice blog on Tumblr, [IF Seal](#). I love advice columns and enjoyed if-confessions and Story Hospital when they were open, and I often get asks about writing and narrative design sooo here it is. If you don't have a Tumblr and want to submit something to it, drop me a message or a comment here and I can answer it both here and over there.

And... drumroll... I have finished coding Honor Bound Chapter 5!

Current wordcount: 187051

Fortnight's wordcount: 5677

Average playthrough wordcount: 49109

Behind the scenes:

I finally got Baldur's Gate 3! I am working my way through it very very slowly! I'm enjoying it a lot! I have lots of exclamation marks about it!

In other news I really enjoyed [Turncoat Chronicle](#) by Hazel Gold from Hosted Games. It's about palace intrigue and usurping your father the king. I enjoyed that it had such an emphasis on social manoeuvring and marriage plots over literal backstabbing, and the setting is beautiful. I'd love to see more from the author and the setting.

[The Dragon and the Djinn](#) by Athar Fikry from Choice of Games was really amazing too - an Arabian Nights story that's fresh, queer, and fun! I had a great time romping around freeing djinn and causing chaos. [salvage](#) by Athar Fikry is a short, heartbreaking game about grief which I loved too.

Sneak peek:

The peeks at Chapter 5 are just placeholder text at the moment, so here is a little bit from Chapter 4:

You step into a vast, parquet-floored ballroom with a wide skylight of stained glass in its ceiling; sunlight streams through, filtering gentle rainbows onto the scene. Musicians play in the gallery above, while a vast spread of food, plates, and punch bowls has been laid out.

Taking a moment to acclimate to the warmth, as well as the noise of music and chatter, you gather yourself. Doors leading out to the gardens have been flung open, and a group of Elites are lounging and smoking on the immaculate lawn while others seem to be performing an archery contest. @see_lav You recognize the woman holding forth: you saw her in the carriage on the way here. There's a woman holding forth intensely, though you're not sure if her companions are interested. From an inner door emerges loud laughter and the clatter of dice: some impromptu games have started. In here, a group of officers are bearing down on a group of foreigners—Westerlind, you think.

My favourite bit:

I am really pleased with how I'm embedding conversations about asexuality and aromanticism into conversations with the ROs. Credit where it's due, a ton of this is thanks to conversations I've had with my wife (she is doing it really well with her current unannounced project) about it. It isn't something I've felt totally happy with in my previous games so I wanted to go into more depth. So I have characters chatting about where they sit regarding emotional and physical connections, and the MC can express how they feel about it all too in more detail - basically it has a lot more breathing room and nuance. It'll go through plenty of iteration, but it feels like it's on a more solid foundation.

[September Newsflash #2](#)

[Sep 15, 2023](#)

I've had a much bigger proportion of my time spent on writing this fortnight, and I'm honestly loving getting back into things! I don't expect to write as much as this every fortnight, but it has been really wonderful to take a good run at it.

Here is a [song from my Honor Bound playlist](#) to listen to while you read.

I've been working hard on Chapter 5 of Honor Bound, as well as doing some polish and fixes on Chapters 1-2 thanks to player feedback. I'm delighted to have Chapter 2 out for everyone - by the way, if you're subscribed at £6 or above, you can play on both versions and have double the save slots; I keep them both up to date even when they both have the same chapters up.

Chapter 5 is not the longest chapter of the game yet. It will be by the end of next week. There has been plotiness and characterfulness and connection and arguments and tension and kisses and very delicious food descriptions.

Current wordcount: 218531

Fortnight's wordcount: 31480

Average playthrough wordcount: 54934 (more than Blood Money!!!)

Behind the scenes:

I have been reading All the White Spaces by Ally Wilkes. I am a big fan of Bad Things Happening In The Snow - see also my deep love of David Kagjanich and Soo Hugh's The Terror - so this is going well.

And I went to see Barbie! I enjoyed it a ton, particularly the music and a moment that had me absolutely cackling in the cinema.

I put up a couple of old IFs on my itch.io page on a whim as I realised I'd left them off by mistake - [Heretic Dreams](#) which is about someone who ate a god and leads a mining party into disaster, and [Teeth and Ice](#) which is about a selkie reclaiming their skin. People are enjoying them, which is really lovely! I first published them in 2016, and Heretic Dreams was the first ever new IF that I was paid for, so I'm really delighted that they're getting a new lease of life. You can play a bunch more of my short IF for free [over here](#) if you haven't before.

I also took part in the Bring Out Your Ghosts game jam and laid one of my long-dormant IFs to rest: [Valentine's](#). It's an unfinished sequel to my completed games [Aquarium](#) and [Thanksgiving](#). Aquarium was the first IF I ever finished!

For obvious reasons I've been thinking a lot about my past work, and archiving, and possibly revisiting some of my old IF. There is another sequel to Aquarium and Thanksgiving that exists, with the protagonist at age 29, which I'm strongly considering putting up as it's at an almost-done state. I playtested it a couple of times and I think it's pretty solid, though I hadn't looked at it in many years.

Sneak peek:

Here is a little something from Chapter 5. Apologies for the lack of indents; Patreon is deceptive in making it look like it'll display OK when pasted in, but then irons it all out:

```
{varenn} meets your gaze, then lowers {var_theirs} to the desk once more. You're intensely aware of how long {var_their} dark eyelashes are. {var_they} @ {var_pl stand|stands}, and you stand at the same time, and you are suddenly
```

```
*if ((hb_pc_height >= 1) and (hb_pc_height <= 3))
```

```
  facing {var_their} chest, and when you look up
```

```
  *else
```

```
    facing {var_them}, and
```

```
    {var_they} {var_dont} seem to know where to look.
```

```
  *fake_choice
```

```
    #I hold {var_their} gaze directly.
```

```
    #My throat catches, but I can't look away.
```

```
    #I start to say something.
```

```
    #I look away.
```

```
  *if (not(var_romance))
```

```
    #I can't help how I feel about {var_them}, even if I don't know what will happen. [Start Korzha Romance]
```

```
  *gosub_scene worldstate var_romance
```

```
  *gosub_place_desk
```


#I step back. I don't want whatever is going on here anymore.

My favourite bit:

I have been enjoying going into a bit more detail about how the PC's injury recovery is going. Now that the characters know the PC better, they're noticing more when the PC is or isn't well, and I really like being responsive to it like that.

Happy September, everyone! I hope you have a lovely weekend.

[Bonus Supplement Tier is Back!](#)

[Sep 16, 2023](#)

We are back with a (gentle, polite) vengeance!

After a lot of soul-searching and making sure I have enough time and energy to do it, I'm restarting bonus stories on here. At £11+ you can gain access to the [archive of four interactive stories about Asher, Javi, Hartmann, and Auguste](#), and to a new (sad but heartwarming!) story put up today from the perspective of Varenn Korzha from Honor Bound, set seven years before the game begins. [Passwords are listed at the link](#).

Between July 2022 and September 2023, the interactive story archive was available for subscribers at £6+ and I would like you to be able to keep access to it if you'd like to play those stories again. If you were a Sneak Preview/£6 subscriber or above between July 2022 and September 2023, please send me a message and I will give you the new password which will give you access to them (though not to the stories from September 2023 onwards).

I always really enjoy writing bonus scenes and stories! I will continue to post something on the third Wednesday of the month - so the next one will go up on October 18th. In the meantime, I will be posting the next progress update on September 29th and Chapter 3 of Honor Bound on October 3rd.

As always, thank you so much for all your support!

[September Side Story: Varenn Korzha, 1754](#)

[Sep 16, 2023](#)

[In this bonus short story, Lieutenant Korzha receives an unwanted letter.](#)

Content notes: references to death and to abusive families (non-graphic)

Password: amatothecat

[Bonus Supplement Master Post with the rest of the bonus stories is here.](#)

[September Newsflash #3](#)

[Sep 29, 2023](#)

Well, I have had some stumbling blocks this fortnight, mostly in the shape of my child getting sick, then me getting sick - I had an ear infection which laid me out up for a week. But I'm feeling better now, and am back in the zone.

[Here is a song from my Honor Bound playlist](#) and [one from my Royal Affairs playlist](#) to listen to while you read.

I finished drafting Honor Bound Chapter 5, which I'm so pleased about! It has some kisses, and plot, and people being stressed out. I also went back and added some things to Chapter 3, which £6+ subscribers will get to enjoy on October 3rd, and general bits and pieces here and there in the earlier chapters too, mostly more flavour about responsiveness to choices about the PC's backstory. And adding in some more mentions of cats.

I have also been planning and coding the Royal Affairs expanded epilogue, and have *almost* finished coding it today. There's a tricky bug to do with whether you've got a romantic partner or a friend with you at a particular moment, but I'll sort that either over the weekend or next week. It is quite an experience going back to my final chapter, which is 72,000 words of me writing while without worrying too much about referring back to it later, and sorting through it to check all the ways in which the PC and NPCs can end up in the same or different places, all the variations of what the PC is doing in a year's time, and so on. But it is a blast returning to the characters, even in code form, because I get to think about how they respond to different situations again and what they've been up to.

If you remember [from August](#), there is a wedding involved in this epilogue! Today, I have been figuring out what outfits the PC can wear. My hours whiled away on the weddingdress subreddit can finally become useful!

Honor Bound current wordcount: 228878

Honor Bound fortnight's wordcount: 10347

Honor Bound average playthrough wordcount: 55745

Royal Affairs expanded epilogue: 8988 words

Behind the scenes:

I playtested Bali B&B by Felicity Banks, which is set to go into the [IF Comp](#) on October 1st. Do check out the comp when it goes live - there's always a wide variety of free games to play and you have a decent chance of playing something by someone who will make it big later!

I have been enjoying Baldur's Gate 3 a huge amount. You may not know that when we were teenagers, my now-wife and I made modded NPCs for Baldur's Gate 2 which were our very first interactive narratives, so the series means a huge amount to me. [More about all that here](#) and [here](#). I was a bit nervous at first that I wouldn't love BG3 - but I do. Hooray!

I reread Slow River by Nicola Griffith, a gritty lesbian scifi thriller about Lore, the child of family of ultra-wealthy science magnates, and her kidnapping. It's a hard read in many places but is absolutely excellent.

Sneak peek:

Here is a bit from Chapter 5 in which you can visit Savarel's house. A long one this fortnight!

The Elene's Prospect vicarage is a tall, old building close to the church and rather overshadowed by it; the garden is plain compared to the shrubs and flowers around the church, and the wrought-iron vines curling around the gate serve to make it look a little neglected. When you head inside, the hallway is low and narrow. Although it opens out to a decently-sized living room, the room is stuffed with bookshelves and sideboards which are laden both with books and ornaments: porcelain figurines, decorative plates, a ship in a bottle. The walls are covered with photographs and illustrations, and one large painting on one wall of a herd of horses running across a field.

@{(hb_religion_belief = 1) In the bay window is a splendidly ornate shrine|The bay window is dominated by a huge shrine} to Elene, gilded in bright gold. Savarel lights the candle and murmurs something briefly, then sits you at a small round table and heads upstairs to change clothes. After a few minutes \${sav_they} @{{sav_pl return|returns}} in \${sav_their} ordinary clothes and @{{sav_pl busy|busies}} \${sav_themself} in the kitchen to make lunch. It's adjoined to the living room; its floor is patterned with floral tiles of varying shades of brown.

[...]

"So," `#{sav_they} #{sav_say}`, "you can probably see why I wanted to have this house used by someone. I'm not here much—it's not really home."

`*fake_choice`

`#"Don't you feel settled here?"`

A wooden hippopotamus sits on the shelf beside Saverel with a ferocious expression. Savarel gives it a pointed look. "I don't know. I forget how long it's been now. It was last summer that I came here, so—I suppose I should. Everyone still sees me as new, and I guess I feel like that too."

`#"Do you miss what you were doing before?"`

Savarel's fork clinks against `#{sav_their}` plate. "No," `#{sav_they} #{sav_say}` quickly, then `@{sav_pl wince|winces}` and

`*if hb_background = 2`

`#{sav_say}`, "You know what it's like. I really loved helping people, working in a team—we worked very well together—but—no, I don't miss it."

`*else`

`#{sav_say}` more lightly, "I was in a brilliant team. I do miss seeing them. And helping people, obviously."

`#"It doesn't look much like you."`

A wooden hippopotamus sits on the shelf beside Saverel with a ferocious expression. Savarel gives it a pointed look. "I don't know where to start, clearing it out. The Church says I have freedom to do what I want with it. But when I spoke to Tedesco they said it would be a shame to lose all this history. So I left it."

`#"Do you really think the bandits @{(ch5_bandit_outcome = 1) will|would} get much out of this place?"`

A wooden hippopotamus sits on the shelf beside Saverel with a ferocious expression. Savarel gives it a pointed look. "More than I do," `#{sav_they} #{sav_say}`. "I don't want anyone to think I'm ungrateful. I'm so glad to have this posting. But I swap between here and Ozera so much, and I don't know where to start clearing it out. When I spoke to Tedesco about it, they said it would be a shame to lose all this history. So I left it."

My favourite bit:

I won't post the exact text because I think it'll be more fun to play in game, but I wrote a bit about talking to Denario about being trans (if you want to), and I really enjoyed showing him being excited for the PC even if you've had a tense time. I love showing trans characters sharing solidarity and I also love showing cis characters not only not being weird about it, but being pleased for the trans people in their life!

On Sunday I'm going to make a public post about what you can expect on here during October. Happy September, everyone! I hope you have a lovely weekend.

[October Bonus Supplement Vote](#)

[Oct 1, 2023](#)

Good morning, Bonus Supplement folks!

Here is your chance to vote for this month's Bonus Supplement short story taken from the past of a character from the Creme de la Creme universe. The story of your choice will go up on the 18th!

Danelak, 1755 (the summer before Noblesse Oblige)

Fiore, 1752 (nine years before Honor Bound; married to Jaime)

Matia, 1748 (thirteen years before Honor Bound; pre-transition)

Raffi, 1759 (two years before Honor Bound)

Savarel, 1760 (one year before Honor Bound)

5 votes total

[October Q&A Post](#)

[Oct 1, 2023](#)

Good morning all!

[Here's your link](#) to the anonymous exclusive Q&A form! I will answer about spoilers, NSFW stuff if it's not super graphic, lore, character stuff, and mostly anything you want to know.

I'll answer comments too, and will answer questions asked through the form in this post so keep an eye out!

****What kind of royal hierarchy for royalty is there: like Medieval, European, Arabic, South East Asian, religiously based?**

****For Westerlin and Zaledo, it's based on the family, with the eldest child traditionally inheriting the throne. There will have been succession struggles between families for the throne in earlier years, but that would be in the distant past. For Jezhan, it is again hereditary (and again there will have been disputes and wars over it many centuries ago) but the monarch's right to be in charge is seen to be awarded by the gods. While not everyone believes this absolutely literally, the monarch is also the head of the Church of Jezhan; this was part of why the Teranese Revolution took place.**

Will you explore historical periods of the Creme de la Creme world in future projects, as in having the story set in the past?

It's something I've considered! I haven't got any concrete plans at the moment but I've occasionally considered ideas for a game set the generation before Creme de la Creme, possibly involving some of the Creme or Archambault teachers, or the Creme/Archambault parents, at younger ages. There's also doing something set in the more distant past which I like the idea of too. It's just a case of coming up with the right idea... at the moment I have a lot of concepts that I could do so there's a lot to choose from!

In Creme De La Creme, our MC's family is described as having fallen on some harder times, and that they live in the Hass District. How bad is their situation, exactly? Obviously there's a fair bit of pressure on MC to "do well for themselves and family", but are they still considered upper class before CDLC?

They're upper-class, but not titled aristocrats, so there was a significant gap between them and the families of the Archambault students. They had a very large, nice house in Fenburg similar to the one [Blaise used to live in](#), and would have been landlords of property elsewhere too. Where the PC grew up is a little nebulous because it can vary by player choice, but they likely had a small country estate as well (though not as big as the ones other wealthier characters have, such as the Hartmanns). I see them as similar to the Dashwood family in Sense and Sensibility, though they aren't in as tough a spot as the S&S protagonists. When they sink in their fortunes, they still have enough cash on hand for a decently sized apartment, albeit in a less nice part of town, a servant (though only one!!), and the cost of sending their child to Gallatin, so they're by no means destitute and they're well-to-do compared to Freddie's family, and very much richer than Karson's and the Noblesse Oblige PC's family. Part of the "you need to do well" is to marry well and get more money, but the huge other element is recovering the reputation so they can move in the social circles they used to once more.

Also, how rich is the average Westerlin citizen? What jobs do most of the populace do?

This is a bit of a vague one for me. Very broadly, Westerlin's class structure is similar to that in 1920s/1930s England, but there was no World War I to have made sweeping societal changes. The social circles in *Creme de la Creme* and *Royal Affairs* are very small compared to the wider population.

There has been something analogous to the Industrial Revolution some decades before *Creme de la Creme* so there are factories, steam trains, buses and cars, and associated workers. Farming has shifted towards more machine use so some agricultural jobs have changed and been lost, and there have been moves from rural to metropolitan. There are a lot of retail and service workers, white-collar workers, and teachers in non-fee-paying schools as well as the lavish private schools. Wealth-wise, there are very sharp divides in Westerlin; although there is a governmental safety-net for people in need, it's not huge or particularly well-run and there is a cultural sense that people should pull themselves up by their bootstraps/have a stiff upper lip, etc.

This bears some contrasts with Zaledo, which has much more of a social safety net and class divisions are less marked (though still existent), Jezhan, which is slowly moving away from aristocrats holding the majority of power thanks to an explosion of wealth in the middle classes, and there is greater mismatching of wealth and class lines, and Teran, which has a very robust government-run safety net and considers itself highly meritocratic... except when it isn't.

What made you decide on setting your games in a less technologically advanced world, as opposed to something more "modern day technology"? I do love this choice though! It just seems to fit the narrative well.

For *Blood Money* I considered setting it in a cyberpunk-ish world at first, but decided I wanted to go for something more fantasy-flavoured with less tech development. It helped that i'd been watching *The Borgias* series at the time! For the *Creme de la Creme* series, the inspiration I drew from initially was *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, which is set in the 1930s, and *Malory Towers*, which was published in the 1940s. I wanted a setting that felt recognisable with that sort of technology/atmosphere but which deviates in a bunch of ways such as being friendlier to queer people than the real world. I also enjoy the feeling of being "in-between" technological revolutions, with things like horse-drawn cabs being very common along with trams and trains. In further years, the horses and carriages will likely become less common.

Have you ever thought about writing non interactive fiction (like a book or short stories for example) professionally?

I used to write novels with the eventual aim of sending them to agents, but I never quite got them in good enough shape to want to publish them - I needed more writing experience. Making short games, and then long ones, really helped me better understand structure in particular. In general I prefer writing games at the moment, and most of my creative ideas are game-related as I'm quite deeply in that mindset... but there are, I admit, a couple of game ideas I had when I was coming up with *Honor Bound*

where I went "actually, that would work better as a novel". It's a very different skillset, though, and it feels a little intimidating!

When you first start writing, do you usually program/write the variables like pronouns as you go? Or do you write it one way, then go back and add in the pronoun variable (I noticed in your sneak peeks that you have the pronouns typed as a choicescript variable or something).

I include all the variables as I write - it's much easier that way. A lot of the pronoun typos that folks kindly spot are because of me inadvertently writing "they" rather than `{mat_they}` or "says" rather than `@{javi_singular says|say}` and it would be a lot of effort - and there would be more mistakes if I went back to put all the variables in. [This is similar code](#) to the way I did it in Creme de la Creme, Noblesse Oblige, and Royal Affairs. The details of it are different and more streamlined for Honor Bound - I plan to put up another version for people to use if they want, because I find it better.

[Upcoming plans: October](#)

[Oct 1, 2023](#)

Good afternoon, all! First, if you're looking for more games to play, I made a digest of all the ChoiceScript updates and releases from September that I could find. [Check it out!](#)

Now for what's happening in October...

October 1st: [Poll is live](#) to vote on the bonus story for the month (£11+)

October 1st: [October Q&A post](#) is live (£6+)

October 3rd: [Chapter 3 of Honor Bound](#) (£6+)

October 13th: [Newsflash update](#) with details and excerpts from what I'm working on (all subscribers)

October 18th: [October's bonus story](#) (£11+)

October 27th: [Newsflash update](#) with details and excerpts from what I'm working on (all subscribers)

[Honor Bound Early Access: Chapter 3](#)

[Oct 3, 2023](#)

HONOR BOUND PATREON UPDATE

Dear subscribers, I'm so pleased to share Chapter 3 today - [play it here!](#)

I'd love to [hear what you think](#) if you have a minute - I'm always interested to hear how you're feeling about the characters and your PC, whether you're feeling like you're having an effect on things, and how everything is feeling for you.

The early access demo is now around 135,000 words! Things you can expect from this chapter:

- go on a trip with students and their families, all of whom will be paying a lot of attention to how you conduct yourself
- more friendly, flirty, and tense developments, both between you and between other characters
- a confrontation!
- you can kiss some people; you can sleep with some people (one at a time... so far); you can have some romantic interludes without either of those things...
- stick to your job or abandon your responsibilities

Note! The intimate scenes in this game are a LOT more explicit than the ones in Creme de la Creme or Royal Affairs, and somewhat more so than the ones in Noblesse Oblige. If you don't want to see that, pick the fade to black options or switch sexual content on and off using the stats screen. If you do want to see that, please do let me know what you think, anonymously or otherwise - I'm well aware of the pitfalls of writing these kinds of scenes! In particular the variables around anatomy are pretty complicated and I want to make sure there aren't any errors there.

Something else I'm especially curious about is the conversation with Fiore about being trans; I am not 100% sure about its placement and framing because Fiore is a pretty private person, but I want to show that being trans is considered ordinary in this society. What I do know is that I'd like the PC to have been aware of it before Fiore talks about it (hence the Chapter 2 Catarina conversation). If you have any thoughts about it, whether you played the scene as cis or trans, please drop me a line - again I don't mind whether it's under your name or anonymously, it's very useful either way.

Enjoy!

[October 2023 Newsflash #1](#)

[Oct 13, 2023](#)

I've been working on the Royal Affairs expanded epilogue this fortnight! [Here's a track from my Royal Affairs playlist](#) - I've been listening to the playlist constantly to get back in the Royal Affairs zone.

A quick note that for Sneak Preview subscribers [the October Q&A post](#) is up and open, and I'll be continuing to update it with answers until the end of the month; [Honor Bound Chapter 3](#) is of course up if you haven't played it yet! The [October Bonus Supplement poll](#) will also be open for Bonus Supplement subscribers until next the 18th, when I'll post the winning story.

(Speaking of stories, yesterday I was finding it hard to focus and feeling in need of something self-indulgent and wrote a very steamy short story about Fabien and the Teranese President spontaneously hooking up; the rivals-with-benefits fortysomethings I didn't know I needed?? I'll be adding it to the November story poll...)

Now for the news!

If you remember from back in August, the epilogue is [all about going on holiday](#) with your siblings and potentially planning a wedding or eloping. Well, in what I've written so far, the MC has arrived at their destination - New Belmir City in Teran.

Writing this epilogue is a very different kind of challenge! I've always admired game writers who write direct sequels with the same MC, and this is like a little glimpse into that kind of writing. I've set it up so that you can invite one of your friends or romantic partners with you (or two, if you're in a triad), so all the scenes are very, very branched, with unique conversations and interactions depending who's with you. It can feel very slow working like that because I'll have done two days' work and look how far through I am through the chronology of the epilogue, and realise it's only been a couple of scenes in terms of playthrough! But: it's also been delightful returning to the Royal Affairs characters and figuring out where they're at, how they're feeling, and what they've been up to (another thing that's very dependent on earlier choices!)

Royal Affairs expanded epilogue wordcount: 32864

Royal Affairs expanded epilogue fortnight's wordcount: 23876

Behind the scenes:

Baldur's Gate 3 continues apace. I love the characters and interactions, they feel so delightfully real and fleshed out!

I read Pageboy, Elliot Page's memoir, and Brainwyrms by Alison Rumfitt, both extremely different books. Pageboy was a difficult read for a lot of it but very interesting. Brainwyrms is horrifyingly revolting in a very well-written way and I would definitely not recommend it if you're not interested in intense, gory, horror and taboo sexual practices! I read it in an afternoon and it is... definitely sticking with me. I do recommend it if you're into extreme horror! (I'm not sure I really am... but it was still a very powerful read) Compared to it, The Others of Edenwell by Verity Holloway, a World War I horror about a haunted wellness retreat in the east of England, was pretty gentle - though still unsettling and heartwrenching.

Apparently I was in the mood for very intense books this fortnight?!

Sneak peek:

It's so hard to find something that isn't so branching that it would be unreadable for this, but! Here, have a heated Dominique kiss:

Dominique kisses up the side of your neck, pausing at your hairline where the skin is soft and sensitive, then draws back and leans in again to meet your mouth. \$!

{dominique_he}@{dominique_singular 's|'re} always enthusiastic, and this time is no exception, but there's a greater sense of lingering, savoring: \${dominique_he} @ {dominique_singular takes|take} \${dominique_his} time before opening \${dominique_his} mouth to deepen the kiss. When \${dominique_he} eventually @ {dominique_singular draws|draw} away again, \${dominique_his} cheeks are heavily flushed.

"Want to help me get out of this?" \${dominique_he} @ {dominique_singular says|say}, gesturing to \${dominique_his} clothes.

My favourite bit:

Really all of these are my favourites, but I really enjoyed writing snapshots of life after Royal Affairs. Here's one about going to Gessner University with a romanced Beaumont and Trevelyan:

Gessner is a stately city whose ancient university colleges and grounds dominate the streets. You were assigned a suite large enough to entertain a decently-sized party, and are allowed to be served dinners there rather than in the banquet hall should you wish. The studying is harder work than at Archambault, and you're given more freedom to make mistakes, but it's gone well enough.

Beaumont and Trevelyan have been there too, of course, and you've spent a great deal of time together: staying up late studying, getting involved in spirited debates, poring close over books in the library, visiting smoky bars and less than salubrious theaters when Beaumont can be dragged away from \${beaumont_his} work.

While you do not have shared rooms, you stay over often enough that you have toiletries and clothes in each other's places, and have settled into something that makes Beaumont lean silently against you during lectures, \${beaumont_his} side warm against yours, and Trevelyan

give you tight hugs or come bursting in to tell you excitedly about something
\$trevelyan_he}@trevelyan_singular 's've just read.

I hope October is going well for you. See you next week!

[Early access alpha writing - thoughts?](#)

[Oct 15, 2023](#)

Hello all and good afternoon for Sunday! I've been thinking about how I'm structuring what I share on here.

Putting up a full playable chapter every other month is a good rhythm for my writing speed and I want to keep doing it as I continue making Honor Bound, but I was wondering if you'd also enjoy reading a non-playable section of the upcoming chapter on the months where there isn't a big playable update.

So, in November I'd put up part of alpha Chapter 4. Then in December, I'll put up the full playable Chapter 4 as usual, part of alpha Chapter 5 in January, the full playable Chapter 5 in February, etc.

To do this, I'd generate a text "playthrough" which can be read through from start to finish. I've attached an example using the opening of Chapter 2 so you can see what I'm thinking. The starred choices are the ones that the "player" has chosen. What I'd share would be a lot longer than this, though!

What do you think?

[Chapter 2 alpha example.pdf](#)

I would definitely read an alpha chapter between big updates

I might read an alpha chapter between big updates

I probably wouldn't read an alpha chapter between big updates

I definitely wouldn't read an alpha chapter between big updates

25 votes total

[October Side Story: Matia Frasada, 1748](#)

[Oct 18, 2023](#)

[In this bonus short story, a mountain survey has gone dangerously wrong.](#)

Content notes: mild sexual references, mild subconscious dysphoria. In this story, Matia uses an outdated name and pronouns, as it's set before they transitioned.

Password: amatothecat

[Bonus Supplement Master Post with the rest of the bonus stories is here.](#)

[October 2023 Newsflash #2](#)

[Oct 27, 2023](#)

Good afternoon, everyone! I've mostly been doing the Royal Affairs expanded epilogue this fortnight, with a little smidgeon of Honor Bound.

[Here's what I have been listening to on a loop while making this epilogue.](#) When I'm towards the end of a project, I tend to find an album and listen to it ferociously until I'm done... this time the Amarantus soundtrack worked very nicely.

I sent off the epilogue to my editor last Friday, got the notes back in super quick time, and have finished implementing them this afternoon. Hooray! The next stage is that it will go into limited beta testing (the code is very complicated in places and I want to make sure there aren't continuity snags) and will be released as a free update sometime in early 2024, along with the ability to save your game for future import into Honor Bound. I'm thrilled to have done this! It was very joyful to revisit the characters and give them a little adventure.

It is, uh... twice the length I was planning. I have learned a lot about scope estimation on this.

Royal Affairs expanded epilogue wordcount: 48700

Royal Affairs expanded epilogue fortnight's wordcount: 24824

As for Honor Bound, I have not spent a huge amount on it this fortnight, but I have done some planning and coding for Chapter 6 and came to an epiphany about Raffi's plotline. It needed tweaking because it felt a bit all-over-the-place and disconnected to how the PC could interact with it; I hadn't been totally

sure about it and wasn't sure how to change it without altering Raffi's personality, but I've come up with an excellent idea that makes it all come together really well - I'm now really looking forward to figuring out how it starts to unfold in Chapter 6! I'll be coding all of that up (and doing some broad-strokes planning for how things move on in Chapters 8-9) next week.

Honor Bound current wordcount: 232280

Honor Bound fortnight's wordcount: 3402

Behind the scenes:

I played [Vampire's Kiss](#) by Dash Casey, which [I enjoyed a lot](#) although it could have done with more romantic and steamy scenes, and [All World Pro Wrestling](#) by David Monster which definitely did not have that problem and probably has the highest sex-scenes-to-playthrough ratio of any game I've played (and I have played a few sexy games), and was also full of joy and good cheer.

I read Uncomfortable Labels by Laura Kate Dale about her teenagerhood/twenties as an autistic trans woman (a candid and interesting memoir, and perhaps more illuminating for trans folks a bit younger than I am?), The Easternmost House by Juliet Blaxland about literally living on the edge of a cliff (I enjoyed it while reading but afterwards it felt unsubstantial, and there were too many digressions about her opinions about other people's opinions on foxhunting and veganism), and The Two Doctors Górski by Isaac Fellman, a novella about academic abuse and brain magic (my favourite of the three, with gorgeous descriptions but a slightly thin ending).

I continue to play Baldur's Gate 3 - it turns out my barber adores it too so we had a great chat about it, so it has officially taken over my life. My wife has finished it. I remain trundling through Act 1, relatively unspoiled for the big plot points. Life is good.

Sneak peek:

This is one of many cases in which I drift into self-indulgent food descriptions:

The sugary taste of the candied flower petal has made you realize how hungry you are. Fabien nods tolerantly.

"You go along," he says. "I have people keeping an eye on everything. Enjoy yourself."

Out of the church you go, into the warm air of the gardens. There's a box hedge maze in which guests are losing and finding themselves; you head past it to a wide open circle entirely paved with a mosaic in bright clashing colors, leading to a tall fountain of some Teranese General atop a horse in the middle. The space is packed with food stalls whose smells combine deliciously as the workers deftly cook on naked flames and hotplates.

You spot Oliver taking a crêpe from a Westerlind-style stall; he turns to wave it at you and hurries over. "Look at this!" he says. "They even got the lemon and sugar proportions right!"

My favourite bit:

I don't want to spoil it because I think it'll be a nice surprise for when it comes out, but I figured out a few things about Teranese and Westerlind wedding ceremonies that I think will be very fun to play!

I hope you've had good Octobers, everyone. I will be posting what's coming up next, along with a bonus story poll, next Wednesday. Have a good weekend!

[November Bonus Supplement Vote](#)

[Nov 1, 2023](#)

Hello, Bonus Supplement folks!

Here is your chance to vote for this month's Bonus Supplement short story from the perspective of a character from the Creme de la Creme universe. The story of your choice will go up on the 15th!

Danelak and Pascha, 1755 (the summer before Noblesse Oblige)

Fabien/President Faraci, 1756 (smut, the year before Royal Affairs)

Fiore/Jaime, 1752 (nine years before Honor Bound)

Raffi and new friends, 1759 (two years before Honor Bound)

Savarel and family, 1760 (one year before Honor Bound)

5 votes total

[November Q&A Post](#)

[Nov 1, 2023](#)

Hello everyone!

This went great last month so I'm going to do it again in the same way. [Here's the link to the anonymous exclusive Q&A form.](#) Ask as many questions as you like, in the comments here or on the form, and I'll

post the answers here. I look forward to hearing from you!

What is the relative size of each country in the CDLC universe? Meaning: compared to a real world country, not the population size.

Ohhhh... this is one I can't answer very well, I'm afraid! I have a lot of trouble with maps and I am wary of contradicting myself. Very broadly, Westerlin and Zaledo are smaller than Teran, which spreads over mainland Teran and lots of islands, and Jezhan is more long and thin, stretching from the northernmost cold climate of Teteriuk to much warmer climates closer to the Equator. But I fear I haven't pinned down anything really specific. Sorry!

How do you navigate writer's block and other extremely frustrating situations in the writing world?

I'm in a position where I need to write in order to pay the bills - which is a blessing because if I feel like I can't write, I'm not able to let that go on too long, but also a curse because it's a lot of pressure! Usually if I'm hit with malaise and finding it really hard to focus, there's probably something else stressful going on in my life and it's a sign that I need to make a change to help reduce that stress. Writing-wise, though, the best thing for me personally is to get myself moving physically - going out for a walk and into a green space in particular, or otherwise going to the gym, getting my heart going, and feeling more grounded. Getting away from a screen helps clear my head. It can also help to do something creative that isn't related to whatever project is giving me problems (this was how some of my Bonus Supplement stories came about).

Sometimes, finding it hard to focus is a sign that something's not quite right in what I've planned in my writing, and I need to rethink it or shift my plans in some way. I find it's best to try taking a break away first, though, otherwise I end up getting more tangled up because of trying to resolve a creative issue while stressed.

In short, my one-size-fits-all solution, at least in the short term, is getting out of the house and taking a brief breather away from the writing, and then when I return I'll feel refreshed. The main thing though is that when I'm stressed I can get in an *"I don't wanna..."* mood and try to work through it... and then I get grouchy when I realise what's happened and that really it would have been better to go for a walk an hour ago, heh.

When you have had a new idea to write about, where do you start? (Building characters, world lore, love interests etc.)

The first thing I think about is a very broad, overarching concept that may include some plot. [Here are the concept paragraphs from when I started making my released games!](#) Then I think about how the player will be interacting with the setting/concept and whether there's enough to give the player choices about how they'll be dealing with the overall plot. I often come up with ideas for games, and the ones that end up going somewhere are the ones that have in-built flexibility about how the PC will move through them, or where the PC has various goals to pursue (that can't be achieved all in one playthrough).

The Creme de la Creme universe is quite fun to work in because I can pick and choose from various places in which to set a game. The very old original version of Honor Bound was set in Jezhan (as bodyguard to a young Jezhani royal); I had a different concept that was set in Teran, but realised that it worked better in Zaledo whereas Honor Bound works nicely in Teran (it being a heavily militarised society, among other things)... so I swapped it round.

I develop world lore somewhat as I go, when it's required. That sometimes results in times such as recently where I think of some funerary/memorial rites and then need to go back and fill in the gaps so it doesn't come out of nowhere. But I don't really like pinning everything in a setting down before I write - for me it takes out the fun of discovery.

Characters are a fun one. I make characters to interweave with the plot and, in some cases, to cause problems for and challenge the PC. When making Honor Bound, Fiore was the first one I thought of, because if you've got a teenage charge they need a parent; Savarel was the last, and was actually partially stolen from a different concept (as was Matia). Once they've got a place in the story, they can spark off loads of other ideas, scenes, storylines, and rewards/challenges for the player.

For a beginner, would you suggest choice script or twine? I have an idea but coding is so over my head.

It depends so much on what you want to make and which ways of writing suit you! My first games were in Twine, and I loved making them; I now spend most of my time in ChoiceScript, and I love using that too. These days I like working in text files and not so much in nodes the way Twine does, but you can use text files for Twine as well. If you like visual/node/mind-map sorts of ways of working, Twine may suit you well.

I would recommend playing lots of games in both and seeing what catches your eye - there are things that you can do with Twine, such as UI changes and click-replace text that can be very evocative, that you can't do with ChoiceScript, but ChoiceScript has incredibly useful automated testing/bugfinding tools that are so valuable if you're making a complicated project. I also really like focusing on the code and writing rather than graphics. Either one has plenty of documentation and active communities (with some overlap), so it should not be too tricky to find out how to do what you want to do.

Good luck!!!

[Upcoming plans: November](#)

[Nov 1, 2023](#)

Good afternoon, all! First, if you're looking for more games to play, I made a digest of all the ChoiceScript updates and releases from October that I could find. [Check it out!](#)

Now for what's happening in November...

November 1st: [Poll is live](#) to vote on the bonus story for the month (£11+)

November 1st: [November Q&A post](#) is live (£6+)

November 7th: [Chapter 3 of Honor Bound](#) (public)

November 7th: [Chapter 4 readable alpha section](#) (£6+)

November 10th: [Newsflash update](#) with details and excerpts from what I'm working on (all subscribers)

November 15th: [November's bonus story](#) (£11+)

November 24th: Newsflash update with details and excerpts from what I'm working on (all subscribers)

[Honor Bound Chapter 4: alpha preview](#)

[Nov 7, 2023](#)

Here's the readable Chapter 4 preview! It represents less than half of what there is to play through in this section of the chapter. I hope you enjoy this tidbit in advance of December's full playable Patreon update!

[Chapter 4 alpha preview.pdf](#)

[November Newsflash #1](#)

[Nov 10, 2023](#)

Hello and happy Friday! I've been mostly writing Honor Bound this fortnight, with a few Royal Affairs expanded epilogue edits.

[Here is a nice instrumental song](#) from my Honor Bound playlist!

I'm very pleased to have put Honor Bound Chapter 3 out in the world - it was a little scary, but the feedback has been incredibly useful. I've edited some of the descriptions in the intimate scenes for clarity, and have also added the option for trans men or trans masc nonbinary MCs who have had bottom surgery to pick whether they had meta, phallo, or unspecified (if those options don't feel comfortable: the scenes are still very spicy but it's slightly less anatomically specific).

[I wrote up a post on the CoG forum on the topic](#) (if you get an error when you click, you need to be in the [Adult Reader](#) group on the forum to access it) about how I've coded the scenes, if you're interested in taking a look!

And I've made [an itch.io page](#) for the public version of Honor Bound so if you want to keep track of progress there, please do! On the itch version you can still make named save slots, and current progress will be saved if you accidentally close the tab (which constantly happens to me).

I removed some of Honor Bound's code and got rid of the chapter checkpoints (they'll be there when the game is released, but they were causing bugs), so the fortnight wordcount looks deceptive. I've actually written around 13,000 words in Chapter 6 - hooray! In this chapter, some really important things are afoot, and there will also be a definite cameo from one of the Creme characters, and optional cameos from a couple of others.

Honor Bound current wordcount: 238960

Honor Bound fortnight's (deceptive) wordcount: 6680

Honor Bound current playthrough length: 62349 (this is literally approaching the playthrough length of Creme de la Creme. Already. I have no idea what's happening anymore)

Behind the scenes:

I had such a nice time going to AdventureX in Greenwich! I hadn't gone to AdventureX in five years, and Greenwich in far longer. I got to catch up with lots of people who I'd not seen in person for ages, including a ton of lovely friends I worked on Love Island with back in the day, and Joey Jones, who's the author of [Lies Under Ice](#) which is coming out soon. The whole thing left me feeling excited and optimistic.

Sneak peek:

This is from Chapter 6:

It's fully dark outside beyond the warm lamps stationed around the school buildings. Your eyes are sandy, but a splash of cold water to your face helps wake you up.

Moving as quickly and quietly as you can down the darkened halls, your breath sounds alarmingly loud, but once you're outside, the noises of the wind and grass and animals mask it better. Close to the line of cars, you spot \${varenn}'s tall, neat silhouette leaning against the

wall in a pool of lamplight. $\text{\$!}\{\text{var_they}\} @\{\text{var_pl peel|peels}\}$ away from the wall as you approach.

"Thank you for coming," $\text{\$}\{\text{var_they}\} \text{\$}\{\text{var_say}\}$, and then falls silent as the sound of jaunty whistling approaches from the direction of the gardens.

My favourite bit:

Oh my gosh. I wrote the saddest thing the other day and I loved it so much. It's about the MC, Fiore, Catarina, and Savarel discussing the late Jaime and I hope you like it when it happens. It gave me Feelings(tm).

I hope you have a good weekend, and if you're doing NaNoWriMo, may the words be flowing freely!

[November Side Story: Fiore Roldan, 1752](#)

[Nov 15, 2023](#)

[In this bonus short story, Fiore and Jaime enjoy a well-earned vacation.](#)

The sun and the long, luxurious lunch have made them both sleepy. Birds sing in the little courtyard below, and the clip-clop of horses are somewhere nearby, but Fiore and Jaime's balcony is large enough for them both to lie on their backs on rugs gathered from the couches inside and savour the afternoon.

Content notes: mild suggestive references

Password: amatothecat

[Bonus Supplement Master Post with the rest of the bonus stories is here.](#)

[November Newsflash #2](#)

[Nov 24, 2023](#)

Happy Friday to you! If you are someone who does Thanksgiving, I hope it went well for you. I've been a bit ill this week, but I am really pleased with the progress on Honor Bound (plus a few Royal Affairs epilogue edits).

[Here is one of my Honor Bound songs](#) to listen to!

I finished drafting Chapter 6 of Honor Bound this fortnight, hooray! Chapter 6 is quite a big one: it includes some big characterful moments, especially with Fiore, Korzha, and Savarel, and some plot-thickening as well. I also submitted Chapters 5 and 6, got my editorial notes back, and have implemented them. This week, I started planning and coding Chapter 7, which is a very dramatic chapter indeed with some major peril involved! I'm nearly done with coding it now: next week I'm going to do some difficulty balancing and then I'll get writing.

Honor Bound current wordcount: 258800

Honor Bound fortnight's wordcount: 19,840

Honor Bound current playthrough length: 66,221 (longer than Creme de la Creme now!)

Behind the scenes:

Although I was ill this week, I did get to the cinema to see Saltburn last week, about which you can read [some of my thoughts on Tumblr](#). It was a messy kind of film that I mostly enjoyed, especially the weird bits, but left me rather cold at the end for various reasons (plot, some odd messaging, and the way the film was over-eager about explaining exactly what was going on).

I keep thinking about Archie Madakwe's character, Farleigh Start. Madakwe plays the only Black character with much screentime in a rarefied white-centric aristocratic setting, who's ambivalently catty verging on hostile to the protagonist, fashionable, and a bit of an outsider himself, comments rather toothlessly on the racist and classist society he's in, and ends up, well, I won't spoil it... and he's the cousin of Ashley Madakwe, who plays an eerily similar role in the Revenge TV show which I happened to get really into back in 2011 (did anyone else watch it? there was some truly nonsensical stuff in it but some of it was good fun. Henry Czerny is a hammy delight, and I was overjoyed to see him in *Ready or Not*, the other other sinister country house movie that I watched this year, playing basically the same character). I wonder if the two actors chat about their roles when they get together for coffee.

Anyway, I do like some menace in a country house, and the actors were fantastic. Just rather muddled, but it was nice to watch something that made me think (even if it was making me think about TV shows I used to obsess over!)

Sneak peek:

This is a little recreational bit from Chapter 6:

You catch a few more hours of sleep before breakfast, after which Raffi invites you to come out to the gardens and exercise while the students do their music lessons. `{varenn}` joins you, to Raffi's surprise, but Raffi's eager to have `{var_them}` along too.

You start with jogging around the borders of the garden and up to the sheep pastures, then return to the garden for bodyweight exercises. Sunlight streams down now, having burned away any dew and mist, and it's making your head pound; Raffi, looking concerned, hands you a canteen of water, which helps a little.

My favourite bit:

You might remember Honored Lidia, who has a problem with Denario in Chapter 2? She continues being a problem at various points as the game goes on, but I've planned out something for her in Chapter 7 which I hope will make her a little more complex, and I'm looking forward to writing it.

I hope you have a good weekend, everyone!

[December Bonus Supplement Vote](#)

[Dec 1, 2023](#)

Hello, Bonus Supplement folks!

Here is your chance to vote for this month's Bonus Supplement short story from the perspective of a character from the Creme de la Creme universe. The story of your choice will go up on December 20th!

(I hope to add another one for you to choose from for January, but November has been a bit of a tough one for fitting in writing that isn't Honor Bound or the Royal Affairs epilogue. Thank you for your patience!)

Danelak and Pascha, 1755 (the summer before Noblesse Oblige)

Fabien/President Faraci, 1756 (smut, the year before Royal Affairs)

Raffi and new friends, 1759 (two years before Honor Bound)

Savarel and family, 1760 (one year before Honor Bound)

5 votes total

[December Q&A Post](#)

[Dec 1, 2023](#)

Hello everyone!

[Here's the link to the anonymous exclusive Q&A form.](#) Ask as many questions as you like, in the comments here or on the form, and I'll add the answers on this post. I look forward to hearing from you!

[Upcoming plans: December](#)

[Dec 1, 2023](#)

Good afternoon, all! First, if you're looking for more games to play, I made a digest of all the ChoiceScript updates and releases from November that I could find. [Check it out!](#) (edit: uh, updated the link to November rather than October, sorry!)

Now, for what's happening in December...

December 1st: [Poll to vote on the bonus story for the month](#) (£11+)

December 1st: [December Q&A post](#) (£6+)

December 5th: [Chapter 4 of Honor Bound](#) (£6+)

December 8th: [Newsflash update](#) with details and excerpts from what I'm working on (all paid subscribers)

December 20th: [December's bonus short story](#) (£11+)

December 22nd: [Newsflash update](#) with details and excerpts from what I'm working on (all paid subscribers)

[Honor Bound Early Access: Chapter 4](#)

[Dec 5, 2023](#)

HONOR BOUND PATREON UPDATE

I'm delighted to share Chapter 4 today - [play it here!](#)

Once you've played, I would hugely appreciate [hearing what you think if you'd like to share](#) - I always read through everything and I will often make tweaks based on feedback, and make tweaks to later chapters with the feedback in mind.

The early access demo is now around 173,000 words! Things you can expect from this chapter:

- a change of scene as you take a trip to the capital with Korzha
- partying and politicking with military and non-military types alike
- fighting, crying, hugging
- the nicest restaurants you've ever been to

I've also done some minor tweaks and polish to the earlier chapters and have added more achievements (not all of which are obtainable yet). At the beginning there are also options to tailor your character's stats and major actions and skip straight to Chapter 4 - or earlier chapters - if you don't want to replay the beginning again.

Enjoy!

Further updates:

December 6:

- when skipping chapters, Korzha will address you with words not a blank space.
- flirt and romance setting corrections in the chapter skip file

[Honor Bound early access update: more trauma edition](#)

[Dec 6, 2023](#)

A slightly glib title, but that's pretty much what it is.

There was some feedback on earlier chapters, and then some for [Chapter 4](#) too yesterday, which asked for the chance to show more ways in which a PC has been psychologically impacted by what happened to them before the start of the game. It's something I've wanted to lean further into in a similar way to how the game is responsive to the amount of the PC's physical pain. After all, the game is about a character who has been through something difficult, and is navigating the aftermath - as well as potentially interacting closely with others who have been through difficult things too and are handling that in various ways.

When I was first planning the game, I knew I wanted to have plenty of chances for hurt/comfort for PCs who want it, and for PCs who don't want that to be able to reject it or feel ambivalent, and so on. While I've been writing beyond what's currently playable, I've been aware that I wanted to include more opportunities for a PC who is not OK to open up (or not) about it to other characters. Although I tweaked some descriptions in the last update, it wasn't anything major and it was a gap that I knew I wanted to improve.

It's also the case that in Chapter 7, which I'm writing at the moment, there is some very stressful stuff happening for the PC and I knew I needed a firmer foundation in the mechanics of how a PC's stress is described and whether NPCs have had a chance to notice or bring up what's been going on before that point.

Anyway: starting in Chapter 2, there are now some more specific responses the PC can have to stressors around them; some Chapter 3 stress points and NPC responses; some Chapter 4 stressors and potential responses; in future chapters, I've written further NPC interactions and responsivity.

Most, though not all, of this text triggers in response to how much physical and mental pressure the PC is under. I've gone back and forth about whether, and how, to display this score on the stats page. At the moment, there's a sentence descriptor under "Health" that gives some information about how the PC is doing; I will probably tweak how this displays, or the way it's worded, over time.

As ever, this is all subject to plenty of iteration and I'm very happy to consider any feedback of whatever kind - about this or anything else in the game!

(I've also fixed a couple of errors in the chapter skip file, and have added a couple of conversation options with Mandriotti and Catarina in Chapter 4, but has rather less of an effect on the broader picture of the game!)

(This update puts the Patreon demo at around 175,000 words.)

[December Newsflash #1](#)

[Dec 8, 2023](#)

Hope you're having a good day, everyone! Right now I would love to be in the southern hemisphere because the UK is dreadfully cold and grey.

It's been a bit of a hard one this fortnight thanks to getting sick and a number of other tricky things, but I've been mostly working on Honor Bound Chapter 7 and made great progress yesterday in particular. As well as working on Chapter 7, I did some polish and updates for earlier chapters, of which the biggest one was [adding more chances](#) for the PC to feel more psychological effects of their background and current stressors.

So far, Chapter 7 involves dealing with some very perilous situations, so you can see why I had "include more chances to respond to the PC's stress levels" on my mind!

Honor Bound current wordcount: 272,421

Honor Bound fortnight's wordcount: 13,621

Honor Bound current average playthrough length: 68,824

Behind the scenes:

I have been playing [Lies Under Ice](#) since it launched yesterday, and am enjoying it a great deal! I like how much my MC is embedded in the world - and the worldbuilding and exploration is superb. I'm almost at the end right now, and things have hotted up... I started with lots of good intentions and now my colony on Europa has a terrible reputation! (Partly because I was stubborn and stood by my problematic boyfriend when I really shouldn't have. I am colourblind, I do not see the red flags, etc.) The game takes place over many years and it really feels like a moving, growing community of people with loads of variation in the ways you can build your base. I really like how you'll have a small scene with someone giving you information about a problem early on, or similar, and then they'll show up again later with a bigger role. It makes it really feel like a big ensemble. I'd love to see it as a TV show!

Sneak peek:

This is from a particularly uncomfortable moment in Chapter 7 (sorry about the lack of indents, Patreon really doesn't like them):

```
| Your boots skid on the mud and as you right yourself,  
  
| *if hb_injury = 1  
  
| you struggle for breath. Pain crackles through your chest.  
  
| *elseif hb_injury = 2  
  
| breathtaking pain stabs through your head.
```

*else

excruciating pain shoots down your thigh.

Your vision spots. For a moment it looks like the rain. Things speckle with gray.

*if hb_pressure <= hb_pressure_hi

Someone grabs your arm. You explain what's going on, and it's perhaps not as clear as it could be, but you're guided to shelter. When you sit, someone pushes a cup of water into your hands, but you can't hold it.

*page_break Nothing

You wake in bed beneath layers of sheets. It's hard to tell whether they're really that heavy or whether you're just weakened. The ceiling above is the color of mustard, with spinach-green leaves frescoed in patterns that make no sense.

Your head feels light and floating. There's a delicious, heady, lack of discomfort, but your limbs feel weak and @{{(hb_pc_build < 3) ungainly|spindly}}.

"Hello?" you call. Then, before anything much else, you slip under once more.

I hope you are having a better time than the Honor Bound PC!

[December Side Story: Tomi Danelak, 1755](#)

[Dec 20, 2023](#)

[In this bonus short story, Tomi Danelak encounters Pascha for the first time.](#)

Aristocrats are bad news.

Password: amatothecat

[The Bonus Supplement master post with the rest of the bonus stories is here.](#)

[December Newsflash #2](#)

[Dec 22, 2023](#)

This fortnight I've been working on Honor Bound Chapter 7, and have finished off the Royal Affairs expanded epilogue! The epilogue is going off to the copyeditor as we speak. I expect it to be released early next year so keep your eyes out for it - I'm really looking forward to people getting to revisit the world and characters of Royal Affairs once again.

I finished the draft of Chapter 7 and did some retroactive tweaks to earlier chapters once I'd done that. I posted about this elsewhere too:

Among other things, I'm feeling the need to go back to earlier chapters and add in bit-part named characters so that when I then put them in peril, which I'm currently doing, the player goes "uh oh, hope that person doesn't get eaten by crocodiles!" or "oh thank goodness, those crocodiles know what they're doing", rather than "who? am I meant to know who this crocodile-victim is?" But I also want to get through the chapter, so a lot of it is a step up from placeholder text before I figure out who exactly the crocodiles* are menacing and how to make the player care about it.

*there are no crocodiles, but I wish there were.

And I've done some work on planning Chapter 8 too. It is a bit of a tricky one as there are a lot of moving plot parts that I want to give as much breathing room as possible, and I want it to flow naturally into Chapter 9. I think there will probably be some elements I need to cut or rework, but that's something to noodle at gently over the rest of the month - I'm not fully back at work until the new year, and am very much in need of a break.

Honor Bound current wordcount: 282063

Honor Bound's fortnight wordcount: 9642

Honor Bound current average playthrough: 69298

Behind the Scenes:

I read *Going Postal* by Terry Pratchett this fortnight which I loved. I was a huge fan of Terry Pratchett as a teenager but stopped reading *Discworld* after *Night Watch*. I'm returning to it now, and am enjoying it greatly. *Going Postal* felt so current that I kept having to remind myself that it was written in 2004.

Health has been up and down. My resolutions for the new year include yoga at least every other day, and getting a massage as soon as my shoulder or hip starts hurting; towards the end of the year, my shoulders haven't been good at all thanks to various stresses. I'm also quietly hoping to practise cooking this year, as I find it a bit scary doing more complicated dishes and would like to get more confident with it.

My favourite bit:

I really enjoyed writing the responses that the Honor Bound characters have after [this bit happens](#) - they all respond to the situation in different ways and I hope to surprise some people with it. <3

Sneak peek:

I don't always post anything as specific as this, but since it's the holidays... there's some very sweet text from the epilogue in the attachment.

Best of luck to everyone over the festive season! It can be a hard time for a lot of reasons, but I hope for some comfort and joy for you, and am thinking of you. See you in 2024!

[asher_romance.png](#)

[End of 2023 roundup](#)

[Dec 31, 2023](#)

Thank you for all your support this year. I can't tell you how much I appreciate it and how much it literally supports me to enable me to carry on working full-time on making the games I love.

This year was my first year of mostly working with Choice of Games. There was some other contract work, but CoG was the main thing going on. I was nervous going in, and it's been more successful than I could have possibly hoped even in an awful year for the field of games at large. And I've written... so much. What I did on Honor Bound, the tail-end of the Royal Affairs beta back in January, and the Royal Affairs epilogue alone was over 330,000 words, and I can't easily count up what I did on Elite Status. It's been a huge year!

- [Creme de la Creme and Blood Money now both have hints and cheats](#) to help you find the obscure paths you really want;
- [Creme de la Creme](#), [Blood Money](#), and [Noblesse Oblige](#) now all have save and restore points (so do Elite Status and Royal Affairs, but they had it from launch);
- [Elite Status: Platinum Concierge](#), for which I wrote and edited additional content, came out after being [dormant for many years](#);
- [King of the Castle](#), the brilliant medieval monarch multiplayer game I worked on last year, came out and [got 4 stars in NME](#);

- I started and wrote seven chapters of [Honor Bound](#) which has been a total treasure to work on, and I've been learning huge amounts from it and falling in love with the setting and characters;
- and of course [Royal Affairs](#), having been in progress for three years, came out into the world. I'm absolutely overwhelmed by all the love: it was such a long journey, through such tumultuous times personally and historically, but making Royal Affairs was a joy and I was so overjoyed to be able to finally share it. I've really enjoyed revisiting the characters for the expanded epilogue that's coming soon in 2024, and I hope you do too!

Thank you for everything. Good luck for the coming year!