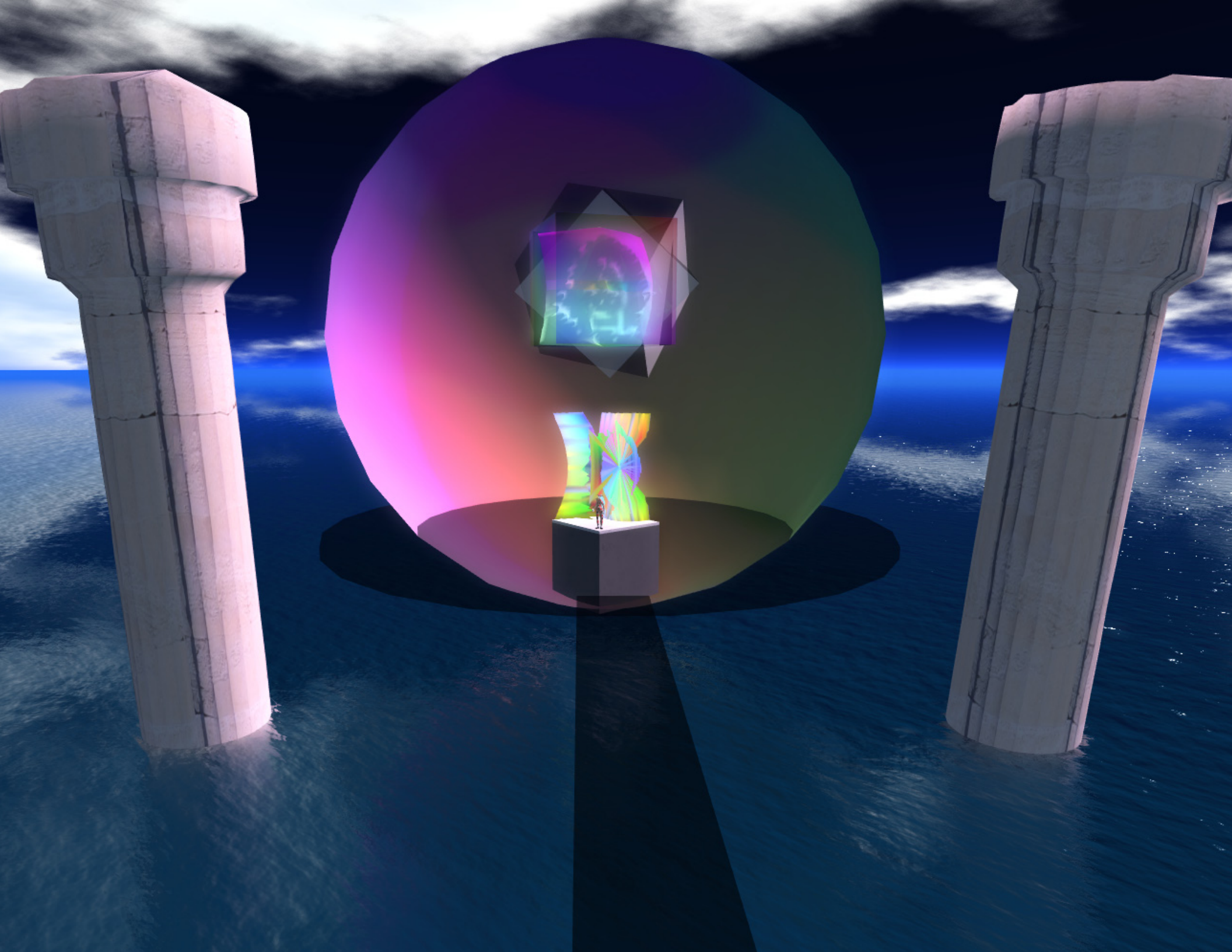
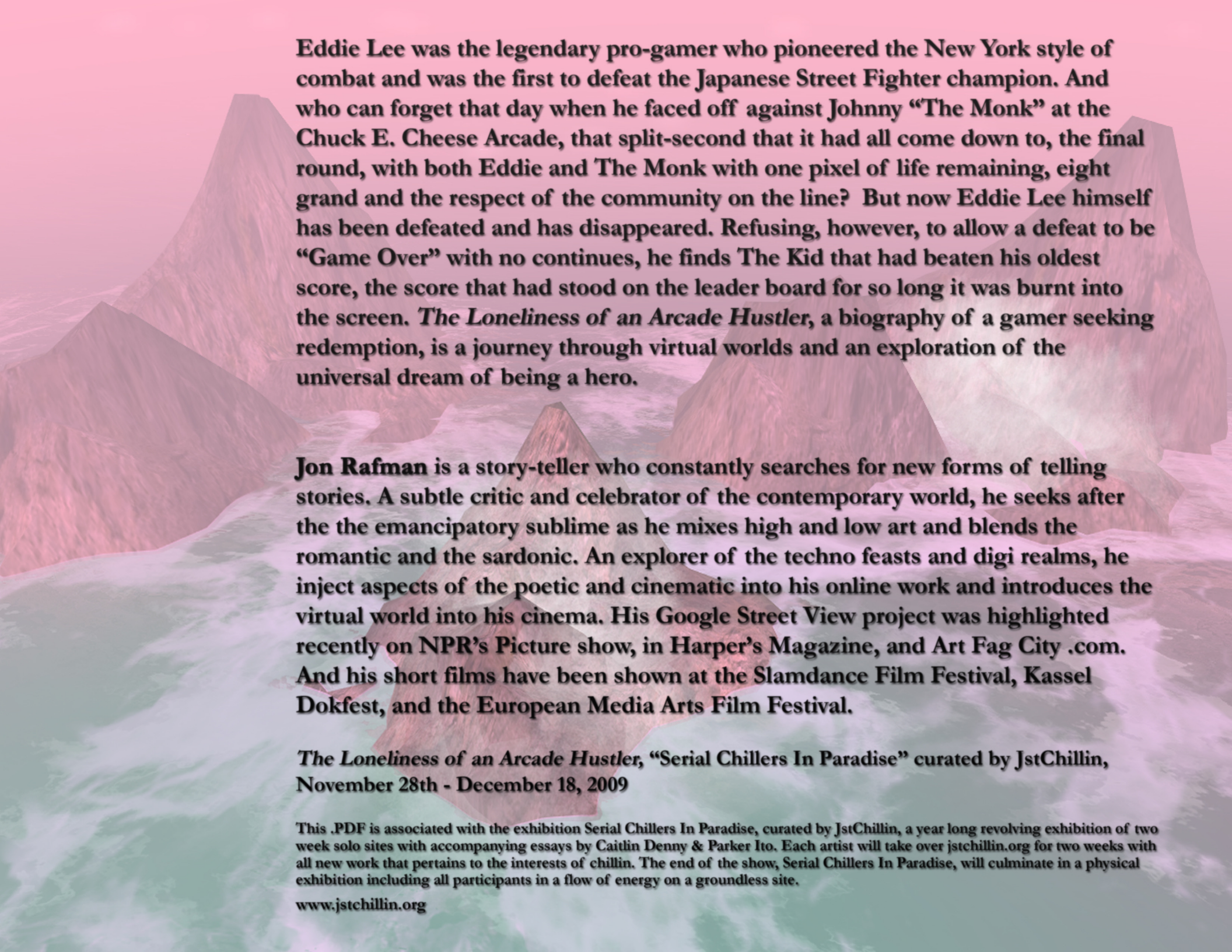




THE LONELINESS OF AN Arcade Hustler

A film by Jon Rafman





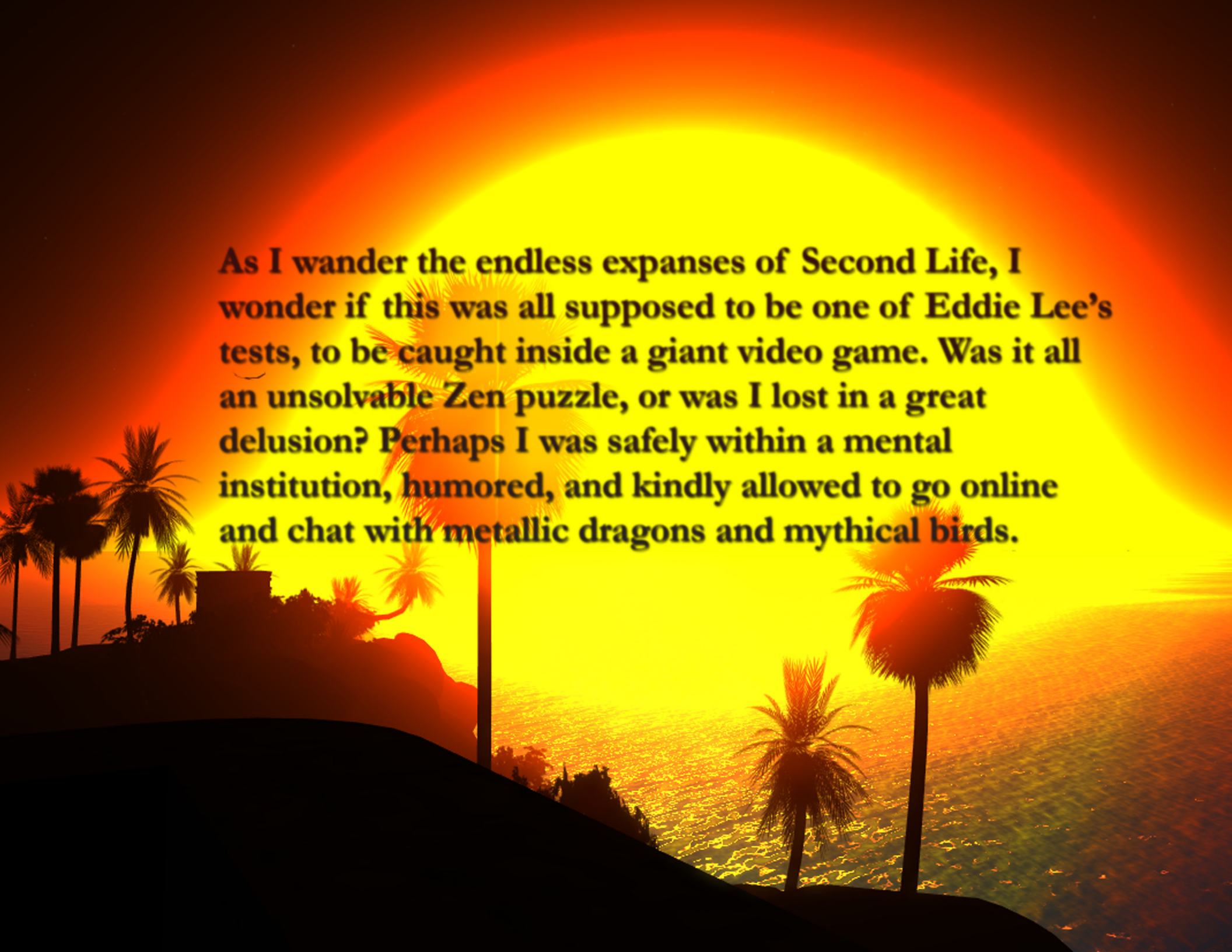
Eddie Lee was the legendary pro-gamer who pioneered the New York style of combat and was the first to defeat the Japanese Street Fighter champion. And who can forget that day when he faced off against Johnny “The Monk” at the Chuck E. Cheese Arcade, that split-second that it had all come down to, the final round, with both Eddie and The Monk with one pixel of life remaining, eight grand and the respect of the community on the line? But now Eddie Lee himself has been defeated and has disappeared. Refusing, however, to allow a defeat to be “Game Over” with no continues, he finds The Kid that had beaten his oldest score, the score that had stood on the leader board for so long it was burnt into the screen. *The Loneliness of an Arcade Hustler*, a biography of a gamer seeking redemption, is a journey through virtual worlds and an exploration of the universal dream of being a hero.

Jon Rafman is a story-teller who constantly searches for new forms of telling stories. A subtle critic and celebrator of the contemporary world, he seeks after the the emancipatory sublime as he mixes high and low art and blends the romantic and the sardonic. An explorer of the techno feasts and digi realms, he inject aspects of the poetic and cinematic into his online work and introduces the virtual world into his cinema. His Google Street View project was highlighted recently on NPR’s Picture show, in Harper’s Magazine, and Art Fag City .com. And his short films have been shown at the Slamdance Film Festival, Kassel Dokfest, and the European Media Arts Film Festival.

***The Loneliness of an Arcade Hustler*, “Serial Chillers In Paradise” curated by JstChillin, November 28th - December 18, 2009**

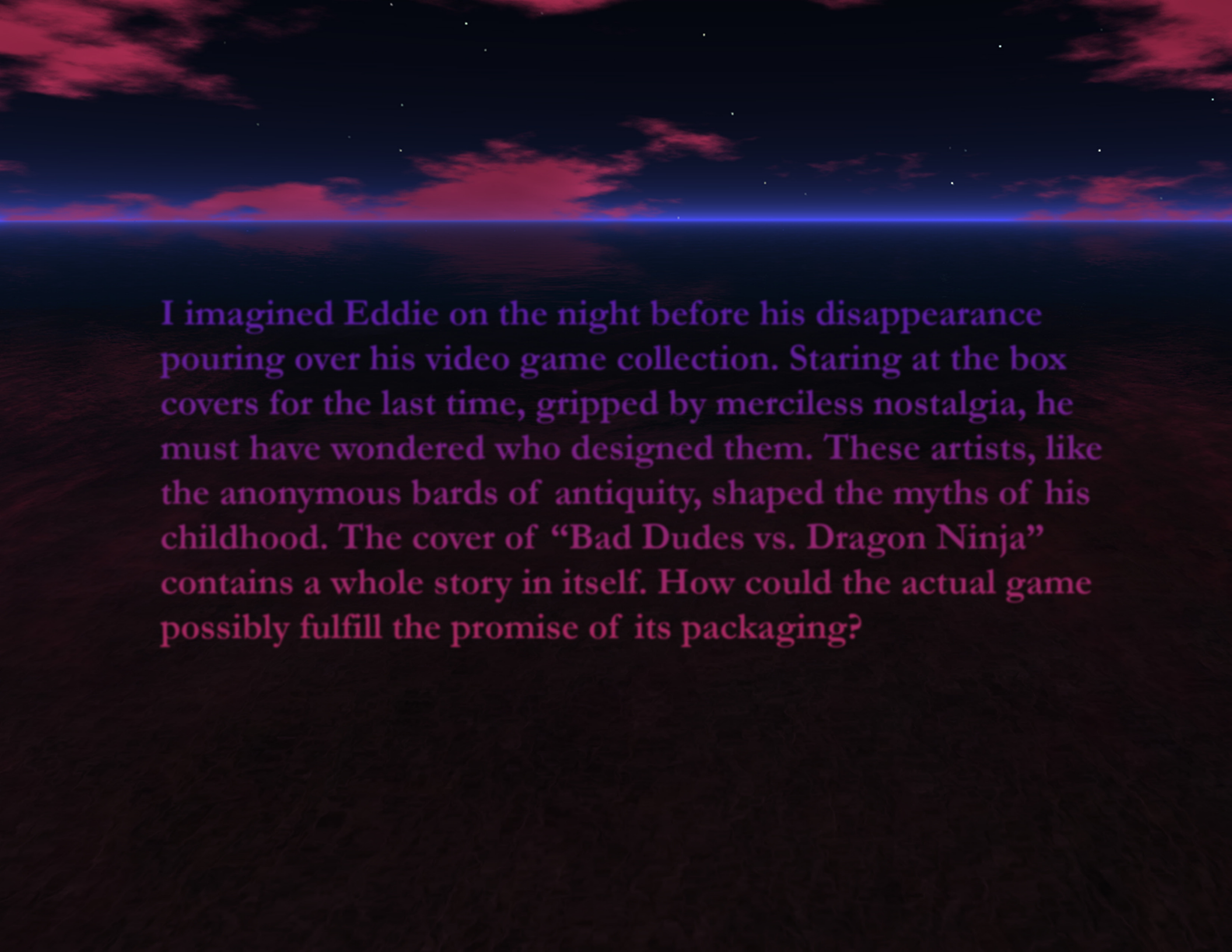
This .PDF is associated with the exhibition Serial Chillers In Paradise, curated by JstChillin, a year long revolving exhibition of two week solo sites with accompanying essays by Caitlin Denny & Parker Ito. Each artist will take over jstchillin.org for two weeks with all new work that pertains to the interests of chillin. The end of the show, Serial Chillers In Paradise, will culminate in a physical exhibition including all participants in a flow of energy on a groundless site.

www.jstchillin.org

A tropical sunset scene with palm trees and a large sun over the ocean. The sun is a large, bright yellow-orange orb in the upper center, casting a warm glow over the entire scene. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a darker orange at the top. The ocean is visible in the lower right, with gentle waves reflecting the sunlight. In the foreground, there are several palm trees of varying heights, some silhouetted against the bright sky. A dark, rounded shape, possibly a hill or a piece of land, is visible in the lower left. The overall mood is serene and nostalgic.

As I wander the endless expanses of Second Life, I wonder if this was all supposed to be one of Eddie Lee's tests, to be caught inside a giant video game. Was it all an unsolvable Zen puzzle, or was I lost in a great delusion? Perhaps I was safely within a mental institution, humored, and kindly allowed to go online and chat with metallic dragons and mythical birds.



A sunset over a dark ocean with a bright horizon line. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, with some clouds. The water is dark and reflects the light from the horizon.

I imagined Eddie on the night before his disappearance pouring over his video game collection. Staring at the box covers for the last time, gripped by merciless nostalgia, he must have wondered who designed them. These artists, like the anonymous bards of antiquity, shaped the myths of his childhood. The cover of “Bad Dudes vs. Dragon Ninja” contains a whole story in itself. How could the actual game possibly fulfill the promise of its packaging?



LINE LINE

PlayStation

DECKE

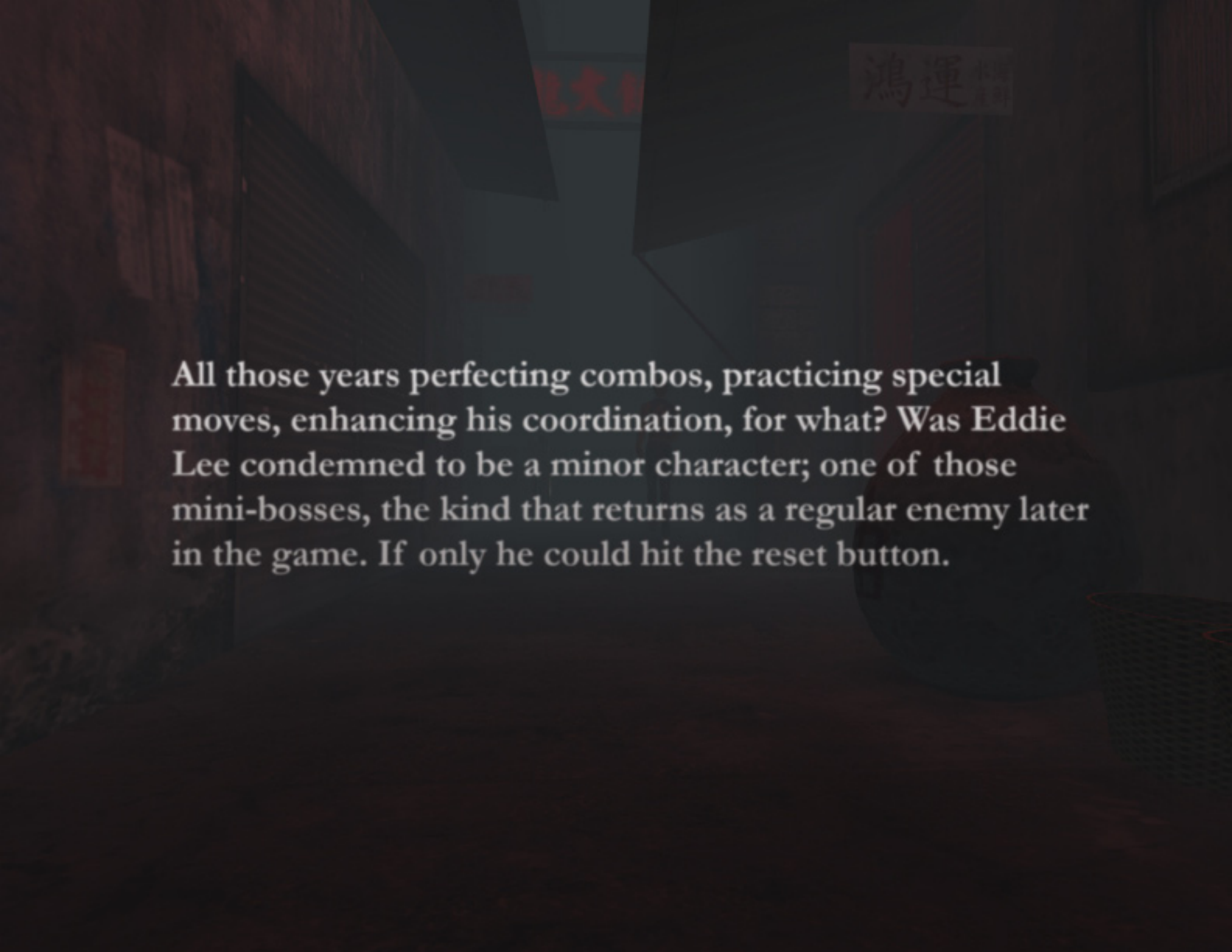


BAD
BOY VS.

DRAGONNINJA

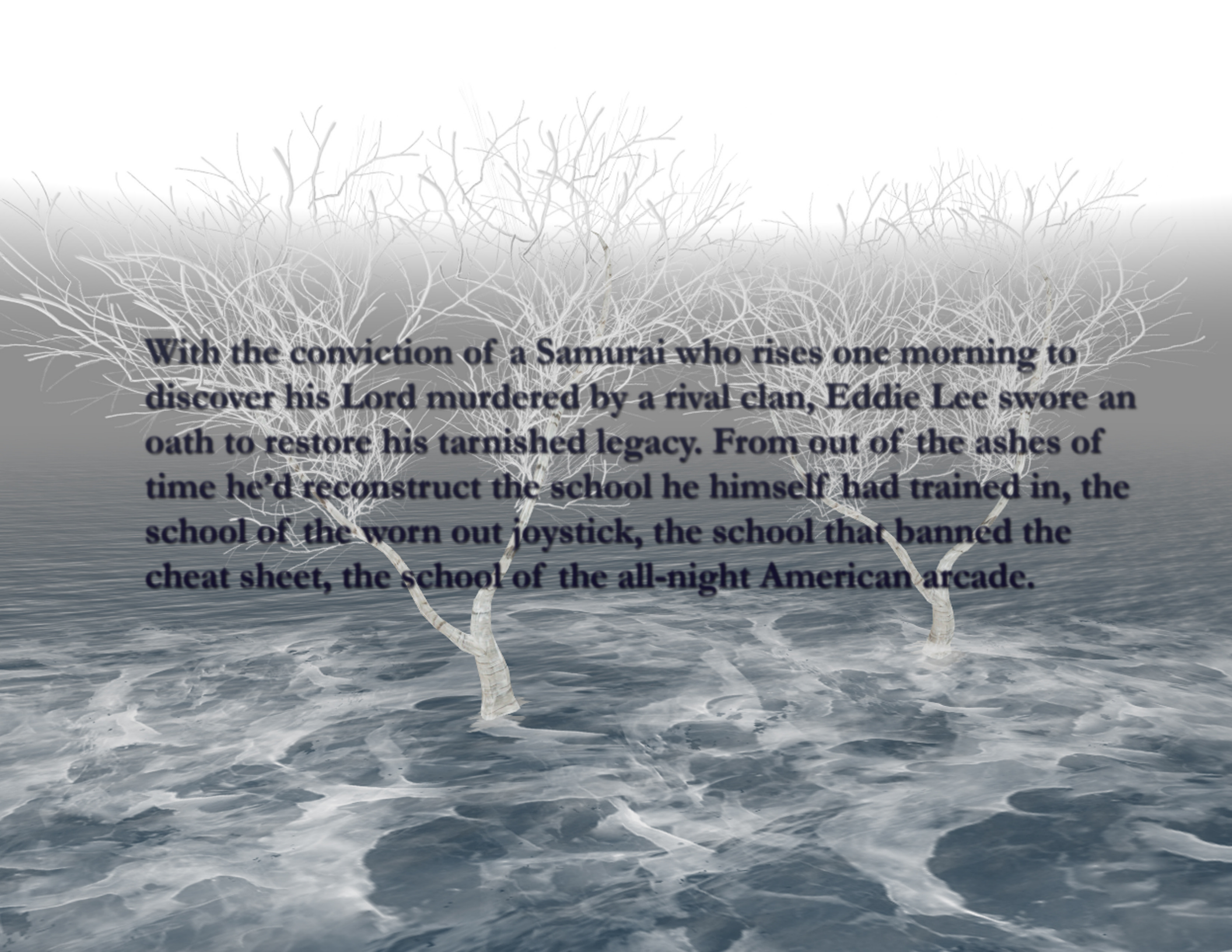
T.M.



The background is a dark, moody scene of a street. On the left, there are wooden structures, possibly part of a building or a stall. In the center, a sign with large red Chinese characters is visible. On the right, another sign with the characters '鴻運' (Hong Yun) is visible. The overall lighting is low, creating a sense of mystery and depth.

All those years perfecting combos, practicing special moves, enhancing his coordination, for what? Was Eddie Lee condemned to be a minor character; one of those mini-bosses, the kind that returns as a regular enemy later in the game. If only he could hit the reset button.

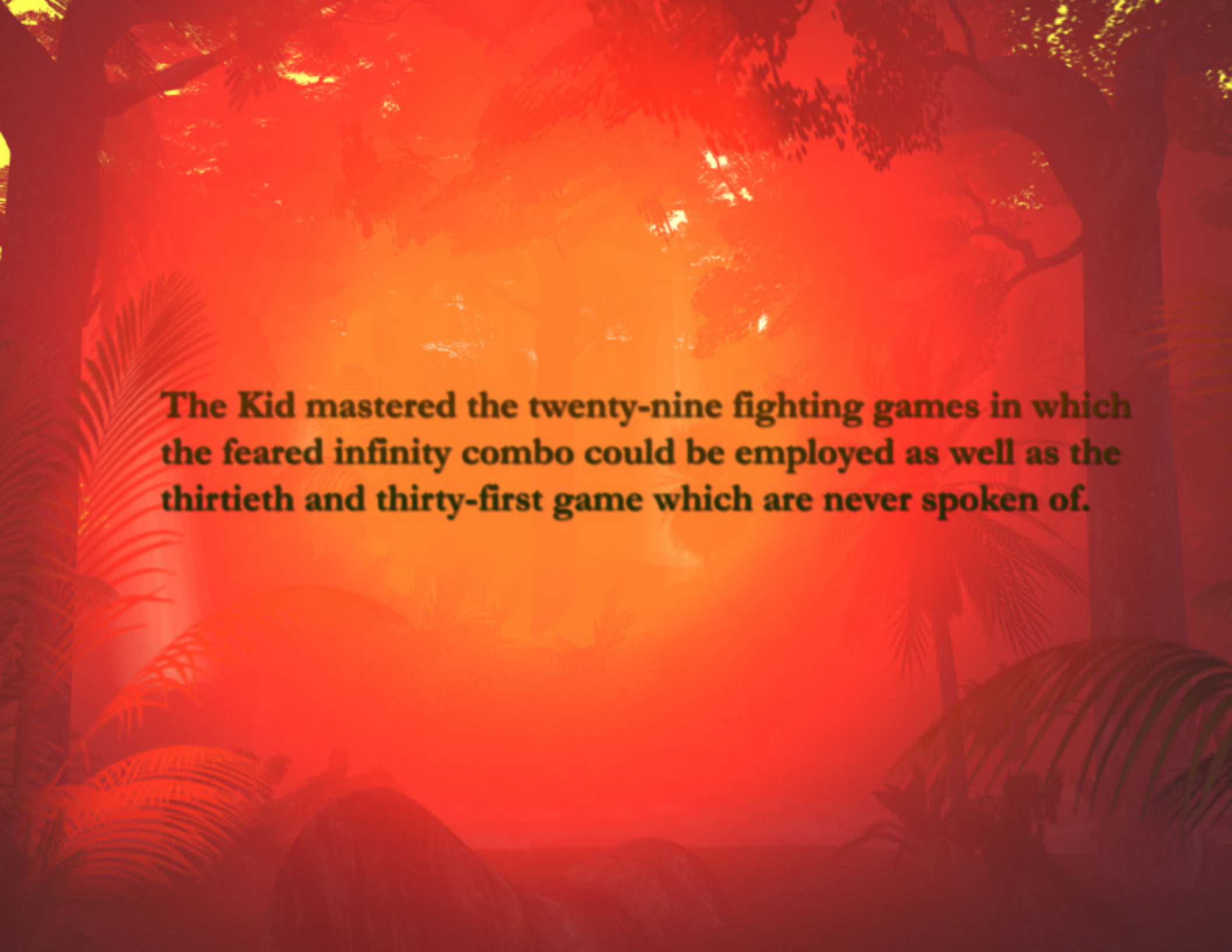


A black and white photograph of two bare, skeletal trees standing on a beach. The trees are positioned on either side of the center, with their trunks partially submerged in the ocean. The waves are crashing against the base of the trees, creating white foam. The sky is bright and overcast, and the overall mood is desolate and somber.

With the conviction of a Samurai who rises one morning to discover his Lord murdered by a rival clan, Eddie Lee swore an oath to restore his tarnished legacy. From out of the ashes of time he'd reconstruct the school he himself had trained in, the school of the worn out joystick, the school that banned the cheat sheet, the school of the all-night American arcade.



 ODYSSEY

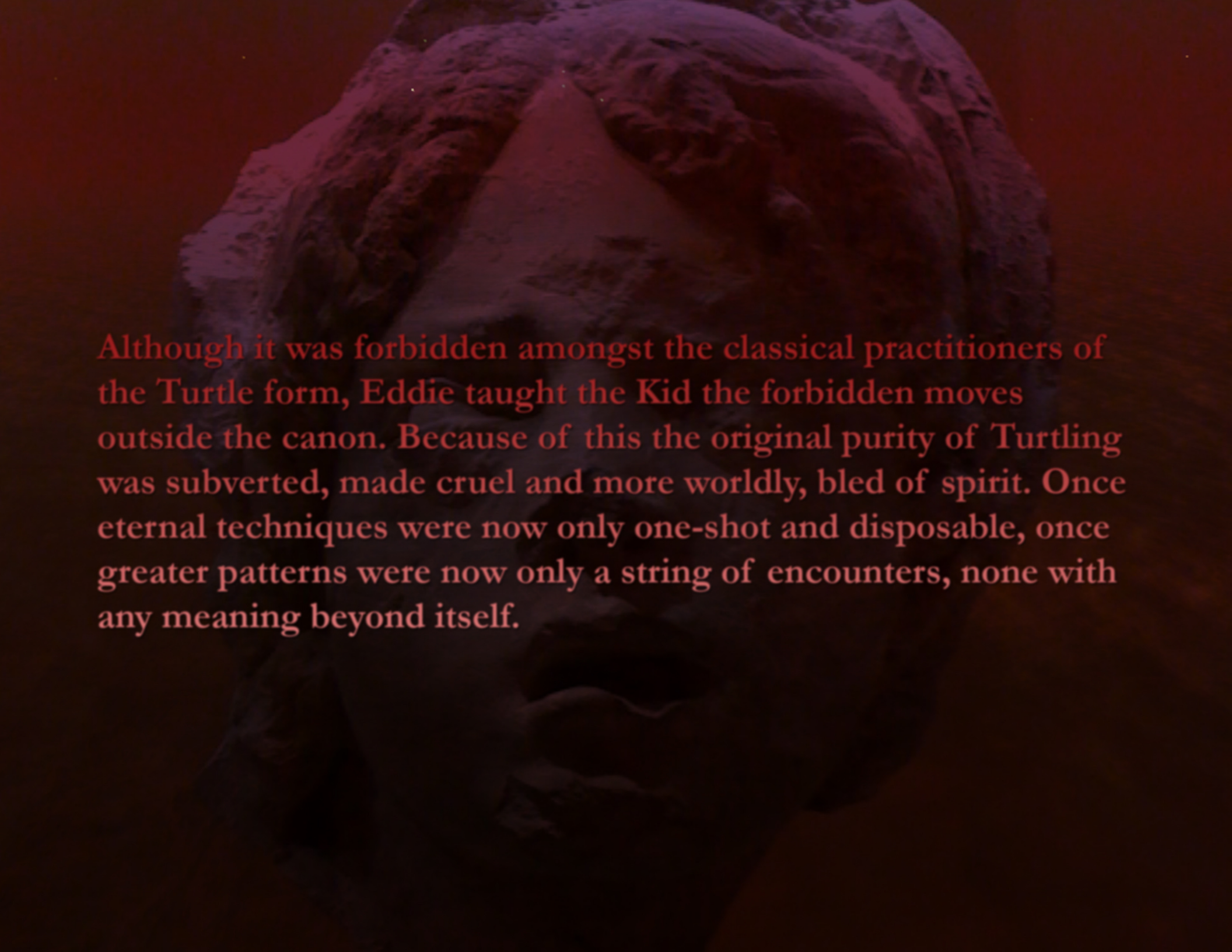
A tropical sunset scene with palm trees and a bright orange sky. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The palm trees are silhouetted against the bright sky, and their fronds are visible in the foreground. The overall atmosphere is serene and peaceful.

The Kid mastered the twenty-nine fighting games in which the feared infinity combo could be employed as well as the thirtieth and thirty-first game which are never spoken of.



Turtling required infinite patience. The strategy demanded that you play a zero-risk game, blocking everything, waiting for the opponent to make a mistake, but never forcing openings, never taking the initiative, just waiting patiently for him to slip and when he finally does, punish him.





Although it was forbidden amongst the classical practitioners of the Turtle form, Eddie taught the Kid the forbidden moves outside the canon. Because of this the original purity of Turtling was subverted, made cruel and more worldly, bled of spirit. Once eternal techniques were now only one-shot and disposable, once greater patterns were now only a string of encounters, none with any meaning beyond itself.



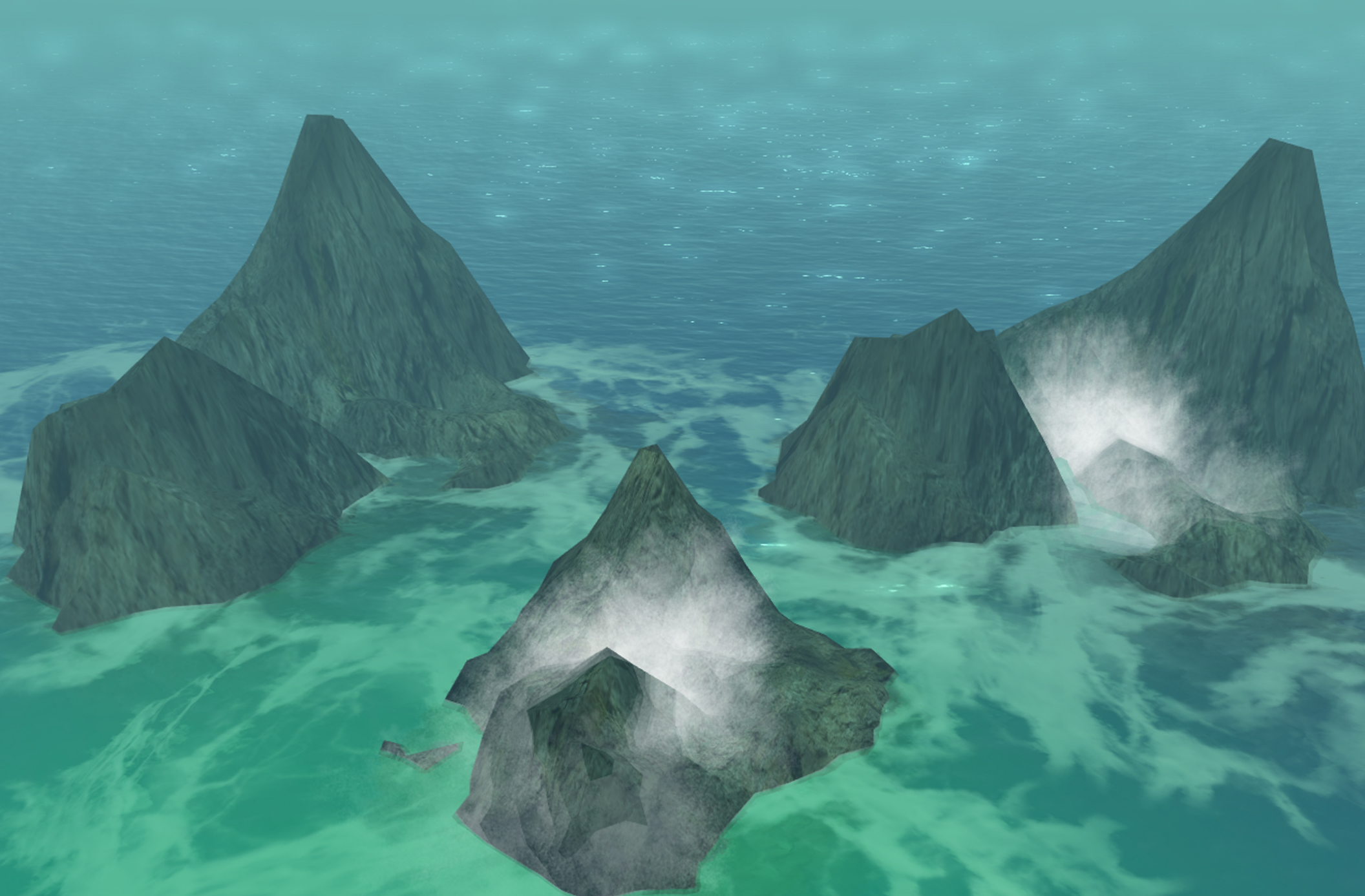
Eddie Lee and the Kid yearned to inhabit
the industrial megalopolis of sci-fi RPGs.





**Only in the mother tongue can one speak one's own truth.
In a foreign tongue the poet lies.**





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