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**WELCOME**

If games feature archaeologists at all, then they’re usually on the trail of a MacGuffin; how refreshing, then, that while there’s a mystery to solve in Heaven’s Vault, the game’s more about understanding an alien language rather than raiding tombs. As archaeologist Aliya Elasra, it’s your job to uncover an ancient civilisation’s secrets by translating the hieroglyphs on its buildings and artefacts.

Brilliantly, though, there isn’t one meaning to the phrases you encounter, an inscription on a goblet, for example, could be interpreted in a variety of ways, and your interpretation will have a cumulative effect on how you understand the language as a whole. As you discover on page six, the systems that underpin the game’s language are mind-bogglingly complex, but they’re in service of a game that expertly fuses linguistic puzzle-solving with its narrative.

Heaven’s Vault also reflects the complexity of language in the real world. The meanings of words are constantly changing over time, and thanks to the web, words can now travel around the world more quickly than ever before. Inkle’s game is a small reminder that words have power, and that the way we use and interpret them can have far-reaching consequences.

You’ll find a few phrases from Inkle’s language to pore over in this edition, but the phrase below feels appropriate: in English, it simply reads, “Be excellent to each other.” Enjoy the issue.

Ryan Lambie
Editor

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