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Rolling Stone



Why Lynchian-Classic 'Mizzurna Falls' Remains Untranslated

The lingering death of a fan translation



By Brittany Vincent

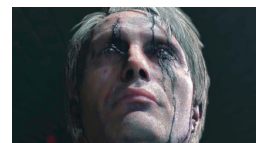
3 hours ago

In 1998, a modest, relatively unknown title launched for PlayStation. Human Corporation's *Mizzurna Falls* followed in the footsteps of the massively popular survival horror series *Clock Tower*, though it never saw anywhere near the same amount of recognition enjoyed by its contemporaries. It was quirky, weird, and rife with references to a cornucopia of media, namely *Twin Peaks*, and traces of it can now be seen in cult favorites like *Deadly Premonition*.

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The reason it never saw the same success among English-speaking players that many feel it deserved were twofold: The game never had a Western release, so it's remained a Japanese iniquity since its original release. While it's popped up on the radar of those looking to delve into "lost", Lynchian games with the emergence of *Twin Peaks: The Return*, it's largely languished in obscurity. The other reason? No one

took the time to write a complete, official translation or offer any viable way to actually play the game outside of Japan.

But near the end of 2016, it seemed as though those interested in trying out the game in English were about to have their moment. A spirited freelance video game translator wrote a complete English translation, then linked up with a talented hacker with the chops to patch the translated text into a copy of the game..

Now, more than a year later, the prospect of seeing a viable, playable form of the game is bleak. While there is a completely translated pack of English text files for *Mizzurna Falls*, no one seems willing or able to patch them into a copy of the game.

In a community where fans will recreate entire video games in *Minecraft* and write lengthy Sonic fan fiction, it's almost impossible to believe no one can or will do anything with these very special tools at their disposal. Is *Mizzurna Falls* relegated to remain a Japanese-only obscurity forever?

Evie

Resident Evie, or just Evie, as she prefers to be called, is a Tokyo-based freelance translator. She is also a self-proclaimed fan of Twin Peaks and most of David Lynch's catalog. Most importantly, for fans of *Mizzurna Falls*, she is head over heels for the quirky game. She dove headfirst into its weird world after happening upon it in 2015, when she chronicled her playthrough in a series of YouTube Let's Play videos. During these recordings, she translated dialogue, menus, and various other selected text as she played the game on the fly.

This made it simple for viewers to follow along, despite the language barrier, and Evie herself proved just as entertaining as the game. That experience inspired her to put together a comprehensive fan translation of the game, which is showcased over at her Project *Mizzurna* Tumblr page, featuring walkthroughs, discourse about the

translation, and other meaty tidbits for the rest of the world to pore over.

Her hard work garnered attention from publications throughout the gaming sphere, who were impressed by the effort that went into bringing an English translation, specifically one created on the fly, to fruition. She took it upon herself to play the games several times over, "three or four times," she tells Glixel, just to put together the English script, and a "few more times" to check over extra text for missed content. She clarifies "It's around a 14 hour game as well, so it's not short, and it has three different ending routes!"

Although work on translating the game into English was proceeding, it wasn't as though you could purchase a copy and pop it into a system to play it. To get the English text into the game required patching the existing Japanese text into the game, a long, painstaking process that needed someone with the expertise and time to combine the translation with the official game and make it playable by anyone.

Gemini

An eager translator introduced Evie to indie developer Gemini after catching an errant *Mizzurna Falls* hacking stream. Evie says Gemini offered to patch the English text into the game. Gemini, whose work also appeared in projects like Team IGAS' as-of-yet incomplete Resident Evil 1.5, seemed like a godsend for the project. Not only would fans eventually be able to play *Mizzurna Falls* in English, but they'd be able to play it in a much more natural way than having to consult an English guide for every twist and turn.

Evie soldiered on to finish the work she began, and completed her translation of the entire game script in December 2016. She then handed it off to Gemini to start the lengthy process of patching the game with the new text, something she was excited to share with her Tumblr's readers.

"Thanks for sticking with me, and while I'll try to answer any questions I can, my part is now effectively finished," she wrote. She asked that fans please refrain from peppering hacker Gemini with questions about the project, and reminded them that she simply couldn't answer when the translation would be finished.



The months ticked by, and progress on the project seemed promising. In August, Evie posted about an hour's worth of English gameplay, courtesy of Gemini. Following several screenshots, teaser videos, and other tidbits, it seemed as though progress was being made at a rapid pace. If the rate at which new content was being posted to the Project Mizzurna Tumblr could be trusted, the game would likely be finished sooner than fans expected. But then updates trickled to a halt. Days passed, then weeks. Finally, it had been months since a sizeable update was posted regarding the English update. Fans were questioning the progress, until the next blog post surfaced.

On January 11, 2018, Evie updated her Project Mizzurna Tumblr, outlining the dilemma she found herself facing.

"So, here's what's really going on with the *Mizzurna Falls* project," the entry began. "Over the past year, I unfortunately didn't manage to get much communication with the very skilled person who's currently making a fan hack patch using my complete translation," Evie continued. "It seems to me that there's not that much merit for me in allowing one person to have exclusive use of my translation. I can't

control how and when that translation will be made into a patch. It could be never. So, I've decided to take a different approach."

It's not immediately clear, what happened to the fan-driven project, but there's no bad blood between the two.

"As time passed, I realized I didn't feel like we were working 'together' on the project, more like I was just the translation donor," Evie told Glixel via email. "I know that they're [Gemini] busy with other projects as well, but I just wanted to be kept informed after doing all the work of translating the game and trying to get its name out there. It's very important to me."

Evie linked the full set of completed project files via Tumblr, saying that she wished Gemini nothing but the best, and offered "complete free use" of her translation.

"Making my translation 100 percent open and available online is the best way I know to try to make this happen. It's about all I can do. So I'm doing it," the post read.

Attempts at reaching Gemini via social media or a viable contact address by Glixel were fruitless. When asked if she heard from the group since making the files available, Evie said "I haven't heard anything, but I wish them well. I think they were just too busy with other things."

One year later, despite all the hard work having been completed on the Japanese to English translation side, there is still no playable English build of *Mizzurna Falls*. But despite the setbacks, Evie says she felt "supported" by those who have been following her on this journey.

"I think people can appreciate that I'm just trying to get the word of this game out by any means possible. I thought a lot about it, and I don't want to be one of those people who holds a free, fan translation hostage. I often get messages from people from non-English speaking

countries who are fascinated by the game and want to try to translate it into their native language, but they don't know Japanese.”

And yet Evie remains hopeful for the future. “A few people have emailed me saying they’re digging around in the game. Hopefully there’s someone out there with both the ability and the drive to make it a possibility!”

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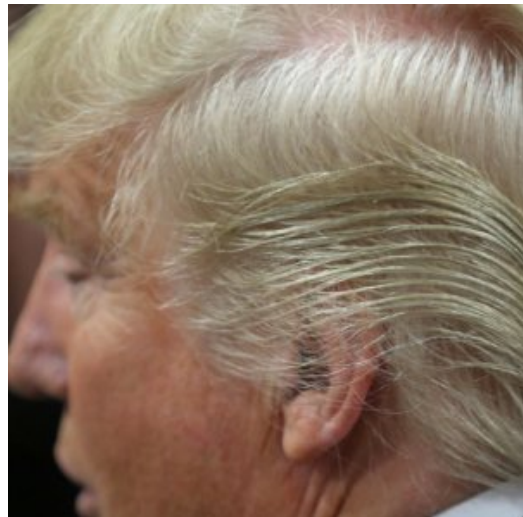
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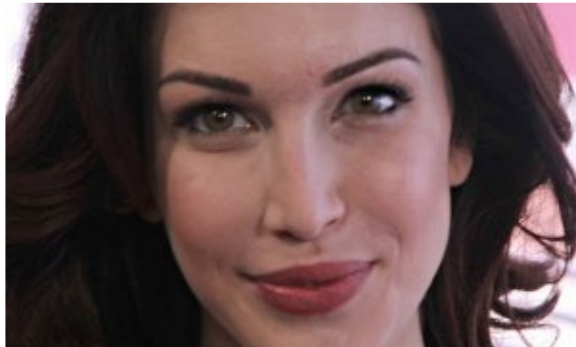
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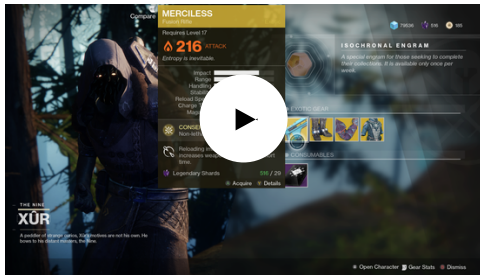
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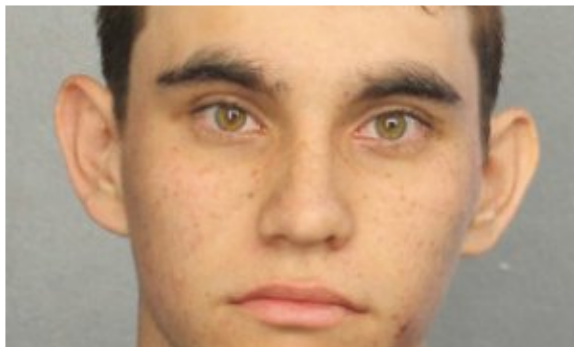
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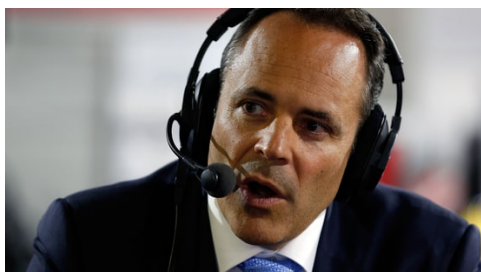
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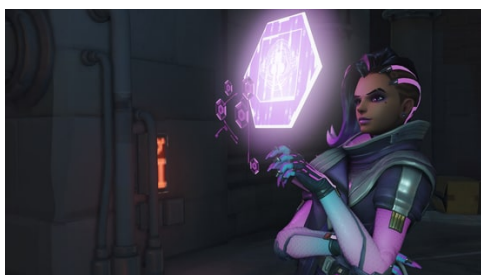
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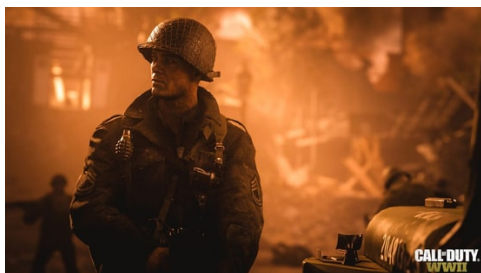
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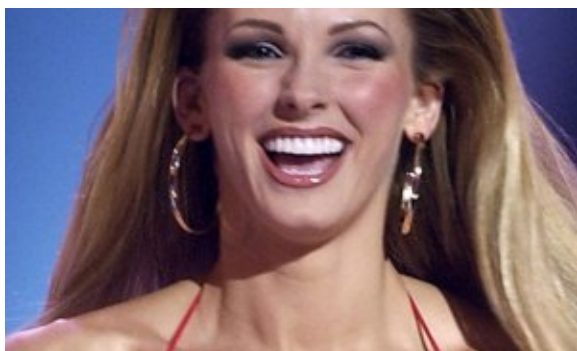
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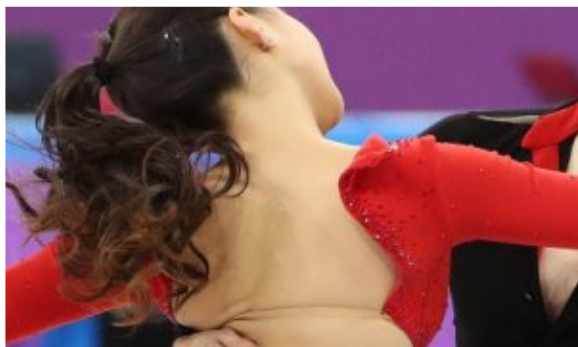
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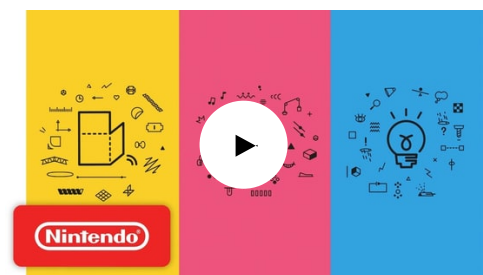
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