

D-PAD
by Jeremy Gable

(The world of the play is a grid of lines and dots. Things pulse, softly, like heartbeats. For a recommended visual reference, check out the Memory Corridors from the *Assassin's Creed* series.

There are set pieces, costumes, sure, but all within the grid.)

CUTSCENE - LOADING...

(ALEX and RACHEL, sitting together. The mood seems light, but something is weighing on them.)

RACHEL

Yeah, why *do* you wanna make video games?

ALEX

Wow, that's, um ...
I mean, do you want a list?

RACHEL

Okay fine, what was the *main* thing
that made you wanna be a game ... maker?

ALEX

Developer.

RACHEL

Whatever.

ALEX

Well ...
if I had to choose *one* thing ...
it's gotta be Samus Aran, from *Metroid*.

RACHEL

That's the one with the aliens?

ALEX

The Space Pirates, yeah.

RACHEL

Space Pirates, how could I forget?

ALEX

So, my earliest memory ever is playing *Metroid*,
that first one on the original Nintendo.

RACHEL

Which is sad and pathetic, but go on.

ALEX

The first time I finally beat the game,
I think I was seven ...
What seven-year-old beats *Metroid*?
Man, I was such a weird kid ...

RACHEL

There were *many* reasons why you were a weird kid.

ALEX

Do you *wanna* hear this story, or ... ?

(RACHEL makes the motion to continue.)

So, yeah, I beat the game,
and this total bad-ass, ya know ...
outer space bounty hunter
takes off his helmet, and ...
he's a she! ...
And I was like,
"Wait, I can actually *be* a woman in a video game?"
Like, you always *saved* them, you never *were* them,
unless you were, like, Ms. Pac-Man.

RACHEL

Which is really just Mr. Pac-Man with a pink bow.

ALEX

Exactly.

RACHEL

See, I've been paying attention.

ALEX

I'm so proud of you.
... So yeah, it feels kinda silly looking back on it, but ...
ya know, that never happened before.

ALEX

(CON'T)

And they *tricked* you into playing the whole game before telling you,
so I was like ...

RACHEL

It just blew your seven-year-old mind.

ALEX

Yeah!

Like, if Samus Aran could single-handedly
take down a group of Space Pirates,
defeat the Mother Brain,
and save the galaxy,
all without a penis ...
... what was I capable of?

WORLD 1: BUILD ALLIES

(We are in Seattle in March of 2014.)

RACHEL appears in a tank top, khaki pants, boots. She bobs back and forth on her feet. This is called Idle Cycle.

We hear ALEX:)

ALEX

(ALEX appears, lazily dressed, drinking a soda.)

What ... shall we do ... today?

Load "Rachel jump cycle".
Run.

(RACHEL jumps in the air repeatedly.
Something is off about it.)

Stop.
What am I missing?
What am I ... ?
... Run.

(RACHEL jumps again. Again, something off.)

Stop.
What am I missing?
... Run.

(More jumps. Finally:)

The hair! Hair doesn't move!
Hair's supposed to move!

(Indeed, RACHEL's ponytail is frozen in place.)

Stop!
Balls!
Add keyframe "Ponytail". PTail1. Y-axis.

(To RACHEL:)

You can chill.

(RACHEL relaxes, letting ALEX fix her hair.)

RACHEL

(Different voice, very similar to ALEX's)

I knew something was off.

ALEX

Rachel!

RACHEL

(Mocking)

Alex!

ALEX

Why didn't you tell me?

RACHEL

I was in Idle Cycle,
I'm not gonna break Idle Cycle.

ALEX

Yeah well, I can't fix you
if you don't tell me what's wrong.

(She inspects RACHEL's ponytail.)

Ugh, every time I think you're perfect...

RACHEL

I'm not perfect?

ALEX

It's not you, it's me.
You're only as good as your maker.
Frame four, translate three.

(A click. ALEX continues fixing RACHEL's hair.)

RACHEL

But other than the hair, I look great.

ALEX

Oh, hells yeah!
Like, in the future, Hottest Girls in Games,
it's gonna go Lara Croft,
Samus Aran ...
I dunno, Bayonetta ...
and then Rachel Wahl.

RACHEL

Wait, I'm below Bayonetta?

ALEX

Well yeah, I mean it's Bayonetta,
what do you want me to say?
But you're above ... ya know ...

ALEX

(CON'T)

FemShep, and ...
Joanna Dark, and ...
I dunno, Princess Peach?

RACHEL

Oh, Princess Peach?
I'm better looking than *Princess Peach*???
My god, Princess Peach,
the Everest of sexy!

ALEX

There's a reason Mario saves her ass every time.

RACHEL

Yeah, he's a fat Italian plumber,
that's the best he can do:
some bourgeois-looking blondie
who rules over a kingdom of mushrooms.
Way to go, dude.

ALEX

Frame eight, translate six ...

(A click.)

But Mario's an underdog.

RACHEL

He throws fireballs!
You know any plumbers that can do that?

ALEX

Not in Seattle.
But they're probably all over the place in Japan.

RACHEL

Oooh, we should find out!
Go to Tokyo,
pick up a couple fire-chucking plumbers.

ALEX

Plus, they could hook us up with shrooms.

RACHEL

Best Spring Break ever!
Seriously, can we go?

RACHEL

(CON'T)

We should go!
You have the money.

ALEX

No I don't,
I'm pouring all my money into you.

RACHEL

Which I appreciate.

ALEX

Plus, you know my track record with foreign countries.

RACHEL

(A melancholy memory)

... Yeah, true.

ALEX

Frame twelve, translate ten...

(Click.)

RACHEL

You got to go to San Francisco last month.
That must have been cool, seeing all the--
OH MY GOD! I haven't seen your speech yet!

ALEX

No, it's embarrassing!

RACHEL

Don't care! Wanna see it!

ALEX

I was drunk.

RACHEL

All the more reason.

ALEX

Nooooo...

RACHEL

Yesssssss!

I refuse!

ALEX

Speech speech speech speech--

RACHEL

Stop it.

ALEX

...speech speech speechitty speech!

RACHEL

Fine! God, you're the worst...

ALEX

(PODIUM appears, dressed in awards show fashion.)

PODIUM

The nominees for Excellence in Game Design are ...
Animatia, Pretty Poly Entertainment ...
D-Pad, Alex Newbauer ...
Fade Into White, Diagonal Games ...
Sochi Press Pass, Jarek Svoboda ...
and *Thatcher and Drake: Episode 2 - The Oregon Tale*, Bardbrain Interactive ...
and the Independent Games Festival Award goes to ...

(He opens an envelope and reads:)

D-Pad, Alex Newbauer, developer.

(Music and applause. ALEX is dressed for an event.)

ALEX

Holy shit!
Can I swear? ...
Yeah? ...
Holy shit!

(Laughter. She reads from a speech.)

Um ...
The *other* definition of "design" is
"purpose, planning, or intention that exists
behind an action, fact, or material object."
I Googled it.

(Laughter.)

And I like to think that my game *D-Pad*
is all about that definition,

ALEX

(CON'T)

making decisions in the face of doubt
and seeing how it pushes you forward,
how it designs your life.
And I know I'd have trouble making most of the decisions ...
... in *my* life without ...
... Um ...

(She looks up from her speech.)

So, even though I really didn't think I was gonna win,
because, ya know, the game isn't even finished yet,
I still wrote a speech, and, uh ...
... I was gonna thank my boyfriend Todd,
but we broke up a couple days ago,
soooo never mind!

(She laughs. The crowd joins in her laughter.)

So you know what, fuck you, Todd,
I'm a rock star now!

(Laughter and applause.)

It's okay, he's not here,
he sold out to Nintendo.

(Big laugh.)

So, um ...
I guess who I really should be thanking
is my sister Rachel,
who's the inspiration for the hero of *D-Pad*,
and who's totally *my* hero, who, ya know ...
who's put up with my weirdness since, like, birth,
and despite not knowing a CPU from a co-processor
has always been super supportive.
So Rach, if you're watching from Brazil,
este é para você!

(Smattering of applause.)

It's okay, you can clap at that.

(Laughter and applause. Someone shouts "We love you, Alex!")

Yes, you *should* love me!

(Laughter.)

Was that Nathan?
That was Nathan, wasn't it?

(Knowing laughter.)

Call me.

(Laughs and "woooo"s. ALEX laughs along.
She's enjoying this moment.)

So ... yeah, finally,
thanks to the Independent Games Festival

ALEX

(CON'T)

for seeing something in this ...
crazy, unfinished game of mine,
and for helping to promote indie game developers everywhere,
despite all of our personal glitches,
and uh ...
yeah, *D-Pad* will be out fourth quarter, so ...
you should buy it.
Love love love to you all!
Thanks everyone!
WOOOO!!!

(VLOG appears, isolated, talking to the audience.)

VLOG

That's Alex Newbauer, who is,
in my humble opinion,
the hottest girl in game development,
and that's our first look into *D-Pad*,
which is shaping up to be uh-maze-ing.
If her work with Conduit Games was any indication,
this is gonna be one of the most anticipated titles of 2014.
Alex, as you may know, became super famous,
and made, like, a bazillion dollars,
as the lead developer on *Team--*

(ALEX stops him. She is back to being lazily dressed.)

ALEX

Frame sixteen, translate thirteen.

(Click.)

RACHEL

The hottest girl!

ALEX

Yeah, that's "game developer hot",
not "normal people hot".
That's a super low bar.
Being the hottest dev is like ...
being the fastest runner in chess club.

RACHEL

Why'd you say fourth quarter?

‘Cause that’s when it’s coming out.

ALEX

You told me first quarter 2015.

RACHEL

Yeah, but we need to get this out before Christmas.
Otherwise no one’s gonna buy it, and that’s, ya know ...
bad.
Frame twenty, translate sixteen...

ALEX

(Click.)

Are we gonna be ready?

RACHEL

Of course.

ALEX

Alex...

RACHEL

Rachel...

(Mocking) ALEX

You’re still animating my hair.

RACHEL

Exactly, it’s little details now.
All the important stuff’s pretty much done.
Frame twenty-four, translate twenty.

ALEX

(Click. RACHEL’s hair is fixed.)

Okay, now ...
render.

(RACHEL freezes.

ALEX nervously waits.

And waits...

Aaaand waaaaits...

RACHEL unfreezes.)

ALEX

(CON'T)

I hate that part.
I'm always afraid I'm gonna lose you.

RACHEL

You're not gonna lose me.

ALEX

It's happened before.

RACHEL

You worry too much.

ALEX

Save?

RACHEL

Saved.

ALEX

Ready?

(RACHEL gets into Idle Cycle.)

Run.

(RACHEL jumps once. The world glitches. She is frozen.)

Balls, what now?
What am I missing? ...
Oh, duh! View infinity on.

(RACHEL is unfrozen.)

Sorry.

(RACHEL rolls her eyes.)

I said sorry!
Ready?

(RACHEL resumes Idle Cycle.)

Run.

(RACHEL jumps another three or four times.
The ponytail bobs up and down.)

Stop.
Better.
But ...

RACHEL

Seriously?

I dunno, there's something ...
Maybe some shadowing that ...
... I dunno, go relax, this could be a while.

ALEX

(ALEX steps in front of a mirror. She watches herself jump in the air.)

What is it?

(She jumps again and studies herself.)

What am I missing?

(She starts jumping repeatedly.)

JUSTIN enters, putting on his shirt. He sees her, stops, watches.

She jumps a few more times before noticing him. She halts. Awkward.)

... Morning.

JUSTIN

Morning ...
... Happy St. Patrick's Day.

ALEX

Yeah ...
... It's Alex.

JUSTIN

I remember.

ALEX

Jesse.

JUSTIN

... Justin.

ALEX

... Justin?

JUSTIN

Yeah.

ALEX

... Are you sure?

JUSTIN

I got a hunch.

... I thought you said Jesse.

ALEX

Well I would've said Justin.

JUSTIN

Because that's your name.

ALEX

Yeah.

JUSTIN

... Justin.
I like it better.

ALEX

Me too.
Were you talking to someone--

JUSTIN

Can I make you breakfast?

ALEX

What?

JUSTIN

Breakfast, you want breakfast,
I can make you, ya know ...

ALEX

Breakfast.

JUSTIN

Breakfast.

ALEX

No, I can make it.
You got eggs?

JUSTIN

Eggs ... no.
I have cereal.

ALEX

JUSTIN
Oh, well I can, uh ...
Toast?

ALEX
I have bread!

JUSTIN
And a toaster?

ALEX
... A microwave.

JUSTIN
So ... cereal?

ALEX
Yeah, but it's Cinnamon Toast Crunch,
so it's, like, gourmet.

JUSTIN
Okay, you can make it.

ALEX
Sounds good.

JUSTIN
Today *would* be the day for Lucky Charms, though.

ALEX
Seriously, why have a drinking holiday on a Monday?
If I were St. Patrick, I'd be furious.
No Lucky Charms.

JUSTIN
S'fine.
So were you?

ALEX
What?

JUSTIN
Talking to someone?

ALEX
... Just me.

Really?
JUSTIN

You don't do that?
ALEX

Can't say I do.
JUSTIN

You should try it sometime.
You learn things about yourself.
ALEX

Okay, I'll, uh ...
Yeah, I'm still not gonna do that.
JUSTIN

Your call.
Hey, did I, um ...
I don't normally do ...
this, so--
ALEX

Me either.
JUSTIN

Okay, lovely, but um ...
Did I ...
do anything embarrassing last night?
ALEX

Define "embarrassing".
JUSTIN

Puke.
Call my ex.
Puke on my ex.
ALEX

I don't remember you doing that.
But I also don't remember ...
like, a lot of last night.
JUSTIN

Yeah, it all starts going fuzzy around that green drink.
ALEX

That thing was delicious.

JUSTIN

Right?
So you don't remember ...

ALEX

(JUSTIN shakes his head.)

You?

JUSTIN

There's, like, fragments, sort of ...
motion blurs, but ...

ALEX

Yeah.

JUSTIN

... I'm sure it was great.

ALEX

Oh, legendary.

JUSTIN

One for the books.

ALEX

(The cereal is ready.)

A la vôtre!

JUSTIN

Thanks.
You have work today?

ALEX

Uhhh ...
yeah, but--

JUSTIN

Oh, should I--?

ALEX

No no ...
unless you want to, then yes yes, but ...
I work from home.

Nice, what do you do? JUSTIN

Uhhh ... ALEX

What? JUSTIN

Well, this is where you remember
you have a thing you need to go do,
and you run out the door. ALEX

What, do you ...
kill people, are you a people-killer? JUSTIN

Not ... really. ALEX

Not *really*?
Okay, I'm actually kinda nervous now. JUSTIN

No no, it's ...
I ...
... make video games. ALEX

... You *make* them? JUSTIN

I'm a developer, yeah.
What do you do? ALEX

Something not as interesting so who cares,
you *make* video games? JUSTIN

Someone has to. ALEX

I guess.
Wow.

JUSTIN

Do you game?

ALEX

I mean, I'm a dude in my twenties, so yeah.
What have you ... made, developed?

JUSTIN

Well, I started at Conduit Games,
I was, um ...
I was one of the lead developers on, uh ...
... on *Team Cloud*.

ALEX

(Bracing for impact:)

... *Team Cloud*?

JUSTIN

(Wait, what?)

Yep.

ALEX

You ...
created *Team Cloud*.

JUSTIN

Co-created.
Helped create.

ALEX

Team Cloud!
Holy shit!
I played that all the time, few years ago!

JUSTIN

A lot of people did.
A lot of people still do.

ALEX

Well yeah, it's awesome,
but more than awesome,
that sounds so...

JUSTIN

JUSTIN

(CON'T)

There's absolutely nothing like it out there.
It's amazing.

ALEX

Yeah, thanks.

JUSTIN

It's, like, a huge deal, right?
Won a lot of ... whaddya call it?

ALEX

Game of the Year Awards?

JUSTIN

That's it.

ALEX

Yeah, it did.

JUSTIN

That's ...
Team Cloud!
Holy shit!
When are you guys gonna make a sequel to that?

ALEX

... I, uh ...
I don't know.
I don't work there anymore.

JUSTIN

... Oh.

ALEX

Yeah, bid farewell to the big budget studios.
I make indie games now,
less money, less people ...
I mean, it's really just me at this point,
making my own stuff.

To read the full script or to inquire about rights,
please e-mail JeremyGable@JeremyGable.com