

//DROWNED GOD

Introduction

-windows XP bootup, launch game, begin showing snippets of gameplay-

Drowned God: Conspiracy of the Ages.

A 1996 point and click video game created by a man named Richard Horne, also known as Harry Horse. Stemming from the idea that the scientific origins of humanity are a lie, the game plays like an eerie looking-glass into a disturbed mind.

The game is, for all intents and purposes, a product of its time, and it was received mostly well. Containing an esoteric mish-mash of historical beliefs, the game effectively bombards you with questions about your origins, while connecting them to prominent conspiracy theories and secret societies - like the Illuminati. In-turn, the end-result is nothing short of perplexing, but – something tells me that this was on purpose.

At the outset of Drowned God, you're greeted with a mysterious chamber and a strange voice explaining your place in its world. Allegedly, the reality that you're experiencing is a gift, and who it's from is presently one of the game's many mysteries. The voice explains that you've returned here from a previous life, and your current task, while obscure, is to unearth a secret that will enlighten you with answers about life itself.

"Trust too deeply", the voice warns, "and you'll know the wickedness in men's hearts. As above, so below. As above, so below. This is the secret of the Drowned God".

-play snippet, maybe do a title sequence, cut to black-

Something about 1990s PC games have this charm about them. And it's eerily... pleasant.

-cut game in with soft music-

The atmosphere of Drowned God sucks you in, enveloping you within it's bemusing lore from the outset. The gameplay is rudimentary, at least compared to modern standards, but back then that was mostly expected. The point and click game was nothing new, and Drowned God was, of course, one of many like it. Sanitarium, Garage, Myst, Putt Putt – they were everywhere. What made it special, though, was the fact that it was so outlandish. It had layers, genuine lore, and a wild mish-mash of conspiracies all baked into an eerie little 2-hour package. To enjoy Drowned God, meant that you had to believe in it. Engross yourself in it. And suspend whatever counterbelief that was baked within your conscience.

-snippets of gameplay-

After the introductory monologue, you're left in a chamber called the *Bequest Globe*. Before you is a terminal, and after entering your name, it assigns you a number, a spirit animal, and then presents you with a synopsis of your past lives. After observing this, a door opens up leading to two otherworldly beings named Kether and Malachut, that explain that you need to collect four ancient relics for the secret of the Drowned God - The Ark of the Covenant, the Philosopher's Stone, The Rod of Osiris, and the Holy Grail. Obtaining these involves utilizing a time-machine mechanic known as the Cryptowheel - that teleports you to the regions in which they're kept.

-show first world-

The first world is one named Binah (bee-nah), containing aspects of Arthurian legend, and including references to Stonehenge. It takes you through a deserted wasteland before eventually dropping you off at a museum I can only describe as... uncanny. Like... the Museum of Anything Goes... [quick cut to game] but that's a story for another time.

-cut to black-

-soft cut in to second world-

The second, Chesed (chess-sed), showcases a submarine interior and Aztec ruins all wrapped up within an eerily liminal desert. Something I particularly enjoyed here were the numerous references to the Philadelphia Experiment – a time-traveling invisible military ship conspiracy theory that's admittedly pretty damn creepy. An obvious hoax, but still creepy. I'm sure you can see why it fit perfectly into Drowned God though.

-show second world-

The third, named Din (den), brings you to a carnival, a maze, and an underground subway system. The characters you encounter during this section don Plague Doctor masks and walk in the most unnatural manner possible. The carnival section, however, was a welcome change because it was throwin' me Silent Hill 3 vibes, and that ain't a bad thing.

-show third world-

And the final world, Chokmah (chalk-mah), takes you to a structure outside of Area 51. Everything's super quiet. Super abandoned. Super... ominous.

-show fourth world-

One thing you'll notice about Drowned God is it's frequent use of Body Horror. From machines that bear the faces of human beings, to talking heads connected with tubes, the game pulls no punches on trying to freak you out.

Once the game finally draws to a close, and you collect three of the four artifacts needed to unearth the big secret, you find that you're unable to, and are left to choose three separate paths leading to three different endings. Spoiler alert – all of them are undesirable. Choosing the first path banishes you to a technological police state with men in black suits surveilling you. The second, is much of the same, however you're forced into genetic manipulation against your will. And the final path? Well that's my favorite one, because it welcomes you with a scene of aliens, that cheerfully claim *"We are coming, for we are legion"*.

-maybe play a quick cut-

...A bit forward I'll admit, but, that's Drowned God for you. Aliens helped create humanity.

-cut to black-

Because of course they did.

-slight pause, fade gameplay back in-

Segue

Now, Drowned God within itself is undoubtedly creepy, and absolutely warrants an entire review video of it's own. It's got all the cornerstones of a dissectible piece of media, with hidden secrets, a convoluted story, disturbing characters, and a creepy atmosphere. While that alone personally piques my interest, what you'd be surprised to know, is that discussion about the game itself isn't actually why we're here today...

-slight pause-

The game's creator, Harry Horse, is a... peculiar person, and the backstory of his life behind the veil of Drowned God is nothing short of unsettling...

But why?

-Google Harry Horse, boom onto articles about the Romeo and Juliet suicide, potential Oddscore beats-

Reports had come out nearly a decade after the game's release that Harry Horse had passed away in a Romeo-and-Juliet-esque suicide pact with his wife Mandy Williamson. The couple had allegedly overdosed on painkillers and died in each other's arms, with some outlets describing the scene as "deeply moving", and "the final expression of the great love story that was their life together". While this may initially seem grievous, subsequent discoveries would later reveal that the reality of the situation wasn't quite so simple...

Like I said, Harry Horse was an enigma. An outlier. A mind full of complexity, like a mad scientist. For the last decade of his life, everything around him was spiraling further and further into complication and misfortune. His wife was stricken by an aggressive form of multiple sclerosis and as a result, Harry would regularly express his growing discontent for how his life was falling into place.

The division and method of discovery between this alleged love-story suicide pact and the media accounts surrounding it are another curious find as well, as the real details of what happened that night weren't released until months later. The story everyone was made to believe – this romantic tragedy - actually was a complete lie.

In reality, things were much, *much* darker. But we gotta establish some context.

Lemme take ya to the beginning.

-long fade-

//THE MISFORTUNE OF HARRY HORSE

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS [Minimal chapter cards with wiggle text?]

It's the 9th of May, 1960.

A boy is born to a Jo and Derek Horne of Warwickshire, England. They name him Richard, and he would be the first of four children. For most of his childhood, things are... pretty good. The family reportedly lived in an upscale farmhouse without much conflict, and from an early age, Richard was known to have a fondness for art, frequently drawing the animals that he'd see on his daily walks with his family. All-around, by those that knew him, he was regarded as a considerably friendly, and stand-up child, with a winning smile.

-fade-

//DISPARITY BETWEEN FAMILY WANTS AND RICHARD'S

By his teenage years, Richard would become increasingly aware that his life aspirations were at odds with those of his family. For instance, his parents were delighted when he eventually landed a job as a solicitors clerk at a law firm, however this occupation opened his eyes to where his heart truly was. Not in law, but – rather *art*.

After quitting a short while later, and around the time he turned 18, he'd leave his home for Edinburgh, Scotland in hopes of sneaking into college art classes. He changed his name from Richard Horne to Harry Horse around this time as well, which his family believes was his method of burying his past life entirely – a rift that we'll soon find noteworthy.

"If you look like a student, and you act like a student, then you basically are one", Harry claimed was his philosophy at Edinburgh University, and it seemed to have ultimately paid off, as just *five years later*, he'd release his debut children's book - to remarkable success. His method of pulling this off, however, involved a significant amount of lying and persuasion. Allegedly, he had contacted the would-be publisher – Canongate - posing as an agent, and claiming that they should check Harry's work out. Needless to say, he ultimately landed that interview, and the rest is history.

-quick fade-

//SWAMPTRASH

By utilizing this new-found knack for role-playing, Harry would launch a band called Swamptrash in 1987. It was during this phase of his life, that he would meet the woman he'd marry – named Mandy Williamson. She was a self-proclaimed 'number one fan', and from the beginning, they reportedly hit it off. According to a friend, "Harry was besotted with Mandy", and she was a "center of sublime stillness". Something Harry reputedly needed since, according to those close to him, he was prone to sudden outbursts of rage. From coworkers to bandmates, what most were unaware of was the fact that Harry would lash out for seemingly no reason, leaving them frequently taken aback by his polarity.

"I hate fucking dealers, they're the parasites of the art world. Profit-margin-obsessed, greedy individuals with no true understanding of art", he once unloaded onto a Scotland art dealer. It was because of this notion that his peers would see him as a nice guy, no doubt – however he had his demons, and *was - undoubtedly -* unpredictable.

-cut to black-

//DISPARITY BETWEEN FAMILY AND MANDY

After Harry and Mandy's eventual wedding, the pair sought refuge in an Edinburgh apartment, and things were – good. At first. The couple would regularly visit editors as Harry found himself in yet another stint alongside Swamptrash - drawing up political artwork for various newspapers. This, however, was short-lived since by 1993, Harry allegedly lashed out at one of his publishers due to his work being mistakenly cropped. Because of this, they were ultimately unable to maintain the cost of living in Edinburgh, and relocated to a small cottage back home in Warwickshire where Harry would begin his work on a *video game of all things* – called Drowned God.

"BREAKAGE" - DROWNED GOD (1996)

-cut to interview vid-

Having taken up an interest in conspiracy theories, Harry utilized his forgery and role-playing skills to craft a false manuscript, dated 1846, that outlined an alternative history of the dawn of mankind. He impersonated an 18th century poet named Richard Henry Horne to pull this off - Not to be confused with Harry Horse's birth name. According to Harry, Henry Horne took "great interest in the legend of the Sons of God, and it was exactly the subject of my forgery". A wild coincidence according to him, but it was one that ultimately duped everyone.

-play segment from EPK-

By Halloween night of 1996, the game was released and was generally well received, selling over 34,000 copies in just two weeks. Described by some as "the strangest, creepiest, most psychedelic adventure game I've yet to come across", it was safe to say that Harry had crafted somethin' special. So special – that he had planned a sequel named CULT to eventually tie the Drowned God story together, however due to events that would soon transpire, that sequel would never see the light of day.

-fade-

"FELINA" – THE FINAL YEARS (2007)

Contrary to his numerous successes in his professional life, his personal life was - crumbling. Mandy was officially diagnosed with an aggressive form of multiple sclerosis, leaving her health to rapidly deteriorate; and by the early 2000s, she was confined to a wheelchair. This downward spiral would carry on for the better part of the next decade, and those close to them could observe Harry's mental state mirroring this. After a myriad of smaller moves and life changes during the next few years, the pair would eventually adopt a cat and a dog named Roo, and in 2004, they'd set up camp one final time near Mandy's immediate family in Shetland, Scotland.

It was there where Harry was.... Out of his element. As time would pass, his workload for caring for Mandy would increase, yet at the same time, his mind had a nagging desire to work back in Edinburgh. To remedy this, he'd organize a group of family and friends to help care for Mandy so he could focus, however it was only marginally effective. To Harry, the months began to feel longer, he was becoming increasingly uninspired, and by May of 2006, it was observed by his peers that his demeanor had reached somewhat of a breaking point.

-silence-

Catalyzed by the sudden passing of their dog Roo, he became, indifferent. Incalculable. And it resulted in a multitude of incidents. According to The Sunday Times, *he berated a Shetland art gallery for its pretentious paintings. He punched a hole in a wall at home during a bout with a social worker who was disputing Mandy's disability benefits. His family's relations were reaching a terminal phase, and he eventually cut contact with each of them.*

"*I am in a living hell*" Harry once claimed. This island that was supposed to be their home of tranquility was beginning to feel more and more like a prison cell.

-long fade-

//FELINA

On the 9th of January 2007, two of Mandy's friends would make a quick stop to check in on the couple. During their stay, Harry purportedly wasn't himself, and was firing off claims such as "*it's a wonderful night for a killing*". According to them, Mandy didn't want them to leave after their visit either, however against her wishes, they did anyway...

-fade out, clock sound, wolf sound?, then tick in to 3D scene zooming out over scene-

//SET THE SCENE [Have numerous detailed pans inside rooms of house with blood on walls during this]

9:40am. January 10th.

The two friends return to the house to retrieve a jacket that they left behind. The front door's open, and they head inside. Instead of being greeted by the couple, however, they encounter something... a bit more grotesque:

-Their new dog and their cat are stabbed to death.

-Mandy is seen with over 30 stab wounds and a broken blade stuck within her. Harry is discovered with over 47 wounds on his arms and torso, and mutilated genitals. The pair are lying close together on her bed.

There's blood on the floor, the windows, the walls, and the scene is – unlike anything they've ever witnessed.

-quick pause-

//"THE STORY"

According to the media, it's believed that that evening, Harry snapped after consuming an alleged "*cocktail of drugs*", stabbing his wife over and over until the first knife broke off inside of her. He grabbed another, and continued stabbing her before shifting his attention to their two pets, and after killing them, he would turn the knife on himself, stabbing his own torso and genitals until both Mandy and he bled to death - together.

-fade-

"*The doctor who attended hasn't returned to work,*" an officer claimed "*it's the worst thing he's ever seen*".

-hard cut onto drone shot with braam-

To police, the scene was ... dark. They went on record to claim that a murder like this hadn't happened on the Shetland Islands in over 15 years prior to the incident. The area was closed off and the investigation began privately, though, on the outside, word of mouth began to spread. Since Scotland's investigators operate close to

the chest, withholding details and official accounts – even today, everyone caught wind that the pair were dead, however nobody knew exactly *why or how*. It was because of this notion that rumors would sprout about the pair potentially overdosing on Mandy's painkillers since – Harry couldn't have murdered his own wife, pets, and then himself...

-cut to black-

Could he?

“CONFLICTION” - Conflicting Accounts (2007-2008)

And so, during the weeks immediately following the incident, media outlets ran with it, dressing up the murder-suicide as an act of love. There were even plans to bury the two together since the families believed that it's what they would've wanted, however, they were oblivious to the full story. It wasn't until days later that the families would catch wind of the actual details from the crime scene, and it's a bitter feeling that they still hold to this day.

With that being said, because the investigation reports are *still confidential*, the quote on quote “official account” – the murder by the hand of Richard Horne – has also been the subject of scrutiny. Evidence of this can be found on Wikipedia [highlight], through numerous articles [highlight or pan], and even various blogs that the Horne family had set up.

//DIGGING IN

The root of the issue stems from the fact that in Scotland, a so-called *Fatal Accident Inquiry* was never released. Having determined that it would be in the public's best interest to *not* know what officially happened that night since the deaths didn't happen at the workplace or in police custody, it's left the public largely in the dark.

I've been in contact with the nephew of Harry Horse, and while they're well-aware of the initial flowery misinterpretation in the media, they're left with the belief that vital details are... missing. According to them, throughout this investigation they've been “*excluded, misled, drip-fed information, and to date, everything that's been released has led to closed doors*”. Allegedly, Mandy's family were the only ones that acquired the full disclosure from that night's events, leaving the *sole* public source of information to come from them.

-quick pause-

One of the few official answers that the Hornes *were* able to obtain was Richard's autopsy report, and the results are highly intriguing. As it turns out, the widely-reported “*cocktail of drugs*” that he ingested the night of the killing actually *wasn't so*, since the Blood Alcohol and **Blood Urine/NEED MORE INFO** levels had come back negative. He was entirely sober during this, leading the family to further question how he'd be able to pull off 47 self-inflicted stab wounds on top of self-mutilation.

Furthermore, according to them, the consensus of Harry murdering Mandy wasn't declared until *months* after the fact, and this point *is* reflected in media reports like this one that was written in [July of 2008](#). Published by the Shetland Times, it claims:

“THE FATHER of Burra woman Mandy Horne confirmed this week what many people in the isles appear to have known but has never been made public until now – that his daughter was brutally murdered by her husband, the writer, cartoon-ist and musician Harry Horse, who then killed himself.

George Williamson spoke briefly to The Shetland Times after details were published in a Sunday Times magazine article which directly contradicted the original story that they had died in a suicide pact in January 2007”.

-fade-

It's the inconsistencies and odd timing like this that've largely left the Horne family frustrated.

"Were they murdered?" a document they curated claims. "To date, a high court judge and forensic psychologist, amongst others believe so. Someone got away with murder. But - can we prove it? Only time will tell".

-long fade-

Closing Remarks

The story of Mandy Williamson and Harry Horse is a metaphorical amalgamation of tension, devolvement, and madness. After leading a life of lies, Harry Horse had found great successes in his professional life, however the reflection of himself in his personal ultimately created a character that he grew further and further from recognizing. The events that played out that night are the summit, the - breaking point - of a relationship that could've been - should've been - so much better, yet the circumstances that surrounded them ultimately crumbled into calamity.

It's been regarded by many as the perfect catastrophe rooted in lunacy. Killing the ones you love before turning the knife upon yourself is a testament to the burning resentment that was buried within him all along...

-slight pause-

Well, at least, that's how it was portrayed in the media. And that's the main issue with this entire predicament - it's one that's wrapped up in he-said, she-said, media sensationalism, and journalistic misinformation.

Ultimately, *"cruel distortion"* or not, this entire affair has taught us to never take anything at face value. Whether the events that played out on January 10th were a gruesome murder-suicide by a doubtlessly unpredictable husband that lost his mind, or were the work of an external group of individuals that got away with homicide, what's undeniable is the fact that the legal system in Scotland is frustrating, ultimately leaving us with limited information on not only Harry Horse himself, but Mandy Williamson, their families, and everyone else that surrounded them...

-long fade-

Thank you for watching. I'll see you soon, I love you all, and good night.

-roll creditz-