

fire crackles in a windy cave. boots crush dirt. something low breathes sharp and heavy.

DUKAYNE (*a heroic barbarian wizard voice*)

I hear you, Fan Clengday-Mo! And your damn chained up name! I freed the village Trust from the evil Baron who controlled it, and there an ugly old man with more brains than teeth told me your old name and broke the chains at the entrance to this cavern!

Fan (*a slow sharp dragons voice*)

You? You have a word the wind whispered and durtled past an iron skirt to challenge me where I've slept for 300-hundred years. You are not the first to reach me. I will not remember you when you are gone.

DUKAYNE

Do you think I'll rust my armoured robes with piss at your rapsed words? If you are the same wyrm who changes the course of rivers by sneezing then show my sword and spells your glinting green eyes. We'll see then who keeps your heartstone.

Fan

You are already dead. You died the moment you darkened my threshold. If any of the trinkets you carry are your god, say your words to him now.

Dukayne

No Gods here but us, Fan. And soon only me. Where are you, that my life is in such mortal theat?

Fan

HERE!

A wall of fire and sizzling pops. then an electronic tone.

Cooper (*nerd*)

AAH! DAMN IT!

Alex (*also nerd*)

(laughs)

Cooper

is that it?

Alex

yeah, you died.

Cooper

What? In a second? I didn't even have time to..fire ball or whatever.

Alex

yeah Fan is tough man. He's the end of the game so he's hard. Do you want me to tell you how to beat him?

Cooper

No, just reset. Put me back in the cave.

Alex

No this is my save. You're gonna screw it up. I'll just start a new file for you.

Cooper

why did you let me play your file if you didn't want me too?

Alex

I knew you would die at the cave. Everyone dies at the cave. Okay hold on. Do you see the green field?

Cooper

I don't see anything. Oh wait! Yes!

VR GAME (old man voice)

Greetings, programs!

Cooper

Yeah someone's talking to me.

VR GAME

Welcome to Brazen Shatterings! You seem a brave and (etc)

ALEX

oh hang on.

(the vr voice cuts out)

Alex

gone?

Cooper
yeah.

Alex
okay, Im just gonna load the standard character. Next time you can build a custom but-

Cooper
yea yea that's fine. Am i going to start-

(a fwoosh noise as the character is loaded)

DUKAYNE
-from the beginning, oh! HA HAA, DUKAYNE voice! Nnnnyaa-II am a hero! a
WIZARD BARBARIAN! NONE ARE MY EQUAL NNNYAAAHAH!

ALEX
I'm gonna put you in a one-off game since we don't have time for a campaign.

DUKAYNE
YYESSSS! Take me, to whatever port adventure is setting sail from!

Alex
There's also a woman character.

DUKAYNE
Ah haa! And what does-

VEDA (*HEROIC WOMAN VOICE*)
-sound like? Ohh hoo! Yes now we're cooking with fire! Hey do I have a staff??

Alex
Yes, Dukayne has a dagger, Veda carries a staff. She know's fewer spells to start with but
her combat stats are higher.

VEDA
Then VEBA ANSWERS THE CALL!

Alex
(laughing) it's Ve-DAH.

Veda

VEDAH answers the call!

ALEX

okay i'm loading the quest. I'm make some lunch, you want some lunch? this quest is pretty short.

Veda

I will have a flagon and a flank, and a leather pouch of the reddest wine you carry, for my thirsts are not exclusive to the ambition of battle

Alex (*off*)

It's gonna be pasta and chicken pesto!

Veda

ALSO GOOD!

(a few video game sounding footsteps. the swish of a sword)

Veda

Ha Haa!

(a fwoosh as the quest start. maybe some video game tavern music)

Veda

Oh! It begins. Hello Tavern...uh Tavern fellow! I am Veda, with a D. I am a travelling hero, I trade deeds for wine and flank. How may I assist you today?

(video game music plays. a swish of the sword)

Veda

Okay whatever. weird.

(footsteps)

Veda

Barmaid! Do you know of anyone in need of-

Barmaid

What'll it be stranger?

Veda

Ah...wine? you're reddest wine? And i'll take a side of adventure-

Barmaid
Here ya go.

(clunk)

Veda
Ok thanks i guess. I can't drink this.

Barmaid
Now that you've had your drink, maybe you can help us? A troll has promised to come here and destroy this town if we don't feed it all our crops. Perhaps you could- etc

VEDA
HAA HAAAAA YES! Now this is more like it!

(an electronic whizzle.)

LINT
Is anyone here real?

Veda
what?

Lint
You! you're a real person right? You're plugged in??

Veda
I am VEDA, the hero who trades deeds for wine and sometimes flank-

Lint
no shut up, you have to help me! I've been plugged in for three days, I can't get out. Every time unplug myself I'm still in the game. If i don't get out I'm going to dehydrate or starve or something. You have to help me.

Veda
Okay uhh....are you serious? This isn't part of Brazen Shatterings?

Lint
NO! I was playing CenterBase Zero9. You have to send someone to my apartment!

Veda

Okay, Okay! Hold on. *(beat)* H-hold on....okay..okkkaaayyy..

Lint

what??

Veda

I can't log off. i can't sign out. I can't even turn the game off.

Lint

are you holding down the power button??

Veda

yes I'm holding it down but nothing is happening! Alex! ALEX! GET IN HERE YOU'RE
GAME IS TRYING TO KILL ME!

Lint

Oh no. That's what happened to me.

VEDA

Well how do I undo it??

Lint

I don't know!

*(a horrible sound of a troll tearing the roof off the tavern. there are screams and troll
roars)*

VEDA

OH not NOW! FIREBALL! (voosh) FIRE BALL! (voosh!) NORTH WIND (wind
whooshing) How do you make it stop??

(pew pew pew!! laser gun noise!! the troll falls like a tree. the screaming stops.)

Veda

holy moly. Is that a ray gun?

Lint

Yah, CenterBase Zero9 is a laser gun shooter thing. It takes a lot more to kill a robot than
whatever that was i guess.

Veda
Troll

Barmaid

Thank you stranger! You have saved us! You're reward is all the the the all the theeee
TriTech Crystaaaaaalls you can carry in your pouch. TriTech Crystals harvested on this
planet arerrrrrr all yours.

Veda
Do what now?

Lint

TriTech crystals are from my game. Whatever is happeneing to me, i think I brought it
into your game. Sorry.

Veda
Not cool bro.

VR GAME

You have completed your quest faster than any pilgrim before you! Speak your name for
the hall of heroic records.

Veda
What the bonkers garbage?? Hey! Hey! I'm at the menu! I can sign out!

Lint

Because you completed your mission...i never completed my mission. I've been trying
real world solutions, trying to reset my system, trying to scream so my neighbors would
hear. it never occurred to me to try an ingame solve! that's it!!

veda
wait, where do you live?? I can -

(electronic fizzle)

Veda
-send someone, no wait!

(boot steps, electronic fizzle. space noises. lasers and battle sounds)

Lint

hey! why did you follow me??

Veda

You don't have to beat your game, just tell me where you are and I can sign out and call someone to go help you or whatever.

Lint

oh!! duh!! god, i haven't eaten in days. I'm not thinking straight. Okay I'm in wichita kansas. 6614 e 10th street.

Veda

Okay, sit tight. (beat) uhh....okay weird. I don't have my logout menu anymore??

Lint

can you reset?

Veda

doesn't...appear to be working no. Can you?

Lint

still no.

Veda

oh son of a...I'm not in MY game anymore. We're in YOUR game now. We have to complete YOUR mission so we can both log out.

Lint

no. God...I'm so thirsty.

Veda

Focus up. We can do this. Your laser gun took care of my troll lickety split. Maybe I have a spell that can work on your mission?

Lint

Harvest the crystals of the world below or make peace with the Bylar, the race that currently shooting holes in my ship, or destroy the Bylar and then harvest the crystals.

Veda

that's...or? why is there so much "or" in your mission?? Why can't games just be "do this to win", god your mission has a peace treaty as one of multiple ending options.

Lint

I like a deeply immersive experience.

Veda

well sister, you' are certainly getting that.

Lint

not helpful!

Veda

Well i don't have a peacemaking spell, and my staff can't kill a whole spaceship, so how do we harvest a planet full of crystal?

Lint

we can either sent the Harvester down and let it grind, or we can take the ship down closer and superheat the atmosphere. the crystals evaporate and we syphon them into the holding chambers. it's just we can't do that during battle.

Veda

Jesus, when did games get so complicated? I just want to shoot a dragon in the face.

Lint

The harvester takes days to mine a planet. I don't know if i can last that long. It's supposed to run in the background while i go on other missions and stuff. Peace isn't really an option anymore, so we need to figure out a way to destroy the other Bylar ship.

Veda

and once we destroy the ship, the mission ends? You get the crystals or whatever and log out?

Lint

Hopefully, yes.

Veda

But did I not come here for adventure? Am I not looking to save those in need? Have I not the tools (sword swish) and the power? (fire fwoosh) And if you say there are beasts that need slaying and they are not far from here, then I will RIDE by your side, Friend, uh...friend what's your name?

Lint

Lint

Veda

Friend Lint! Lead on! Lead on to glory!

Lint

there's no where to go! The ship is already at battle stations, the fight have been going on for two days. We can go to the bridge and watch if we like but, there's no way to speed things up without changing tactics.

Veda

Not the bridge, Lint! To the enemy ship! Take us to the fight, the very belly of the beast! You with laser in hand, me with my many spells and warrior staff should make quick work of these Baymer!

Lint

Bylar. You want to go to the Bylar ship? That's intersting. That could work. How would we get there though? The only shuttle that leaves the ship takes th harvester down to planets.

Veda

Don't you worry about that my young friend. I may not know as many spells as Dukayne at level one, but I do have a trick up my wizard's sleeve.

Lint

What?

Veda

so to speak. I have a teleportaion spell. Put my eyes on the ship and i can take us both there with the wave of my staff. COME , LINT! TO THE WINDOW!

Lint

You see that ship up there, above the two smaller ones?

VEDA

INDEED!

Lint

that's the main attack cruiser. We take that ship, we can take out the smaller ships. We end the conflict.

Veda
Is your weapon ready?

Lint
Yeah, charged and loaded.

Veda
is your heart ready?

Lint
Ah, yes.

Veda
Take my hand then. The battle plan is to take as many souls as there are on board. Don't stop. never stop. the only thing that ends after your courage is your very life.

Lint
...okay.

Veda
Now cross your fingers cause i've never done this before.

Lint
WHAT?

VEDA (*booming voice*)
TELEPORT

teleport noise. alien ship noise.

veda
hey it worked!

Alien
INTRUDERS! ATTACK! KIL KILL KILL!

veda
FACE ME SQUARE, ALIEN HORROR! HELL, I IMAGINE, WON'T CARE MUCH
WHERE YOU DIED!

fire fight. alien noises. alien guns. Lints gun. Veda shouting FIRE BALL, FIRE BALL, EAST WIND, etc. sounds of battle continue through conversation.

VEDA

AAH HAAAAA!! NYAAAAH! FRIEND LINT, YOU MUST ADMIT IF WE ARE TO DIE HERE, IT IS A DEATH A WARRIOR COULD BE PROUD OF!

Lint

If we die here the level just starts over.

VEDA

What?!

Lint

Yeah letting my character die is the first i tried to get out. If we die in this game, it'll be from dehydration.

VEDA

Then we will fight this battle to our last blood! We will fight this battle again and again and again. I came in search of adventure! But I found a life to save! You will not DIE in this skybound pellet, Friend Lint. TOGETHER! TO ARMS!

ALEX

hey do you want parmasean?

battle noises continue

Veda

Alex?

Alex

yeah, do you want parmasean for your pasta? It's ready, by the way.

Veda

Alex! you have to turn the machine off! There's a player trapped in here! i followed her into her game, it's like an alien shooter game-

Alex

CenterBase Zero9.

Veda

what? yes! She's trapped in the game, I'M trapped in the game!

Suddenly all the battle noises stop. Cooper takes the VR helmet off.

Cooper

What happened? what the hell?

Alex

foods ready. also you were shouting.

Cooper

But the girl! She's trapped in the game. She's in Kansas, we have to call someone!

Alex

Oh my god, you're such a goober. That's the quest you were on. It's a demo for the custom crossover map maker.

Cooper

what? seriously??

Alex

yeah, the old man says so in the menu screen!

Cooper

we skipped the menu screen!

Alex

oh yeah. Ha. My bad.

Cooper

that's so messed up. So she's not real? shes fine?

Alex

yes, i've played the demo like five times. you beat the game and come back or she dies or whatever. Did land the ship on the planet?

Cooper

we teleported to the alien ship and just started killing things.

Alex

cool. Hey! Why did you name your characters "what the bonkers garbage"?

Cooper

Ha ha! The old man showed up when...(they walk off)

they walk off. transition noise. electronic fizzle. back in the space battle.

Lint

Veda! What happened?? Where did you go??

she gets murdered by an alien and it's sad and spooky.