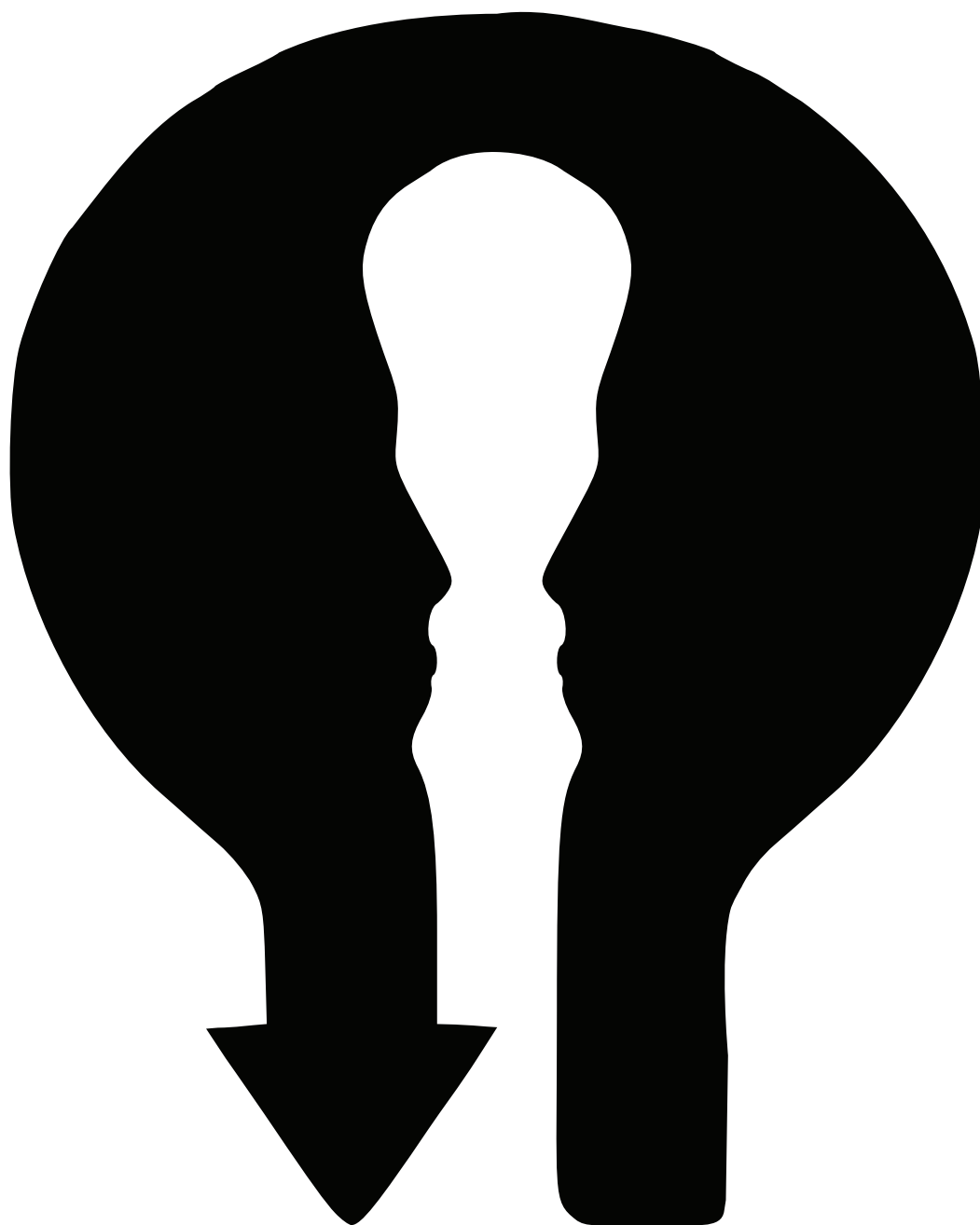


# Her Inner Dead Ends



A freeform larp scenario for two players created by Francesco Zani and Francesco "Ruggerfred" Sedda about a fictional franchise for many people created by J. S. Hunts

# Introduction:

**Her Inner Dead Ends** is a freeform larp scenario for two players taking the role of two users of an online community dedicated to a fictional multimedia franchise that is closing and focuses on their first live meeting.

What happens when the community disappears and the connections are severed? What feelings are involved when the medium is abruptly taken away? What's next?

The game should be played in a cozy and peaceful public space: a bar, a pub or a restaurant are great for this purpose.

The game require very little preparation and a printed copy of the handouts (Message from the Admin, Hiding Cards and Community Cards).

# Inspirations:

- Time (xkcd)
- The Forge
- Reddit, Chan, forums and communities in general
- Janus Design
- Firefly
- S., by Doug Dorst and J. J. Abrams
- .hack franchise
- The Climb by Jason Morningstar
- The Beekeeper by Mel Leverich
- Serpent of ash by J. Tuomas Harviainen
- A Penny for my Thoughts by Paul Tevis
- Microscope by Ben Robbins
- 24 game poems by Marc Majcher
- Her Story
- Cloud Chamber
- Zero Escape series

# Thanks:

Thanks to Angela Manna, Flavio Mortarino and Monica Neddi for their precious feedback.

# The Franchise:

"**The Many Paths Series**" is a transmedial franchise started with the "Her Inner Dead Ends" novel. The franchise gained many fans since the publication of the first novel and a lot of users gathered in the official HIDE community thanks to the unconventional and stratified narrative, innovativeness in the use of transmediality and cryptic mysteries.

The series is famous for allegorical sections, stories prone to multiple interpretation and open-ended storylines that encouraged the fans to create a vast repertoire of theories.

Since the cancellation of the HIDE animation series nothing new has been created in the Many Paths franchise and many hypothesized that the author might have lost interest in the whole project.

**J. S. Hunt** is a hugely appreciated novelist, critic, essayist, musician and movie director. He is mostly known for the franchise "The Many Paths" for which he wrote a total of 7 novels and directed 2 movie adaptations. Even if he's widely recognized as one of the most eclectic creative minds of the last century, with projects spanning all media, he is notoriously reclusive: very few photographs of him have ever been published and many rumors about his location and identity have circulated.

## **In the franchise:**

- Her Inner Dead Ends (novel)
- Weak End (novel)
- The House of Veiled Walls (novel)
- The Square and the Circle (prequel novella)
- One Thousand Boxes (novel)
- His Inner Dead Ends (novel - spin off)
- Her Inner Dead Ends (movie)
- HIDE (graphic novel)
- Better than Ever (novel)
- Weak End (movie)
- Behind the Curtain: and what she found (ARG)
- Your Own Dead Ends - HIDErpg (pen & paper RPG)
- Just Another Fall (novel)
- Just Another Fall (music concept album)
- HIDE (movie - remake)
- HIDE: The Hidden Path (TV animation series)

# The Community:

The **HIDE community** was officially opened about ten years ago as a place to talk, debate and theorize about the hidden meanings of the franchise. In the middle of its life it became less easy to approach the community, due to the amount of source material produced in the franchise and from the user theories, but the influx of new users kept growing. In the last three years the lack of new material convinced the publishers to pull the plug in a short time, but nobody is prepared to deal with this: users keep posting daily discussions, crafting new theories and introducing people to the franchise, but the end of the HIDE community is near and unavoidable. What's discomfoting in the imminent closure is not only the necessity to re-group and re-organize somewhere else with such a short notice, but also the news that no backup will be kept and every content will be wiped at its closure. Ten years of theories, discussions, friendships flushed away forever.

# The Main Characters:

The two main characters of the scenario are two users of the HIDE community. They met each other online and have become friends: for quite a while they have discussed, fantasized and theorized together. Now, discovered that the community is about to close, they decided to organize a live meeting and give a face to each other's nickname, finally knowing who they are away from keyboard.

# Principles:

## **Think about how The Many Paths speaks to you:**

Play trying to describe which aspects of the franchise convey emotions to your character, what makes them think and empowers their creativity. Describe how the franchise speaks to your character. What triggers your interest in this franchise? What evokes your emotions?

## **Think about how The Many Paths speaks about the other character:**

There is something in the person in front of you that reminds you of the franchise. You should question why this is true and try to understand the reasons behind it: what elements in the franchise that reminds you of them? What do you recognise about them in the franchise?

## **Think about the community:**

The characters must not speak uniquely about the series but should try to speak also about the community. Think about unsolved questions regarding the community: where will the newcomers to the franchise learn about all the theories and the contents created over the years? How will they experience the franchise now that the main gathering place is about to disappear? Wasn't it a fundamental part of the huge project of the franchise to create a community and to develop around it?

## **Think about what comes after the end:**

Remember to think what projects for the future your character might have. This scenario doesn't aim at answering that question during the game, but thinking about it will enrich the experience and it can help you in the dialogue with the other character. What will happen to the characters after this meeting?

## **Focus on the experience, more than on the story:**

Don't force yourself to create a narration built upon a chain of memories following one another, but use the scenario to explore your emotions about this kind of experience: what did you discuss on the community and how does it make you feel? What kind of alchemy you and the other character had?

## **Do it together:**

It's of extreme importance that you both contribute elements to the narration. There's no prevalent narrator and there should never be: if you notice that the other player is having difficulty in the creation of the narrative content, help him by asking some questions and whenever the other player suggests something try to build on it. Always make the other player's character shine: if you do, you will both have a better experience.

# Game mechanics:

Both players should read and familiarize with this section before they get to the table, so that you can both enjoy the game without stressing about not knowing what to do or explaining the rules during the game itself. The following will guide you through the mechanics that you'll need to know. There are few mechanics, but all of them are fundamental.

## **Community Cards:**

Throughout the game the players will mostly talk to each other trying to explore what kept the community united, the events your characters can recall about it, what are the feelings they link to those experiences, to the members of the community and to their future projects. In order to do this you'll have the support of the Community Cards.

This deck represents some users and things they said during the time the two protagonists frequented the HIDE community: you will be using them as an inspiration for the discussion. Your character doesn't have to remember exactly the nickname or the words of any of the users represented so, while you certainly can directly quote any of them as you see fit, you can also vaguely describe an episode that leads to that specific card. You can read the cards on the table during the game, but do not focus on them too much: when you figure out something to say, find a card on the table that might convey that message and start telling that story.

## **Reverse & Destroy:**

Reversing and destroying cards is what controls the game flux during its execution and will determine its end. Reversing a card on the table is an act of acceptance by both players of whatever that card represents for their relationship. Destroying a card, on the opposite, is an act of refusal.

When you used a card to talk about something and both players believe there is nothing more to say on the matter, you can:

- reverse it, placing the card face down on the table, if you think that the talk you had was a bonding experience.
- destroy it, tearing it into small pieces, if you think that the talk you had was a detachment experience.

When a card is reversed the other player can decide to leave it as is or have a chance to disagree with you and destroy the card, making his dissent clear.

## **What are you hiding?**

The Hiding Cards are a small group of cards specifying what you, as a character, cannot speak about. At the beginning of the game you will choose one of these that you would like to adopt for the current game and it will represent a very personal aspect of your character. Choose something that intrigues you and from which you can take inspiration: if you fear that you will not use a card during the game, then don't choose it. Whenever you have chosen take that card place it covered in front of you on the table. Whatever it is that you have chosen remember to avoid explicitly mentioning anything about that topic, but act as it is an important part of who you are.

The topic mentioned on the card can be lightly referred to but it can never be talked about openly. Don't miss the occasion to make some reference to whatever it is and drop some hints about it.

Even if you cannot talk about your respective topics, they will give you some backstory to who the characters are so you can build upon.

### **Take the Hand:**

Whenever one of you feels like there's something they want to express in game that they don't want their character to speak out, they can touch the hand of the other player and share that thought. Whatever the players say in that occasion is something that the characters are thinking but not telling, so it should be considered as not said by the characters in-game.

For this, try to keep your hands on the table during the game, so that the other player can easily make hand contact.

What's embarrassing for your character to say at the first meeting with someone else? What are they afraid of sharing, even with the best of their friends? Do you think something about your character should be shared, but you don't want to say it out loud? Do you feel the need to talk about your Hiding Card's topic? If so, take the hand of the other character and start the flow of your thoughts.

### **Closing sequence:**

When every Community Card is reversed or destroyed, the game should come to an end: conclude the current subject and take the hands of the other player. Look at the destroyed and at the reversed cards on the table and then look the other player for one last time, then close your eyes.

Now collect your thoughts: how was the meeting? The relationship has deepened, or has been damaged by this event? Do you want to keep the relationship even after the closure of the community, or is it better that everyone takes their own path?

After some thought, decide:

- open your eyes, if you want to keep the relationship after the closure of the community.
- disconnect your hands if you want to break the relationship after the closure.

If both players open their eyes, your characters will be in touch in the future. If even one of you disconnects the hands, your characters will take their own separate paths.

### **Debrief:**

Have a small debrief process after the end of the game

Talk freely about your characters, their change during the game and how the game ended. Why it ended that way? There is something untold about your characters? What feelings you experienced during the game?

# Game preparation:

You can execute this sequence right at the table, after everything else is ready to play. This is the part where players think about the themes they will bring in the game and create the necessary mood to play. Feel free to start ahead of time with this section: the more you'll think about this, the more you'll probably have to share at the right moment. Think about your previous experiences with forums, online communities and any face-to-face meeting you had with people you knew only from an online community. Which memories do you link to all of these? Which disappointments? How the community where you participated more actively was? Which kind of users you met online? What do you don't know about them? Try to visualize people, memories and events that can help you in the game.

This ideal length of this phase is about ten minutes, but feel free to spend all the time you like remembering people and episodes. Try to incorporate something you remembered and you care about in the game itself, it'll make the experience more personal.

Now think about your character: what have been their first impressions about the other character? What might be their expectations about the meeting? What do they imagine about the person they are about to meet? How they think they will look like? How did they get to know the franchise and how they were influenced by it? Is there any other reason you want to meet them?

Try to answer or at least have an idea of some possibilities to address these questions. Then think about a nickname you'd like to adopt for yourself and share it with the other participant: write it on a nametag.

Now place the Hiding Cards on the table: each of you must choose one of them to be a topic they'll be forbidden to talk about out loud. Is there any of these cards that really catches your eyes or contains a theme you would like to talk about? Choosing something that triggers your emotions will enrich the experience for both players.

Start thinking about the card you choose and how this might show in your character's behavior and words and remember that you can't talk about it directly.

Now decide with your fellow player whether you want to play the short or the long format. The short format involves 16 Community Cards and will take about an hour to play out. The long format involves 25 Community Cards and will double the time needed for a playthrough. Now extract the corresponding number of cards from the Community deck and position these cards face up on the table. You will not need the rest of the deck.

Take some time to read all the Community Cards on the table: is there any connection with what you just remembered about your previous experience? Is there anything that you find particularly interesting, evocative, or that links with any of your experiences?

Keep these suggestions in mind because you will be using them during the game.



# Game walkthrough:

## **Before you get to the table:**

- Print a copy of the handouts (Admin's Message, Hiding Cards and Community Cards).
- Read and understand this manual.

## **Opening sequence:**

- Place the Admin's Message on the table and read it together.
- Each of the players chooses one of the Hiding Cards and place it covered in front of themselves. The remaining Hiding Cards will not be used.
- Choose the short or the long format and extract the corresponding number of cards, 16 or 25, from the Community Deck. Position these cards face up on the table and read them together. The remaining Community Cards will not be used.

## **During the game:**

- Choose a Community Cards to start a topic and, when you feel the topic should be closed, reverse or destroy the card.
- Remember to keep your hands on the table and use the "Take the Hand" every time you don't want to speak out loud about something.
- Try to follow the principles of the game.

## **Closing sequence:**

- When all the Community Cards are either reversed or destroyed, you can begin the "Closing Sequence".
- Have a short debrief session.

# Message from the Admin:

Hi everybody,

*from the beginning this community was always intended as an evolving experience, not only a place where every fan of JSH's work could come and discuss what they think of it with people as passionate as them, but also a place where the franchise itself could expand and improve through the contribution of its fans.*

*Here's something for you: the HIDE community went live ten years ago. I just ran some math about that: if the entire existence of the community spans but a single day, then today is 11:55 PM. If you prefer the metaphor of a single year, it's currently 4 PM on December 30.*

*Yeah, you perfectly understand what I'm implying: the official closure is set. I aim to move to the final stage over the coming week. That sucks, but that's it: everything comes to an end sooner or later. Cool internet communities included.*

*Let me be clear: it's not that the higher ups don't see what we've accomplished here, but just a fact: JSH didn't create anything in the last three years, after the cancellation of the animated series. The publisher has pulled the plug, there isn't anything here to justify the economic expenses of this whole enterprise.*

*For those who are wondering what will remain, there's unfortunately a good chance that "nothing" might be the most accurate answer. Not here, and certainly not in this form, anyway.*

*This is my last official post here. My only thought for all of you: don't lose contacts with one another. All the time we spent here has been amazing and I will sincerely miss many of your daily rants.*

*I've been passing through JSH works again in the last week in order to get in the right mood for this post, so let me indulge in that feeling and close with the last phrase of the first novel:*

*<<She was finally free from those walls. There were better days to come.>>*

*My best HIDERS,  
HawaiianPattern*

## Hiding Cards:

Your importance in the community.

Your hate for the administration of the community.

Your addiction to the community.

Your love for another user in the community.

The secondary account you're using.

Your failed suicide attempt.

The harassment you received.

Your personal correspondence via mail with JSH about the franchise.

You were a collaborator for one of the installment in the franchise.

## Bonus:

This card alters the game experience, shifting part of the discussions and probably influencing the decisions you'll have to make during the course of the scenario. We don't suggest to use it during your first run of this game and, if one of you chooses to use it, both players should agree.

You are J. S. Hunt.

# Community Cards:

## **DeadlyPhysicist:**

"It is blatant that the author imagined exactly this: people who gather and try to figure out what's the meaning of HIDE, if there is any."

## **BoxOpener:**

"The most interesting side of the ending of the book is that everyone can interpret it freely. Everyone finds the best meaning."

## **WatchOwISOar:**

"This franchise is so extraordinary that the world will totally remember it in the centuries to come. Some things never die."

## **AsProven:**

"The main character has an ambiguous behavior? What is ambiguous? Because if we define ambiguous what is not normal, then we are all ambiguous."

## **GlitchElement:**

"I believe that nowadays this stuff has lost its sense. In the beginning everything was simpler..."

## **FinalSpin:**

"What kind of guy can do what JSH does? What life does he have? No human can excel at so many things at once!"

## **DrumMering:**

"The concept album truly is what made me want to read all of the novels. Will there ever be anything as good as this?"

## **FaceUrDoom:**

"Is there really any meaning to all of these discussions? I mean, let's face it, we'll never get to know WHY she did what she did."

## **//beelzebub//:**

"I'm still trying to figure out what I wanna do in life, just like Her. I guess with time I'll be able to focus more on what I want."

## **AmAiErAn:**

"Everytime she is pushed to make a difficult choice she runs away... JSH, what's your point exactly?!"

## **Kahileeeee:**

"I'm not a fan of the bad guys, but at least there they are honest and upfront about what they believe."

## **ExecuteOrder66:**

"Poppin' in to say I just finished watching the reboot movie: WTF was that bullshit about the expectations of society?!? That's lame."

## **Dong-ma-99:**

"The day creating stuff with you guys will stop being fun I'll stop caring about what's right or wrong about our theories."

## **CTANKEP:**

"I never cried like that, NEVER. She keeps losing friends one after another. Come on, REACT!"

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Leceracle:</b></p> <p>"The spin-off is a masterpiece. The focus on secondary characters was brilliant: everyday drama is more interesting than epic drama."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SchwachEnde:</b></p> <p>"Am I the only one that noticed how the RPG tries to ignore some key events in history? Do they really think that erasing the past is a good thing?"</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hylja-hylja:</b></p> <p>"The soundtrack of the film is amazing: it makes me feel less alone even on public transport. Is it just me?"</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Deuteronomicon:</b></p> <p>"The game wasn't bad: it allowed the user to interact and to choose. And when you decide what really matters, everything is more interesting."</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ozymandias:</b></p> <p>"Everything has an expiration date: something you once loved, now just annoys you. Nothing lasts forever."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PiccadillyCitruz:</b></p> <p>"If you keep saying that you don't have time you'll never accomplish anything. If you never rest, on the other hand, it's just autodestruction."</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PrescriptionGlasses:</b></p> <p>"Love is to make decisions that consider another person before considering yourself. Surely isn't what she did in the third book."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Dayoff/Dayon:</b></p> <p>"There's no amount of self-righteousness that can make you think doing THAT to another person is the best way of solving the problem!"</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Anonymous-6739210:</b></p> <p>"I am pretty confident that JSH hates this community. He doesn't care about our opinion: he just wanted to create something."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Anonymous-7417903:</b></p> <p>"I never thought anybody would get the reference to the "Faust" in the second book. Knowledge and pleasure aren't everything."</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Anonymous-5377156:</b></p> <p>"Fame gets to your head fast! One second you're loving something and the second after you're just trying to please strangers."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Anonymous-1407990:</b></p> <p>"It's not the amount of resources you drop into something that makes it great, it's about you being ok with losing parts of it."</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Anonymous-3402884:</b></p> <p>"To all those arguing about continuity errors I'll say this: sometimes you need to step back to comprehend the bigger picture."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Anonymous-4603009:</b></p> <p>"In a labyrinth if you walk long enough you can always find your way to the centre: I want to talk about that walk."</p>