



# Exploring Helplessness in games with *Bury me, my Love*

Florent Maurin  
CEO @The Pixel Hunt

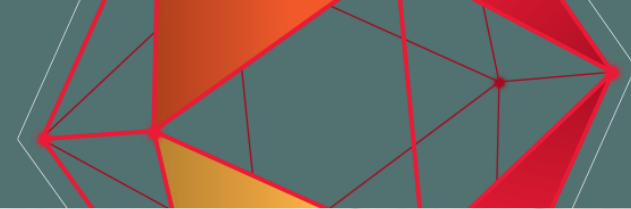


# Who am I?

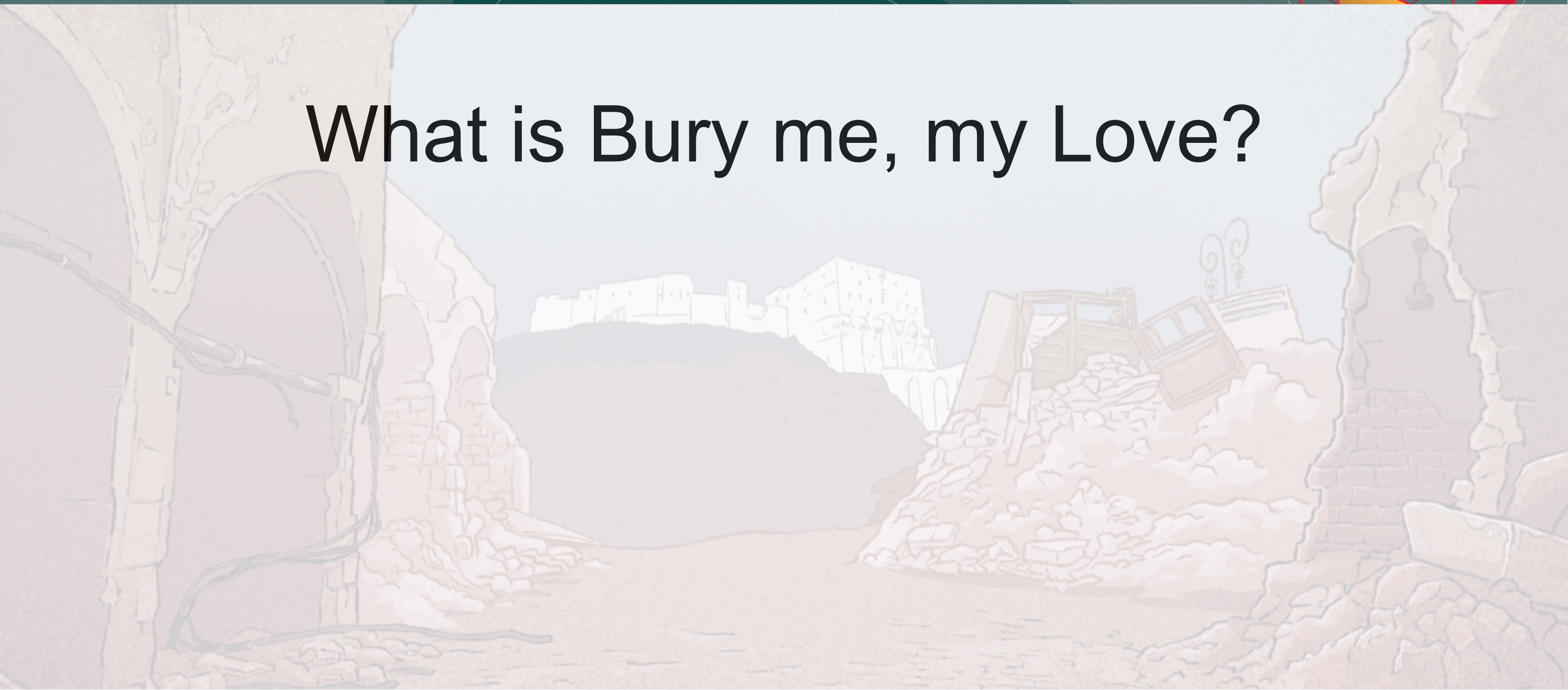
- A former journalist
- Founded The Pixel Hunt in 2013
- Reality-inspired games maker







# What is Bury me, my Love?









# A reality-inspired game

- Based on true events
- Written with the help of Dana
- Designed to mimic the way migrants use messaging apps





# The ethics of reality-inspired games

DO's:

Respect reality, gather documentation, listen to people

DON'T:

Be too player-centric.



Federico Scoppa/CAPTA



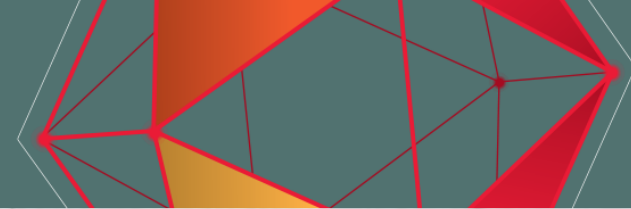




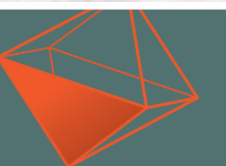
# What we learned listening to migrants?

- Things go sideways
- Being connected with your loved ones is nice - it is also very hard
- Helplessness is the most difficult thing to deal with

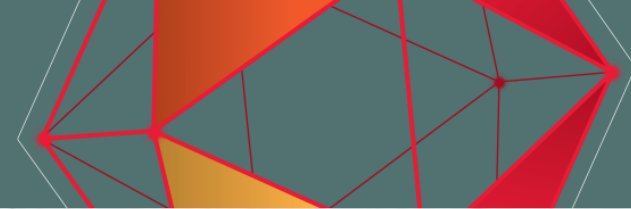




# How did we translate it in the game?

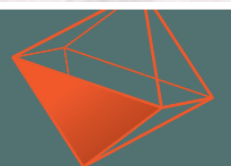
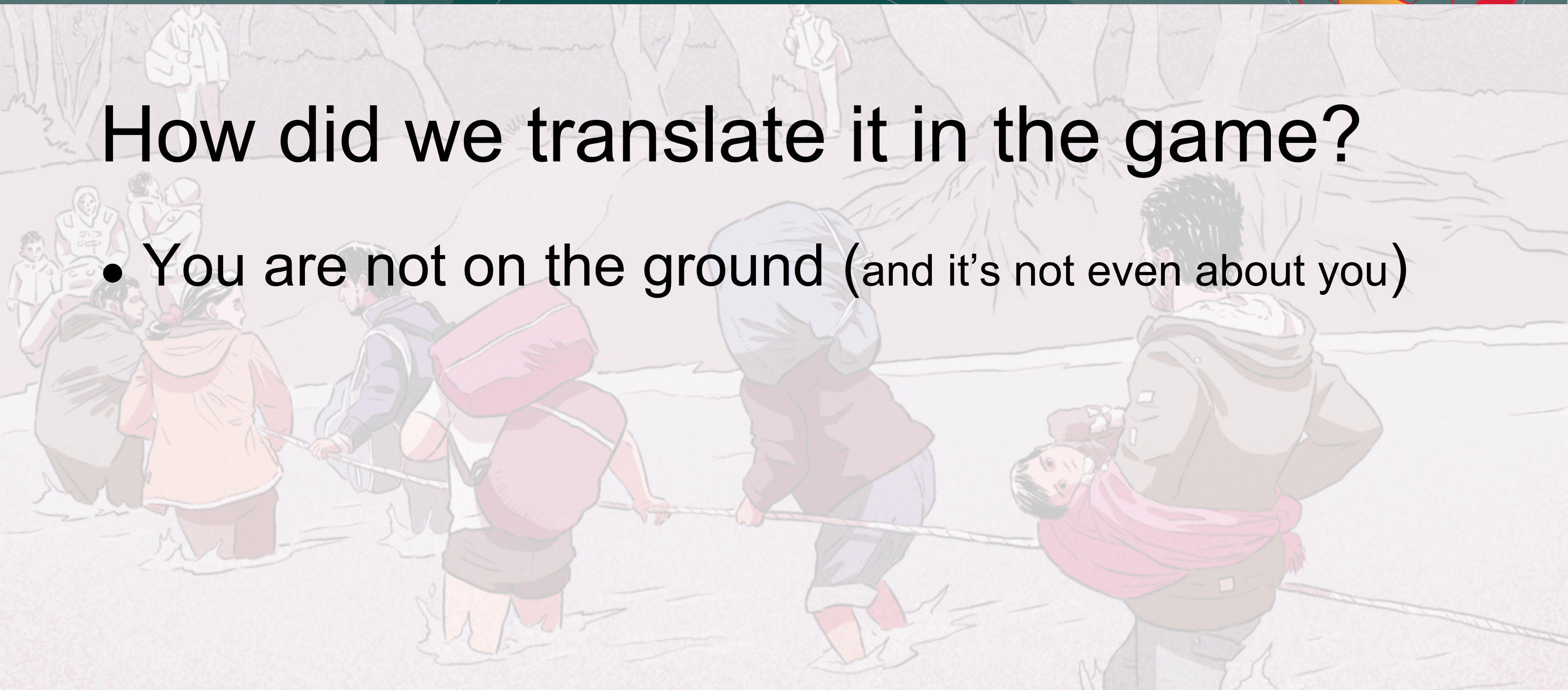


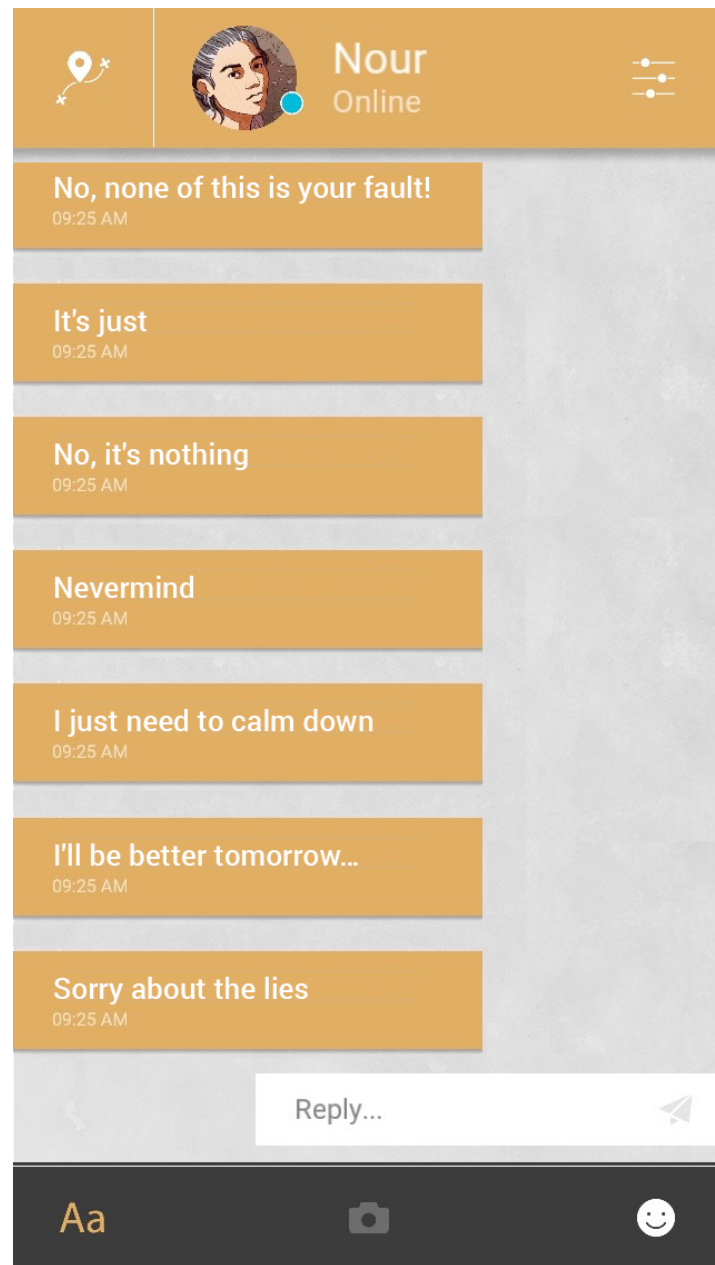




# How did we translate it in the game?

- You are not on the ground (and it's not even about you)





Nour is « alive »







# Make Nour feel like a real person

- Nour is consistent





# Make Nour feel like a real person

- Nour is consistent
- Nour may lie to Majd



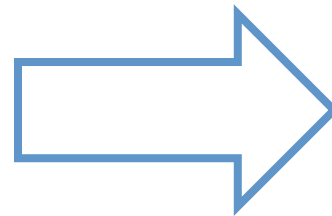


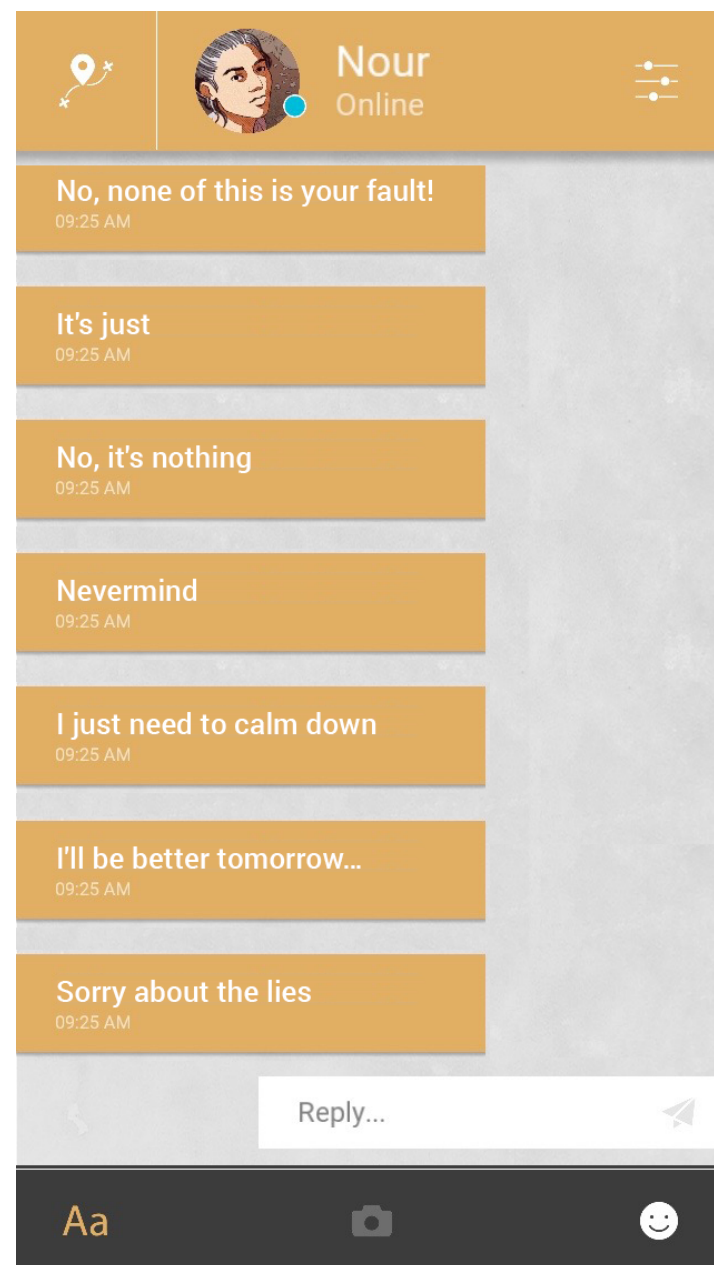
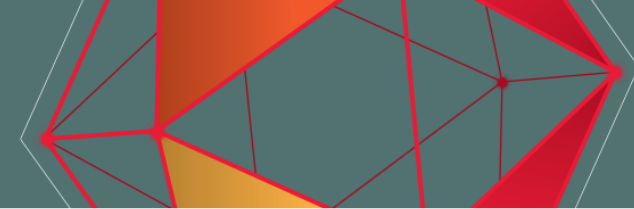


# Make Nour feel like a real person

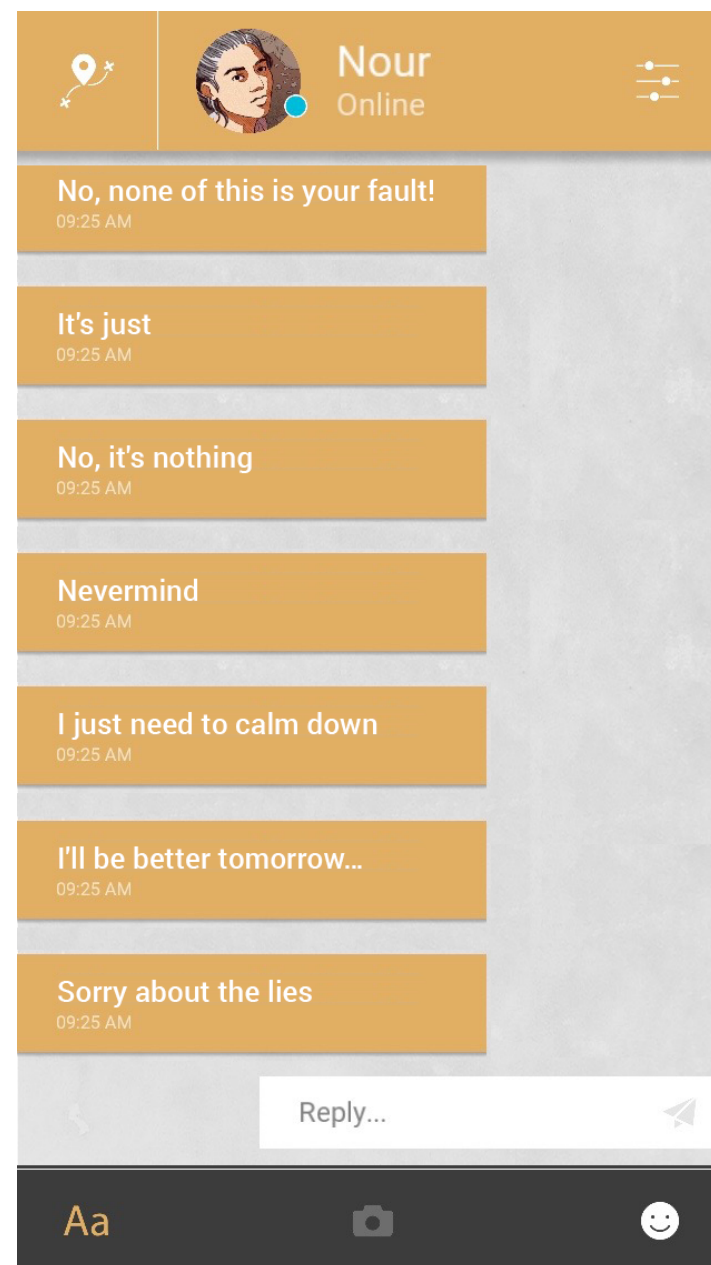
- Nour is consistent
- Nour may lie to Majd
- Nour hesitates

```
Majd = We'll talk when you land.  
Nour = FAKE 1000  
WAIT 2s  
Nour = We will.
```





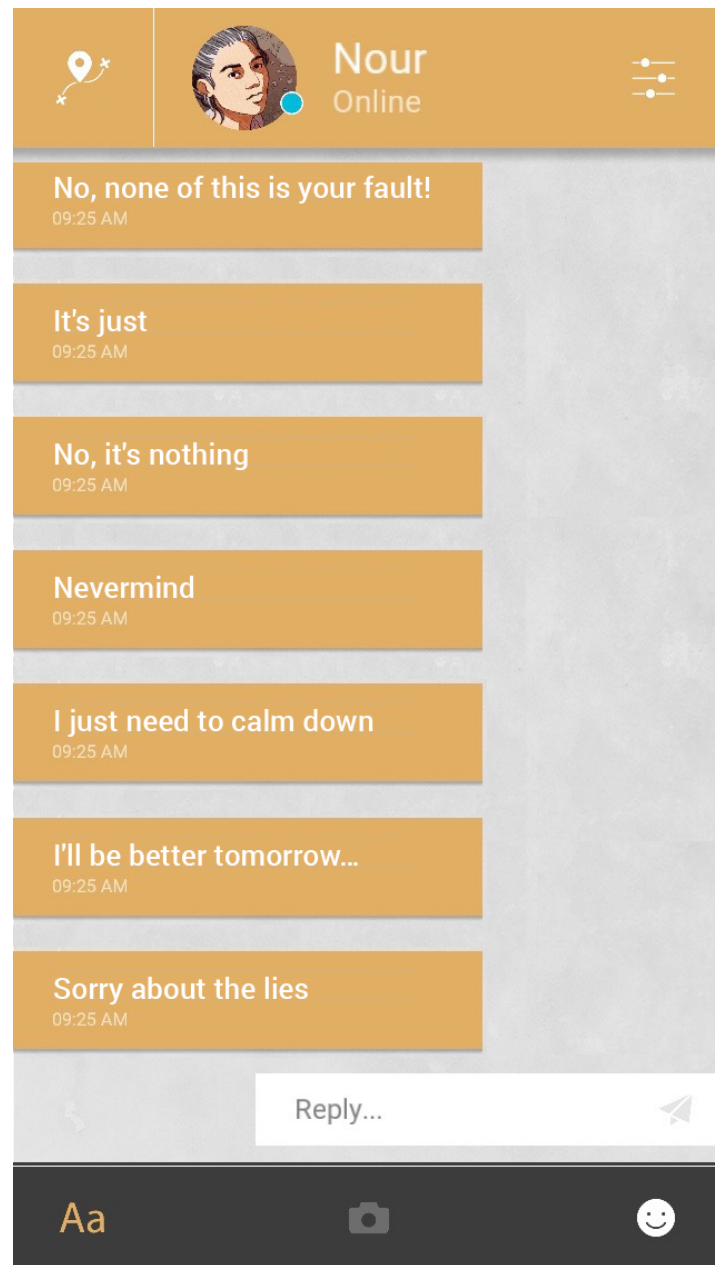
Nour is « alive »



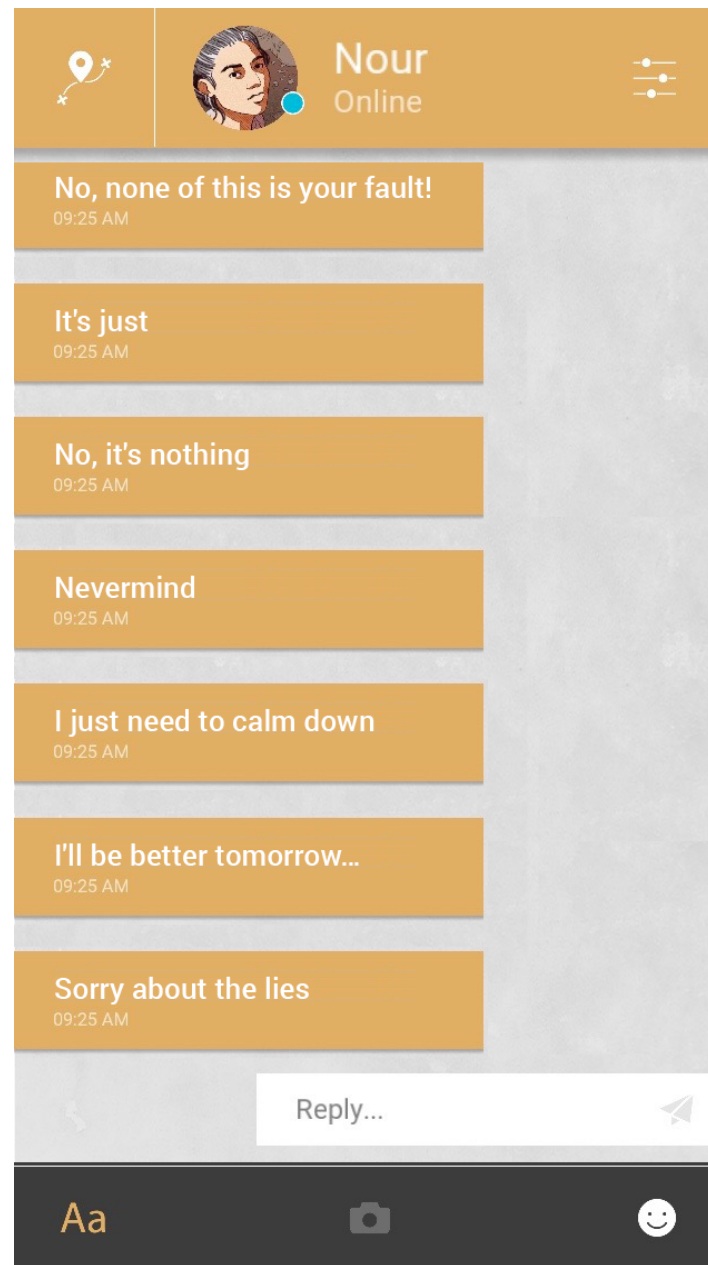
Majd's advice  
sometimes sucks







Nour is « alive »



Majd's advice  
sometimes sucks



Most of the time,  
Majd's in the dark



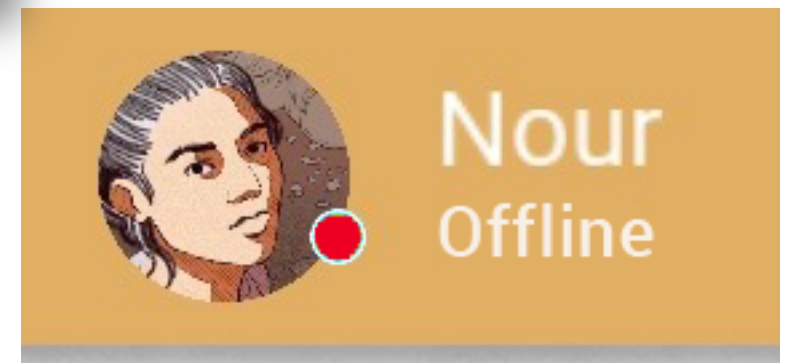
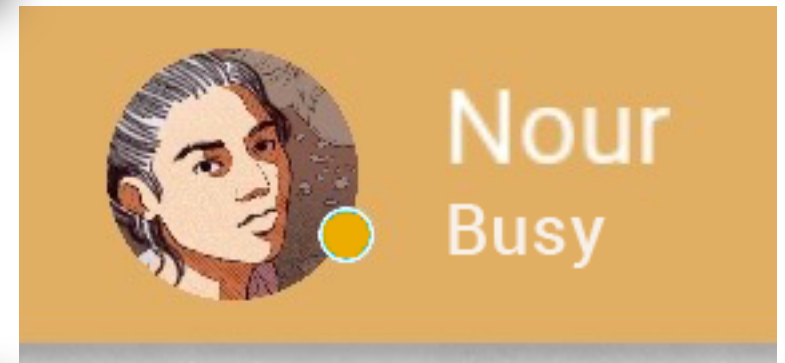
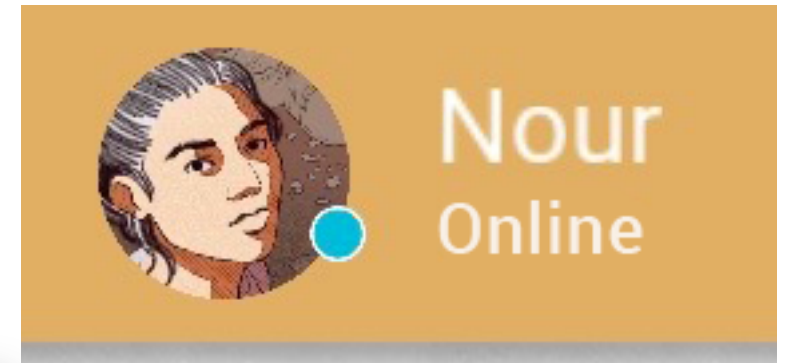


# Playing with waiting times

- Nour's status

WAIT 30m BUSY

WAIT 92m AWAY







# Playing with waiting times

- Very (very) short sessions

WAIT 27m BUSY

Nour = We're about to get cut out...

Majd = What?

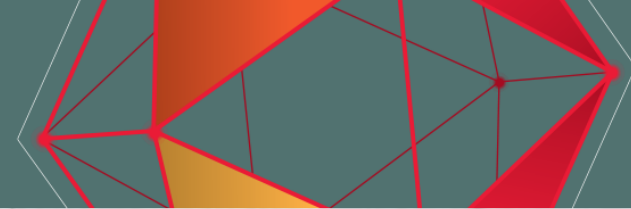
Nour = The network, it's about to cut out.

Syriatel doesn't cover this far.

Nour = I'll buy a SIM card when I get to Beirut!

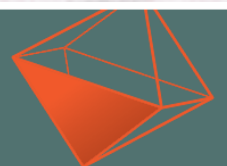
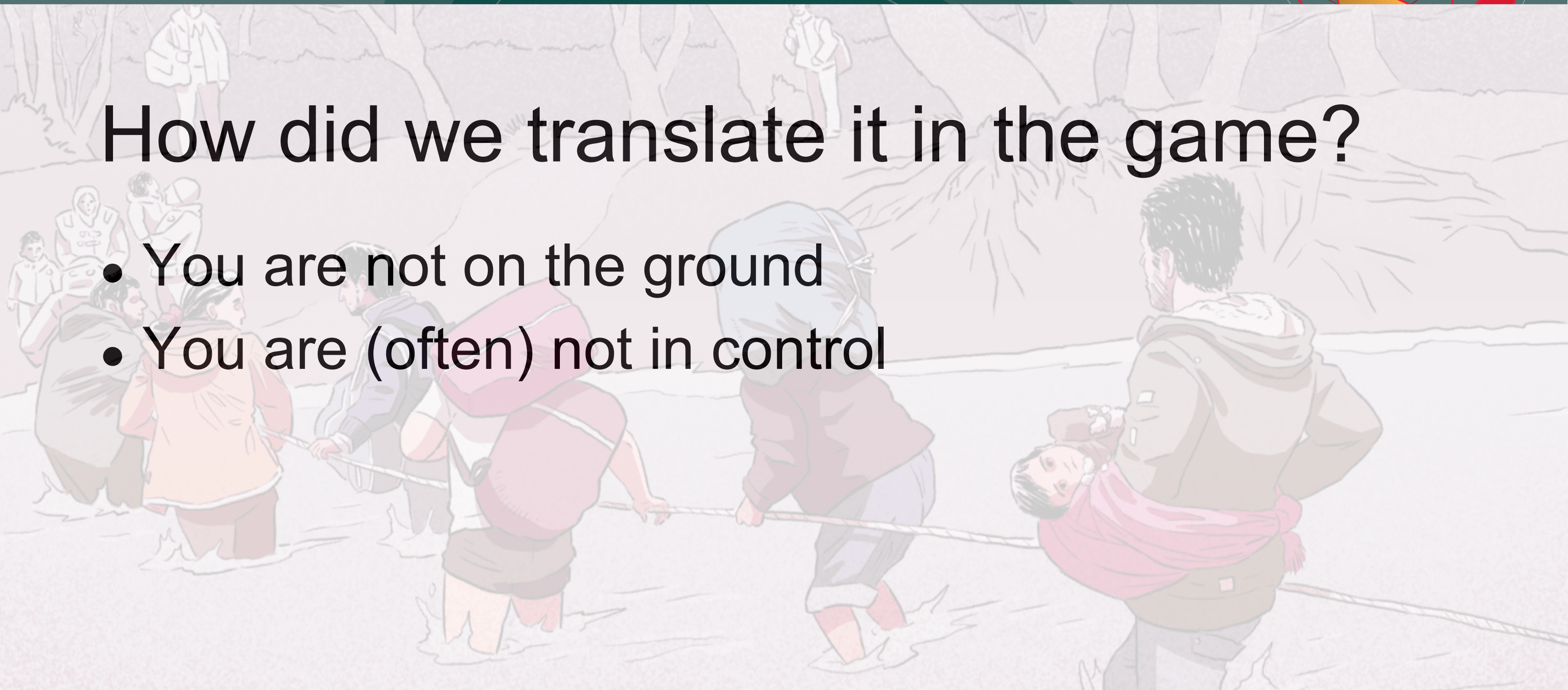
WAIT 79m BUSY





# How did we translate it in the game?

- You are not on the ground
- You are (often) not in control





# Nour's variables

- Money
- Love
- Morale







# Different types of choices and impacts

- Direct decisions

Nour = Answer me!

Nour = My plane's going to leave soon!!!!

\*OK! -> [beyrouth\\_par\\_homs\\_EAA](#)

\*It's too much[.], forget it. -> [beyrouth\\_par\\_homs\\_EAB](#)





# Different types of choices and impacts

- Direct decisions
- « Blind » decisions







# Different types of choices and impacts

- Direct decisions
- « Blind » decisions
- Cumulative influence

Nour = You know, I hear a lot of talk about the bombings, the terrorist attacks and all that... but the truth is that Syria's greatest foe has always been its bus drivers.

```
*😬 -> alep_AA(2)
*😭 -> alep_AA(2)
*😞 -> alep_AA(-6)
===alep_AA(x)===
~love = love +x
```



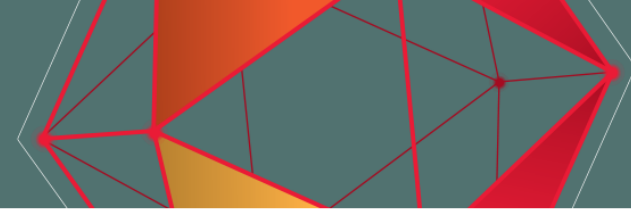


# Different types of choices and impacts

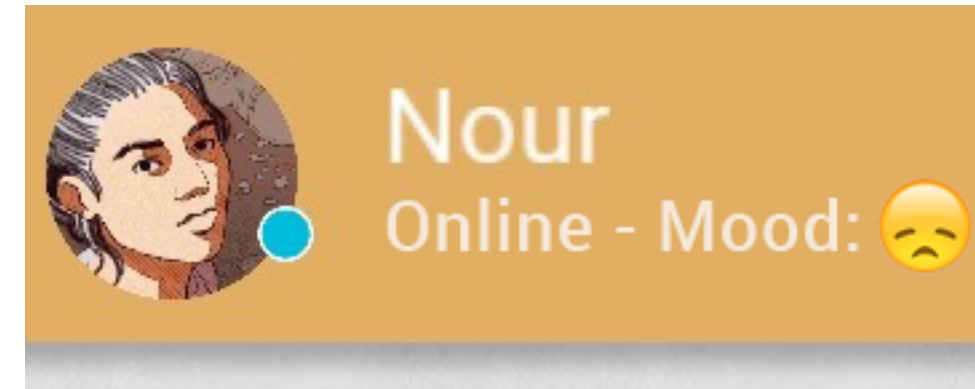
- Direct decisions
- « Blind » decisions
- Cumulative influence

In any case, the variables are never displayed.





# Discarded: Mood indicator

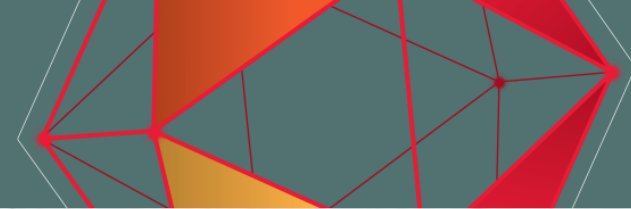


- Too extradiegetic

		Amour		
		$x > 70$	$70 > x > 40$	$x < 40$
Moral	$y > 70$	😜	👍	😞
	$70 > y > 40$	😍	😊	😞
	$y < 40$	😓	😱	😵

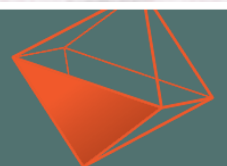
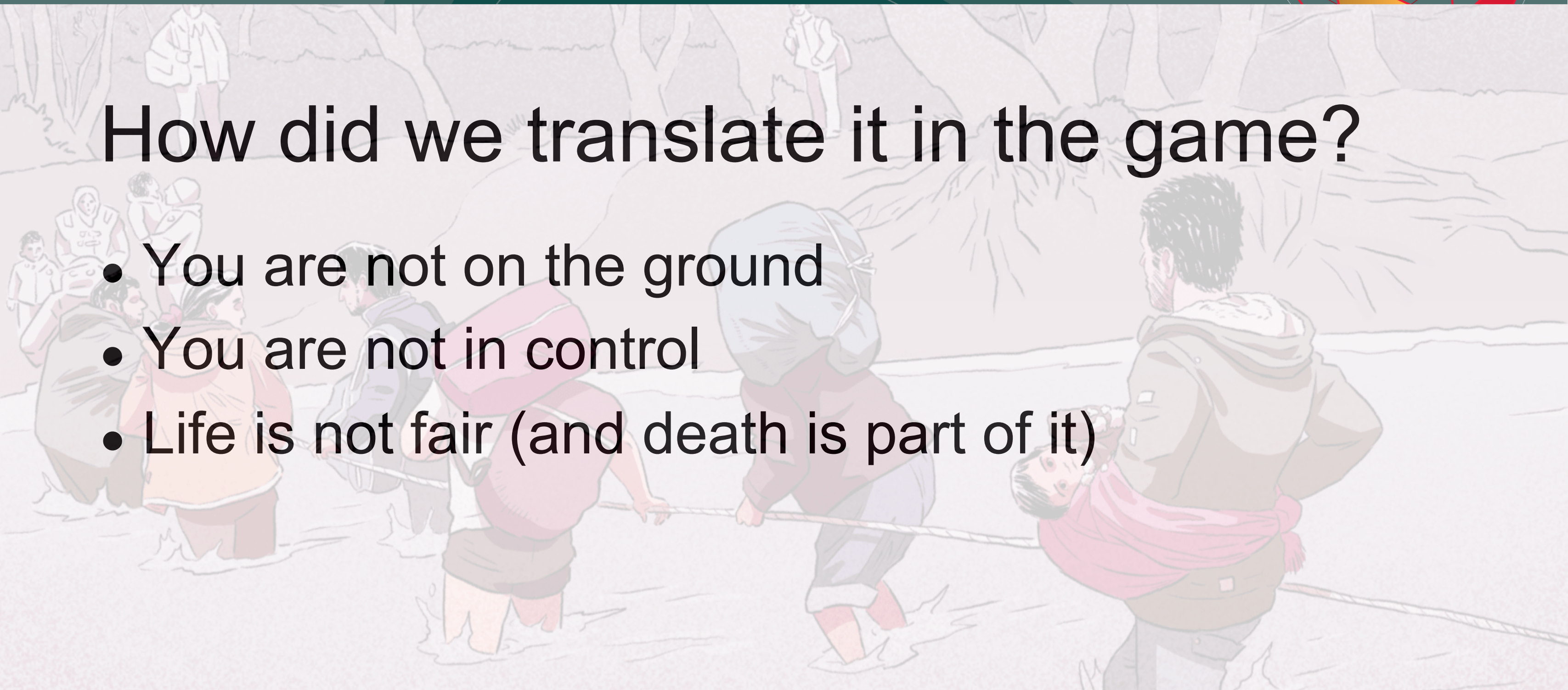






# How did we translate it in the game?

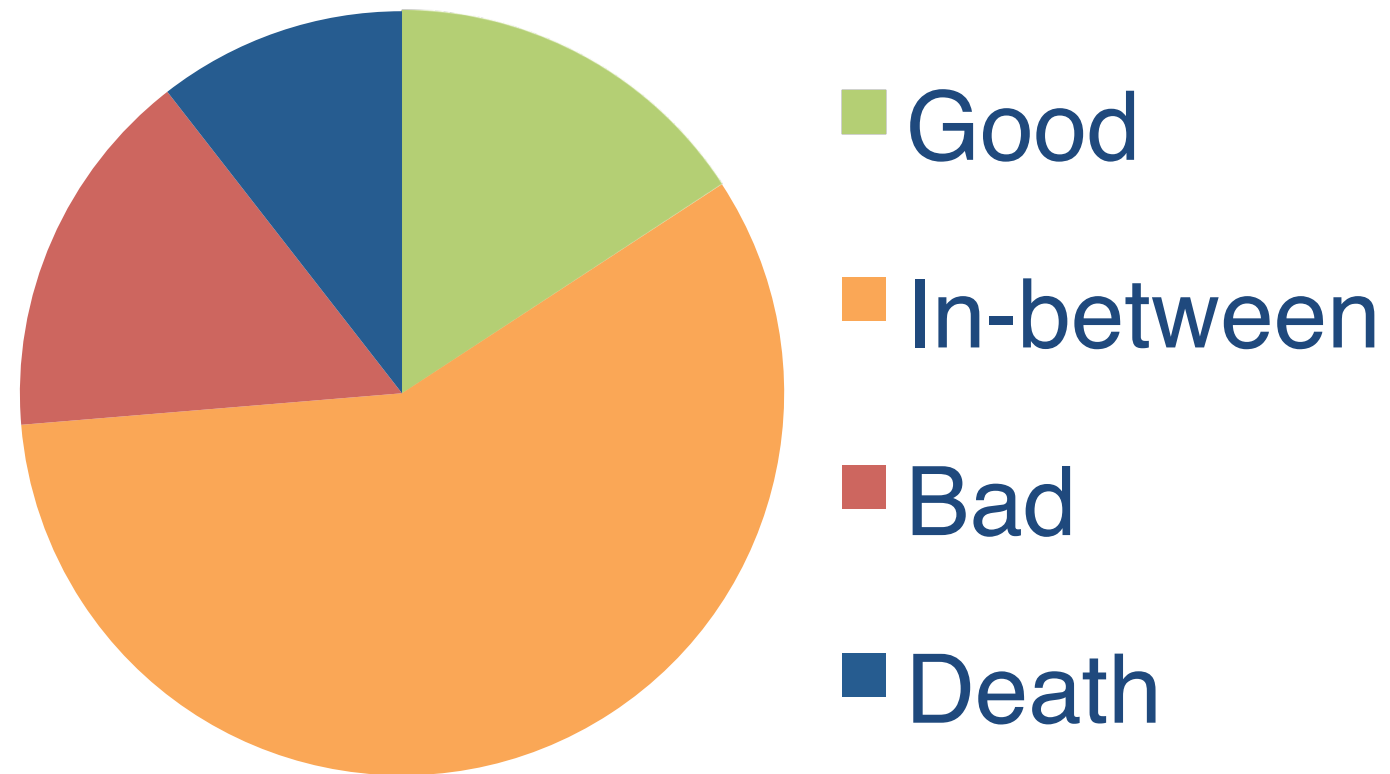
- You are not on the ground
- You are not in control
- Life is not fair (and death is part of it)



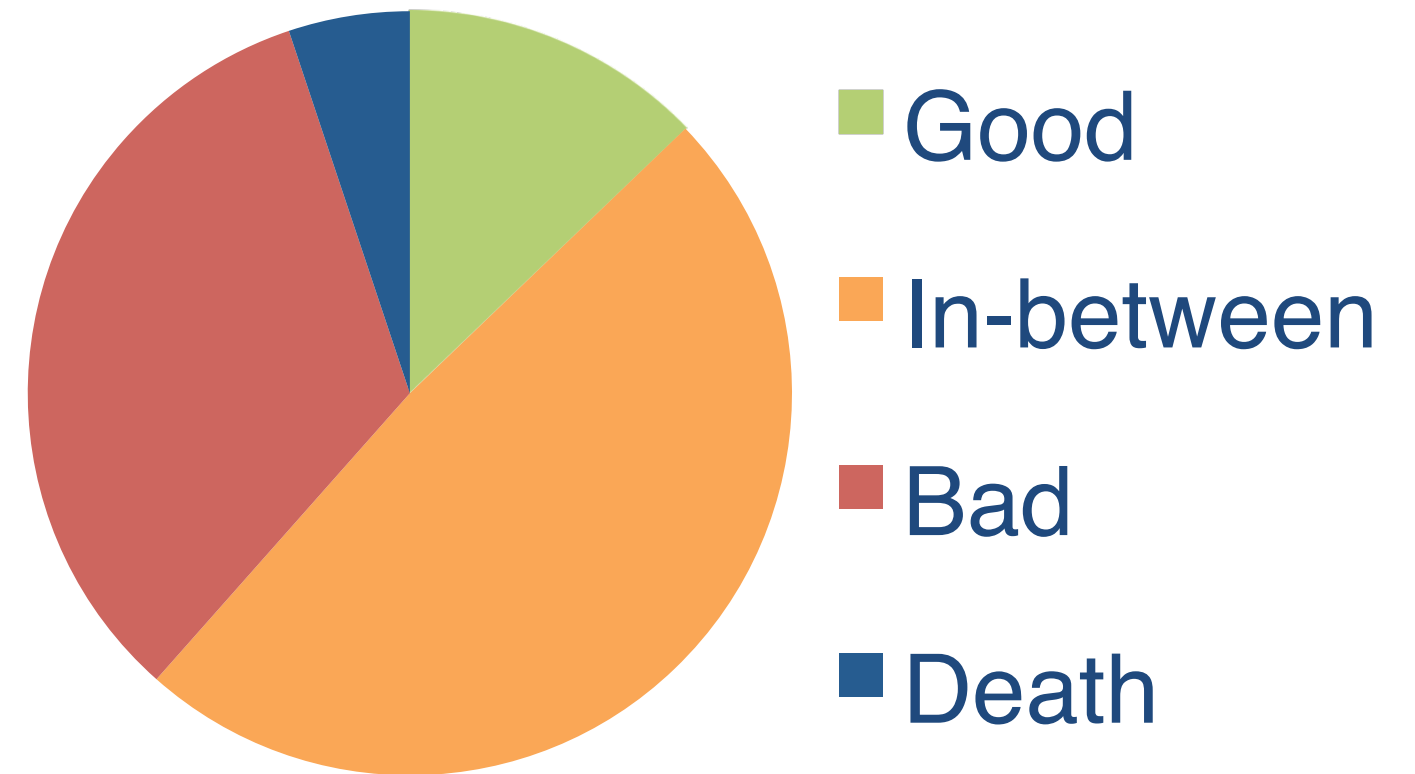


# Bury me, my Love's Endings

## 19 different outcomes

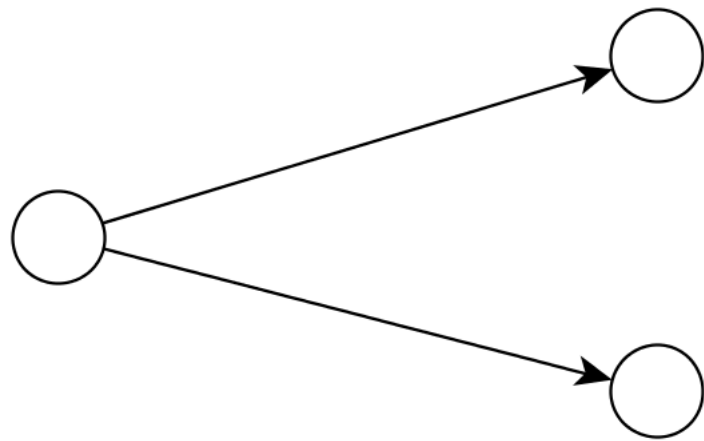


## 39 end states





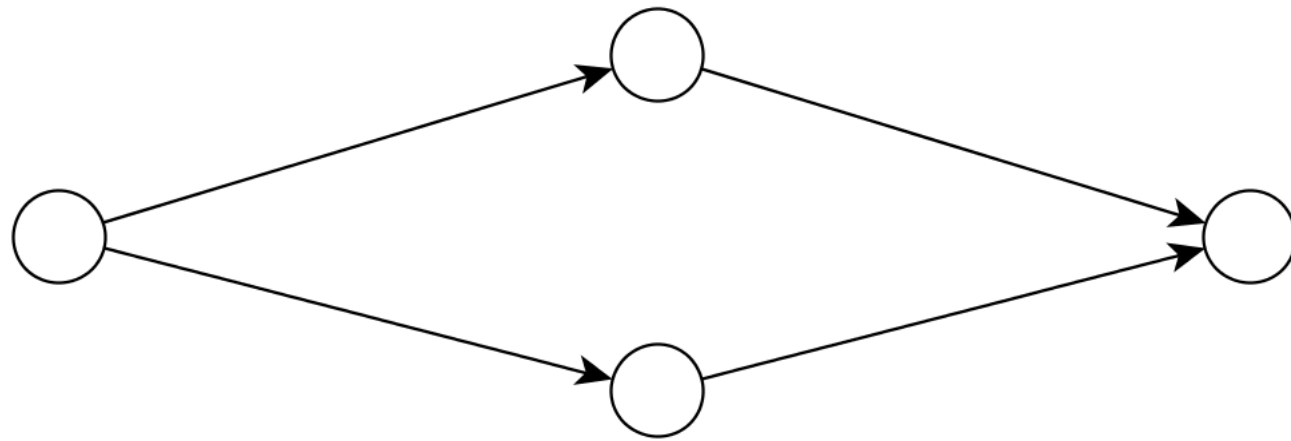
# The Smuggler sequence





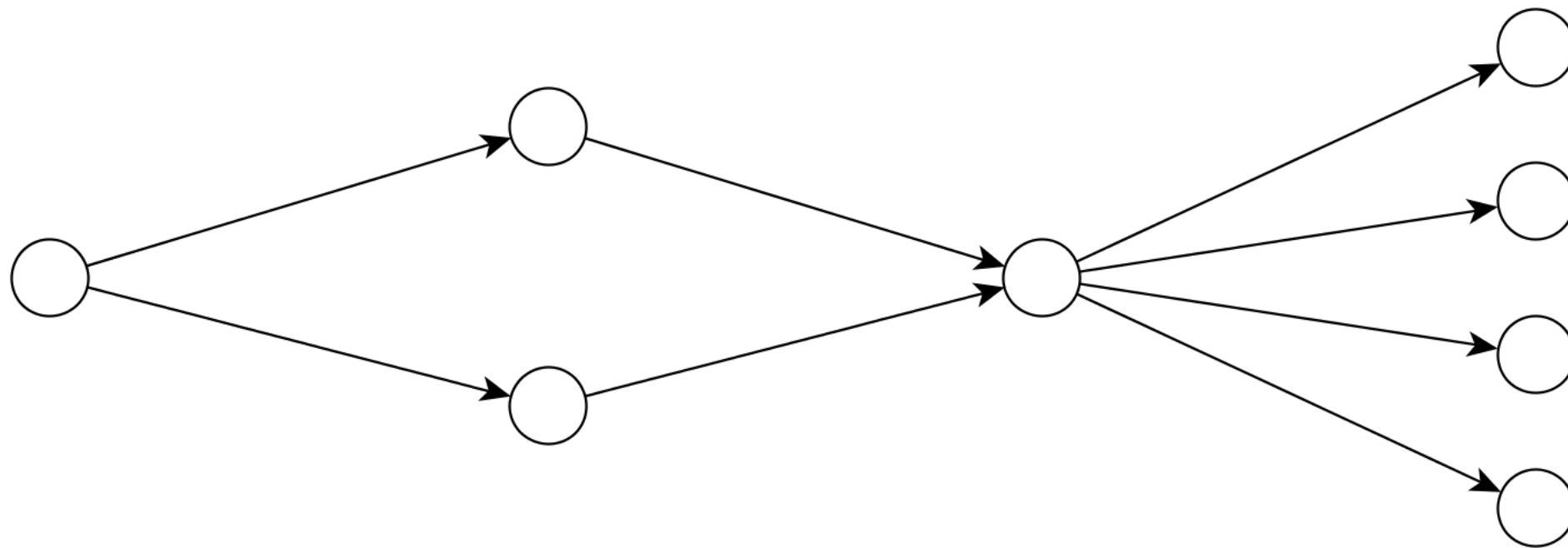


# The Smuggler sequence



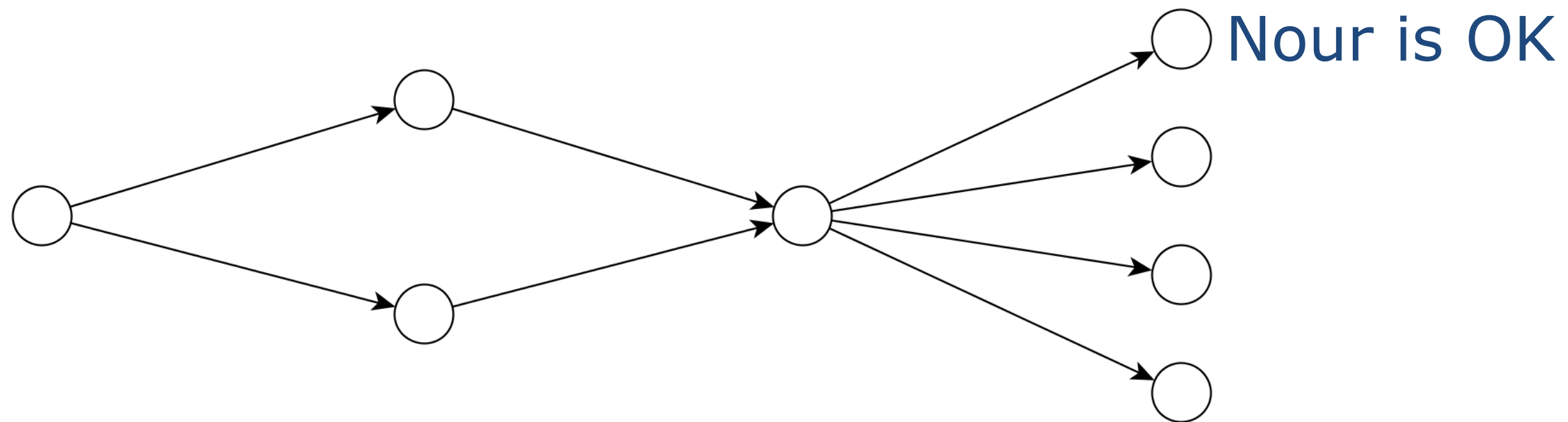


# The Smuggler sequence





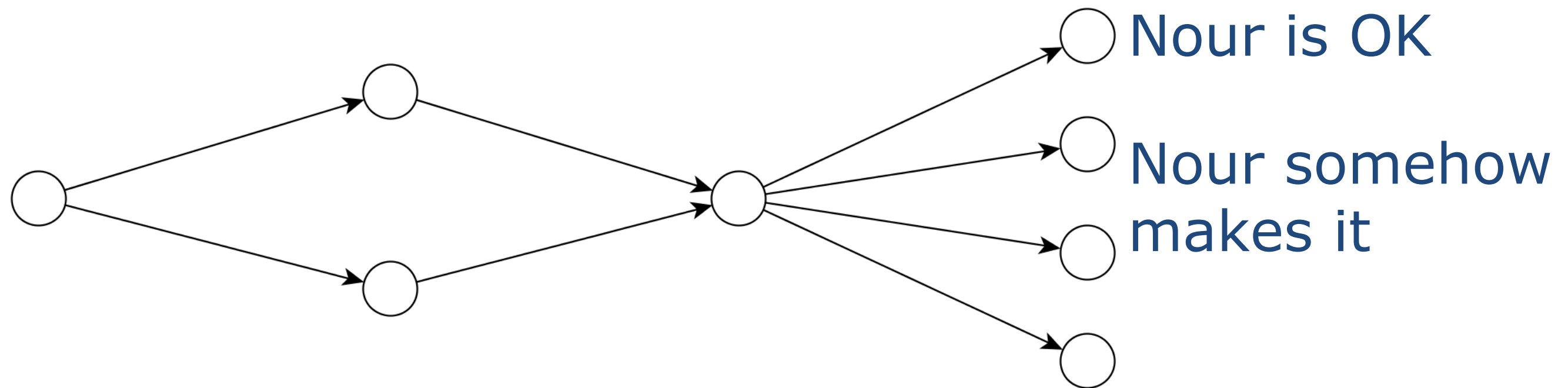
# The Smuggler sequence





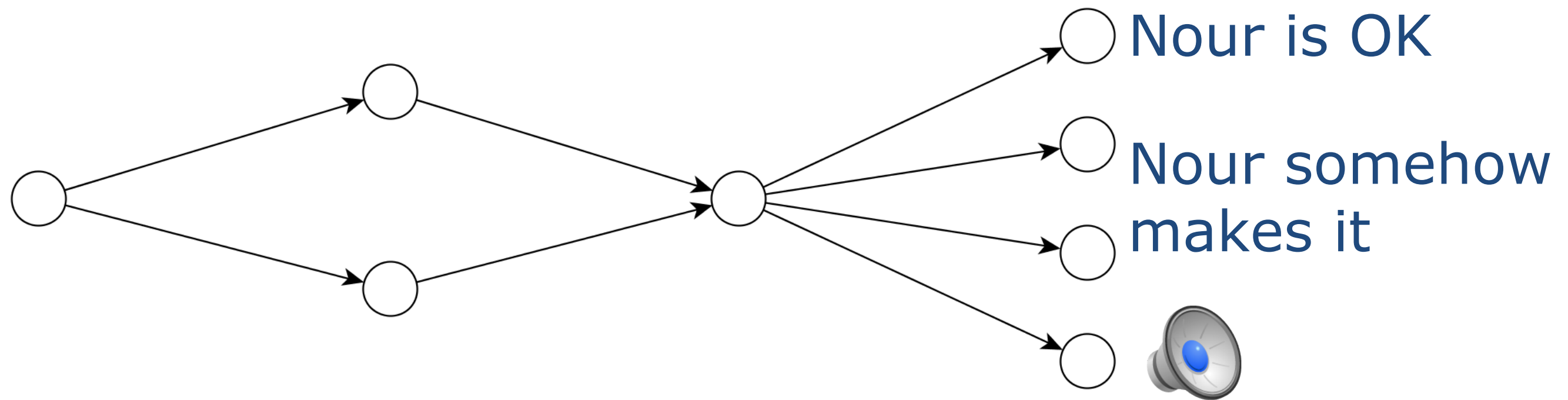


# The Smuggler sequence

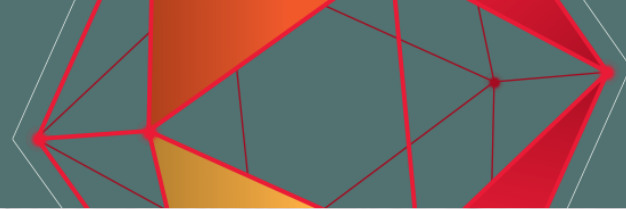




# The Smuggler sequence

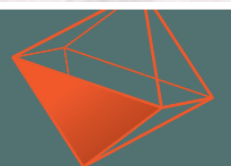
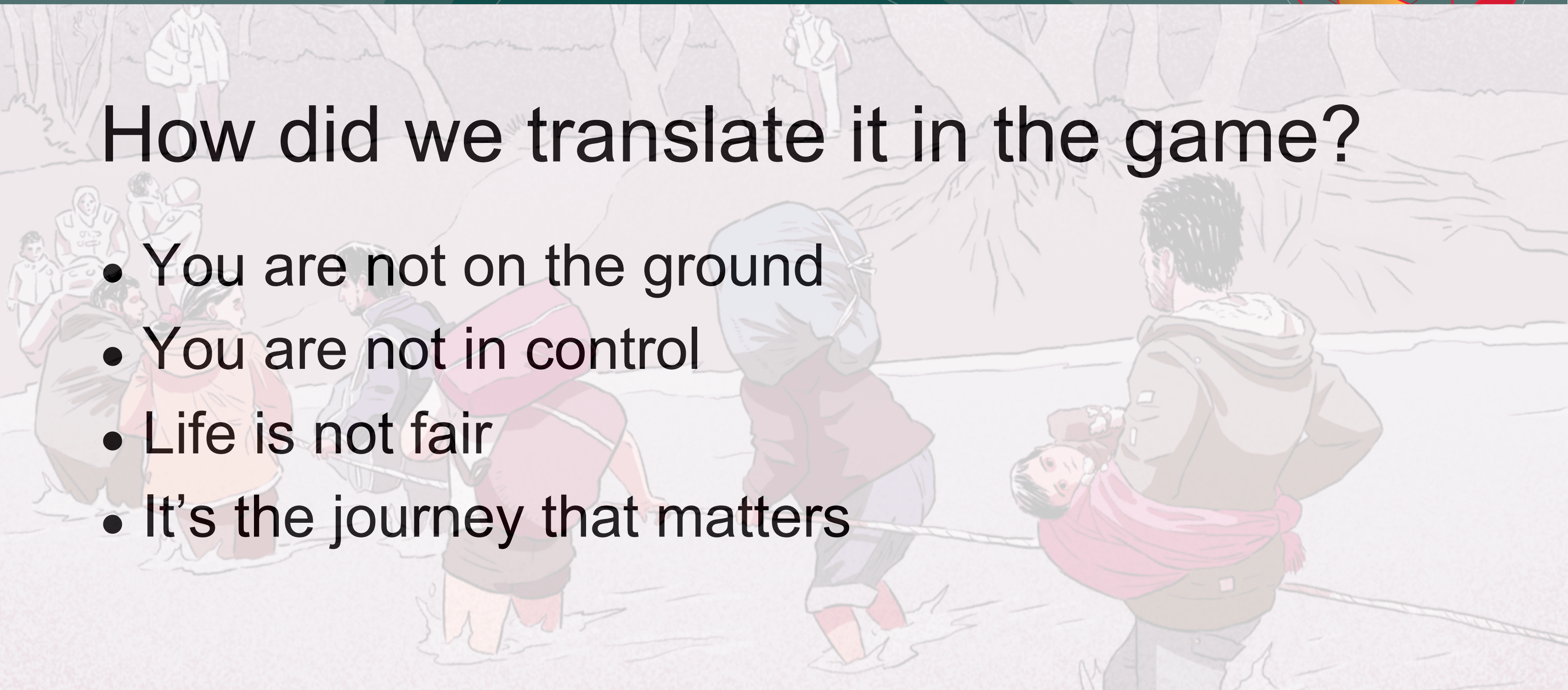




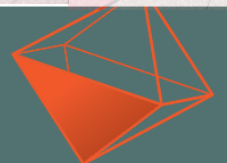
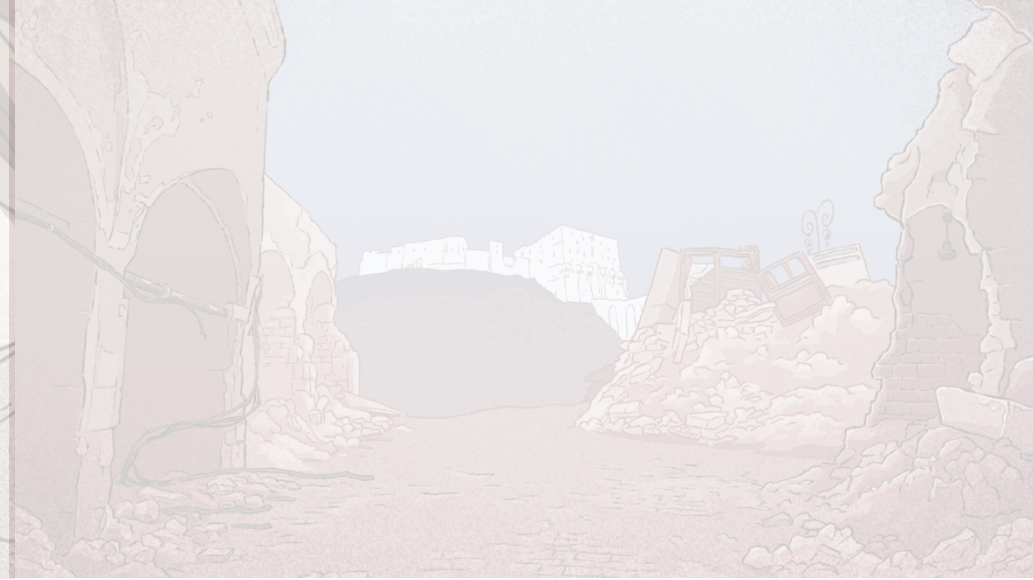
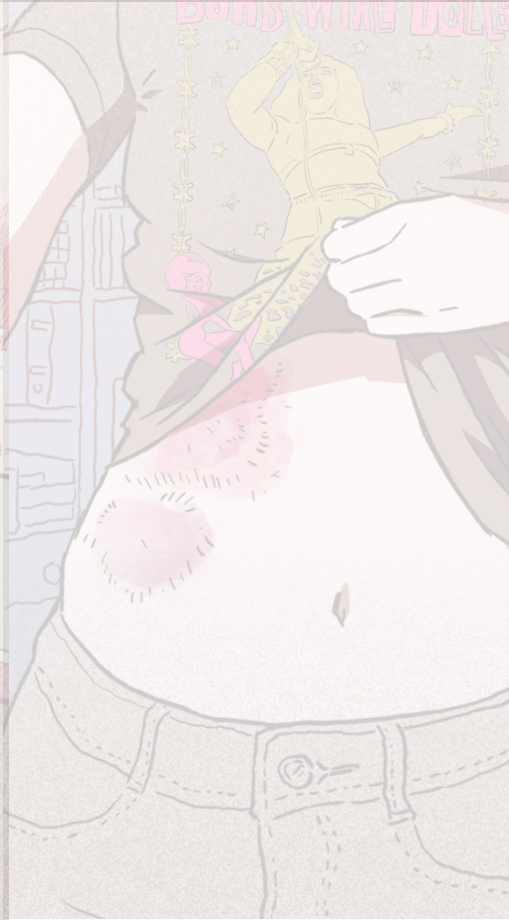
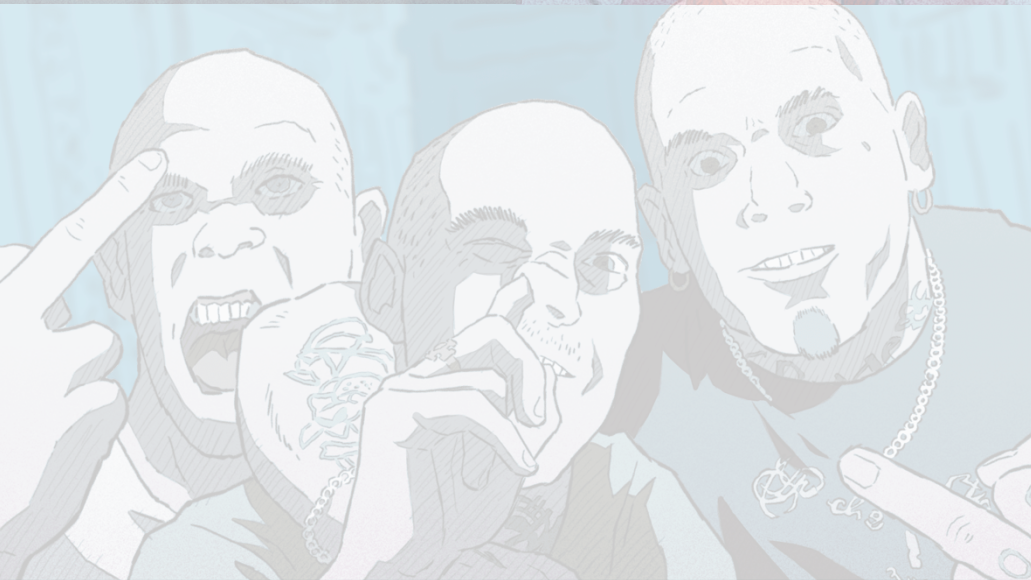
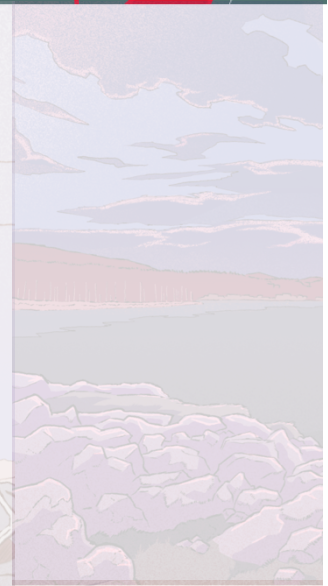


# How did we translate it in the game?

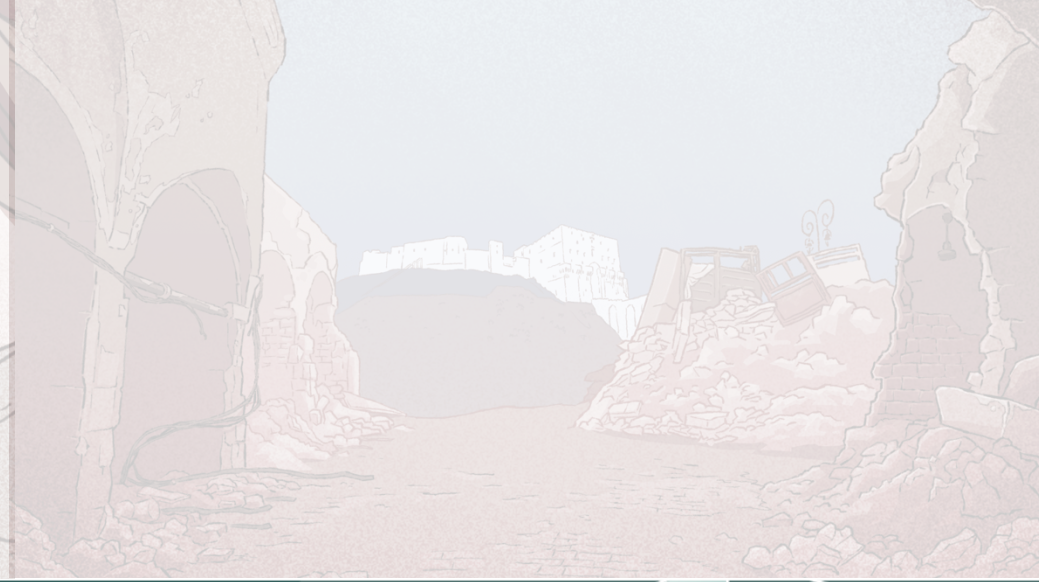
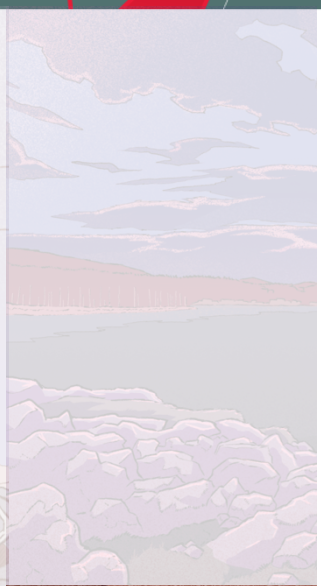
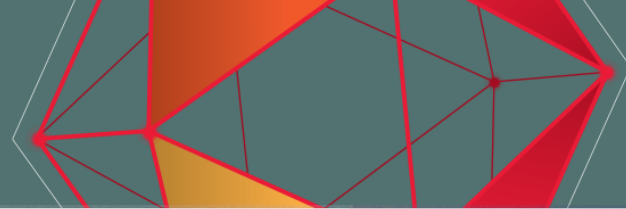
- You are not on the ground
- You are not in control
- Life is not fair
- It's the journey that matters



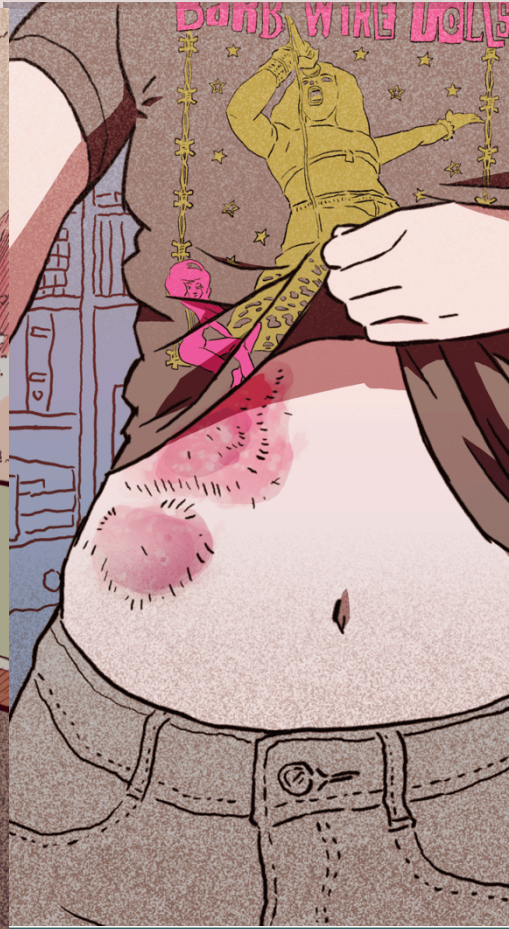
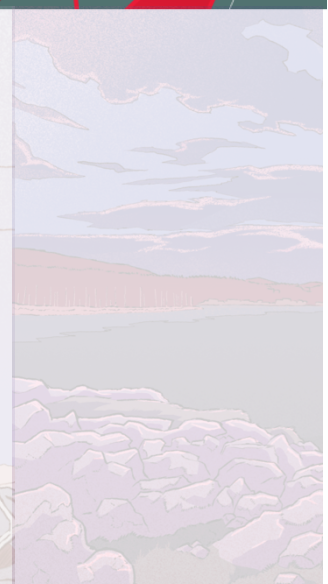
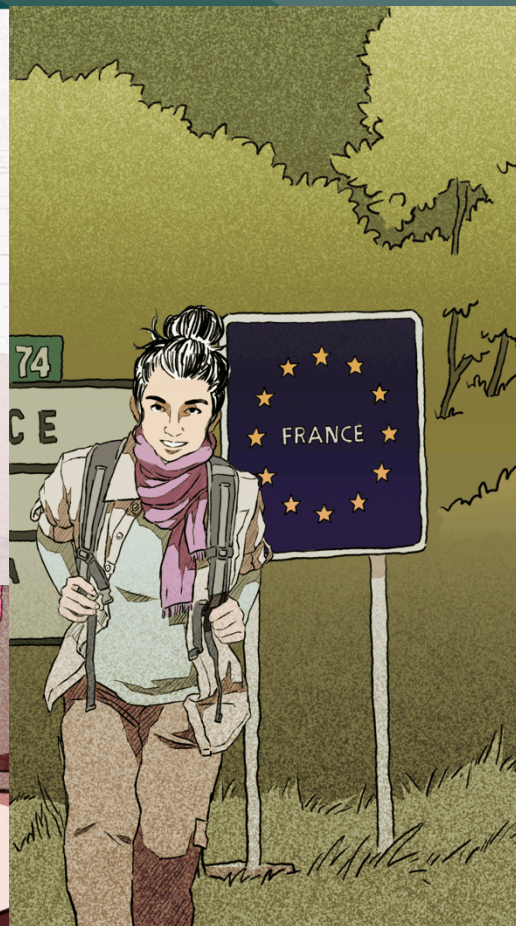
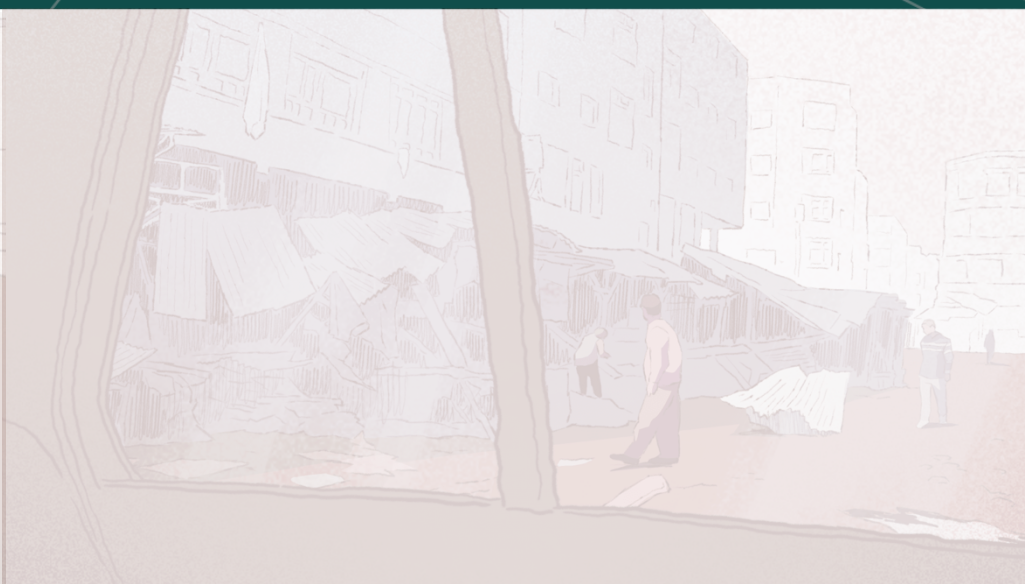
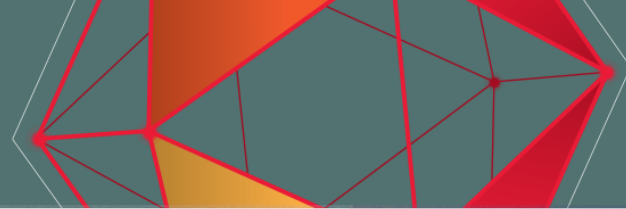




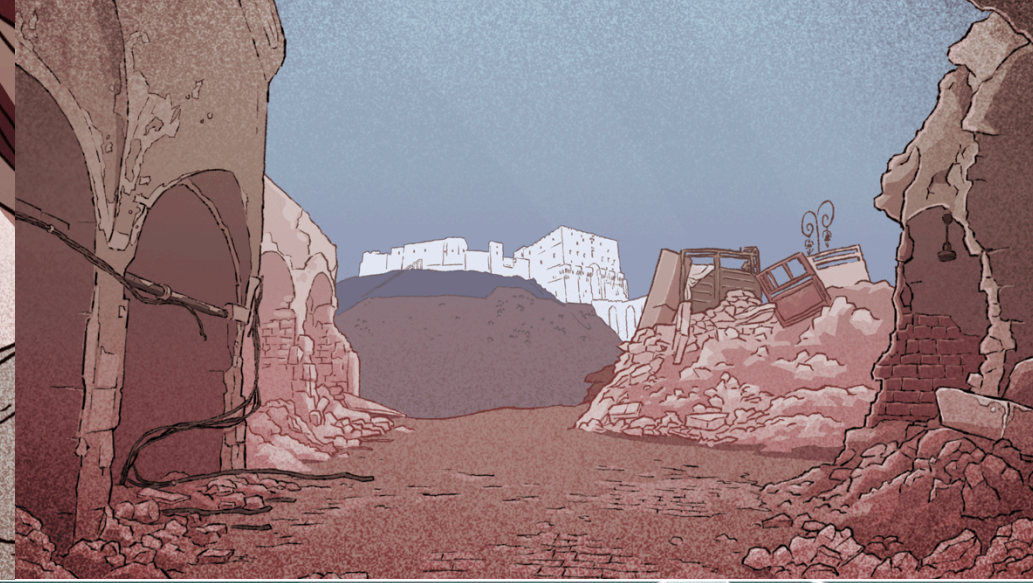
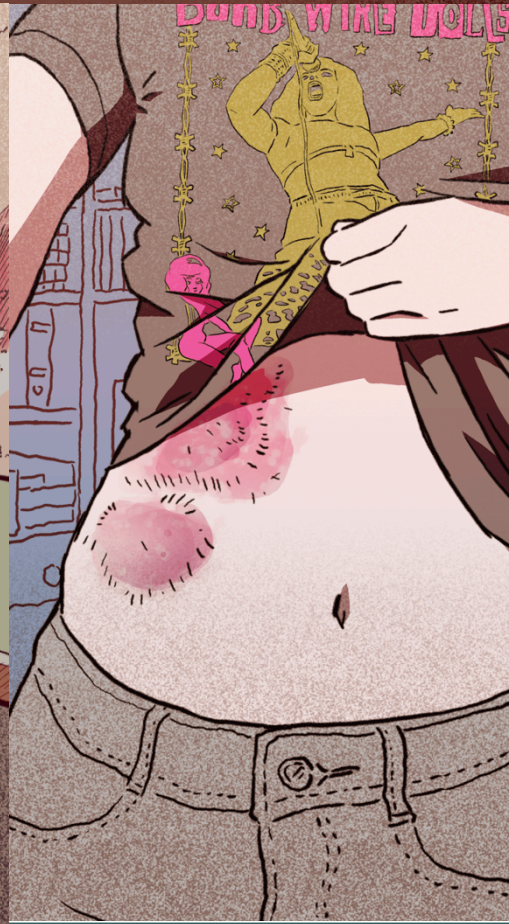
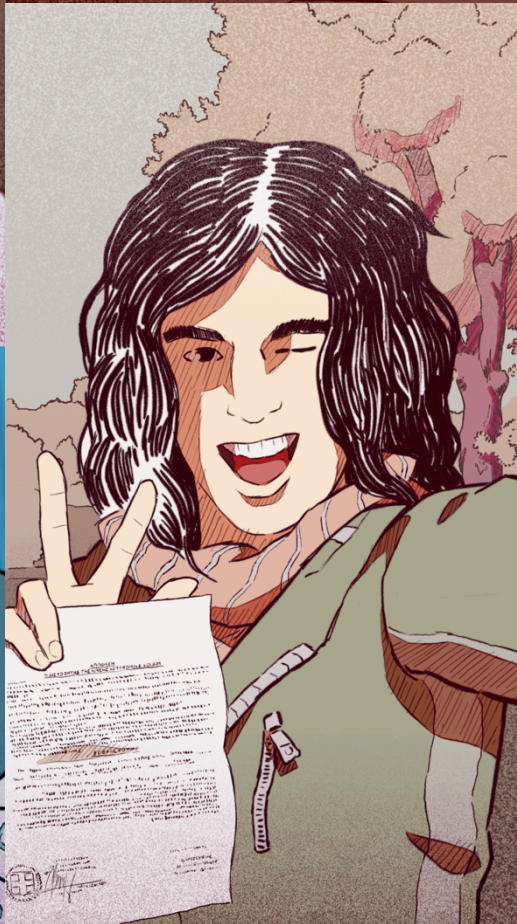
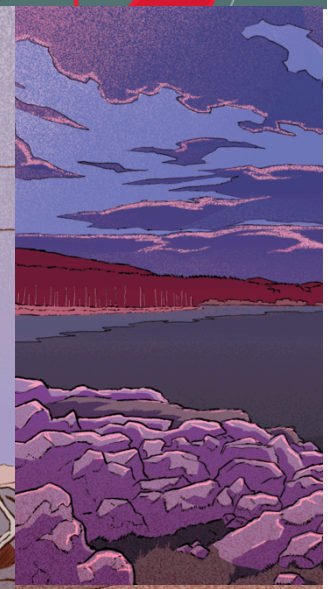
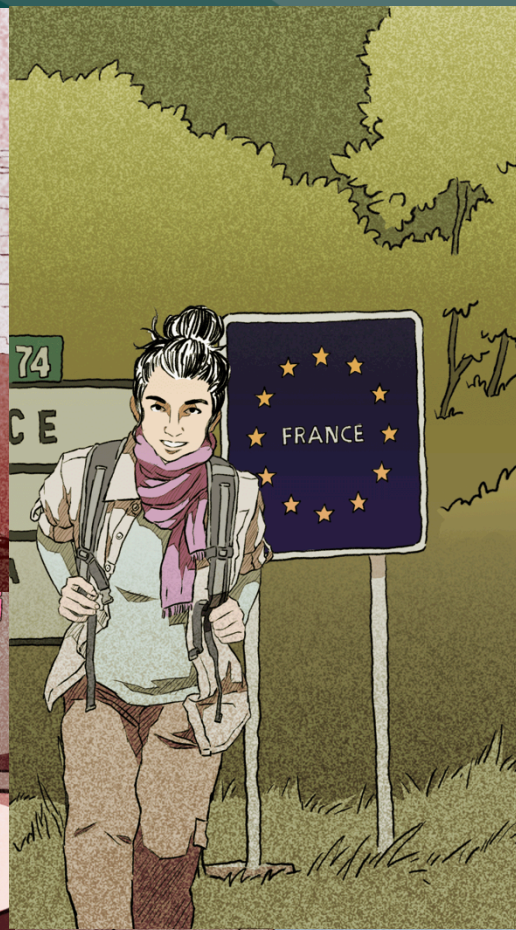
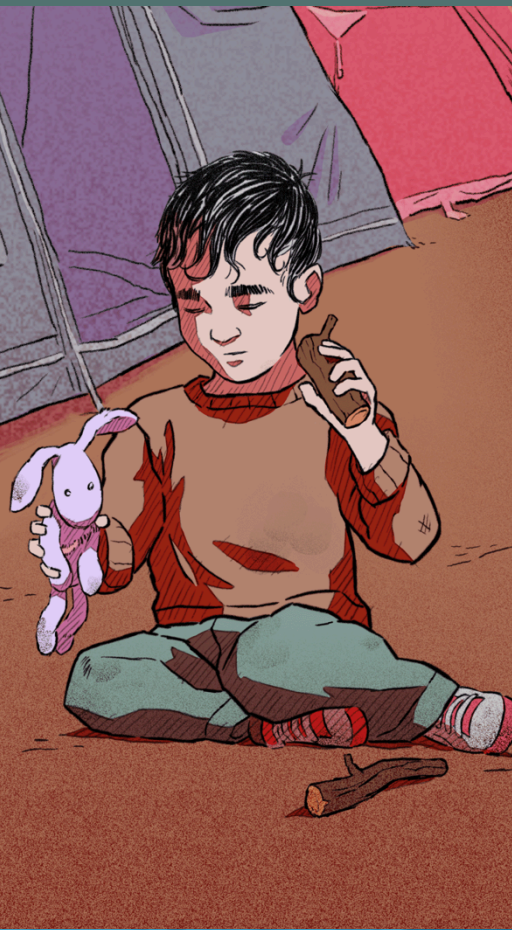
















# It's the journey that matters

- No save points





# It's the journey that matters

- No save points
- When you reach an end:
  - restart from day 1







# It's the journey that matters

- No save points
- When you reach an end:
  - restart from day 1
  - never play the game again



# GDC®

## Thank you!

# THE PIXEL HUNT

@thepixelhunt

@BMMLgame

contact@thepixelhunt.com