

## Culture and Technology I

## Implosion Assignment III: Reconstructing the Object

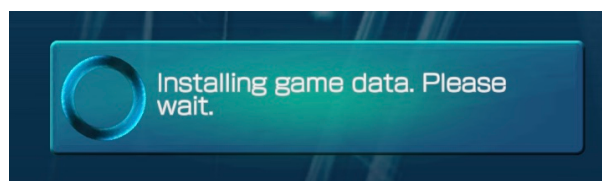
Mobius Final Fantasy

In Palamecia, everyone has heard of the Warrior of Light. It's an old legend, about a prophesied warrior who is destined to face many trials, rise up and save us all from the forces of Chaos. For as long as anyone can remember, Chaos and his minions have been a constant threat to our realm. Supposedly whole kingdoms have been wiped out completely by them in the past. Day in and day out, people keep hoping for the Warrior of Light to appear.

As if to keep this hope alive, they say that every once in awhile people appear in Palamecia who have no memories of their past. We call these people Blanks. Every time a new person shows up, another wave of chatter spreads that maybe this person is *the one*.

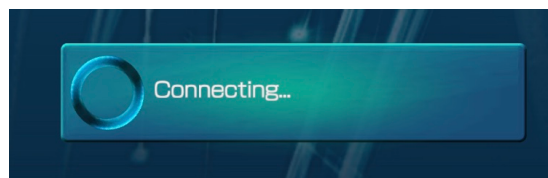
Being a lowly farmer on the outskirts of Shoopuf Farms, you never thought too much about it. Sure, the threat of Chaos is always scary, but you figured he'd never come to a backwater place like this. Monsters would show every once in awhile, but they were nothing the palace guard couldn't handle. And since you weren't important enough to visit the Queen's Keep where the Princess lives, you'd never actually met any Blanks before. You didn't really care to either, trials and destiny weren't really your style.

That is until, one day,



you had very strange dream.

[“Okay —, I know you’re still an intern, but now’s your time to shine. The game has been live for over two years now and we’re looking to collect data on player retention. You are to observe player behaviour and analyze the trends you find. You’re going to be given developer’s notes and time to research fan communities. We want to figure out how to keep people playing.”]



You couldn’t remember the specifics, and the dream didn’t make much sense to you, but ever since that day you felt compelled to learn more about the Blanks. You began to wonder about many things. Who are the Blanks? Why do they choose to follow a prophecy in a world they know nothing about? Do they enjoy following the prophecy?

A couple days later, you decided to pack your things and go on a journey. Your first stop would be the Cornelia Plains.

You weren’t prepared for what you were going to find.

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The Plains of Cornelia were known to be a barren wasteland. Long ago, this used to be where the kingdom proper once stood, before the villages and towns were ravaged by Chaos’ minions.

The reason this place was noteworthy however was because this is where Blanks would always first appear in Palamecia, brought to our world from who-knows-where. Normal citizens usually kept away from this place, for fear of interfering in the prophecy and being branded a heretic.

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<Note: Since it's an online game, players should have some way to communicate with each other.>

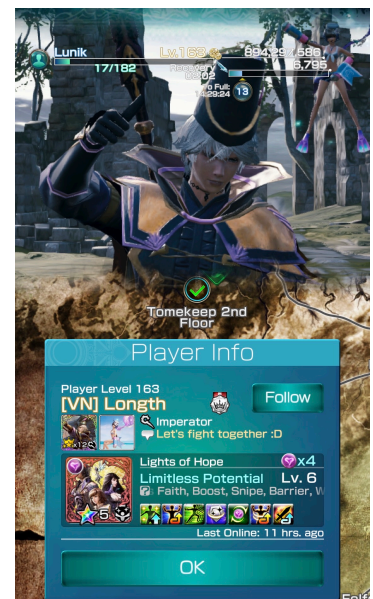
It started friendly enough when a young man wearing robes waved and approached you.

“Let’s fight together :D”, the man said. You were a little thrown off, hoping to avoid fighting at all costs.

“No, thank you. I’m just on a pilgrimage down south...”

“Let’s fight together :D”, the man repeated for a second time.

“Let’s fight together :D”. You stared at each other for what felt like an eternity, until finally the man went on his way without another word.



You couldn’t help but wonder if all Blanks were this strange.

Soon, another young man walked up to you, grimacing.

“Such a lust for revenge.” You decided to stay quiet, not knowing what the man was going to do.

He left without another word, looking angry.

Soon many more people walked by, all saying completely incomprehensible things.



“Calm down, it’s just 2\* MP”

“thank you, bro !”

“Glory to the mankind!..”

Once you saw the angry man start to approach again, you got scared and quickly turned and hurried down the trail to escape.



Who knew the Blanks were such an eclectic bunch?

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You decide to head south to a place called Primordia. This is the supposedly the place where Blanks first arrive in Palamecia.

It takes about half a day for you to make it to the Shaded Woods, a place of perpetual night. You decide to set up camp for a short rest before continuing on.

[“We want to know, are people going to continue playing the game? The contents of your report could sway the higher-ups on whether or not to keep the game alive in the west.”]

You wake yourself from the short sleep after another strange dream. You continue onwards, but it's not long until you find another disturbing sight.



A short distance away you see a group of men lying unconscious close to a purple lake. You've heard that these dark seas are Chaos' domain. Fearing for your safety, you decide to stay back and observe.

Soon the men arise, all looking confused and disoriented. A glow appears around them as they appear to be talking to someone you can't see or hear.

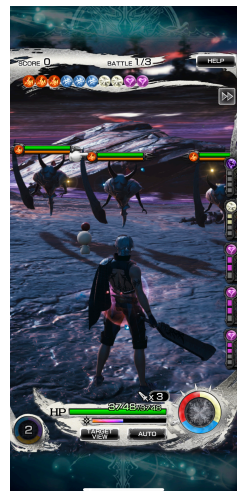
You've heard of this before, a phenomena known as the Voice of the

Prophecy. Supposedly Blanks who come to Palamecia get guided by a

mysterious voice named Vox who leads them down the path to becoming the Warrior of Light.

You wonder if the strange dreams and voices you've been hearing are that same voice...?

Just as you have that thought, you hear screaming as monsters appear and the Blanks start to run. Only one of them stays and fights.

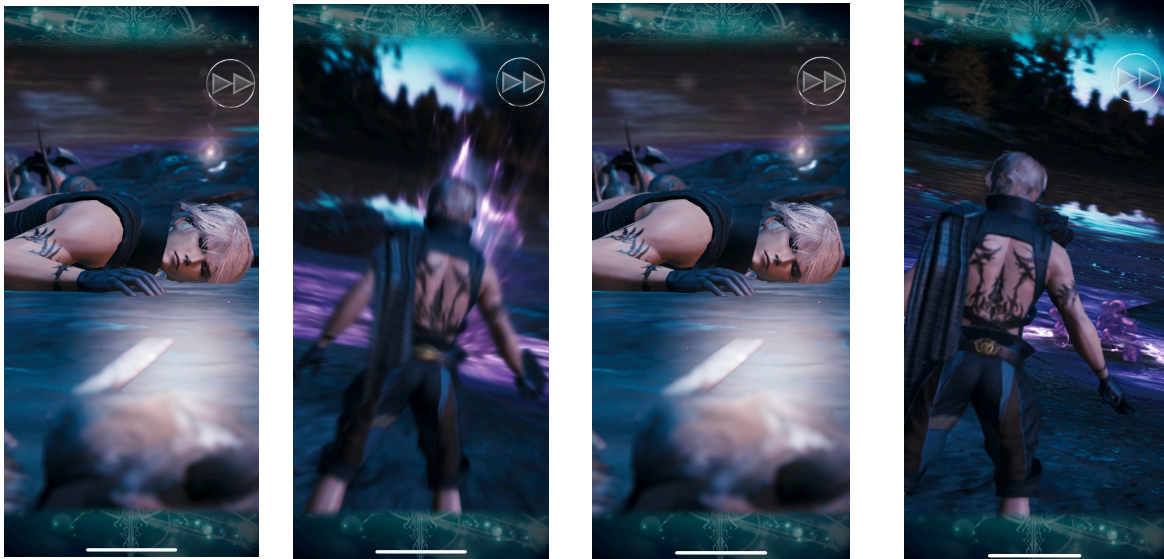


The man quickly defeats the monsters and starts to head east. You overhear him mention that he's heading to the Runic Temple.

You decide to stay behind and examine the birth place of Palamecia's Blanks a little longer.

To your surprise, it doesn't take long for more Blanks to show up. What surprises you even more is that you recognize the person who appears before you. It's the same Blank that left for the Runic Temple what feels like only moments before.

{“You’ll regret it if you start the game without taking this opportunity to reroll while you can. Otherwise it could take over a year of playing to get a supreme ability.”}



You watch as the same Blank appears over and over and over again. With no idea what is going on, you wonder if you've entered some sort of purgatory. Watching over this poor soul's own personal hell. Is this what you came here to see?

You try to speak to the man a couple of times, but every time he ignores you. He seemed determined. This continues on for hours, maybe even days. In this place of perpetual darkness, you quickly lose track of time.

As time continues, you think back to the dream you had that set you off on this journey.

Is there some purpose that the Blanks are here, beyond just being our saviours?

Mesmerized as you were by this process of continual rebirth, eventually you decide you need to leave to keep your own sanity. You decide to follow the man on one of his countless travels to the Runic Temple to see what it is he was doing there.

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The Runic Temple is a sacred structure in Palamecia. It's an integral part of the prophecy, where the Blanks go to receive a blessing from the sacred crystal enshrined inside the Temple walls.

As you head east towards the Runic Temple, you realize that it takes quite a while to journey from Primordia to the Runic Temple. You wonder how the man was reappearing so quickly if he was also making this long journey...



{“You can use multiple devices to simultaneously create new accounts. Rerolling on Steam, an iPad and iPhone at the same time speeds up the process a ton.”}

You wonder if the Blank you’re following is choosing to repeat this journey over and over of his own free will. Why would someone do that?

[“Every time they make a new account our metrics improve. Soon we’ll be able to say that we’ve hit 10 million downloads. This is great data to show our shareholders.”]

None of the Blanks you’ve met so far seem to want to talk with you. If they won’t tell you what they’re thinking, will you ever be able to answer these questions that keep arising in the back of your mind?

Lost in thought, you walk down a barren path, seeing ruins of villages and towns off the side of the road. You observe the Blank you’ve chosen to follow while he cuts down countless monsters on his way to the temple. As he does so, you see him collect small crystal fragments from their bodies.

<Note: Update will allow Magicite to be collected from random battles>

As you get closer to the Temple grounds, you start to find many more Blanks doing the same thing. Cutting down monsters and searching their bodies for those tiny crystal fragments. Many silently repeat the activity over and over, while others express frustration about being unable to find anything. You are surprised by how many people are around.

You always thought the temples were a solemn place.

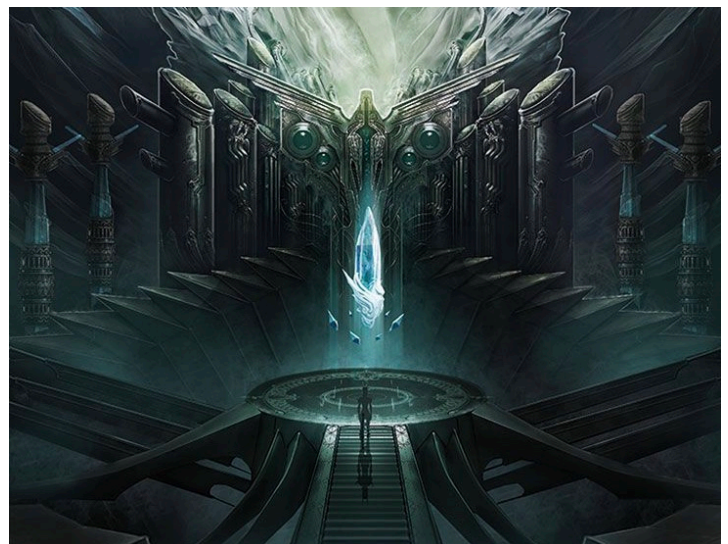
[“This should give people a reason to keep playing everyday. These numbers show that people are enjoying the game!”]

Upon entering the temple you find an endless corridor. You follow the long hallway until you run into some stairs heading down. You expect the sacred crystal must be further below. Your Blank friend is unfazed by this, as he rushes down the stairs.

This routine continues for a number of floors, until finally you reach a large, extravagant room. There you are stunned by the enormous crystal held in suspension there.

It’s beautiful.

You are left in awe. You lose yourself as you hear a gentle melody emanate from within the crystal.



You are so distracted that you lose track of the Blank you were following. You're surprised since you were sure that this must be where he was headed.

That is until you notice a sort of chanting coming from beyond the crystal. You listen carefully and you can also make out muffled screams of anguish or delight. You continue on to investigate the sounds.

Behind the sacred crystal, you find a hidden passage. Inside, you come across a row of almost angelic structures.



Here you see people offering up the crystal fragments they've collected, as the device spins and whirls, eventually offering them bigger crystals of all shapes and sizes. Sometimes the device shines blue, sometimes the device shines red. People keep repeating this process over and over, until they run out of offerings. A large group of Blanks sigh, looking dejected. Then they head back upstairs, saying they need to go collect more Magicite.

You wonder what this strange ritual is. You never heard anything about this in the prophecy. But people seem excited about it.

You catch sight of your mark doing the same ritual. He doesn't have as many fragments as the others, but he offers up what he's collected along the way. The device glows a strange blue again. The man shrugs, turns around and starts to walk away.

<System notice: Saved data deleted>

As he does, the man disappears into thin air. You're dumbstruck by what you've just witnessed, until you start to hear chanting again.

In the corner of the room, you seem a couple Blanks with elaborate outfits praying loudly.

<12500 Magicite for \$104.99. Confirm payment?>

As they do so, a light shines and descends upon them. From that light large chunks of Magicite begin to appear in their hands. They go on to offer up the crystal pieces to the device and watch it whirl. They continue this, completely unfazed by the results.



Sometimes they go back to chanting, obtain more Magicite and then go back to them device. This continues for a time, until finally the device starts to emit rainbow colours and shake erratically. Everyone in that basement room stops and turns to watch.





Taking his newly acquired blessing, the elaborately dressed Blank walks away, with an ambiguous smile on his face. After so much time spent praying, surely he's tired.

Some of the others stare at him with looks of jealousy. Others try to catch his attention, asking if he will fight with them. The atmosphere is a little awkward, so you decide to leave.

You wonder why no one is in the main foyer, appreciating the beautiful crystal this Temple was set up to honour...

—

You leave the temple, at a bit of a loss what to do next.

You wonder if this whole pilgrimage was a mistake. The prophecy just is what it is. The Blanks follow it because that's what they're meant to do. Is there any reason other than that?

As you're considering abandoning the whole thing and heading back to Shoopuf Farms, you hear a voice right by your ear.

"Stop looking so gloomy! What, did the crystal reject you or something?"

You look around to find a small, flying woman circling you frantically.

"Don't just stand there, c'mon, let's go find some loot!"

You stay silent, remembering the stories about faeries who love to trick and deceive people.



{“I love the game because of the characters. Echo is the best.”}

“Not biting, huh? I thought all you Blanks loved collecting stuff. Isn’t levelling up your favourite thing to do?” The faerie bats her eyelashes and gives a mischievous smile.

“I’m here... to learn about why Blanks choose to follow the Prophecy.”

“Oho! I get it, you’re the truth-seeking type! Well lucky for you, I know all about this world *and* the prophecy. Want me to spill the beans on all of this world’s deep, dark secrets?!”

{“I love the game for its story. I want to know where it’s going to go.”}

“That’s not it... I just want to know about the Blanks. What motivates them?”

“Hmm... you really are a strange one. Why worry about other people when you could just be off having fun yourself?”

<Announcement: Koreans servers are to be shut down at the end of the month. Thank you  
for playing.>

“Alright, well I can still help you out. Follow me.”

—

The faerie chatters on and on. She tells you about many strange and questionable things.

She talks about the clothes the Blanks around you are wearing. She talks about the wondrous places there are to explore. She talks about some guy named Cloud and how cool he is.

{I love the nostalgia and all the references to the series.}

Just as you’re about to try and get a word in, she shouts “We’re here!”.

You look back at your map to figure out where you are. It seems you’re just north of the Runic Temple at the Royal Hunting Grounds.

There, you spot the elaborately dressed Blank from earlier. He seems to be fighting monsters. At first it's just small fries, the kind you've had to tumble with yourself a couple times to get here.

That is when you hear a roar in the distance, and the ground shakes, as the biggest monster you've ever seen lands a few yards away.

"You see, some people just like to be powerful..."

You watch in awe as the man proceeds to casually walk up to the monster.





“He summoned meteors from the sky?!”. You stare wide-eyed at the scorched ground left behind as the Blank wanders away.

“That’s just the way Palamecia is. You fight trial after trial. Sometimes you get lucky and receive the crystal’s blessing, sometimes you have to struggle for it. Either way, it’s all about fighting to get stronger. So what’d you say? Wanna go fight some baddies?!“ The faeries eyes light up, staring expectantly at you.

You look down at the ground, wondering if people really enjoy fighting battle after battle.

“Haven’t you ever had the rush of overcoming a challenge that feels impossible at first?”

{I love the battle system. It’s both strategic and engaging. I like how you can adjust the difficulty to your liking.}

“But aren’t the Blanks being forced into this against their will? The prophecy sounds like a form of slavery to me...”

“Still not convinced, huh? C’mon, let me show you one more thing.”

Then without another word, we were whisked away in a flash.

—

[So, how's that report coming along? The game's a dud, isn't it? I hear it's not doing so well compared to those other mobile titles.]

You awaken with no clue where you are.

There's darkness in every direction and you don't seem to be standing on solid ground. That's when you turn to see —



“Confused? Us faeries can do all kinds of things, even teleport!” The faerie glances at you, waiting for a reaction.

You stay silent, wondering why she's showing you this.

“That’s Palamecia, pretty neat, right? Though... perhaps this sight is more familiar to you.” The faerie flickers her wings and does a twirl as your vision blurs slightly.

Words and numbers suddenly start to appear in front of your eyes. And some sort of advertisement to “personalize your Echo”, whatever that means.

“To be honest, I knew you weren’t a Blank when I first found you. I just had to find out more! Are you from the outer world?”

Suddenly your memories from life on the farm start to become hazy.

“Disguising yourself as a citizen of Palamecia though, that’s a new one! If you’re here, then that must mean trouble for us. To have a god descend upon the realm, what, are we not doing our job well enough?”

She just keeps on talking and talking, before you have any idea what’s going on.



“I’ve heard whispers that you can just turn us off. Poof, and we’re gone! If Palamecia is gonna be destroyed, I’m not upset though. We had a good run.”

The faerie’s words make your racing mind pause.

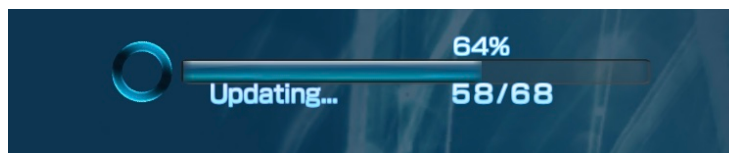
“Why do you say that? Don’t you love this place?”

“What, you still don’t get it? It’s no surprise to anyone that Palamecia is a system that’s meant to go on forever, like a Möbius strip. The trials never end on purpose.” The faerie turns to look you straight in the eyes.

“What that means is it doesn’t matter how far you go. It’s about setting goals and achieving them. As long as you’re doing something you find meaningful along the way. That’s why *I* always try to have as much fun as I can!”

The faerie’s words stay in your memory as the world slowly melts away.

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[“Did you hear? Seems we got green lit to continue on with the game. Great job with the report!”]

Notes

All images were taken as screenshots or video captures of Mobius Final Fantasy by Square Enix on an iPhone X or iPad Pro.

The song included is an audio recording of 'Rune Crystal' by Mitsuto Suzuki, made for the Mobius Final Fantasy Official Soundtrack 1.

Some information was adapted from a Reddit thread I created, linked here:

Reddit. "Why do you play?", accessed December 10, 2018,  
[https://www.reddit.com/r/MobiusFF/comments/a3qtl9/why\\_do\\_you\\_play/?st=JPK0AV2F&sh=c21c5a9f](https://www.reddit.com/r/MobiusFF/comments/a3qtl9/why_do_you_play/?st=JPK0AV2F&sh=c21c5a9f)