

transcenders

Let's talk about power, baby ... and games ... and sex!

How is BDSM portrayed in games, and what can this teach us about love, life and games?

Bobbi A Sand from Malmö, Sweden, will be speaking about this at *Queerness and Games Conference (QGCon)* in Montreal on September 30, as well as at *IndieCade* in Los Angeles on October 11. The topic is "Explicit Power Dynamics - BDSM in games", something that is very close to heart, since BDSM and power exchange are also themes in Bobbi's upcoming game **Knife Sisters** (in development). Knife Sisters will be shown at the Arcade at QGCon.



- Games and BDSM actually have some things in common, Bobbi says.
- They are both examples of play, and therefore have some similar structures, such as requiring *clear boundaries, clear rules, and clear feedback*, among other things. But games are also great ways of addressing power, since they include mechanisms that you can play around with.

In the visual novel Knife Sisters, BDSM is part of the story; something the player through the actions of the main character, the 19-year old non-binary Leo, can experience. Peer pressure and manipulation are also themes of the game, which starts off with Leo waking up late one afternoon with a pounding headache and no recollection whatsoever of the night before, but with a sense that something terrible might have happened. It's now up to the player to go back in time and explore what triggered the events that night.

The person that has pulled Leo into this situation is the artist Dagger, who six weeks earlier moved into the same communion as Leo. She claims to be part of the secret society Knife Sisters, and she drags Leo into a world of occult rituals and strange assignments, asking Leo to do things that get more demanding each time. But can Leo really do whatever Dagger says, regardless of the cost?

- It's mainly a game about how our choices affect other people, but also about how to get close to others, Bobbi says.

- The main character has a hard time understanding both themselves and other people, and therefore they find close relationships really challenging. For them, the clear rules and the role-taking in BDSM is easier to grasp, and thus BDSM becomes their resting space.

- Something that both playing games and practising BDSM can do for us human beings is offering the opportunity to try out new roles, new ways of acting, as well as making experiences that we wouldn't get in everyday life. That, says Bobbi, might even be the main purpose of play: to develop us as persons.

More info at: <http://www.transcendersmedia.com>

Queerness and Games Conference schedule: <https://qgcon.com/qgcon-2018/schedule/>

IndieCade schedule: <https://www.indiecade.com/2018festivalschedule/>

About Bobbi:

Bobbi A Sand is a game designer and author from Malmö, who loves subcultures, playfulness and writing stories about queer emo kids.