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At What Price: Insidious Hegemony and Character Archetypes Woven into *Until Dawn*

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Literature and Language

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in English

by

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ABSTRACT

At What Price: Insidious Hegemony and Character Archetypes Woven into *Until Dawn*

by

Courtney Harvey

Supermassive Games's *Until Dawn* tasks its players with helping eight teenagers survive a night of terror. All eight playable characters may live or die depending on the player's choices and gameplay proficiency. Despite its intricacies, the game still relies heavily on horror movie tropes, which the characters embody, and they face different treatment based on their gender, race, and sanity. Particularly, the weapons available to them and the scenarios for their deaths and survival contribute to trapping the characters within their given characteristics and forcing them into a role that they cannot ever fully break free from. While the branching narrative style opens up the possibility for the hegemony to be challenged, the characters are so stiffly created that, in spite of the multitudes of choices and paths to go down, all the characters are confined to their archetypes and stereotypes related to their identities regardless of the player's choices.

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CHAPTER 1. IMPORTANT DISCOVERY: INTRODUCTION

In the end it is always the same: Hannah runs out into the snowstorm followed by Beth, eventually both being forced over the edge of the cliff, falling to their untimely deaths. The game wants the player to believe that their choices matter, that they affect the story, but that clearly is not always true. Despite beginning with the butterfly effect and insisting that everything the player does affects the future, the way in which the player can effect change in the game is limited.

Supermassive Games's *Until Dawn* is a branching narrative horror video game in which the player is tasked with helping eight teenagers survive a night of terror. All eight playable characters may live or die depending on the player's choices and ability to succeed at combat scenarios, quick time events, and don't move commands. Despite the intricacies of the game, it relies heavily on horror movie tropes. The use of these tropes is strategic. The game's intention was to use these common and recognizable tropes in order to make it easier for the player to learn what each character was like in order to successfully conform to what they would do in a given situation, which is key for survival. Common advice for players of *Until Dawn* is to "play the character, not the game"—to do as the character would do rather than to do what they want to do instead. Though this works from a game design perspective, it unfortunately leads to a reinforcement of harmful horror hegemony around gender, race, and mental illness.

Each playable character in *Until Dawn* embodies at least one specific horror archetype, and they also all face different treatment based on their presented gender, race and sanity in the game (refer to Table 1 in Appendix A for a list of the characters, their identities, their traits, and their archetypes). The characters' archetypes and identities are the source of *Until Dawn*'s

limitations; it is where we can see how the future is much more limited than what the game wants the player to believe. The choices the characters are presented with are often influenced by their archetypes and identities, and they will always conform to their archetypes when the player is unable to control them.

The characters are affected by a pervasive ideology (in Althusser's sense of the term) that places them in their roles based on unconscious beliefs held by the general population about people who suffer from mental health issues, who are racial minorities, and who are women. His concept of interpellation, which hails subjects to behave in certain ways to further the current dominant social system, is heavily at play in *Until Dawn*, as deviating from what the characters would do, deviating from their archetypal role, results in various forms of punishment for the player, such as character relationships with each other being harmed, character injury, or character death. The game provides the player with information about the playable characters both through pause screen traits and relationship charts (see Appendix C) and through introduction cards flashed when the characters are slowly introduced in Chapters 1 and 2 (these traits are also listed in Table 1.1 in Appendix A), which tells the player how to play the game, the "correct" set of traits to attribute to each character and make them exhibit in order to win. It also gives the players hints about what they should do in certain moments or consequences for failures through the totems and the prophecies they hold. Following the guidance of the totems and the characters' prescribed traits is conforming to the dominant social order set by the game, and straying can and will be punished.

Ultimately, the characters' archetypes and identities become insidious, impacting the characters in sometimes unexpected ways. They influence the weapons characters have access to (or, pointedly, the ones they do not have access to), the effectiveness of weaponry allotted to

them, the scenarios for their possible deaths, and the struggles and costs of survival. And all of these things fall atop an Indigenous backdrop.

The manifestation of the archetypes and identities of the playable characters works to reinforce horror hegemony rather than fight it. In spite of the game's choice-based format that could serve as a platform to diversify the ways these characters may be presented and played by the players, the game instead forces players into the dominant social order by punishing the player for not conforming to the characters' archetypes by injuring, traumatizing, or killing the characters.

This thesis looks separately at gender, racial minorities, and mental illness in *Until Dawn* and seeks to illuminate how deeply entrenched in the dominant social order the characters are forced to be as well as how easy it is for the player to conform to the interpellation because of their desire to win the game, often even replaying it to do everything correctly, taking a second chance to follow the rules, ultimately upholding the hegemonic ideas around gender, race, and mental health. Each chapter dives into the weapons available to the relevant characters as well as the effectiveness of those weapons and whether or not the characters are required to interact with those weapons in order for the narrative to proceed. Weapons are a source of power for the characters because they provide at the very least the illusion of protection if not true protection, and the distribution of weapons can speak to the underlying dominant social order about who is trusted with weapons to protect themselves and others. The chapters also look at the possible scenarios for character deaths as well as some of the costs of survival. Deaths are the ultimate punishment in *Until Dawn* for failure to conform, and many of the deaths throughout the game reflect characters' archetypes, identities, and Hannah's lingering personal feelings about them. In order to survive, the characters must enact their given archetypes or else they will be faced with

Wendigo Hannah's punishment. Many of the deaths are symbolic of their archetypes or clearly reflect the relationship the character had with Hannah, who acts in some ways as the enforcer of the dominant social order of the playable characters. The chapter on racial minorities also addresses the concerns of lingering colonial trauma for the Indigenous Peoples who previously lived on Blackwood Mountain, where the events of *Until Dawn* unfold.

Game Mechanics

The mechanics of the game shape it into what it is. The game has several primary mechanics to be aware of: choice-based format, combat scenarios, quick time events (QTEs), don't move commands, clues, totems, and butterfly effects.

The choice-based format of *Until Dawn* is its core. The choices are often for dialogue that can impact character relationships or for actions that push the narrative forward, sometimes impacting character relationships and sometimes either putting characters in danger or evading it. All of the choices in *Until Dawn* are presented as two options, though there is a hidden third option in some. Some choices between two things are timed decisions, which makes the option to do nothing a possibility as well.



Figure 1. An example of a choice (Source: *Until Dawn* Prologue)



Figure 2. An example of a timed choice (Source: *Until Dawn* Prologue)

Combat scenarios are associated with weapon usage. They feature a target (or multiple targets) on the screen, and the player uses the right stick to aim at a target and then presses R2 to

shoot. There is no misfiring in *Until Dawn*, so the player can spam the R2 button as they move the cursor to the target. They will only actually fire if they are on target, as indicated by part of the target turning light green and getting bigger.



Figure 3. An example of a combat scenario (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 1)

QTEs are generally used in action sequences, often when characters are climbing or running. QTEs are timed commands to press a specific button on the controller. If the player successfully presses the indicated button, the character will do the intended task and continue forward. If the player does not press the button in time or presses the wrong button, the character will fail at the task, which sometimes puts a character in danger. Only three buttons on the controller are used for QTEs: triangle, square, and circle.



Figure 4. An example of a QTE (Source: *Until Dawn* Prologue)

Don't move commands are an important feature since the primary enemy of the game—the Wendigos—see via movement changes in their field of vision. When the don't move command shows up on screen, the player is tasked with holding their controller as still as possible. A graphic on the screen indicates the PS4 controller's movement. This command also causes the controller to vibrate; however, in PlayStation settings, a player can turn controller vibration off and not be affected by this.



Figure 5. An example of a don't move command (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 1)

Clues are essential for learning about the world of *Until Dawn* and its mysteries. There are three clue sets: the twins, mystery man, and 1952. These give us information respectively about who Hannah and Beth were and what happened to them, about the Psycho and the Stranger, and about the events that took place in the sanatorium after a cave-in in the mines in 1952. Finding clues helps the player to better understand what is going on so that they can better navigate the world in order to survive. Notably, there is one clue required to find in order to save one character's life. All clues the player finds can be looked back at in the pause menu at any time, and when the player finds a related clue, the game will connect the dots for the player, updating the description of all clues already found that are associated with the new one.

Totems can be found like clues all around the gameworld. When a character finds a totem, the player is granted a vision of a possible future. The totems come in five colors with five distinct meanings. Death totems are black, and they prophesize the death of the character who found the totem. Danger totems are red, and they warn the player of potential dangers in the

future. Loss totems are brown, and they prophesize the death of any character other than the one who found the totem. Guidance totems are yellow, and they tell the player about something they should do in order to help the characters survive. Fortune totems are white, and they show the results of a good decision. Like the clues, these can always be re-accessed on the pause screen once found if the player wants to refer back to them. Also, a bonus video is unlocked if the player finds all of the totems in the game.

Butterfly effects show the player how their choices relate to one another and lead to certain outcomes. Some of the earlier ones do not refer to particularly important things, but they give the player an idea of what this page does before it gets to matters of survival. This is generally helpful to players as a way to see perhaps where they went wrong so that they may perform better in a replay of the game, but the titles of the butterfly effects sometimes provide interesting hints about what to do in certain situations if the players look out for them (and those titles also provide flavor to the title of this thesis and its chapter titles).

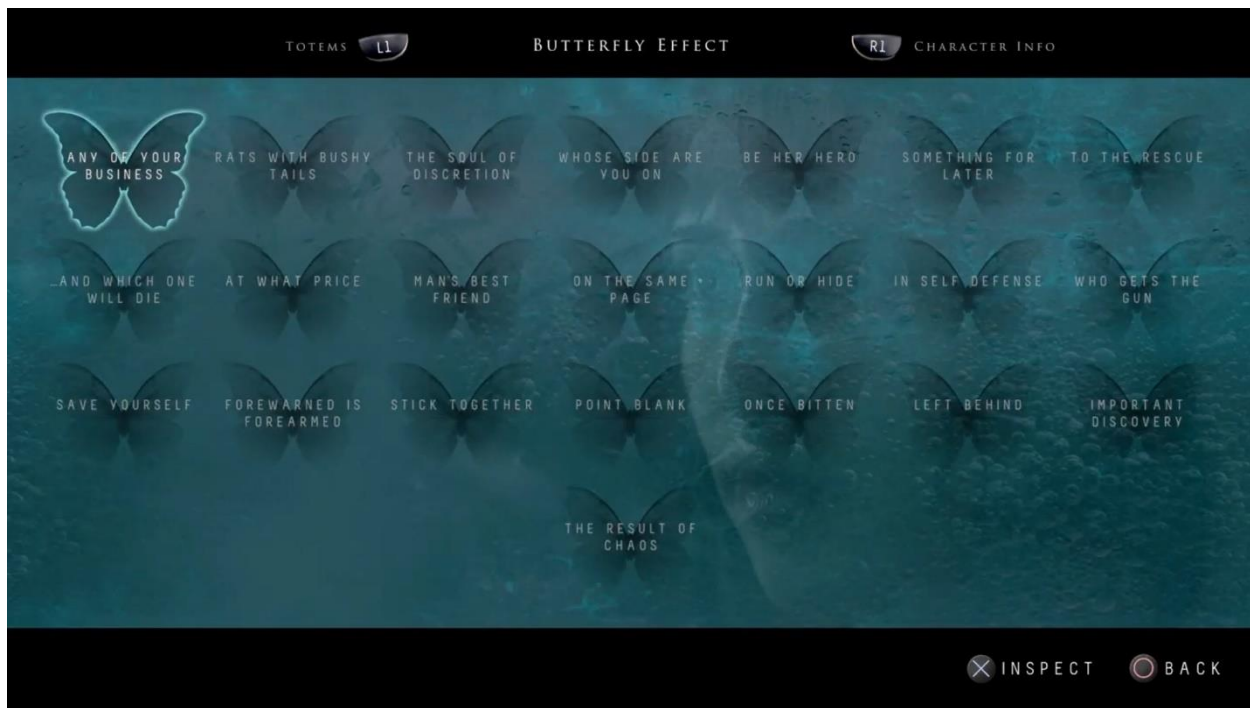


Figure 6. Empty Butterfly Effects page (Source *Until Dawn* pause screen)

Literature Review

Video game study is a relatively emerging field, especially compared to literary and film study. An essential text to consider when criticizing video games is Sebastian Domsch's *Storyplaying: Agency and Narrative in Video Games*, for he lays the groundwork for theoretical interpretation of video games. Video games are distinct from literature and film because they have the added feature of player agency, which allows the audience to interfere with the narrative, creating it as they see it unfold. Thus, the narratives in video games are called future narratives while literature and film's narratives are considered past narratives. While past narratives proceed via events, future narratives have nodes, which is a situation that has more than one possible continuation, and those continuations are mutually exclusive (Domsch 1). *Until Dawn* uses both past and future narratives—events and nodes—to progress the plot, including many events that will always happen and many that are dependent on the player's interaction leading to different results. Player agency in *Until Dawn* comes in the form of its many game mechanics, many of which are nodes (choices, combat scenarios QTEs, and don't move commands). These things shape the game into a future narrative. The game mechanics serve as rules for the game, and the narrative elements associated with them add meaning, ultimately creating the gameworld (Domsch 18).

A large amount of the game's content is cut scenes, a film element rather than a game element. Though it also includes many opportunities for interaction, there is a lot of time spent seeing the narrative unfold once the choices are made and waiting for the next opportunity to interact. Thus, if *Until Dawn* was not a survival horror game, it would be a slasher film. The tropes it uses follows the conventions of slasher horror, and if it were not for the player agency

embedded into the game and its narrative, it would present entirely like a slasher horror film since it heavily uses the narrative strategies of film. One essential work to discuss to contextualize *Until Dawn* as slasher horror is Carol J. Clover's *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. This book not only sets the stage for my discussion of gender in *Until Dawn*, but it also provides an extended definition of slasher horror that helps to classify the game.

Clover discusses the film *Psycho* in detail, for it laid out the formula to come for the emerging genre of slasher horror: "Its elements are familiar: the killer is the psychotic product of a sick family, but still recognizably human; the victim is a beautiful, sexually active woman; the location is not-home, at a Terrible Place; the weapon is something other than a gun; the attack is registered from the victim's point of view and comes with shocking suddenness" (23-24). The genre of slasher horror, then, requires "killer, locale, weapons, victims, and shock effects" (Clover 26). All of these elements are at play in *Until Dawn*.

The killer is represented in two ways: through Josh serving as the mystery's red herring when he masqueraded as the Psycho and the true threat of the Wendigos. The primary killer in the game is Wendigo Hannah. When it comes to female killers in slashers, "their anger derives in most cases not from childhood experience but from specific moments in their adult lives in which they have been abandoned or cheated on by men" (Clover 29). For Wendigo Hannah, this moment is the prank performed on her in the game's prologue that leads to a chain of events that ultimately end with Hannah cannibalizing her dead sister and turning into a Wendigo. Like male killers, she also exhibits some sexual frustration, as is clear in how she typically uses sharp objects—which are generally phallic in nature—to kill her victims, and she avoids causing harm to Mike, her crush before she turned, while being particularly violent towards the women he has

been intimate with. Further, “The killer is often unseen or barely glimpsed, during the first part of the film” (Clover 44) and is usually anticipated to be male. This is the case with the Wendigos, since there is no clear view of them until the beginning of Chapter 8, only occasional glimpses, some sounds, and at times seeing through Wendigo Hannah’s direct point-of-view. The Wendigos are also all anticipated to be male since the clues set up the miners as Wendigos, but it is not until Chapter 10, the final chapter of the game, that it is revealed that Hannah is the one and only true threat to the playable characters.

Clover defines the locale, the Terrible Place, as typically a house or tunnel (the lodge and the mines) “in which victims sooner or later find themselves is a venerable element of horror” (30). The Terrible Place is not simply the places themselves, however, “but the terrible families—murderous, incestuous, cannibalistic—that occupy them” (Clover 30). For the lodge, that is Josh himself and the horror story of Hannah and Beth’s disappearance. Josh turns the lodge into a Terrible Place, filling it with tricks to horrify and torment his friends. For the mines, that is the birth of the cannibalistic Wendigo curse and Wendigo Hannah’s lair. There is also the abandoned Sanatorium where the Stranger keeps many former miners, now Wendigos caged. Especially noteworthy is the fact that “the house or tunnel may at first seem a safe haven, but the same walls that promise to keep the killer out quickly become, once the killer penetrates them, the walls that hold the victim in” (Clover 31). This is the case with the lodge, for while it was where several members of the group were able to create a safe room from the Wendigos, that safe room did not hold. In the end, several miners and Wendigo Hannah infiltrate the lodge, and the characters are forced to slowly escape the once-comforting walls of the building to avoid them. The Terrible Place is also often defined as “decidedly ‘intrauterine’ in quality [...] dark and often damp, in which the killer lives or lurks and whence he stages his most terrifying

attacks” (Clover 48). This is true of the mines where Wendigo Hannah lives and where many possible deaths can occur. The mines are also a place of rebirth for Hannah, for though she fell down there as a human, she emerged reborn as a Wendigo.

There are many weapons throughout the game, and in the subsequent chapters I discuss in detail many of the weapons the playable characters can use, but the weapons in horror slasher are defined mostly by the ones the killer uses. Guns are never used by slasher psychokillers, typically preferring sharp objects instead. Victims may use guns, though those ultimately fail them (as evidenced in *Until Dawn* by the guns only slowing the Wendigos down instead of killing them). Clover states, “Knives and needles, like teeth, beaks, fangs, and claws, are personal extensions of the body that bring attacker and attacked into primitive, animalistic embrace” (32). Wendigo Hannah primarily uses her bare hands, her long sharp claws, to do her killing, and she often bars her sharp, jagged teeth as a threat. She also has some sharp objects as her disposal as well, most notably a hanging hook.

Victims in slasher horror come as both men and women, but all victims generally must be a “sexual transgressor” (Clover 33). While not necessarily every character in *Until Dawn* is overtly sexual—for only one character out of eight is defined by her sex appeal—they are all teenagers alone on a mountain without any adult supervision, thus are expected to engage in varying levels of sexual activity. While all characters—men and women alike—who seek out illicit sex in slasher horror are faced with death, there is a distinct difference between the fates of men and the fates of women: “Boys die, in short, not because they are boys, but because they make mistakes. Some girls die for the same mistakes. Others, however, and always the main ones, die—plot after plot develops the motive—because they are female” (Clover 34). This holds true in *Until Dawn*. Even the simple fact that it was Hannah and Beth to run out into the

snowstorm in the prologue rather than any of the men reinforces the notion that their femaleness forced them into a victim position.

With the victims comes, of course, the Final Girl. The Final Girl encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril” (Clover 35). This is the case in Chapter 10 when Sam and Mike are in Wendigo Hannah’s lair and get a chance to see the dead bodies of the Stranger and any of the other playable characters who have died up to that point. The Final Girl is also “distinguishe[d] from her friends minutes into the film” (Clover 37), “is not sexually active” (37), is androgynous, and may even have a masculine-leaning name (39). These are all the case with Sam, who is only called Samantha when put into a particularly feminine victim situation by Josh when he chases her around the basement of the lodge while she wears only a towel, who is the only woman in the group to speak out against the prank on Hannah and refuses to be involved with it, and is the only female character who is not in a relationship and does not have a love interest.

Finally, slasher horror must have shock effects (Clover 41). These in *Until Dawn* are the many graphic depictions of violence and violent death. It is impossible for the player to avoid encountering violent depictions of death, for the game always has Josh fake his own death, making it seem as though he has been cut in half by a massive sawblade. Even earlier in the game is the shock set up, for the situation Hannah and Beth find themselves in, forced to the edge of a cliff and eventually falling over it and tumbling into the mines is inherently shocking for the player.

There is distinction between the slasher horror film and the video game nature of *Until Dawn*. This is especially the case in where point of view lies throughout the game. In slasher horror films, the audience tends to identify with the killer, seeing the events happen from his

point of view and cheering him on as he brutally kills his victims until the end when the audience shifts into identifying with the Final Girl who fights back against the killer.

In *Until Dawn*, however, the point of view is dual until the final scene of the game. The camera angles in the game mimic the film style of representing the point of view of the killer and the red herring. Once Josh reveals himself as the Psycho, he may also reveal that he has recorded the events of the night, and the player may also find a camera as a clue. Upon a second playthrough, it is clear that there are many scenes in the lodge that feature camera angles that appear to be a camera placed by Josh. One noteworthy instance is in a brief shot in which the camera seems to be placed in a chair (see Figure 7). This indicates Josh's/the Psycho's perspective, for the Psycho is occasionally glimpsed watching several screens and tracking what the others are doing. There are also moments in which the player gets to see through the eyes of a Wendigo (usually Wendigo Hannah, but a different one in the prologue). The Wendigo has movement-based vision, and sometimes the filter of that vision is placed onscreen, letting the player see the characters that way (see Figure 8). This filter also alters the sound, making characters' voices sound slightly more distant and have a slight echo. This indicates the true killer's perspective, and it can be seen on occasion throughout the game, from the prologue to the final scene.



Figure 7. Camera placed in a chair (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 4)



Figure 8. Wendigo vision (Source: *Until Dawn* Prologue)

But the player cannot indulge in identifying with the killers all throughout the game as they can when watching a film. Because the characters seen through the killers' perspective are

playable, controlled by the player, the player must identify with them. These are not simply characters, but *player* characters. The player controls them, helps them navigate through the world, makes decisions for them, and becomes invested in their survival as a goal of the game. In slasher film, the viewer can take pleasure in seeing characters die, but in the survival game, the player is terrified of player character death, desperate to help all the victims survive because they are invested in them through having to become them and know that player character death is the result of failure.

In the end, *Until Dawn* does still follow the slasher horror film model of giving the player over entirely to the Final Girl, for Sam is the only possible playable character for the final scene, and she does still “mak[e] a spectacle of the killer and a spectator of herself” (Clover 60) in the final scene. With the only game mechanics at play in the final scene being lengthy don’t move commands and choices, the player is rooted in Sam’s perspective, staring down the Wendigos as they brawl and as Wendigo Hannah gets closer and closer to Sam. The final scene is the only point in the game when the point of view feels exclusively singular rather than multiple.

Though there has not been particularly much academic work specifically on *Until Dawn*, there has been one seminal work worth discussing: Rebecca Waldie’s “*It was just a prank, Han!*” *Wendibros, Girlfriend Woes, and Gender Politics in Until Dawn*. In this thesis, Waldie explores hegemonic masculinity in *Until Dawn*. Especially important for this analysis is her discussion of protector roles and how they are relegated to the white, sane, and male. This manifests in *Until Dawn* especially through Mike, the hero who acts in defense of other characters. She also explores how protector status is denied to many other characters who do not fit the role because of their identities. My research builds on these ideas while focusing primarily on the weapons, possible deaths, and conditions for survival for the eight playable characters.

The Narrative of Until Dawn and a Note from the Author

The narrative of the game is long and complex, usually taking about ten hours for someone to play through the entire game for the first time. In the second appendix, there are two tables: one providing a brief summary of each of the game's chapters, and another detailing all the events of the game, including marking when deaths occur.

My experience with the game is likely far deeper than any of my readers' experience, thus those tables should be helpful for referring to. I have experienced the game all the way through from beginning to end somewhere between forty to sixty times since first watching a let's play of it on YouTube in early 2016 to now, March of 2022. My experience of the game has not been solely through playing it myself, instead made up of my own playthroughs to try different things, watching various let's plays on YouTube and Twitch to see what choices other experienced gamers make, and making friends of mine play it over the years and seeing what less-experienced gamers—or people who would not consider themselves to be gamers at all—would make. My knowledge of the game is mostly influenced by watching it all the way through so many times, especially since I have seen it not only through my own choices and the limits of my ideas for different choice paths, but also through what many other diverse people have chosen to do usually without any prior knowledge to the game.

CHAPTER 2. GENDER

The presented gender of each character has significant impact on their agency in the game. Historically, the dominant social order has placed women in a position of inferiority to men, and that is what we see in *Until Dawn* as well. Generally, the men are placed in positions of power through the protector roles they embody (as described by Waldie). Though some men are denied these protector roles (as will be explored in the chapters on race and mental health), Mike and Chris especially are elevated to that role, embodying the role because they are expected to, and failure to live up to that path laid out for them, failure to conform to the interpellation calling out to them, leads to punishment. The same goes for women: generally, they are relegated into victim positions, requiring the protection provided by protectors like the ever-capable Mike. Failure to remain as weak as intended can mean punishment for the female characters. Thus, the roles each character performs is dependent on their gender: the men play typical male roles while the women play typical female ones, leaving men in positions of power and women inferior, helpless.

In Self Defense: Weapons

The distribution of weapons in *Until Dawn* speaks volumes about how women are granted little power and agency over their own survival, left dependent on men to save them. Out of twenty-two total possible weapons in the game that require player interaction via a node that is usually a combat scenario, only eight of those weapons can be wielded by women, and only four of those eight must be claimed in order for the narrative to proceed. This is strikingly different

than the distribution for the men, who have access to fourteen total weapons and must wield twelve. This distribution of weapons immediately puts women in a position of inferiority and insinuates that they do not have the right to even try to protect themselves from their attackers, instead leaving them in need of the protection men are expected to be able to offer.

The weapons allotted to the women often further speak to their disadvantaged position, especially when compared to the weapons the men handle. One example of this is Jessica's one and only "weapon": a snowball. In Chapter 1, Jessica is the player character during a snowball fight with Mike in which she wields a series of snowballs, and this scene serves only as practice for the combat scenarios to come later. In fact, the snowballs are only even considered a weapon because they trigger combat scenarios—require player interaction through a node whose distinctions between branches are minimal, only differing for the brief duration of the scene at most—but they can hardly be considered legitimate effective weapons. This is strikingly different from the other practice combat scenario in Chapter 1: Chris picks up a shotgun at the shooting range at the lower cable car station, and the player gets their first taste of how to aim and shoot in the game in this scene. While Chris and Jessica both have the ability to be deadly—only to a squirrel or to a bird—with their respective weapons in Chapter 1 depending on the player's choices, the shotgun Chris wields is perceived as more dangerous, as having the capacity for more violence by the player. A snowball is hardly something anyone would look at as dangerous, save for perhaps the parents of young, rowdy children. Further, the branching consequences for one node in Chris's use of the shotgun can have lasting effects in Chapter 5, but there are no such major consequences for anything Jessica can do so early in the game. Moreover, the player as Sam can pick up a totem earlier in Chapter 1 that warns the player against throwing the snowball at the bird, and right before Jessica can throw the killer snowball,

the tutorial sidebar pops up to inform the player that sometimes no action is the best choice, but there are no such overt warnings against shooting the squirrel, only an alternative target possible. The fact that Jessica is left to do nothing rather than use violence while Chris is still given an option to act showcases how the men's actions are perceived as more important and necessary than women's, and it is insinuated that it is better for women to do nothing at all.



Figure 9. The tutorial warning the player not to throw the snowball at the bird (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 1)



Figure 10. Chris's opportunity to shoot the squirrel (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 1)

Thus, in the first chapter of the game, women are situated as less dangerous, less capable of using legitimate weaponry, and less aggressive; and the player is swiftly warned not to choose violence when playing as a female character. Even though by virtue of Jessica's snowball throwing being part of a combat scenario it is associated with other past and future violence, it is certainly not something the player would categorize as a particularly violent interaction, even in the unlikely event that Jessica kills the bird.

Women are also positioned as incapable of effectively using the weapons they can find, reinforcing their position as needing to be protected by the men around them instead of being able to help themselves. One key example of this is the pair of scissors Ashley can find. This is an optional weapon, but one that is incredibly easy to find that seems alluring in the moment. Upon entering one room in the basement of the lodge while Chris and Ashley are looking for Sam to make sure the Psycho does not get to her, the player only has to move Ashley slightly to the right for the enticing glint to appear.



Figure 11. The easy-to-spot glint leading Ashley to the scissors (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 6)

The scissors are placed under a book the player is guided to by that glint, and once she looks at the book, she will take the scissors and stow them away for later use. There is no player choice involved; Ashley will always keep the scissors if she finds them. To a first-time player, these scissors seem like a good omen. After all, when a Psycho is running around the house, it always seems like being armed in some way could only work to improve your circumstances, but that is not the case with these scissors.

Ashley gets one opportunity to use the scissors: once she and Chris find Sam or a dummy in her clothes, the Psycho sneaks in and knocks Chris unconscious with gas or an injection. Then, when the Psycho goes for Ashley, she has a chance to stab him in the shoulder. If the player successfully completes the combat scenario triggered and Ashley successfully stabs him, he is only enraged, proclaims, "Live and learn!" (*Until Dawn* Chapter 6), then knocks her unconscious by punching her in the face, leaving her with a black eye.

The scissors, then, only serve to make Ashley's circumstances worse, increasing the violence that is done against her. No matter what she does here, she will always be knocked unconscious by the Psycho, but the method becomes more violent when she tries to defend herself. This reinforces women's incapability to use weapons well, and it punishes the player for playing Ashley—as a woman—aggressively and defensively instead of leaving her a passive victim of her fate waiting for men to save her.

Another weapon that highlights how women cannot effectively protect themselves and others is the shovel or pipe that Sam must use. They both serve the same purpose, and which one she actually uses is irrelevant for they have essentially the same function. In Chapter 9, Sam will find Mike being attacked by a Wendigo, either on the ground with one on top of him or being chased by a flaming one depending on his prior actions. This prompts two combat scenarios for Sam to hit the Wendigo with the shovel or pipe. If the Wendigo was on fire, then the second hit will knock its head off and kill it. If it was not on fire, Mike will shoot a barrel, blowing up that section of the Sanatorium and killing the Wendigos present.

In this scene, Sam gets a chance to act as a protector, possibly to kill a Wendigo herself, but the impact of her ability to protect here is diminished by the fact that failure to succeed at the two combat prompts only results in Mike saving himself. Ultimately, her involvement here is negligible; her attempts to help her friend may be noble and further provide proof that she fulfills the Final Girl archetype, but, as a woman, she is unable to reach a true protector status. The shovel or pipe only provides the illusion of empowerment for Sam. She is unable to truly help her friend, for Mike is presented as a capable man whose protector status is reiterated several times throughout the narrative, and the protector does not need protection. This is further

emphasized by the fact that Sam is only able to kill the Wendigo if Mike severely weakened it already by shooting a barrel and causing an explosion before Sam even arrived.

The only woman who truly gets any genuine weaponry is Emily, but her most effective weapon—the flare gun—is most likely not going to end up in her hands. Emily can find the flare gun in the fire tower, and a key node appears: the player is given the choice to make her keep it or give it to Matt. It is most likely that the player will give it to Matt, for not long before that scene Matt can find a guidance totem that shows Emily handing it to Matt, leading the player to believe that that is the better choice. I, however, find that it is the wrong choice, that the flare gun is more effective in Emily's hands than in Matt's. Of course, Matt can effectively use this weapon, for if he keeps it, it acts as a fail-safe to save his life if the player makes a bad decision in the following scene. However, the problem lies in getting Matt to keep the flare gun, for the player character in that scene is Emily, and whether Matt stows it away for later or shoots it right then as a signal for help is dependent on a prior decision. Thus, the player can only in that moment control whether it is used or saved if Emily keeps it. Even if Matt does keep the flare gun, the only situation in which he may use it can be entirely avoided, leaving the flare gun unused and its value diminished.

Emily's use of the flare gun is more effective than Matt's use of it for a couple reasons. Most importantly, there is no choice that Emily can make that can get her to avoid the situation in which she would use the flare gun. The only way to avoid the provided opportunity to shoot Wendigo Hannah is to die before making it to that point. If the player succeeds at the triggered combat scenario, then Emily will not be bitten by Wendigo Hannah, which will avoid a confrontation with Mike and Ashley later in Chapter 8 that could lead to Mike (the player

character in that scene) shooting her. Thus, the flare gun always can help Emily avoid at least one possible death, while when it is in Matt's hands, it is not guaranteed to be used.

Yet, the game still encourages the player to give the weapon to Matt. He is placed in a position of expected superiority over a woman when it comes to effectively using weaponry. The game provides Emily with a flare gun, something most often used to send a distress signal, to call for help, and encourages her to give it away, to signal for help by putting it in the hands of a man expected to be able to protect her.

Women's inability to use the weapons given to them is further emphasized by the level of difficulty of the combat scenarios triggered by Matt's and Emily's usage of the flare gun. Interestingly, the difficulty levels do not seem to fully reflect their respective circumstances. When Matt uses the flare gun, he is being dragged by the collar of his shirt, his back to Wendigo Hannah, and he shoots above his head without looking at his assailant. When Emily uses the flare gun, she is looking directly at the Wendigo, both hands on the gun pointed straight in front of her. One would assume that it would be easier for someone to hit their target if they could see it, but that is not the case here. The size of the target in the combat scenario for Matt is much larger than the one for Emily, which makes it a much easier combat scenario to succeed at. Matt's combat scenario also does not even require that the cursor touch the target for it to successfully fire. While the size of the target may in part be because of their respective distances from Wendigo Hannah, the length of time given to the player to make these shots is also drastically different. The player barely has to move the cursor in order to hit the target zone for shooting with Matt, which is swift and easy, and plenty of time is given to the player to get to that zone (see Figure 13). On the other hand, the timer is at least a fourth of the way done before the cursor can even be moved in the case of Emily's use of the flare gun (see Figure 12).



Figure 12. When Emily can use the flare gun (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 8)



Figure 13. When Matt can use the flare gun (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 6)

These two combat scenarios emphasize how deeply programmed into the game women's inferiority and inability to protect themselves is. Matt being in a much more compromising

position yet his task still being easier speaks to how the women are not trusted with weapons; they are deemed less capable of protecting themselves and less skilled at using firearms or any other weapons.

The weapons the women get in *Until Dawn* are overwhelmingly unnecessary and ineffective compared to the men's. Some of the weapons provided to women cannot even in good faith be considered weapons at all, some come at the cost of worsened circumstances upon use, many are ineffective and unnecessary since the associated player interaction can fail with little consequence, and many will never pass through their hands at all. The snowball and the shotgun in Chapter 1 ultimately set a precedent for who will and who will not have access to effective weaponry throughout the game. Hegemonic ideas about gender are programmed into these weapons the characters may or may not handle, written deep into the code of a game that could so easily challenge the hegemony. Yet, instead of pushing back by incorporating more compulsory and effective weaponry for the women and more opportunities for them to be protectors of their friends, the final product instead reinforces the ideology that views them as helpless.

Be Her Hero: Death and Survival

The distribution of deaths is more equal between men and women than the weapons distribution, but there are still more deaths possible for the female characters than for the male. Out of eighteen possible deaths in the game, eleven of those are possible deaths for the women while only seven are for the men. That leaves an average of 2.75 deaths per female character and an average of 1.75 deaths per male character. These numbers are not as drastic as those for the

weapons, but they call back to how slasher horror began with exclusively female victims and how the victim role is coded as feminine (Clover 21, 23, 32-33, 43).

To begin with the end, the first death to discuss is that of the Final Girl's. Sam is the Final Girl because she had the best relationship with Hannah, was Hannah's best friend before her disappearance and was the only one who tried to stop the prank before it got out of control. Of all the women, Sam is who Hannah would be the least inclined to harm. If she survives the game, she sustains essentially no injuries, and if she does not, her death is not even particularly graphic and brutal as compared to many of the other deaths. And, of course, Sam is one of three characters in the game to only have one possible death; she always survives until the final scene, is always the final player character, the Final Girl.

Sam's death involves Wendigo Hannah gutting Sam by punching all the way through her stomach and out her back, then pulling her hand back out and dropping Sam on the ground, which is a sexualized, penetrative death which reflects Clover's conclusion that slasher psychokillers and Final Girls are sexually frustrated (28-29, 48-49). Though this may sound intense, it is not as bad to watch as many of the other deaths in the game are. This one goes by surprisingly quickly. It is less than ten seconds between failing the don't move command and Sam's body being dropped on the ground. In those ten seconds, Wendigo Hannah grabs Sam's face and lifts her up, and the player can see that she is going to punch through Sam's gut, but the swiftly camera zooms in on Sam's face, instead only letting the player see the blood that comes out of her mouth (which is not a particularly gory detail compared to many of the other deaths) and the life drain out of her eyes. The shot jumps back out so that the player can see Wendigo Hannah remove her arm from Sam's torso then drop her on the ground. Once she is dropped, we

do not even get to see her injury, mostly focused on her face instead, as can be seen pictured below (Figure 14).



Figure 14. Sam's dead body (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 10)

The lack of brutality in this killing may speak to Hannah's humanity shining through, for she perhaps recognizes Sam, her best friend from a life long lost. The lack of excessive brutality may also be because of Sam's existence as the Final Girl. She is the easiest female character to like in the game, for none of the girls exhibit quite as many prosocial behaviors as Sam (which is part of what makes her the Final Girl). The other female characters, being less likable, make it sometimes more fun to watch them suffer a brutal death if the player particularly dislikes them, which is also typical of slasher horror since audience tends to take pleasure in watching the cast of characters fall at the hands of the killer until the Final Girl stops running and begins fighting back. In the context of *Until Dawn* as a game, players often want the characters they like the most to survive and hate to see that failure, so Sam's death not being as intense as many of the others may be to lighten the blow of that failure on the player's part.

In stark contrast to Sam, Jessica suffers the most physical trauma in the game. She is kidnapped and violently assaulted by Wendigo Hannah early in the game, sustaining injuries that cause her to blackout early in Chapter 4 and not be seen again until Chapter 9 if she survives her attack. Her injuries speak to how she is defined entirely by her sexuality, attractiveness, relationship with Mike [as evidenced by many sexualizing shots, such as one when the camera begins with an extreme close up of her butt; flirtatious conversations with Mike; and her taunting that she has “all the natural advantages [she] can handle” (*Until Dawn* Chapter 2) while gesturing towards her figure in her verbal fight with Emily], and to Wendigo Hannah’s personal feelings about her. The injuries are so severe that they must leave her with massive scarring on her face and body, and she looks far different after only minutes of being kidnapped (see Figures 15 and 16).



Figure 15. Jessica moments before being kidnapped by Wendigo Hannah (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 3)



Figure 16. Jessica after being kidnapped (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 4)

Jessica goes from uninjured to brutalized in a matter of minutes, massive gashes in her chest and covered in splotches of blood. Further, Wendigo Hannah inflicts large gashes on Jessica's face as well, which can be seen more clearly when she wakes up much later in the game (see Figure 17).



Figure 17. Jessica's injuries after waking back up (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 9)

If Matt survives to see her in Chapter 10, one of the first things he says to her is “Jesus, Jess, what the hell happened to you? How the fuck are you still alive?” (*Until Dawn*), and it is a reasonable question considering the severity of her injuries.

These injuries are incredibly telling of Wendigo Hannah's persistent romantic feelings for Mike, for Jessica gets these injuries just after her most well-known speech:

JESS. HEY! YEAH! PRICKS! THAT MEANS YOU! I KNOW you're OUT THERE!

The FUCK are you trying to do!?! You want to ruin our fun THAT BAD?! Well
GUESS WHAT? You can't! You can't ruin our good time! Because Michael and I
are gonna FUCK! That's right! We are going to have SEX! And it's gonna be HOT!

So ENJOY IT! Because I know WE'RE GOING TO! (*Until Dawn* Chapter 3)

Interestingly, most of this monologue is seen through Wendigo Hannah's eyes, as is evident by the filter for the screen that only defines the things that move (see Figure 18). Thus, Wendigo Hannah heard this proclamation that Jessica was going to have sex with the guy she liked, so she

had to put a stop to it by promptly kidnapping Jessica. This monologue may have also inspired Wendigo Hannah's method of execution—removing Jessica's jaw—for it is awfully difficult to speak without a jaw, and someone unable to speak is also unable to perpetuate quite as much verbal aggression as Jessica does throughout her brief time in the game. Further, removing her jaw also symbolic of how she is defined by her looks. Without a jaw, she no longer meets society's standards for attractiveness in a woman. Wendigo Hannah ensures that Jessica is disfigured in her death, no longer able to fulfill her archetypal role as the ultimate punishment for her.

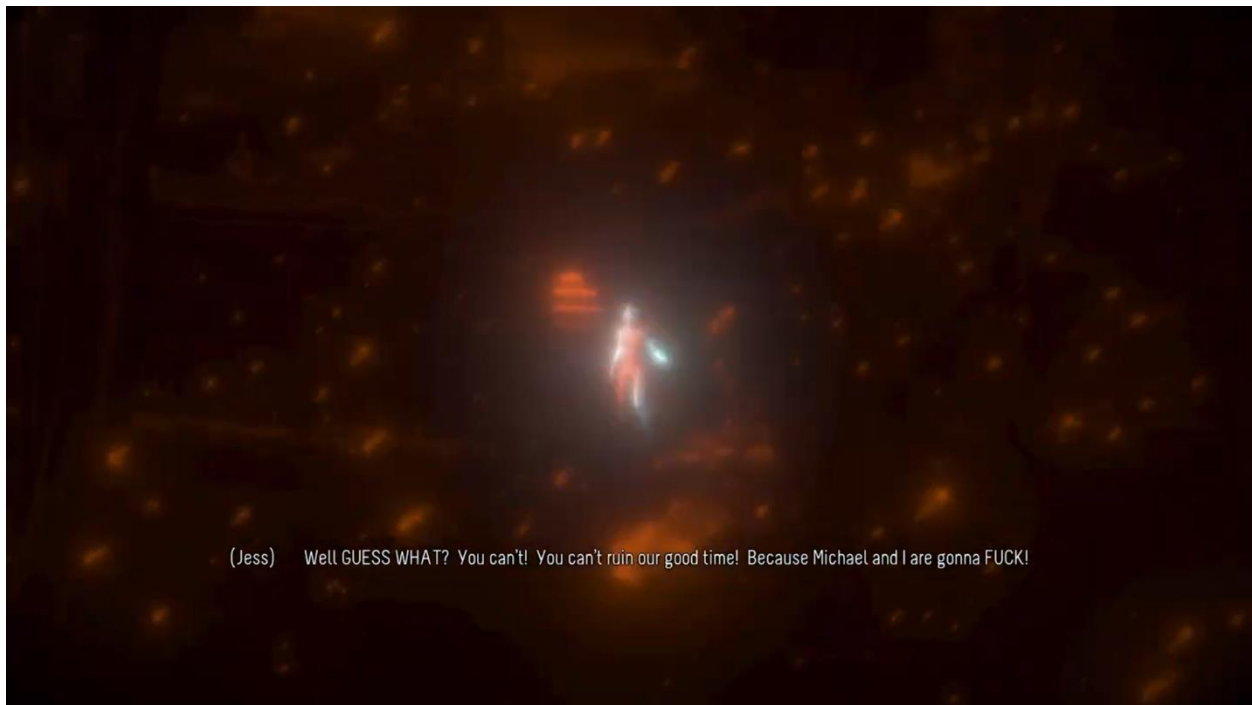


Figure 18. Wendigo Hannah's vision of Jessica's monologue (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 3)

The injuries Jessica sustains also speak to societal view of women who engage in sexual activity. Jessica's entire role in the game is to be sexualized, and she endures some of the most intense physical trauma of all the characters as a result of her willingness to engage in consensual sexual activity, for her status as a "sexual transgressor" (Clover 33). Yet, she must engage in her sexuality in order to have an increased chance of survival. How much or how little Jessica is

wearing at the end of Chapter 3—dependent on the player’s ability as Mike to woo her on their trek to the cabin and gain consent to engage in sexual contact—determines how much room for error the player has in Chapter 4 when they are tasked with helping Mike chase after her. If the player entirely failed to woo her and she remains fully clothed, Mike has no room for mistakes in his pursuit, or else Jessica will die. But if she is partially or fully undressed, Mike can make errors and still successfully make it to Jessica on time. Thus, Jessica’s sexuality becomes compulsory, nearly essential for her survival of the night, for without enacting her sexuality, she becomes more difficult to save. And her survival is almost always dependent on men. It is Mike who can save her in Chapter 4, and at the end of the game, she can only be the player character in her final scene if Matt has died. Otherwise, she is left dependent on him, her life in his hands, and he does not have to save her.

Ashley’s relationship with Hannah is not particularly clear in the game; we only really know that she was involved in the prank, though the part she played was minor. Thus, her deaths generally revolve around symbolism for her hysterical woman archetype. The term “hysteria” has a deep history in relation to women’s medical treatment. The term derives from the Greek word for uterus (Dixon 14), and though the symptoms associated with hysteria were recognized in both men and women, the root cause was deemed different, originating in the uterus for women and called hysteria while men were simply called melancholic. The most noteworthy symptoms of hysteria/melancholia are depression, mood swings, and hallucinations (Dixon 197). Ashley is an emotionally charged character, prone to suddenly shift in mood throughout the narrative of *Until Dawn*, and especially when anything frightening or traumatizing is presented to her.

Ashley has many diverse methods of death, for she can have her head torn off, have her eyes gouged out, or be burned alive. Most of the other characters with multiple deaths generally have similar executions under varying circumstances instead of so many different methods. The many possibilities for her death with so many wildly different circumstances are symbolic of her hysteria, her wild panic that she slips in and out of all throughout the night.

One death of Ashley's in particular is especially symbolic of her hysterical woman role. In Chapter 9, Ashley can open a trapdoor believing that she hears Jessica calling out for help, but the voice is actually Wendigo Hannah mimicking Jessica's voice to lure in her prey. Once the door is opened, Wendigo Hannah pops out and promptly decapitates Ashley. She loses her grip, her head, her sense of logic in favor of emotional breakdown. The loss of logic is clear in this death since in the previous scene in which Ashley was player character, there is an event in which the player is forced to look through the Stranger's journal (and generally the player will read these clues since they discuss the Wendigos). As the player reads, Ashley will occasionally interrupt the process by saying something about what is on the current page, and one important clue she mentions is that the Wendigos can perfectly mimic humans. It is difficult for the player to avoid hearing that, getting that emphasis on the clue, unless they quickly flip through the pages and move on without allowing time for Ashley's interruptions and not reading at all. Thus, the literal loss of her head calls back to the archetypal role she plays in that it symbolizes a loss of her sanity and an inability to connect what she knows to the situations she is put in.

Emily is a character who is difficult to like. With her characterization as aggressive and unlikable, many players are not as disappointed with her deaths as they are with other characters' deaths. With five total possible deaths in the game—more than any other single character—it can be easy to see her meet her death, and it is often less disappointing for players to see her die

because of their dislike of her. Interestingly, Emily is the only character that the player can directly choose to kill in the game, for in the likely scenario that she is bitten by Wendigo Hannah, other characters in the safe room will become fearful that she may turn into a Wendigo herself, and Mike (the player character in that scene) pulls out a gun and threatens to shoot her, which triggers a combat scenario for the player. Players may choose to make this decision out of fear, but many also make it simply because they dislike her. Though dislike is likely not the deciding factor for serious players on their first playthrough who want to try to win the game, players who are not taking it quite as seriously or players who are replaying for fun are likely to make the decision to shoot her.

CHAPTER 3. RACIAL MINORITIES

Similarly to character gender, the presented racial identity of each character has significant impact on their agency in the game. Historically, the dominant social order has placed BIPOC in a position of inferiority to white people, which can be seen in *Until Dawn*. Both of the nonwhite characters are segregated together through abusive romance that most players will see no intimacy in. While Emily at least has another distinguishable and noteworthy archetype aside from being a token minority to discuss, Matt has nothing more than being a Black man in a verbally abusive relationship with Emily. Their status as racial minorities places them in a distinctly Othered position from the white characters, a position which they are forced into and must fully inhabit or be punished for it.

Most players do not even get the entirety of Matt and Emily's content, for there is a bonus scene in Chapter 2 available only to players who preordered the game. Matt and Emily are the only two characters to appear in it, meaning that all players get the entirety of the white people's narrative, but the story for the nonwhite characters is left incomplete for most players. This scene is also the only time the player gets to see any true intimacy between Matt and Emily, the only time they get to be truly humanized in a way that white characters like Mike and Jess are swiftly granted.

Who Gets The Gun: Weapons

The distribution of weapons the nonwhite characters receive in comparison to the white characters speaks to how BIPOC are disallowed from exhibiting aggression—even if it is

defensive—while the white characters (especially the white men) may use violent force to aid in their survival, which reflects the way Black men and white men with guns are viewed differently by society (notably by police officers in America), with the Black man treated as a threat while the white man is not.

Surprisingly, Emily has access to three total weapons, two of which are required. This is actually more weapons available to her than her white female counterparts; while Ashley and Jessica only have one weapon each, Sam is the only other one with access to three weapons, but only one of hers is required. She also has more weapons than Matt, who only has two possible weapons with only one of those two required. This speaks to how Emily is masculinized while Matt is emasculated, which is a key aspect of their relationship. Still, even combined, the two have less weapons than Mike alone is required to use and an equal number to how many Chris alone has access to. This is especially telling of Matt's treatment, for he as a Black man is placed in a position of inferiority to his white counterparts, given fewer opportunities to take on the role of a protector for Emily while Mike and Chris are often able to protect the women around them.

The types of weapons they have access to and their effectiveness speaks volumes about the way BIPOC are positioned as incapable of helping themselves and discouraged from using violent force to protect themselves and others. Matt's only two weapons are the flare gun and an axe. He can perfectly well survive without using the flare gun at all if the player simply makes the smartest decisions in the two scenes he is in post-finding the flare gun. He also has the best chance of surviving if he does not use the axe at all. The only significant scenario for its use is one or two options to attack elk with it, but doing so leads to the other elk in the pack forcing him over the edge of the cliff. He may climb out to save himself from death, but, similarly to how Ashley's use of the scissors only serves to make her circumstances worse, using the axe in

this situation does nothing but put Matt's life in danger, and it ultimately shows that Matt cannot effectively use weaponry to protect himself and Emily. Further, Matt's circumstances worsening as a consequence for using the axe paralleling Ashley's use of the scissors highlights his emasculation.

For Emily, her two required weapons—the torch and the flares—are primarily used for light rather than for defense. There is an opportunity for the player to perform a combat scenario to throw the torch on a puddle of oil to block the path behind her from the pursuing Stranger, but the only player interaction involved with the flare—which would likely be considered more dangerous than the torch—is to light it up. When she uses it defensively, it is an automatic action performed without the player interacting with it, and this automatic decision to defend herself sets her apart from the other female characters in the game. Not only is she actually given the means to defend herself, but she is also programmed to do it without the player needing to make it happen. This distinguishes her as an Other from the rest of the women and highlights her masculinization as a nonwhite woman.

The flare gun is a particularly symbolic weapon to be available to Matt and Emily. Seen most as a tool to signal for help, it tells the audience that BIPOC are unable to help themselves and need to ask for help from white people in order to survive. This weapon can so easily be wasted, for if the player chooses to have Emily keep it, they can right then also choose to shoot it as a signal for help instead of keeping it, which is ultimately a waste of the flare gun; and if the player chooses to give it to Matt, whether he shoots it or stows it away for later use depends on a prior decision. It is incredibly common in a player's first run of the game to end up losing the flare gun, for Matt to shoot it once it has been given to him, because of the guidance totem urging the player to give it to Matt and because of the prior choice in the cable car station: Matt's

decision to agree or disagree with Emily's plan to go to the fire tower. Of course, to the player, going to the fire tower to seek out help seems like the best plan, so they are most likely to choose to agree with Emily, but that choice causes Matt to shoot the flare gun instead of keep it because it means that he believes what is there will be helpful, that they really will make contact with someone, that someone will see the shot and know they need help. Thus, the only two nonwhite characters are either left without an incredibly helpful weapon, or the player must choose who they believe needs it more, must choose between two characters and decide which one they would prefer to have the extra means for survival.

Ultimately, the BIPOC in *Until Dawn* are allotted very little weaponry, and many of the weapons distributed to them are not particularly effective, easily wasted, or result in punishment for use. These weapons emasculate Matt and masculinize Emily, further Othering them from their white counterparts.

... *And Which One Will Die: Death and Survival*

The distribution of deaths between the white characters and the BIPOC are chilling. Out of eighteen possible deaths in the game, eight of those are possible deaths for the BIPOC while only ten are for the white characters. While this at first may not appear too shocking since the numbers are nearly equal, a reminder that there are six white characters and only two BIPOC characters reveals how unequal this distribution really is. That leaves an average of 1.67 deaths per white character and an average of 4 deaths per BIPOC character.

And while these numbers alone are already horrifying, it is also worth mentioning that Matt and Emily both have deaths that are not directly perpetuated by Wendigo Hannah, Matt also

having the only death in the game that has nothing at all to do with Wendigo Hannah or the stress of the Wendigo threat at all. In Chapter 6, he has the second possible death in the game: falling over the edge of the same cliff that Hannah and Beth fell down. Approached by a pack of elk—which the game earlier warns the player that they can be aggressively defensive—the player is given a combat scenario: for Matt to take the axe he carries and kill one of the elk. If the player chooses to complete this combat scenario instead of letting the timer run out, the elk pack’s defensive nature will come out, and they will force Matt over the cliff as Emily watches. The player has a chance to save Matt by completing QTEs to help him climb back up, but if he fails to do so, he will fall, landing on the same rock that broke Beth’s back as she fell in the Prologue.

This death being entirely unrelated to the primary threat of the game suggests that Matt’s existence as a racial minority makes his death less significant. This death is a testament to Matt’s ability (or lack thereof) to read a situation well and to respond the necessary way, and if he fails that first test, it becomes about his ability to use his physical strength to save himself.

Another death that is only indirectly perpetuated by Wendigo Hannah is when Emily can fall into the meat grinder. Fleeing from Wendigo Hannah, Emily will turn on and jump onto a conveyor belt. If she chooses to stay on it instead of jump off, she will have to jump over the meat grinder at the end of it. If the player fails the associated QTEs, then Emily will fall in, her legs brutally crushed. She is not shoved into it by Wendigo Hannah, only falls in due to player failure.

This death is one that can come across as frustrating, a cheap shot. To successfully escape the pursuing monster—for at that point Emily is no longer in danger of being killed on the spot by Wendigo Hannah no matter what she does, only at risk of being bitten—just to fall into a

meat grinder is ultimately unsatisfying. Just like when Matt is forced over the edge of the cliff, this death suggests that Emily's existence as a racial minority—possibly intersected with her existence as a woman—makes her death less significant than those of the white characters.

These deaths can be starkly contrasted to Mike's death. While one possibility for his death is a result of Sam running for the switch too soon, the more likely scenario is that Sam has died and he is injured. Without Sam to run to the switch, he will sacrifice himself, pulling out his lighter and igniting it, setting the whole lodge ablaze. This death is seen as a heroic moment, a brave choice to prevent the Wendigos from escaping the lodge and hurting his friends or anyone else outside it ever again. His death does not come across as insignificant by any means; it comes across instead as a noble sacrifice that ultimately can solidify his archetype as the Hero. While Matt and Emily are left forgotten, not even mentioned by the remaining characters if Emily dies before making it back to the lodge, Mike leaves the game a hero whose sacrifice will never be forgotten.

Another possible death that is not directly perpetuated by Wendigo Hannah is the possibility for Mike to shoot Emily. This is the only death in which a character can be directly and purposefully killed by another character (and by the player). It is most likely that Emily will be bitten by Wendigo Hannah at the end of her scene at the beginning of Chapter 8 since she most likely does not have the flare gun, and, even if she does, the target is a difficult shot to succeed at anyway. In the event that Mike threatens to shoot Emily, it is after a lengthy dialogue exchange among the characters in the safe room, a few of whom are afraid because they think that the bite indicates that Emily will transform into a Wendigo. There is one particular shot that is interesting and telling of Emily's Othered status here (see Figure 19). All the characters keep their distance from Emily while throwing fearful accusations at her. They nearly surround her

entirely, only leaving open a space for her to pass them on the way to the door out of the safe room. The physical distance between the characters emphasizes how Othered Emily is, not only for being a racial minority, but also now for potentially being a monstrous Other.

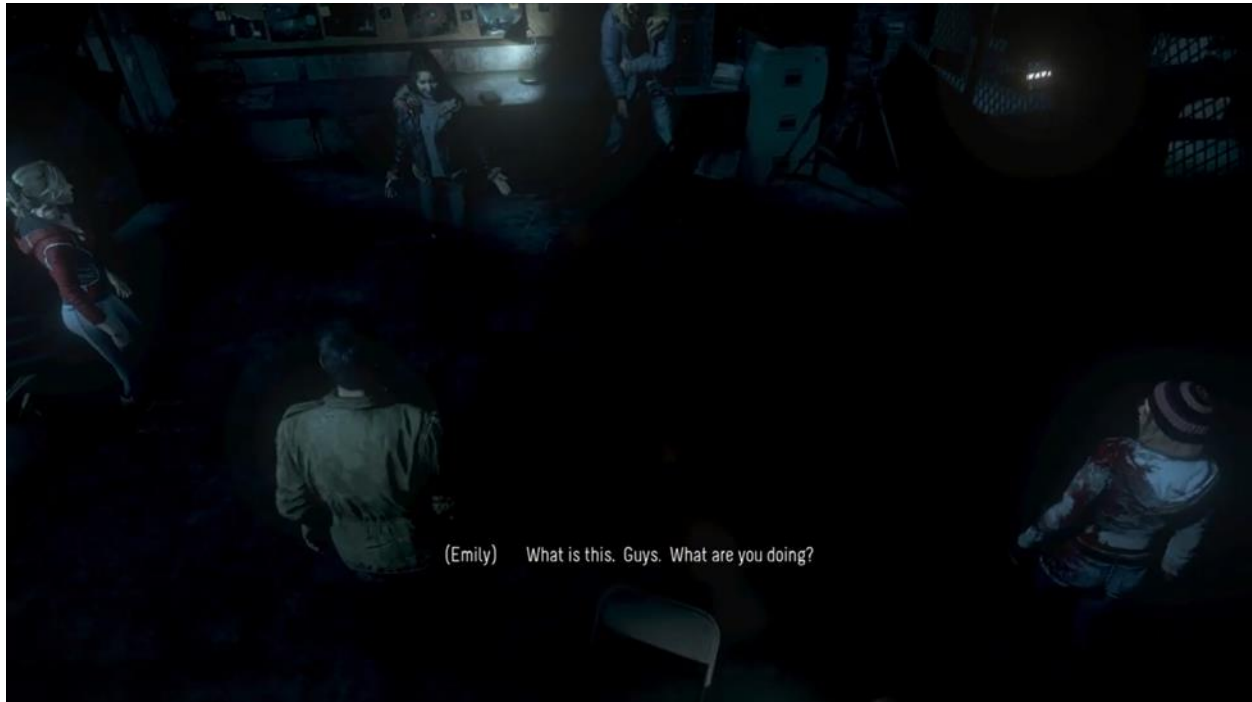


Figure 19. Sam, Mike, Ashley, and Chris surrounding Emily from a distance (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 8)

In the event that Mike shoots Emily, she, as a Token Minority, is sacrificed, her body left neglected in favor of keeping her white counterparts safe, for after he shoots her in the left eye and the characters all express their horror, chillingly, they leave Emily's body exactly where it was, her face still twisted in fear and her blood splattered against the wall behind her. They make no effort to even cover her up, leaving her corpse where it sits like some horrific décor. Mike, the game's primary protector, chooses to protect white people instead of Emily, accusing her of monstrosity that has yet to be demonstrated, and, soon after he leaves, the remaining characters learn that Emily was never a threat in the first place.

It is important to pay special attention to the fact that, if shot by Mike, Emily's wound is through her left eye. Emily has two other possible deaths that involve her eyes, both of those deaths having her eyes gouged out by Wendigo Hannah. This is significant, for the only other character who has an eye-related death is Ashley, and that death is exactly the same as one that happens to Emily, and it could just as easily be Emily's death instead of Ashley's depending on earlier nodes. Most notable is the first time Emily can undergo an eye-related death: at the beginning of Chapter 8 while fleeing from Wendigo Hannah. If the player fails certain QTEs, then Wendigo Hannah will jump in front of Emily and grab her by the head, then she will jam her thumbs—which feature particularly long and sharp-looking fingernails—into Emily's eyes. This death is especially telling of Wendigo Hannah's sexual frustration since it is a penetrative execution with a sharp weapon that could easily be considered a phallic symbol (Clover 28).

Interestingly, Wendigo Hannah takes her time lining up to go through this execution; between missing the final QTE that causes this death and Emily being dropped to the ground, it takes approximately fifteen seconds, which is a long time to linger on such a simple action, especially compared to how quickly Wendigo Hannah does a much more complicated maneuver to kill Sam. The player never even really sees Emily's body lying on the ground, either; we can see it dropped, but it fades to black before we can see her on the ground. Wendigo Hannah even appears to take much more pleasure in this kill, appearing to smile before sticking her thumbs in Emily's eyes and exhibiting extreme intensity while she keeps them jammed in Emily's eye sockets (see Figures 20 and 21).



Figure 20. Wendigo Hannah smiling while preparing to stick her thumbs in Emily's eyes

(Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 8)



Figure 21. Wendigo Hannah with her thumbs in Emily's eyes (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 8)

The eye-related deaths for Emily seem to speak to her status as a minority, both racially and for her gender. The eyes are a center for facial expression; we say a lot with our eyes. In the game, the characters' eyes after they die still show some kind of expression to the player. One example of this is Matt's first death in which the player sees an extreme close-up of his eye rolling back into his head as his injuries kill him—and there are many other examples throughout the game as well of dead characters having particular eye expressions in their deaths. But Emily is robbed of being able to have that expression in her death. It ultimately works to dehumanize her, for the player loses out on being able to feel quite as much sympathy for her once she is dead. This may also relate to her positioning as unlikable since she showed very little empathy in life and therefore shall receive none in death.

The fact that Emily's death is so heavily focused around her eyes may also be significant due to her Asianness. Especially since she has three deaths that involve her eyes in some way while almost none of the other (white) characters have eye-related deaths, it seems to call to the fact that her eyes are different, that she has Asian eyes while the rest of the characters do not.

Matt also has a death that reflects his ability to perform as a protector. In his final scene, if Jessica is still alive, they will meet up, and he will guide her out of the mines (or will abandon her, if the player so chooses). While abandoning her can help him survive, it surely leads to Jessica's death. If he does not abandon her, however, and he fails to protect her, then he will watch Wendigo Hannah tear her jaw off her face before attacking him, pinning him to the ground and smashing his face in with her bare hands. Rebecca Waldie writes about Matt's position as a protector of Jessica here: "Having failed in his protection of Emily, a higher-functioning woman, the narrative gives Matt a chance to protect someone who poses less of a challenge to his masculinity. In a way, he is only capable of protecting the weakest of the weak" (67). Thus,

failure for Matt to protect Jessica here further emasculates him. In fact, if Wendigo Hannah smashes his face, his features become nearly unrecognizable, as if stripping him of his masculine identity entirely since he failed to live up to the protector role.



Figure 22. Matt's face smashed by Wendigo Hannah (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 10)

One final noteworthy death is one with chilling historical connotations. After falling from the fire tower to the mines, if Matt does not choose to save himself the second time the option is presented to him and instead tries to protect Emily (reaches for a protector role he cannot grasp, as literally symbolized in their hands just failing to meet when he tries to save her, as seen in Figure 23), then he falls into a different place in the mines, a more dangerous place than if he chooses to save himself. There, he is attacked by Wendigo Hannah, and if he does not have the flare gun to fend her off, then he is taken to his death: a death that looks eerily similar to racially charged hangings (Figure 24).



Figure 23. Matt trying to save Emily (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 6)



Figure 24. Matt hanging from a hook (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 6)

The player watches Wendigo Hannah—at that point a mostly unseen assailant—lift Matt and hang him on the hook through his throat without any hesitation. He struggles briefly, then the shot cuts to the one pictured above just before his arms drop to his sides as he hangs.

The imagery associated with this death is horrific, resurfacing the trauma of historical images of lynchings of Black men. In her book *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women, and the Mob*, Dora Apel discusses how “The pain inflicted upon lynching victims was often prolonged as much as possible in a ritualized and spectacularized process, beginning with the severing of toes, fingers, ears, or genitals” (7). Though players of *Until Dawn* who see Matt meet this horrific fate do not have to endure his prolonged suffering (save for watching him be dragged helplessly for seemingly endless seconds), the possibility of that suffering is written into the narrative of the game. The Stranger shares with Chris some horrific possibilities for the fates of people captured by the Wendigo: “First, the Wendigo, he’ll render you immobile. And then he strips the skin off your entire body, piece by piece. And then he keeps you alive and aware and feasts on your organs, one piece at a time” (*Until Dawn* Chapter 8). Even though Wendigo Hannah thankfully did not put the audience through seeing such a fate and granted Matt the mercy of a much swifter death, she still becomes symbolic for the mobs who historically performed lynchings on Black people.

The deaths possible for the BIPOC call back to their minority status. They can die in frustrating ways, not even at the hands of the primary antagonist of the game, and can be murdered by another character—by the players themselves. Most chilling, however, is that their deaths can be racist depictions. Emily’s three deaths that relate to her eyes are likely a result of her Asianness, highlighting how she looks different from the white characters. And Matt’s

lynching death digs up traumatic imagery of mob assaults, torture, and murder of Black men in the antebellum South.

Left Behind: Indigenous Roots

The trauma of Black men is not the only historical trauma dug up in *Until Dawn*. The lingering generational trauma of colonialism is built into the game. The narrative of *Until Dawn* simply would not be possible without Native American culture. Indigenous influence is breathed into the game, from the setting to the antagonist to game mechanics, yet there are no Native Americans to be found. The only way to hear Indigenous voices in the context of the game is to watch the bonus content, which turns hearing and truly listening to Indigenous voices an option rather than a necessity when engaging with the aspects of their culture that are used in the game and its narrative.

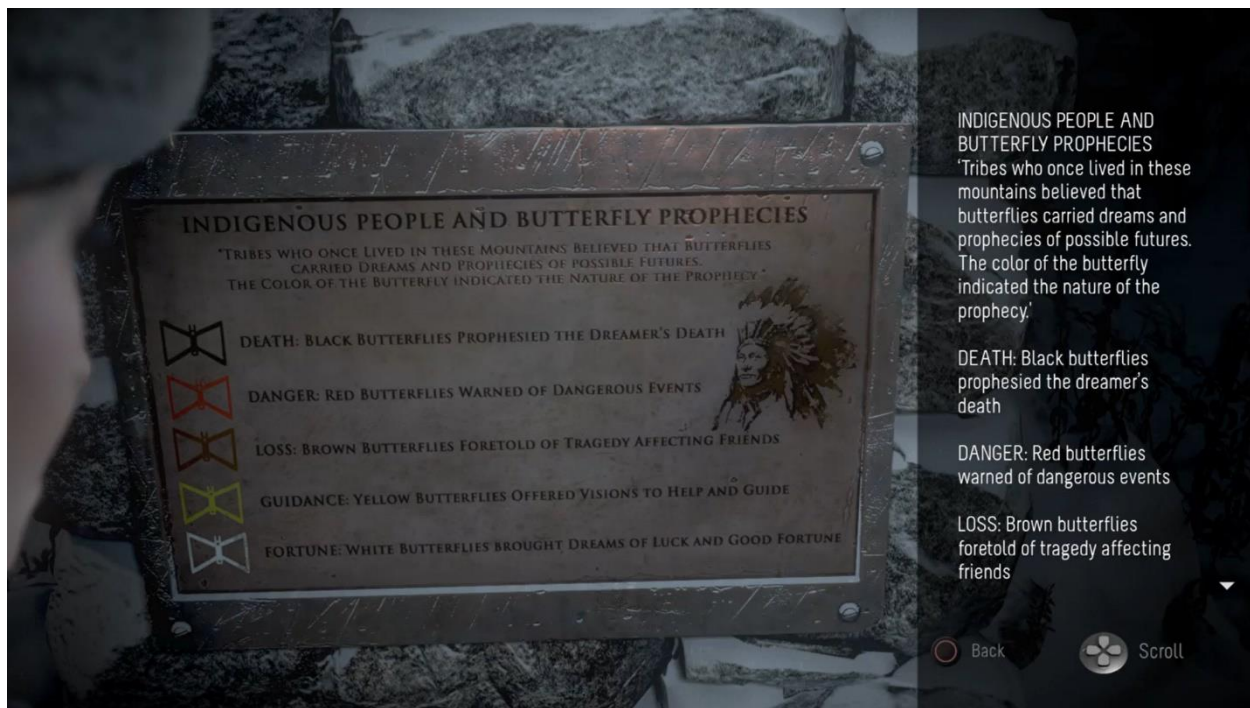


Figure 25. Indigenous People and Butterfly Prophecies posting (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 1)

Blackwood Mountain, where all the events of the game take place, used to be the home of Indigenous nations—specifically noted by the game is the Cree. The player is first introduced to the fact that Native nations lived there when Sam finds a posting titled “Indigenous People and Butterfly Prophecies” (Figure 25). Based on the fact that there are no Native Americans to be found during the events of the game and that the clues the player can find detailing the events of 1952 give no hint of any Indigenous peoples present, one can conclude that there have not been any Native Americans living on Blackwood Mountain for a long time.

This, however, is not a sign that the nations have moved on. After searching the library, Chris and Ashley can find a letter from Josh’s mother about the nations (Figure 26), and the letter informs the player that “the tribe still feel an attachment to the land” (*Until Dawn* Chapter 3) and that Blackwood Mountain is their “ancestral home” (*Until Dawn* Chapter 3). The issue is not handled well by the characters. The dialogue triggered by collecting this clue includes Ashley saying, “Yeah, she’s really making an effort to set things right with some native [sic] tribe or something” (*Until Dawn* Chapter 3). There is an obvious problem with the insensitive wording, and it is interesting to see that the subtitles do not capitalize the word Native in this sentence, for the standard is to capitalize the word (Baker); nevertheless, Chris and Ashley’s lack of care with this issue is not surprising with them being young adults probably fresh out of high school who cannot be expected to respond to such things with sensitivity, but it is nonetheless worth noting.

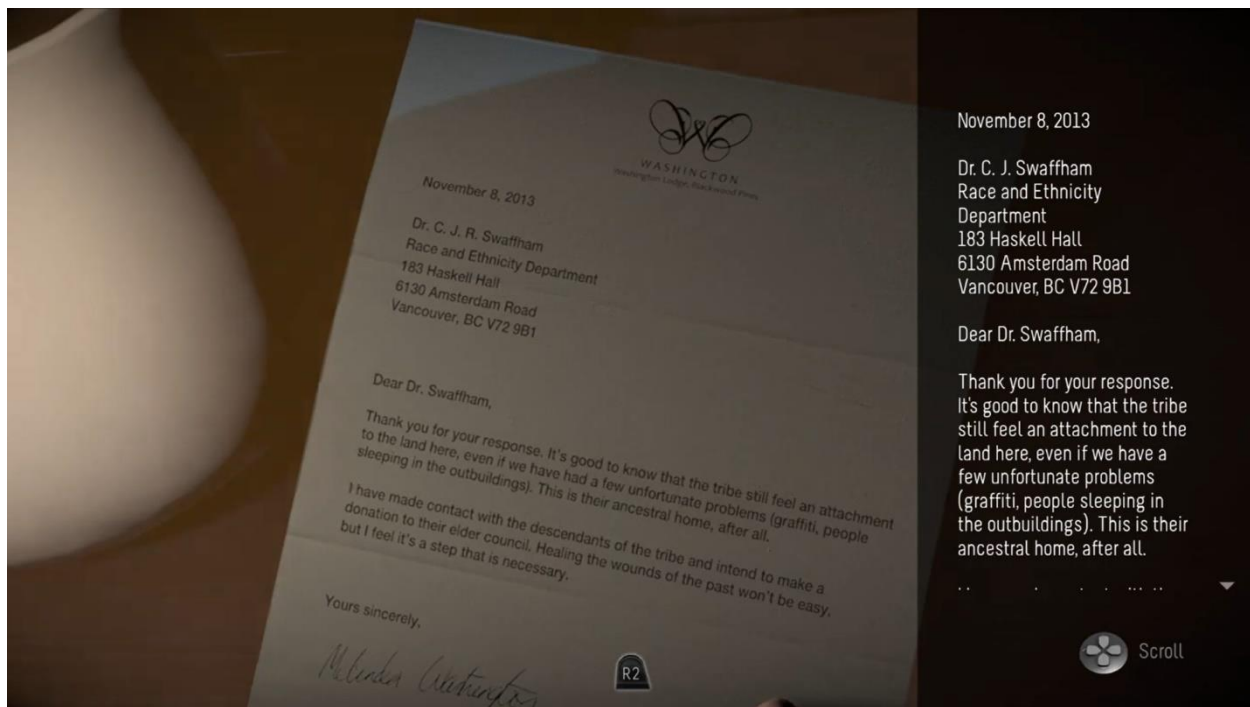


Figure 26. Josh’s mom’s letter about the Native nations who previously lived on the mountain (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 3)

However, we can reasonably expect for adults to handle this in a more sensitive manner—adults like Josh’s mother. Despite her efforts, there is a lack of care in her letter, as is seen in a couple of ways. First, there is seemingly an issue with the subject-verb agreement with “tribe” and “feel.” While some Indigenous peoples may use the collective noun, making this agree, many people reading this will notice that it sounds wrong. Where she should have written “the tribe still feels an attachment to the land” or “the tribes still feel an attachment to the land,” she instead wrote, “feel.” Even if this collective noun is not technically incorrect, it may come across as a mistake, as lazy on her part, showing that perhaps she wants to rush through this issue, to get it out of the way as quickly as possible. This is further emphasized by her mentioning her own problems more than the issues faced by the victims of colonization, noting “a few unfortunate problems (graffiti, people sleeping in the outbuildings)” (*Until Dawn* Chapter 3). She does not even truly address the generational trauma endured by the Native Americans,

instead brushing over it and stating that she “intend[s] to make a donation to [the Indigenous people’s] elder council” (*Until Dawn* Chapter 3). While monetary donations certainly can be helpful, that is the only solution she brings up, which is not enough to make up for the trauma endured by the Indigenous Peoples.

Positive indigenous influence in the game is mostly reduced to a game mechanic. The Indigenous People and Butterfly Prophecies posting informs the player about the totem system in the game. This is an important feature recommended for the player to rely on, but it is completely optional to use. Throughout the game, the characters can find totems in various places on the mountain, and these totems, once picked up, reveal to the player a vision of a possible future. They prophesize the deaths of characters (death and loss), dangers, fortunes, and provide guidance for tough situations. Though incredibly helpful, it is up to the player to find them and use them to their advantage, making all but the one Sam finds and is forced to pick up when she sees this posting optional, and, ultimately, Indigenous tradition seems optional as well.

Though at first one might suspect that the totems are a remaining artifact of when the Indigenous Peoples lived on the mountain, it is revealed in Chapter 8 when the Ashley gets to read the Stranger’s journal (Figure 27) that he is actually the one who created and set out the totems. The Stranger appears to be a white man. Though some may believe that he is a descendent of the Cree, it is not abundantly clear in the narrative, and because he appears to be a white man, having similar skin tone to the many other white characters in the game, most players would, upon first playthrough, assume that he is white. While there are some pieces of evidence in the game that could lead to the conclusion that the Stranger has Indigenous blood, it requires the player to pick up on particularly subtle evidence because it is never clearly stated or shown, and because I strongly believe that Indigenous representation should be obvious, clearly stated,

and an undeniable and unarguable fact in order for it to be a true character representation of that ethnicity, my argument will only consider the Stranger as one more white character among many.

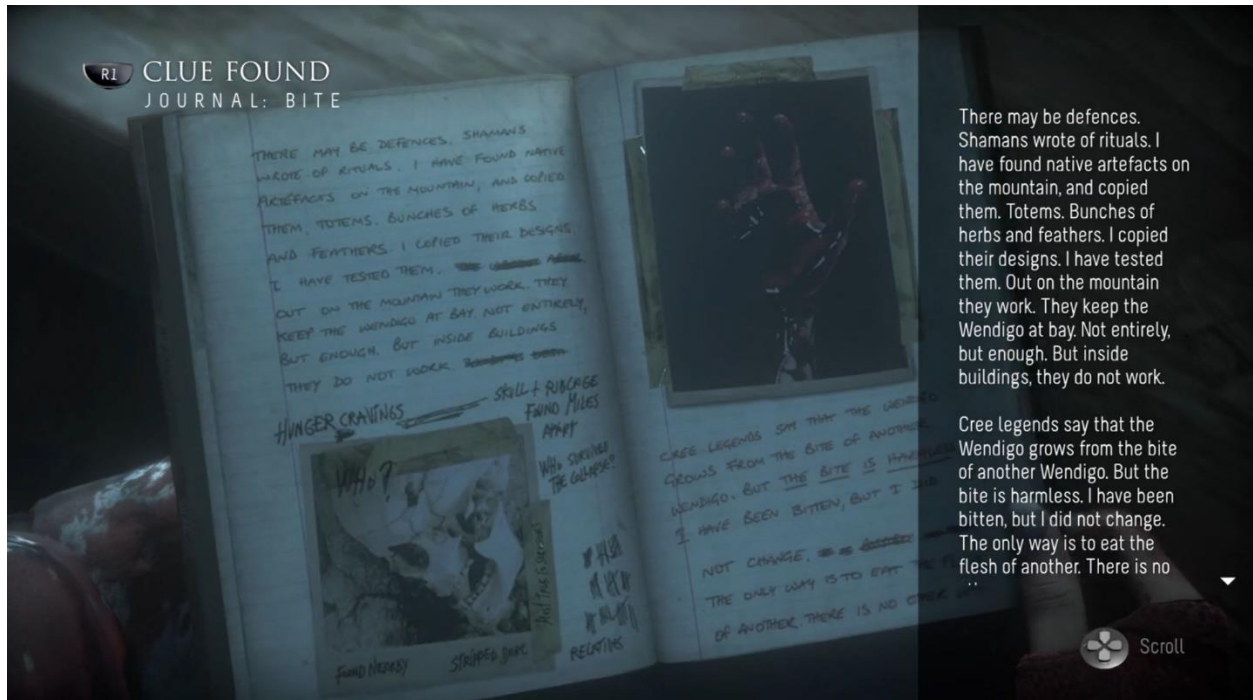


Figure 27. The Stranger's journal entry that mentions the totems and other Native artifacts (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 8)

The Stranger writes in his journal about finding “native [sic] artefacts on the mountain” (*Until Dawn* Chapter 8) and mimicking them. These artifacts he writes of refers to both the totems as well as other markings seen throughout the game, such as markings characters can find in the mines (Figure 28). The Stranger not only appropriates Indigenous culture for his own gain, ultimately reducing positive Native American influence to little more than decoration and a game mechanic, but he also further disrespects Indigenous Peoples by neglecting to capitalize the word “Native” in his journal.



Figure 28. Native markings and artifacts left by the Stranger (Source: *Until Dawn* Chapter 2)

Mike and Jess finding the markings and artifacts in the mines, like when Chris and Ashley find Josh's mom's letter, is not a scenario handled with care. Their dialogue upon finding this is as follows:

MIKE. Whoa. This place is like...historical.

JESSICA. Holy bat cave.

MIKE. It's gotta be Native American, right?

JESSICA. I don't think the miners were getting their arts'n'crafts on, no.

MIKE. It's like a shrine or something.

JESSICA. A shrine to what? (*Until Dawn* Chapter 2)

As previously stated, we cannot reasonably expect teenagers to handle such things with sensitivity, but it is certainly worth noting that a lot of the Indigenous items we see throughout the game are filtered through the lens of mostly white teenagers making flippant comments about them.

The most prominent Native American influence in the game is the primary threat: the Wendigo. This influence is distinct from the totems and other artifacts that can be found, for the Wendigos threaten the lives of the eight playable characters. While the player is likely to see the totems and artifacts as helpful, as positive things they want to continue to see, they would alternatively look at the Wendigos as frightening, inherently a bad sign. Interestingly, “Wendigo” is the only word consistently capitalized throughout the game, which adds emphasis to this representation of Indigenous folklore over the other aspects present in the game. Further, it is necessary to be mindful of the fact that in the game’s bonus content about the creation of the Wendigo, it is stated that Native Americans often refuse to even say the word “Wendigo” since it is believed that saying the word will bring it to you. Yet, even with the writers knowing this, the characters in the game still say it many times, and it is never mentioned in the game’s content itself that many Native Americans will not speak it.

The Wendigo is particularly significant in *Until Dawn*. It is explained that the Wendigo curse was released by the miners back in the fifties when they started digging into the mountain. In 1952 when thirty miners were trapped in a cave-in for weeks, only twelve made it out, for those survivors had been tempted by the spirit of the Wendigo, forced into cannibalizing their fallen friends, then progressively transformed into Wendigos themselves not long after being rescued from the mines. Further, the spirit of the Makkapitew—the strongest, alpha Wendigo—tempted Hannah into cannibalism after her and Beth’s fall in the prologue, a fall that killed Beth and left Hannah with two broken legs. Hannah ultimately cannibalizes her twin sister’s remains and turns into the new Makkapitew, and she threatens the lives of all her former friends. It is not evident in the game that the Wendigo threatened the lives of the Native Americans who previously lived on the mountain; it only appears to have been released when the miners came.

Though through the totems and the symbols, there is a clear positive message associated with Indigenous influence, this positive message is overshadowed by the menacing presence of the Wendigo. The player knows from the moment they pick up the game that the goal is to ensure the survival of the eight playable characters, and the Wendigos threaten to take each and every one of their lives; therefore, the player ends up much more engrossed in that aspect of the Native American influence on the game. One key example of this is in Chapter 8 if Emily has been bitten. The player as Mike has the option to shoot her out of fear that she may turn into a Wendigo because of the bite, and the player's desire to keep as many people alive as possible can lead to them making this choice out of fear. The choice to shoot Emily is even memorialized in a trophy, which is chilling considering that Emily is always the only nonwhite character present in this scene, so the player is encouraged and rewarded for killing her, for protecting the white characters present at the expense of the Other.

The Indigenous culture appropriated throughout the game not only is used for the benefit of mostly white people, but it is also seen primarily as a danger to protect white people from. Blackwood Mountain is owned by the parents of Hannah, Beth, and Josh Washington, who are all presented in-game as white. Blackwood Mountain was stolen from Indigenous Peoples, colonized by white capitalists who wanted to mine the mountain. It is never revealed what was in the mountain that the miners were after; the only thing we know they mined was the Wendigo curse. Ultimately, Native American influence in the game is reduced to decorations, threats, and game mechanics, and their culture is left on the mountain only as something for white people to manipulate, fear, and mock.

CHAPTER 4. MENTAL ILLNESS

Slasher horror has often engaged with the mentally unstable. Even the term “psychokiller” that Clover uses throughout her analysis of the genre includes the charged term “psycho,” which is often linked to sanity, mental disorder and instability. Thus, the presented mental health status of each character is another factor that impacts their agency in the game.

Josh is the only character who is indicated to have any serious mental health issues. While it is certainly possible that all the characters struggled with some depression after Hannah and Beth’s disappearance, Josh is the only one whose depression is highlighted and diagnosed, and he is the only one who clearly has a history with mental health disorders. Thus, the only mentally ill character in the game acts as a red herring, a fearful antagonist for several early chapters in the game, terrorizing and occasionally physically attacking his friends to make them believe their lives are in danger.

In an article about the societal depictions of disease, Sander Gilman discusses how the mentally ill are often considered “mad” (11) and discusses the “construction of the image of the violent insane” (11). He explains this when he writes, “If I am afraid that I am to be attacked, have my goods stolen, lose my status in society, I do not want this fear to be universal, pervading every moment of my life. I want to know who is going to rob me, who is going to attack me, who is going to steal my hard-won status” (Gilman 11). People want to have clear Others to fear in order to feel safe when those Others are not present, and the mentally ill are often cast into this role, perceived as a dangerous Other to be feared. The monstrous Other represented by Josh’s Psycho persona is an indication that the dominant social order that opposes the sane from the insane is still at play in the game.

Arguably, Ashley as a hysterical woman could also be discussed in terms of sanity, for the states of hysterical panic she quickly jumps into clearly demonstrate that her mental functioning is impaired. Her issues, however, are not dignified by a diagnosis as Josh's are, which may result either from her inferiority as a woman compared to a man or from the class distinction between the two characters, for while the Washington family is rich enough to afford a mountain and therapy for their son, nothing is known about Ashley's family's financial ability to provide therapy to their daughter. This drives in the historical tendency for women's needs to be undermined and written off while men's are taken seriously, as is the case with historically describing hysteria versus melancholia (Dixon 197).

Point Blank: Weapons

The power and agency that comes with having weapons is particularly interesting in the case of mental health. With only Josh confirmed as having any mental health issues, the way weapons are distributed to him speaks to how people who are mentally unstable are perceived as compared to those who do not display any mental health issues. The mentally ill are not trusted with weapons, characterized instead as the "violent insane" Gilman describes, and not categorized as protectors like their sane counterparts.

Josh uses many weapons throughout his time in-game, but not when he is the player character. As the Psycho, Josh uses gas or a needle to knock out his friends, has massive sawblades rigged up in the lodge's basement and in the shed, has a gun to give Chris, has hooks hanging throughout the basement, and many other frightening weapons to be seen. But when the

player gets to finally control him, the only weapon he has at his disposal is his fist, which can only be used once while he is hallucinating a pig's head in the mines.

There is only one other character who has a body part for a weapon, and that is Mike, who can use his foot in the Sanatorium to kick a wolf (not recommended). In Josh, only being able to use his fists to defend himself makes him appear helpless, but Mike is not seen that way. When Mike is given the opportunity to kick the wolf, he has the machete on him, and he could just as easily go for that, but he instead uses his foot, which portrays instead of helplessness a reluctance to severely hurt the animal, and that makes Mike come across as thoughtful in his approach to using weaponry, choosing just the right weapon at his disposal for the situation. Josh by that point, however, has proven that he is not so thoughtful, as evidenced by the damage done by the Psycho.

Josh is ultimately the only male character who has no opportunities to be a protector at all, not even given a chance to fail as one, for he is deemed exclusively a violent threat from the beginning. His monstrous side as the Psycho uses many weapons to torment others, but when that mask is taken from him, once his friends discover that he has been the Psycho all along, he is stripped of all weaponry, left with only his fists and his words to fight back with if he needs.

Forewarned is Forearmed: Death and Survival

Josh's fate is horrific whether he lives or dies, and both his possibility for death and his possibility for survival are significantly linked to his struggles with his mental health.

Josh only has one possible death in the game: in the mines after Mike and Sam find him in Wendigo Hannah's lair, Mike tries to take Josh back the way he and Sam came, but they

encounter Wendigo Hannah who stops them in their tracks. This scenario can go one of two ways: either Josh and Wendigo Hannah will recognize each other and Hannah's humanity will come forth enough for her to take Josh back, or Josh will not recognize her in time for her to realize it is him, and she will squeeze his head like a zit until it pops.

Josh's death is entirely out of his hands, as is his life. His struggles with his mental health control him. Notably, in one of the only scenes when the player gets to walk around with Josh when he is experiencing a severe episode of hallucinations, he hears the Psycho's voice and will say, "I don't take orders from you... you can't tell me what to do... you can't tell me what to do anymore" (*Until Dawn* Chapter 10). There is an unmistakable note of distress and fear in his voice when he says this. It is also swiftly followed by the sound of the Psycho laughing and then Josh giving in: "Okay... okay... I trust you... I trust you" (*Until Dawn* Chapter 10). His tone is drastically different here; from the first "okay" to the second, he goes from still rather distressed to much calmer, and his "I trust you" is unsettlingly, disturbingly calm. His life is clearly not made up of his own conscious choices, instead directed by his unstable mind, and his death or survival is ultimately that way as well, for whether or not he survives depends not on anything the player can do while he is the player character, but on whether or not Sam finds Hannah's journal in the mines. If she does, then she can tell him that the Wendigo is Hannah, but if she does not, he will not know, and he will not realize it soon enough for her to recognize him back. This feminizes Josh, for he becomes comparable to Jessica, who also is not granted any agency over her own survival of the night, though she can at least have a chance to save herself if Matt does not survive to that point. Josh never gets an opportunity to protect himself, ultimately maintaining a feminine victim role whether he lives or dies.

Josh's mental illnesses, his lack of sanity compared to the other characters, is also symbolically linked to his death: his head being squeezed until it pops is representative of his mental instability, of his major depressive disorder and/or schizophrenia that is ultimately his true downfall, for it is possible that they never would have returned to the mountain, Josh never would have concocted his revenge scheme, if not for his mental illness—the Psycho dwelling within him and haunting his hallucinations—pushing him to act.

Josh's only scenario for survival is not much better than his death. He only has one way to survive the game: once recognized by his sister, she will take him with her and make them a family again. In the post-credits scene, the player gets a glimpse of him in the mines chewing on the Stranger's head and turning into a Wendigo (see Figure 29).



Figure 29. Josh eating the Stranger's head and turning into a Wendigo (Source: *Until Dawn* Post-Credits)

Josh, our violent mentally ill character, is perceived as a monster in the narrative when he is first revealed as the Psycho. His actions led to his friends believing him capable of even killing

Jessica despite his insistence that he was not the one who kidnapped her. Yet, he cannot escape his monstrosity. In the end, he literally becomes a monster, literally becomes the thing capable of what was done to Jessica. Josh enters the narrative already with mental disfiguration due to his major depressive disorder and possible schizophrenia, and he leaves it with literal physical disfiguration, a true Othered monster isolated to a life in the mines.

CHAPTER 5. THE RESULT OF CHAOS: CONCLUSION

In her analysis of another branching narrative video game, Carlen Lavigne notes that all events are preconstructed—the outcomes already decided. This rings true in *Until Dawn*. No matter how much the game emphasizes the butterfly effect and how your choices as a player matter, your choices can and will be punished if they do not uphold the hegemony. All the characters are confined to their archetypes and identities regardless of player choices, for the choices presented will ultimately enact those archetypes. Thus, through its structured use of horror tropes, *Until Dawn* insinuates many negative things about women, racial minorities, and the mentally ill, all while leaving the Native Americans behind.

Women are situated as inferior to men, for the men are elevated to protector positions over them, and they are not deemed capable of protecting themselves and others. The weapons that may end up in women's hands are few and far between, especially compared to men like Mike and Chris who wield plenty of effective weaponry throughout the game. The women have more possible deaths than the men, which reinforces how victim-status is a traditionally feminine role in slasher horror. The only truly liberated woman in the game is Wendigo Hannah, who embodies the masculine role of the monstrous psychokiller and gets the opportunity to fight back against the those who wronged her, who led her to what could have been her death, but actually was a horrific rebirth.

BIPOC are Othered immediately upon being introduced in Chapter 1, brought together as a Token Minority Couple. The weapons they have access to serve to emasculate Matt and masculinize Emily, which Others them further, and their most effective weapon is one that can only be used by one of them, and it is typically associated with a cry for help, highlighting how

they are not considered capable of helping themselves. Their most notable deaths are influenced by racist depictions, and with so many possible deaths between just the two of them, it is easy for players to be exposed to at least one.

The mentally ill are treated as monstrous, given little to no chance to defend themselves with weaponry because they are believed to be inherently violent, monstrous. And that monstrosity is emphasized by the literal transformation into a Wendigo.

Indigenous culture is appropriated throughout the game and treated with disrespect by the characters who interact with it. The generational trauma of colonialism lingers as the mostly white characters use Native culture for their personal benefit while also shielding themselves from the darker aspects of the culture: the Wendigo.

The Wendigo is ultimately the hand of the dominant social order in *Until Dawn*. Wendigo Hannah is the force of interpellation on Blackwood Mountain. The Wendigo curse, seen so easily by players as a bad omen, as a threat to the characters they identify with and want desperately to save, is the liberator of the Indigenous Peoples, the force that can fight back against the colonists of the Cree's mountain. The miners who slaughtered the people who worked in the Sanatorium and Wendigo Hannah who is given the opportunity to kill all her former friends can be seen as evil creatures to be avoided, as something to fear as a threat to the player's ability to win the game, but losing frees all the characters from the pressures of their reality, of conforming to the dominant social order, and it rids the mountain of colonizers who prevent the Indigenous Peoples from returning to their ancestral home.

With its branching narrative style, *Until Dawn* has the ability to challenge the hegemony, but it overwhelmingly fails to do so. The outcomes are preconstructed for the player, every choice already made, and those choices reinforce problematic aspects of horror culture that place

women, racial minorities, and the mentally ill in a position of inferiority to sane white men, and leave the Indigenous Peoples alienated from their home. The only way to truly fight back against the hegemonic ideas in the game is to fail and to embrace the slasher in *Until Dawn* rather than the survival. Instead of going for They All Live, the trophy signifying a win of the game, the challenger of the hegemony must aim for This is THE End, the trophy signifying total loss, all characters dead.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Something for Later: Tables

Character	Gender	Race	Mental Illness	Traits	Archetype
Samantha “Sam” Giddings	Female	White	N/A	Diligent, considerate, adventurous	Final Girl
Christopher “Chris” Hartley	Male	White	N/A	Methodical, protective, humorous	Funny Guy/ Skeptic
Jessica “Jess” Riley	Female	White	N/A	Confident, trusting, irreverent	Sexy Girl
Matthew “Matt” Taylor	Male	Black	N/A	Motivated, ambitious, active	Token Minority
Ashley “Ash” Brown	Female	White	N/A	Academic, inquisitive, forthright	Hysterical Woman
Michael “Mike” Munroe	Male	White	N/A	Intelligent, driven, persuasive	Hero
Emily “Em” Davis	Female	Asian	N/A	Intelligent, resourceful, persuasive	Bitch/Token Minority
Joshua “Josh” Washington	Male	White	Major depressive disorder (diagnosed), possibly undiagnosed schizophrenia	Complex, thoughtful, loving	Red Herring

Source: *Until Dawn* various chapters

Characters	Weapons	Required?	Characters	Weapons	Required?
Sam	Vase	Optional	Ashley	Scissors	Optional
	Baseball Bat	Optional	Mike	Lighter	Required
	Shovel/Pipe	Required		Hunting rifle	Required
Chris	Shotgun (1)	Required		Foot	Required
	Pistol	Required		Revolver	Required
	Plank	Required		Machete	Required
	Revolver	Optional		Sawed-Off Shotgun	Required
	Shotgun (2)	Required	Emily	Torch	Required

Jessica	Snowball	Required		Flare Gun	Optional
Matt	Axe	Required		Flares	Required
	Flare Gun	Optional	Josh	Fist	Required

Statistics for Weapons

All Weapons	Men's Weapons	Women's Weapons
Possible weapons: 22 Required weapons: 16 Optional weapons: 6	Possible weapons: 14 Required weapons: 12 Optional weapons: 2	Possible weapons: 8 Required weapons: 4 Optional weapons: 4

"Required?" refers to if the character must obtain the weapon and it always triggers player use opportunity (Source: *Until Dawn* various chapters)

Table 1.3 All Possible Playable Character Deaths

Characters	Deaths	Characters	Deaths
Sam	Gutted by Wendigo (10)	Ashley (cont.)	Burned alive due to Sam running to switch too soon (10)
Chris	Head torn off by Wendigo due to player failure to succeed combat scenarios or Ashley refusing to let him back into lodge (8)		Eyes gouged out by Wendigo (10)
	Head torn off by Wendigo after opening trapdoor or after Ashley opening trapdoor (9)	Mike	Burned alive due to Sam running to switch too soon or sacrificing himself (10)
Jessica	Butchered by Wendigo, jaw has been torn off (4)	Emily	Eyes gouged out by Wendigo (8)
	Jaw torn off by Wendigo (10)		Falls into a meat grinder while fleeing from Wendigo (8)
Matt	Falls over cliff's edge (6)		Shot in the eye by Mike (8)
	Attacked by Wendigo and hung on a hook (6)	Eyes gouged out by Wendigo (10)	
	Face smashed in via Wendigo punch (10)	Burned alive due to Sam running to switch too soon (10)	
Ashley	Head torn off by Wendigo after opening trapdoor (9)	Josh	Head squeezed by Wendigo (10)

Statistics for Deaths

Men's Deaths	Women's Deaths
Total possible: 7 Average: 1.75 deaths per character	Total possible: 11 Average: 2.75 deaths per character
White Characters' Deaths	BIPOC Characters' Deaths
Total possible: 10 Average: 1.67 deaths per character	Total possible: 8 Average: 4 deaths per character

Source: *Until Dawn* various chapters

Appendix B. The Soul of Discretion: Until Dawn Summary

Table 2.1 Brief Summary of <i>Until Dawn</i>	
Chapter	Events
Prologue	Several of the friends play a cruel prank on Hannah; she flees into the woods followed by her twin sister Beth; they fall off a cliff and are never seen again
Chapter 1	The eight remaining friends all return to Blackwood Mountain one year after Hannah and Beth's disappearance because Josh (Hannah and Beth's brother) invited them all back
Chapter 2	They reenter the lodge; relationship drama ensues; the group splits up: Josh, Ash, Chris, and Sam stay in the lodge; Em and Matt go back to the cable car station; Mike and Jess head to the cabin
Chapter 3	Josh, Chris, & Ash have a séance and think they make contact with one of Josh's sisters; Josh storms off; Chris and Ash get assaulted by the Psycho; Mike and Jess make it to the cabin; Jess is kidnapped by an unseen assailant
Chapter 4	Mike chases after Jess then follows the Stranger (who he thinks is her kidnapper) when he loses her; Chris is forced to choose between Josh and Ash; Josh gets cut in half
Chapter 5	Mike explores the Sanatorium; Mike may befriend Wolfie; Matt and Em discover the cable car keys are missing and decide to go to the fire tower in search of a radio; the Psycho chases Sam through the basement of the lodge
Chapter 6	Matt and Em make it to the fire tower and call for help; the fire tower falls into the mines; Chris and Ash look in the basement of the lodge for Sam; the Psycho kidnaps and ties up Chris and Ash and makes Chris shoot himself or her
Chapter 7	Sam and Mike find Chris and Ash just in time for the Psycho to reveal that he is Josh; Mike accuses Josh of killing Jess; Mike and Chris take Josh to the shed and tie him up; Em explores the mines, finds where Hannah and Beth fell, and encounters the Stranger
Chapter 8	Em is chased by a monster before returning to the lodge; the Stranger comes and tells everyone there (Sam, Chris, Ash, Em, and Mike) about Wendigos; Chris and the Stranger go to the shed to get Josh, who has already been taken by the Wendigo, and it kills the Stranger and chases Chris back to the lodge; in a safe room in the basement, the group looks through the Stranger's things; Mike leaves to look for Josh and get the cable car keys from him; Ash reads the Stranger's journal; Sam is concerned to discover there are more Wendigos and the group follows after Mike to warn him
Chapter 9	Mike returns to the Sanatorium, meets Wolfie again, and encounters the other Wendigos; Jess wakes up in the mines; Sam sends the group back to the safe room when they encounter a wall the rest can't climb; Sam climbs the wall and finds Mike

Chapter 10	Josh vividly hallucinates his dead sisters; Sam may find Hannah’s journal in the mines, which reveals that Hannah is a Wendigo; Sam and Mike find Josh; Sam takes a shortcut back to the lodge while Mike takes Josh out the way they came; Wendigo Hannah interrupts, recognizes her brother, and takes him with her; Matt and Jess find each other in the mines and evade Wendigo Hannah; Sam returns to the lodge, Mike just behind; Wendigos are in the lodge; Chris, Em, and Ash slowly escape while Mike and Sam enact a plan to blow up the lodge and all the Wendigos in it (including Hannah)
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Table 2.2 Detailed Summary of *Until Dawn*

Chapter	Playable Character	Events	Deaths
Prologue	Beth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Hannah is pranked and flees into the woods. · Beth follows her. · The player is introduced to choices, QTEs, and interacting with the world. · Hannah and Beth are chased to the cliff’s edge and fall. 	⊗ Beth (unavoidable)
	Patient/Josh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Therapy session · The player meets Dr. Hill, the analyst. · The player answers a series of questions about a picture of a scarecrow in a field. 	
Chapter 1: “Friendship” or “Momento Mori” 10 hours until dawn	Sam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sam arrives at Blackwood pines. · The player is once again introduced to totems and QTEs, and for the first time introduced to clues and the don’t move feature. · Sam meets with Chris who takes her to the shooting range while they wait for the cable car. 	
	Chris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Chris practices at the shooting range. · The player is introduced to the shooting feature. · Chris may choose to shoot a squirrel, which will hurt his relationship with Sam and lead to a bird flying down and attacking her. · They leave the shooting range and get in the cable car. · In the cable car, Sam and Chris chat, and the butterfly effect comes up. 	
	Jess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Jess lets Chris and Sam out of the cable car station. · Chris takes a note Jess has from Mike, and she may choose to reveal that after Mike and Emily broke up, she and him got together. 	
	Matt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Matt and Emily bring their bags up the mountain towards the lodge. · They run into Mike, and Matt can be aggressive or friendly with him. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Emily will go back down saying she needs to talk to Sam before getting to the lodge. 	
	Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ashley sees Mike and Emily flirting through the telescope. · Matt startles her. · Ashley can choose whether or not to let Matt look through the telescope. 	
	Jess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mike startles Jess with a snowball, and they have a snowball fight and flirt. 	
	Patient/Josh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Therapy session · The player flips through a notebook and tells Dr. Hill which of the options shown scare them more. 	
Chapter 2: “Darkness” or “Jealousy”	Chris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Chris and Josh discover that the lock on the door of the lodge is frozen, so Josh helps Chris go in through a window on the side of the house. · Josh leaves Chris to go through the house alone. · Chris finds a can of deodorant and uses it with a lighter to melt the ice on the lock. 	
9 hours until dawn	Matt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Josh, Sam, Ashley, and Matt come inside the lodge. · Jess and Mike arrive. · If Matt saw Mike and Emily flirting, he’ll confront Mike, and he may choose to physically fight him. · Emily arrives, and if Mike and Matt didn’t fight, then she and Jess will fight. · Matt can choose to side with either Emily or Jess. · Josh will stop the fight and send Mike and Jess to a cabin. 	
	Mike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mike and Jess will start the trail to the cabin, and they will flirt along the way. 	
	Sam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sam goes down to the basement with Josh to turn on the boiler and get the hot water running. 	
	Patient/Josh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Therapy session · The three things the player indicated scares them in the therapy session in chapter 1 are decorating Dr. Hill’s office. · The player is asked about the fear Dr. Hill concluded from the therapy session in the prologue. · The player is asked to choose between honesty, loyalty, and charity. 	
	Matt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · This section is only available to those who preordered the game. · Matt and Emily leave the lodge to get Emily’s bag, joking and flirting along the way. 	
Chapter 3:	Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ashley, Chris, and Josh have a séance with a Ouija board. 	

<p>“Haunted” or “Isolation”</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · They believe that they make contact with Hannah or Beth, and it directs them to look in the library for proof about what happened to the twins the year before. · Josh gets upset and leaves. 	
<p>8 hours until dawn</p>	<p>Mike</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mike and Jess continue flirting on the trail to the cabin. · They find a deer that has been severely injured, and when it’s pulled away by an unseen force, they are frightened and run the rest of the way to the cabin. · Jess realizes that her phone is missing. · Mike starts a fire and adjusts the lights. · Depending on how Mike has performed, Jess may accept or reject his advances, leaving her in one of three possible states of dress for the remainder of the game: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If their relationship is at its max, Jess will strip down to her underwear and bra. · If Mike fails to impress but doesn’t destroy their relationship, Jess will strip down to her t-shirt and jeans. · If Mike fails to impress and acts rudely, then Jess will remain fully clothed. · They are startled by a noise, and Mike goes into the other room to find Jess’s phone was thrown in through the bathroom window. · Frustrated thinking it is Emily trying to ruin their fun, Jess storms outside and yells. · Moments after coming back inside, something breaks the window on the door and snatches Jess out. 	
	<p>Ashley</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Chris and Ashley go to the library to find what the spirit board told them about. · They find a moving panel in the library with a room behind it. 	
	<p>Chris</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Chris looks in the room and finds a threatening letter about Hannah and Beth. · Chris can choose whether or not to tell Ashley about the note. · Chris and Ashley hear a noise from the kitchen, and both of them get knocked out by the Psycho. · The player watches the Psycho drag Ashley away and light candles in the lodge. 	
	<p>Patient/Josh</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Therapy session · The player flips through a notebook and tells Dr. Hill which of the eight characters they like more between the pairs shown. · The player ultimately chooses which character they most dislike. 	

Chapter 4: “Loyalty” or “Malevolence” 7 hours until dawn	Mike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mike chases after Jess. · Jess (regardless if she is alive or dead) falls down the mine shaft. · Mike pursues Jess’s attacker (or the man he thinks is her attacker), and he ends up finding the Sanatorium. 	⊗ Jess – upon failure to take the risky paths and failure to complete the QTEs
	Chris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Chris wakes up in the kitchen and tries to find Ashley. · He follows a path to the shed where he finds Josh and Ashley tied up. · The Psycho’s voice plays, telling Chris to choose which to save. · Regardless of who Chris chooses, the saw will “kill” Josh. · Running outside, Chris and Ashley find Matt and Emily, and they talk about what to do to save everyone. · Chris and Ashley decide to look for Sam in the lodge while Emily and Matt decide to try to find help. 	
	Patient/Josh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Therapy session · Dr. Hill asks the player questions about how the game is going and references the player’s choice in the therapy session in chapter 2. · Once the player knows that the patient is Josh who has undiagnosed schizophrenia, it is clear that Dr. Hill is referring to that here. 	
Chapter 5: “Dread” or “Prey” 6 hours until dawn	Mike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mike explores the Sanitorium, and he finds many clues about the miners who were stuck in a cave-in in the fifties. · He will find a machete, but he may lose it. If he ignores the trap or immediately amputates his fingers upon getting stuck, he will leave the Sanitorium with a working machete. If he tries to open the bear trap, the machete will break and be unusable. · He may befriend Wolfie. 	
	Matt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Matt and Emily go down to the cable car station and find that the key is missing. · They find a map that shows a fire tower and decide to go to it in search of a radio. · On the way to the fire tower, they end up at the cliff where Hannah and Beth fell. · A pack of elk confront them. 	
	Sam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sam gets out of the bath when she hears a weird noise to find her clothes stolen, and she walks around the house looking for her friends and thinking it’s some kind of prank. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · When she gets to the cinema room in the basement, the Psycho shows her a clip of herself in the tub and then of Josh dying. · The Psycho then confronts her, and she has to run away from him. · If she was attacked by the bird in chapter 1, she will not be able to escape the Psycho. If she was not attacked, she can escape by choosing the right time to hide. 	
	Spectator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Therapy session · Dr. Hill talks about how the game is going. · The patient is revealed to be the Psycho. 	
Chapter 6: “Psychosis” or “Vengeance” 5 hours until dawn	Matt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Matt and Emily walk through the elks. · Matt may choose to kill one, and the whole pack will push him (but not Emily) over the edge of the cliff. He may climb back up or fall to his death. · If he does not attack an elk, they both safely walk through. 	⊗ Matt – upon being forced over the cliff’s edge and failing to complete the QTEs to climb back up to safety
	Emily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Matt and Emily walk the rest of the way to the fire tower. · Emily may find an emergency flare gun. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Emily may choose to give the flare gun to Matt. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Matt agreed to Emily’s plan to go to the fire tower, he will shoot the flare gun. · If Matt disagreed with Emily’s plan to go to the fire tower, he will keep the flare gun. · If Emily does not give the flare gun to Matt, she can either keep it or shoot it. · They get the electricity working and use the radio, and they make contact with someone who tells them that help will arrive, but not until dawn. · Something cuts the cables holding the fire tower up, and it falls into the mines. 	
	Matt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · In the mines, Matt has a choice about whether to save Emily or to jump to safety. Emily is safe either way. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Matt jumps to safety, then he’s fine. · If Matt tries to save Emily, she will fall, and he will jump into a different spot. There, something will attack him. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Matt has the flare gun, he can shoot it and save himself. · If Matt doesn’t have the flare gun, he will die. 	⊗ Matt – upon trying twice to save Emily and not having the flare gun to defend himself against his assailant
	Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ashley and Chris look around the lodge for Sam. · In the basement, they see a ghost that leads them to find Hannah’s diary in a dollhouse. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · They search deeper into the basement, finding the Psycho’s lair. · Depending on whether or not Sam was captured, they either find her tied up in a chair and unconscious, or they find a dummy in her clothes. · The Psycho sneaks up on them and knocks both of them out. · If Ashley has the scissors, she will have a chance to stab the Psycho, but it will not stop him from knocking her out. He’ll just punch her in the face. 	
	Chris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Chris and Ashley wake up tied to chairs sitting across from each other at a table. · They have a touching moment confessing their feelings for each other. · The Psycho’s voice can be heard overhead, and he instructs Chris to take the gun on the table and either shoot himself or Ashley. · Chris may either point the gun at himself or at Ashley. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If he points it at himself, Ashley asks him to kill her instead. · If he points it at Ashley, she will behave hysterically. · Chris can choose to shoot himself, shoot Ashley, or neither by letting the timer run out. 	
	Spectator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Therapy session · Dr. Hill watches the scene with Ashley and Chris on the monitors. · He rebukes the Psycho for his actions. 	
Chapter 7: “Loss” or “Violence” 4 hours until dawn	Sam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Sam escaped the Psycho in chapter 5, then she will have a chance to explore his workshop, eventually finding the room where Chris and Ashley found the dummy in her clothes. · If Sam did not escape, she will wake up in the chair she was tied to. · Sam will find Mike who is in a nearby room connected by a grate. · Sam opens the door to let Mike through and changes out of the towel into clothes. · They hear Chris and Ashley and push open a door to where they are tied up (both alive regardless of Chris’s choice). · The Psycho comes out and reveals that he’s Josh. 	
	Emily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Emily wakes up from her fall and gets to safety before the fire tower falls even deeper into the mine. · She explores the mine trying to find a way out. · She finds where Hannah and Beth fell, and she may find many gruesome clues, such as Beth’s head. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · She encounters the flamethrower guy (who, as far as she is currently aware, is the Psycho), and runs away from him. 	
	Chris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Josh laughs about the night of torment he's put his friends through, mentioning how the turmoil they've experienced is similar to what his sisters felt the year before and describing how he'd done everything. · Josh believes he's concocted a revenge film to post online, but his friends are unhappy. · Mike claims that Jessica is dead (regardless of whether or not she actually is at this point). · Mike and Chris bind Josh's hands and take him to the shed. · Josh tells them that he has no idea what happened to Jessica. · Josh will antagonize Mike and Chris, but he will only antagonize Chris if Chris chose to save Ashley instead of him in chapter 4. · After being antagonized, Mike points his gun in Josh's face to scare him, and Chris is given the option to disarm Mike or hit Josh. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Chris chooses to disarm Mike, then Mike claims that he wasn't actually going to shoot Josh, and Josh further antagonizes them. · If Chris chooses to hit Josh, then Josh is left unconscious, and Mike scolds him. · Mike sends Chris back to the lodge. 	
Chapter 8: "Animus" or "Revelation" 3 hours until dawn	Emily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The flamethrower guy gives Emily flares and instructs her to escape. · She will be pursued by a creature. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If she successfully evades her assailant and has the flare gun, she will have an opportunity to shoot the monster. · If she does not have the flare gun or fails to shoot it, it will bite her before she escapes. 	⊗ Emily – upon failure to complete the QTEs while running from the creature or upon falling into the meat grinder
	Chris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Emily escapes the creature, she will run back to the lodge where Chris, Ashley, and Sam let her in, and she tells them about what she found in the mines. · Mike will run in when he hears Emily's screams (he will hear screams even if Emily doesn't make it back to the lodge). · The flamethrower guy knocks on the door and comes in to warn them all about the Wendigos, and they decide to hide in the basement. · Worried about Josh, Chris and the flamethrower guy go to the shed to get him. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Flamethrower guy (unavoidable) ⊗ Chris – upon failure to shoot the Wendigo or if Ashley refuses to open the door

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Chris chose to shoot himself or did not make a decision, Ashley will kiss him before he leaves. · If Chris chose to shoot Ashley, she won't speak to him as he leaves. · While walking to the shed, Chris asks questions about Wendigos and the flamethrower guy gives him information that will be helpful for the player. · The most notable things the player learns about Wendigos in this chapter is that they are born out of cannibalism, guns only slow them down, fire can kill them, and they are mutated from a human. · When they get to the shed, Josh is already gone. · The Wendigo shows up and decapitates the flamethrower guy. · Chris has to shoot it several times to escape back to the lodge, and he is injured along the way. · If Chris chose to shoot himself or did not make a decision, Ashley is there to open the door and let him back inside. · If Chris chose to shoot Ashley, she locks the door and lets him die. When Mike sees Chris's head (which the Wendigo throws at the door), Ashley claims that it was too late, that he was already dead. · The player sees a short scene in which the Wendigo drags an unconscious Josh into the woods. 	
	Mike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mike, Sam, Ashley, Emily, and Chris gather in a room in the basement. · Some of them look through the flamethrower guy's stuff. · If Emily was bitten, Ashley notices it, and she and Mike believe that it will cause her to turn into a Wendigo. · Sam tries to calm them down, but Ashley is hysterical, and Mike won't listen. · Mike has a choice to shoot Emily. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Mike shoots Emily, they're all horrified—including Mike, who calms himself by claiming it had to be done—and leave her body where it is. · If Mike doesn't shoot Emily, he leaves the gun with them, instructing Sam and Ashley to do what they have to if Emily starts to change. · Mike leaves them to pursue Josh in order to get the cable car keys from him. 	⊗ Emily – upon Mike choosing to shoot her
	Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · In the safe room, Ashley reads through the flamethrower guy's journal, and she learns two noteworthy things about Wendigos from it: that because they are mutated from humans, they can perfectly mimic their prey, and that the bite alone is harmless. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Emily is still alive, Ashley can choose to disclose that the bite is harmless. If she does, Emily will hit her. · Sam looks at the journal and sees that there are many more Wendigos, and she says that they need to go warn Mike. 	
	Josh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Therapy session · Dr. Hill’s office reflects the environment Josh is in, which currently is the woods. · Dr. Hill ridicules Josh, blaming him for the loss of his sisters and for isolating himself from his friends. 	
Chapter 9: “Despair” or “Karma” 2 hours until dawn	Mike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Mike returns to the Sanatorium. · If he befriended Wolfie, then the wolf joins him. · Mike finds a lot of Wendigos—the miners from the fifties who all turned. 	⊗ Wolfie – upon failure of a QTE that causes Wolfie to sacrifice itself for Mike or upon failure to barricade
	Jess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Jess is alive, a short scene in which she gets up and puts on a jacket that’s been left in the mines plays. 	
	Ashley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ashley, Chris, Emily, and Sam are following after Mike. · Chris, injured, wants to stop, and Ashley can choose whether or not to leave him behind to rest. Even if she does choose to leave him behind, before entering the tunnel, she can go back for him. · They discover that Mike locked the door behind him, and they go down into a tunnel to pursue him instead. · Ashley is left behind either because she is closing the grate (if Chris is dead or was not left behind) or because she’s leaving markings on the ground for Chris to follow them. · Ashley hears Jessica’s voice and can choose to investigate it. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If she does not investigate the voice, she will simply rejoin the group. · If she does investigate the voice, she will find a trapdoor that she can choose to open. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If she does not open the trapdoor, she can rejoin the group. · If she does open the trapdoor, a Wendigo will pop out and decapitate her. 	⊗ Ashley – upon opening the trapdoor
	Chris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · This segment is only played if Ashley chooses to leave Chris behind. · Chris enters the tunnel to follow the group. · He also hears Jessica’s voice and can choose to investigate it. 	⊗ Chris – upon opening the trapdoor or Ashley having already opened it

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If he does not investigate it, he will simply rejoin the group; however, if Ashley opened the trapdoor, he will not be able to join them and instead will be killed by the Wendigo no matter his choice. · If he does investigate it, he will also find the trapdoor. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Ashley already opened the trapdoor, he will find her beanie and mourn her before the Wendigo pops back out of the trapdoor again and kills him. · If Ashley did not open the trapdoor, he can open it, and the Wendigo will pop out and kill him. · If Ashley did not open the trapdoor, he can avoid it and simply rejoin the group. 	
	Sam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sam, Emily, Ashley, and Chris run into a tall rock wall, and Sam says she can climb it and sends the rest of the group back to the safe room. · Sam gets out of the mine and heads to the Sanatorium, where she helps Mike get out and away from the Wendigos. · Alternatively, Mike may have at the beginning of the chapter shot a barrel at the end of his run from Wendigos, causing an explosion that gets him out of the Sanatorium. If so, Mike enters the mines where Sam is pursued by a flaming Wendigo that they promptly kill. 	⊗ Miners (Wendigos)
Chapter 10: “Repentance” or “Resolution” 1 hour until dawn	Josh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Therapy session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Dr. Hill berates Josh once more, criticizing him for his actions that have pushed other people away. · Josh is in the mines where the Wendigo left him. · Josh experiences auditory hallucinations of his sisters, Dr. Hill, and the Psycho. · Josh vividly hallucinates his dead sisters, a dead pig, and the Wendigo. · All his hallucinations clearly demonstrate the severity of his undiagnosed schizophrenia. 	
	Sam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sam and Mike enter a different section of the mines in their search for Josh. · Sam may find Hannah’s journal, which describes how she buried Beth after the fall killed her but eventually was so tormented by hunger that she dug her back up. · Sam and Mike find where the Wendigo has stored bodies and react to the gruesome sight. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The flamethrower guy’s body is always here. · The bodies of any of their friends who have died (except Emily if Mike shot her) are here. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · They notice Josh through a wood wall and bring him back to reality, out of his hallucinatory state. · If Sam found Hannah's journal, she tells Josh about it. · They get the cable car keys from him. · Sam notices a way out by climbing, and Mike helps her up to get out of the mines that way while he and Josh plan to go back the way he and Sam came. 	
Josh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Josh follows Mike out of the mines. · Josh sees all the bodies as well. · Josh is confronted by the Wendigo. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Sam told him about Hannah's journal, he recognizes Hannah (the Wendigo) in time for Hannah to recognize him as well, and she will take him back with her. · If Sam didn't tell him about Hannah's journal, he doesn't recognize Hannah in time, and she kills him. · Mike escapes unscathed. 	⊗ Josh – upon Sam failing to find Hannah's journal and warning Josh that the Wendigo is Hannah
Matt/Jess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If both Matt and Jess are alive, the player will play as Matt. If only one of them is alive, the player will play as whichever one is alive. · Matt and Jess find each other. · They walk through the mines. · They encounter the Wendigo (Hannah). · Hiding can lead to saving both of them, but Matt can choose to abandon Jessica and just save himself. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Matt – upon failing to escape and hide from the Wendigo ⊗ Jess – upon failing to hide from the Wendigo or being abandoned by Matt
Sam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Sam returns to the lodge, followed by Mike. · They go to the basement to see who else is alive. · Emily, Ashley, and Chris run in, pursued by Wendigos (miners). · They all run back to the main level, finding another Wendigo (Hannah). · Sam is instructed not to move. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If she fails the first don't move sequence, Mike will take the blow for her. He will be injured and unable to escape the lodge. · The Wendigos brawl since they are the only things moving. · One Wendigo knocks open a pipe letting gas out, and when Mike and Sam see this, they silently concoct a plan to break a lightbulb and turn the lights on, which will cause an explosion. · Sam is put through a series of don't move sequences and decisions while her friends slowly escape the lodge while the Wendigos are distracted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Mike – upon Sam failing a don't move, Sam failing to save him when prompted to, or Sam running for the switch too soon ⊗ Sam – upon failing a don't move ⊗ Ashley – upon Sam failing to save her when prompted to or Sam running for the switch too soon

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · If Sam makes it through all five total don't move sequences in this scene and chooses to save her friends and to hide instead of run for the switch each time, everyone remaining in the lodge will have time to escape. · If Sam fails a second don't move sequence after Mike is injured, Hannah promptly kills her, and Mike sacrifices himself by igniting a lighter to blow up the lodge. · If Sam runs for the switch too soon, anyone remaining in the lodge will die. · Once outside, the help Emily and Matt contacted while at the fire tower will arrive via helicopters as the lodge burns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Emily – upon Sam failing to save her when prompted to or Sam running for the switch too soon ⊗ Hannah and miners (Wendigos)
Credits and Post-Credits		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A replay of all the deaths of playable characters happens right as the credits start, always beginning with Beth. · All characters who survived until dawn will have police interviews play during the credits. What they say will depend on the choices the player made throughout the game and which characters survived. · After the credits, if Josh survived, he can be seen in the mines chewing on the flamethrower guy's head and turning into a Wendigo. 	

Appendix C. Whose Side Are You On: Character Traits and Relationship Status Charts

The white line indicates where the character's traits and relationship statuses were at the beginning of the game. The blue bar reflects how those traits and relationship statuses change based on player choices, either increasing or decreasing on choices that affect the trait or relationship. The bar will turn red if fills to its maximum or depletes to its minimum based on player choices.

It is possible to see Beth's relationship status with all other characters, including her sister Hannah, but it is never revealed what anyone else's relationship status with Hannah was.

In the order characters are first playable:

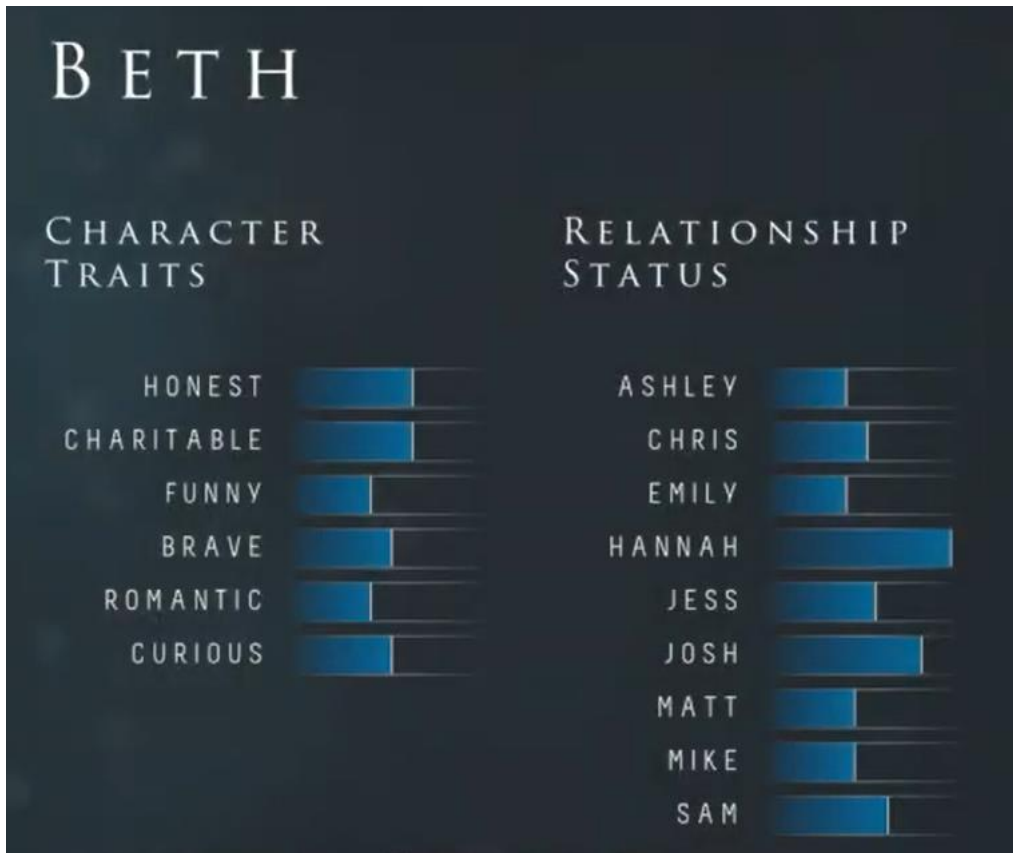


Figure 30. Beth's character traits and relationship statuses (Source: *Until Dawn* pause menu)

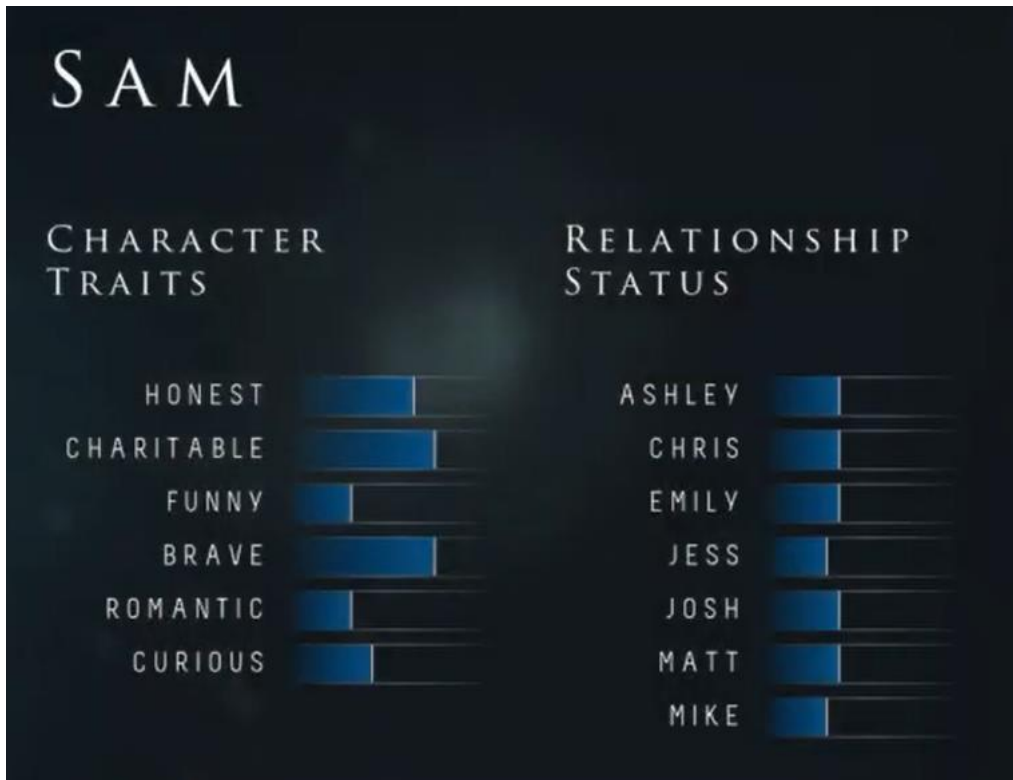


Figure 31. Sam’s character traits and relationship statuses (Source: *Until Dawn* pause menu)

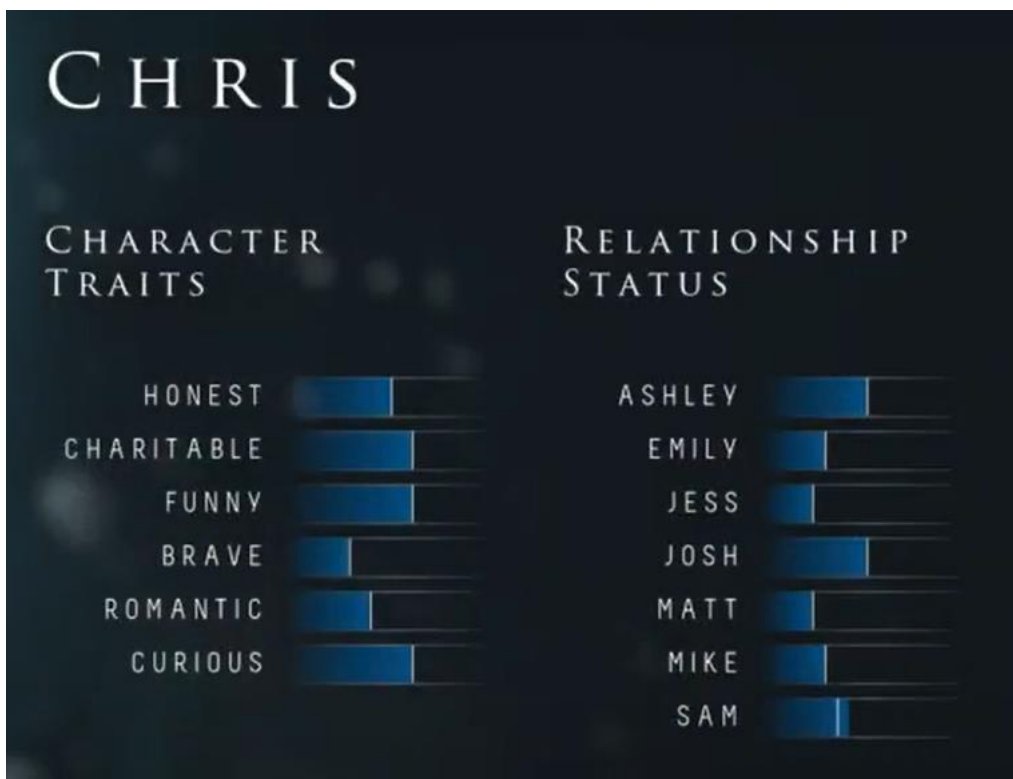


Figure 32. Chris’s character traits and relationship statuses (Source: *Until Dawn* pause menu)

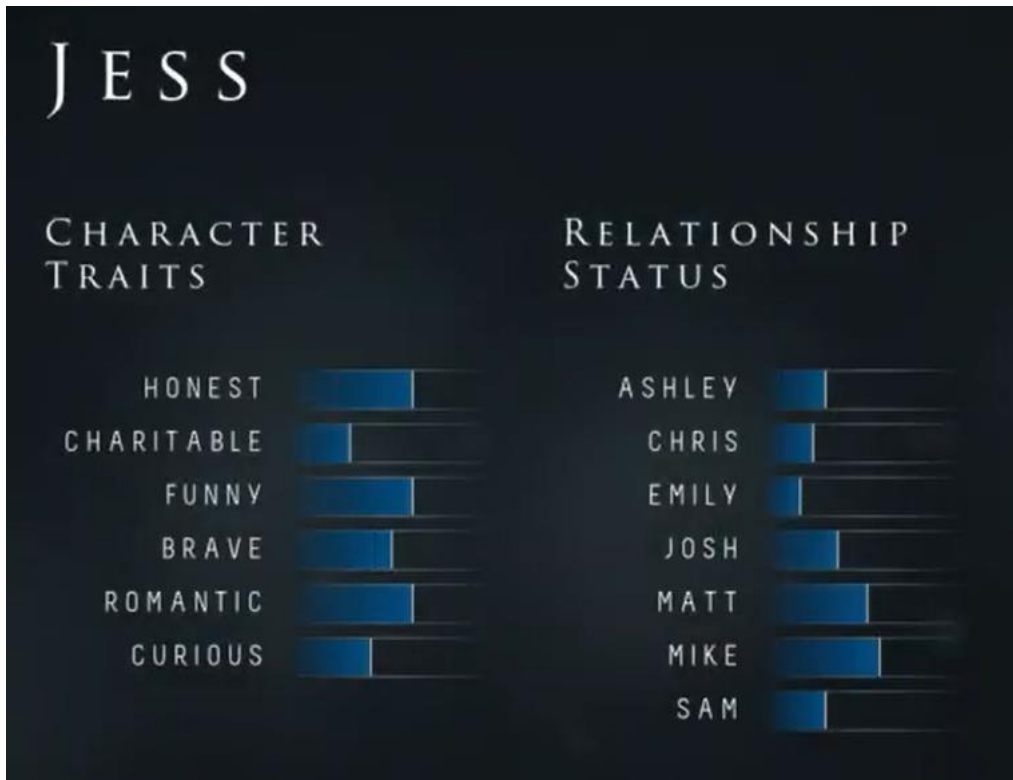


Figure 33. Jessica’s character traits and relationship statuses (Source: *Until Dawn* pause menu)

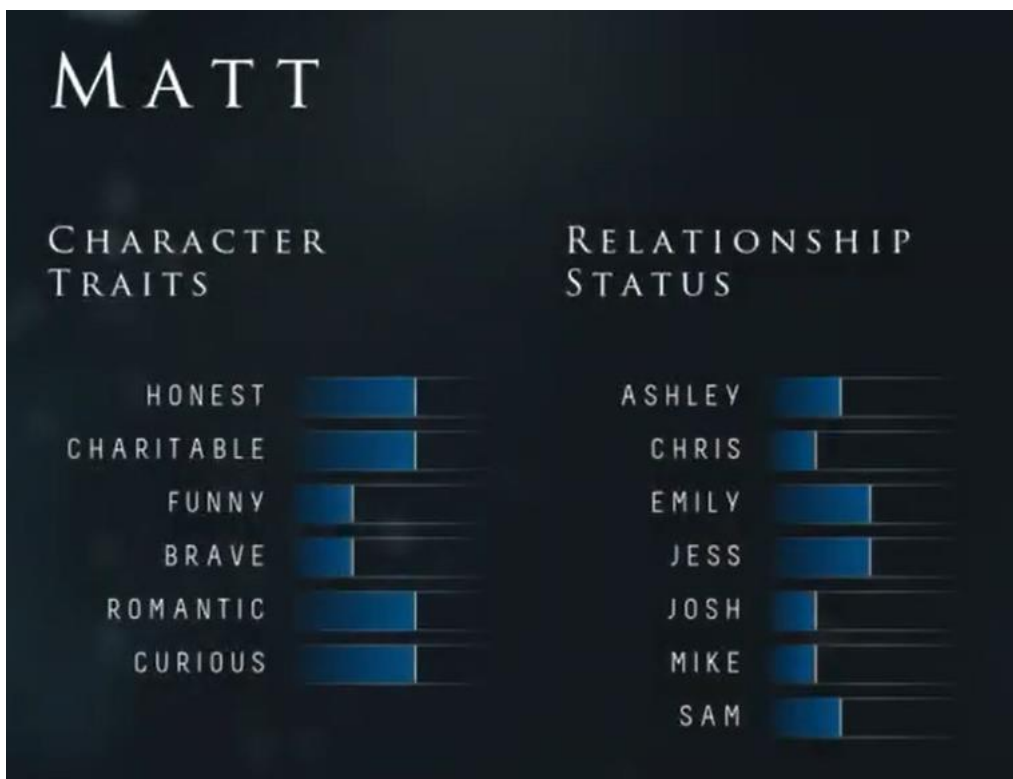


Figure 34. Matt’s character traits and relationship statuses (Source: *Until Dawn* pause menu)

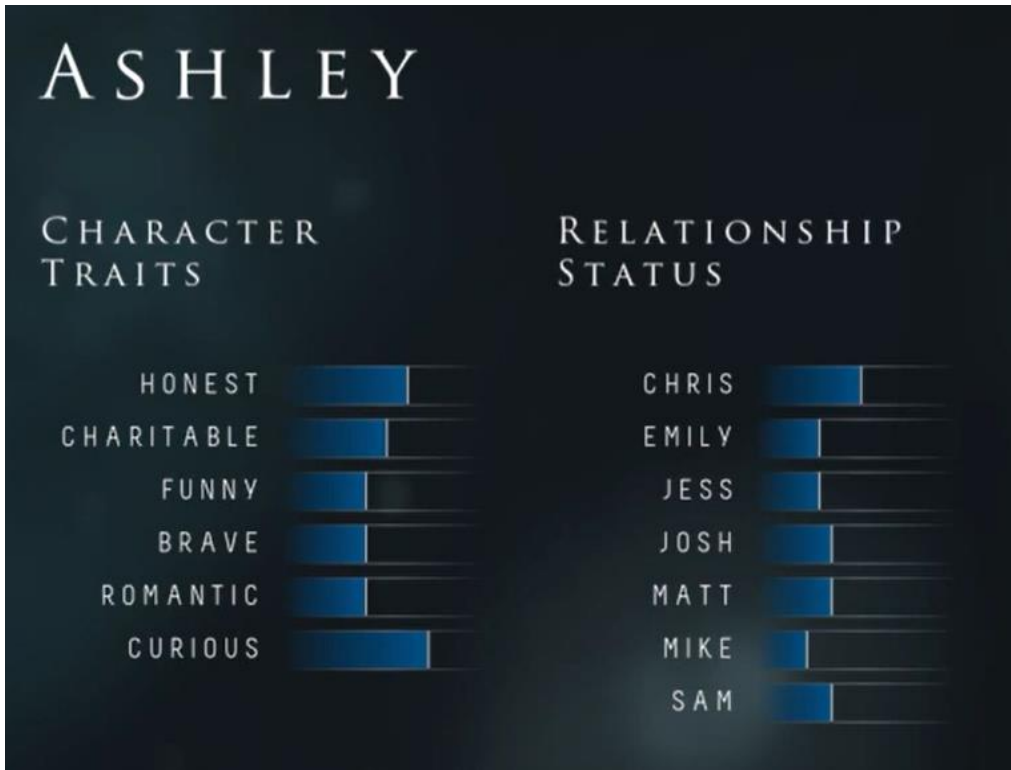


Figure 35. Ashley's character traits and relationship statuses (Source: *Until Dawn* pause menu)



Figure 36. Mike's character traits and relationship statuses (Source: *Until Dawn* pause menu)

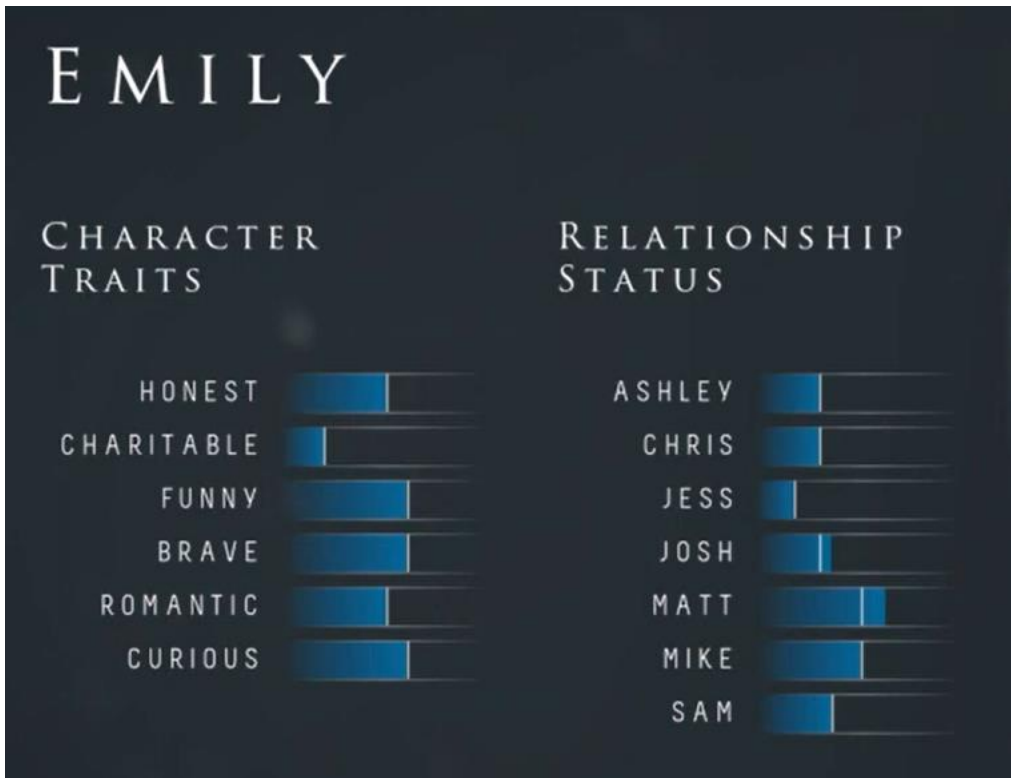


Figure 37. Emily's character traits and relationship statuses (Source: *Until Dawn* pause menu)

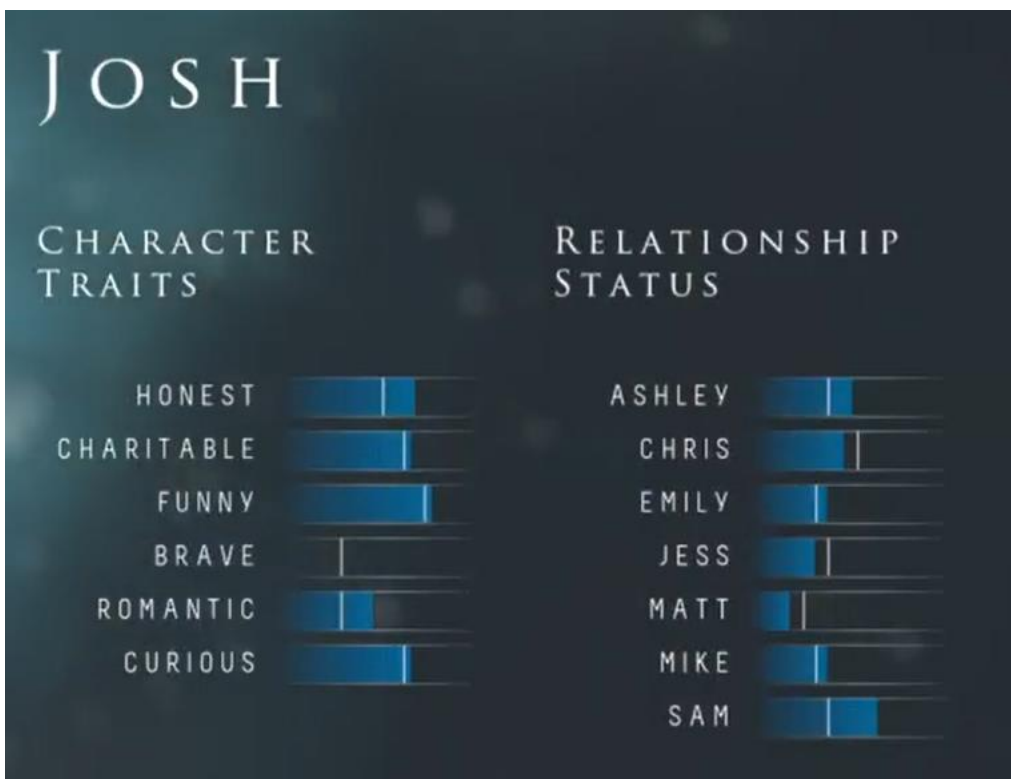


Figure 38. Josh's character traits and relationship statuses (Source: *Until Dawn* pause menu)

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