

## Videogames with Ru

A Green Bone Saga slice-of-life scene in support of *Locus Magazine*

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Author's note: takes place before the events of Chapter 31 in *Jade Legacy*

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In Kaul Ru's estimation, one of the few benefits of being a stone-eye and living at home was that he did not ordinarily have to share his possessions with siblings. For example, he could usually count on having his ArcadeMox 3 console and games to himself. Unfortunately, that was not true when his whole family was home for the holidays, as they were now, for the spring blossom long weekend.

Ru settled onto the sofa with a pomegranate soda and brought up his favorite roleplaying game, *Syndicate Showdown*. So far, he'd sunk over sixty hours into the neon-drenched futuristic city of New Leyolo. What Ru liked the most about RPGs was that they were about exploring, strategy, and solving puzzles more than merely fast reflexes and violence. Koko came over with his favorite rubber ball and dropped it at Ru's feet. "Not now, Koko," Ru told him, rubbing the dog's head. Koko gave him a disappointed look but jumped up onto the sofa and turned around several times before settling next to Ru.

Niko came out of his room and stood behind the sofa for a few minutes watching the screen. Ru glanced over his shoulder. His brother was dressed in jeans and a button-up black shirt, six jade beads gleaming at his neck over the open collar. There was a whiff of cologne on him that suggested he was going out for the evening. "I thought you had a cold," Ru said.

"I do," Niko replied. He did indeed, sound a bit congested.

“Where are you going?”

Niko shrugged. “The Pig & Pig. You want to come?” He didn’t sound as if he actually wanted Ru to tag along, but he also didn’t seem as if he was extending the invitation reluctantly merely to be nice to his little brother. Many young men made an effort to affect cool indifference, but Niko came by it naturally.

“Nah. I’m sure it’s just going to be a bunch of Fingers from the Academy.”

“See you later, then.” Niko left the house and the recognizable roar of his Roewolfe SX Coupe started up in the driveway a minute later before quickly fading toward the gates of the estate.

Ru’s mother came downstairs and frowned. She began to shoo Koko off the sofa, but Ru protested, “Ma, he’s fine there, just leave him alone.”

“If you’re playing games, I hope you’ve finished all your schoolwork.”

“I have, and besides, it’s a holiday weekend.”

“If you have free time, you could be training.”

“*Niko* isn’t training right now. *He’s* the one who’s a Green Bone, and he just went out.”

His mother sighed through her nose. “A Fist needs to spend time with his Fingers.”

Ru did not get a chance to point out that Niko was not yet a Fist so her assertion was premature, because at that moment his father came through the patio door, gave his mother a kiss, ruffled Ru’s hair from behind and asked, “How was the relayball game yesterday?”

Ru paused the videogame—with all the distractions, he was playing badly and about to die anyway—and turned around to talk to his father. “We won, but I didn’t get to play that much.”

“Why not?”

“The coach subbed in Tesho after the first quarter.”

His father snorted. “You’re a much better first advancer than that other kid. You want me to talk to the coach about it? Or the school?” When Ru reacted with an expression of abject horror, his father broke into a grin and laughed. “Don’t worry, I’m joking. But the look on your face just now was great.”

“Don’t *do* that to me, Da!” It was awkward enough to be from a famous family; it was not funny to Ru to imagine the mortifying embarrassment of his coach and teachers saluting and quailing before the Pillar of the No Peak clan over something as trivial as a student’s playing time on a high school relayball team. “I’ve been starting most games and don’t mind Tesho getting to play some more, I really don’t.”

“You’re sure to start during the city playoffs,” his father said. “I’ll come watch.”

“If you have time,” Ru’s mother added gently. She always wanted to temper Ru’s expectations so he would not be disappointed if his father was unable to attend something he’d promised to, on account of issues in the clan pulling him away. But Ru understood, better than his mother gave him credit for.

After his parents went upstairs, Ru let his character die by falling off a building and started over from his last save point. Not fifteen minutes had gone by before the front door opened again, this time to the sound of motorcycle engines, raised voices, and laughter. “See you tomorrow, bitches,” Jaya shouted cheerfully to her friends, before closing the door behind her and wandering over to the sofa. “Hey, dogface, get off already, it’s my turn to play *Squad Six*.” She made a lazy grab for the ArcadeMox controller.

Ru yanked the controller out of her reach. “It’s *my* console. You don’t *get* a turn.”

“It’s shared,” she insisted.

“Ask Da who it belongs to.”

Jaya scowled. She could usually prevail with their father, but not when it involved Ru. She changed her tone and began bargaining. “You can play for another twenty minutes.”

“Thirty,” Ru countered with a steady stare. He was a year older, but she was a future Green Bone, so their relative status in the family was debatable and a constant negotiation. She wasn’t green *yet*, though.

“Fine,” Jaya conceded, and stalked away, but not before leaning over the back of the sofa and boisterously snuggling Koko, making him squirm with excitement and flail his tail about so wildly that it knocked the controller out of Ru’s hands. Cursing his sister, Ru reclaimed the controller and his spot on the sofa, but by then, his character had been set upon by knife-wielding bikers and was down to twenty percent health.

Gods in Heaven, what did it take to get some peace around here?