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Game Developer Releases Most Realistic, Tedious Action/RPG Ever

TOKYO, JAPAN- This time of year nearly every major game developer has a big-budget title on the shelves ready for Christmas buying. This intense competition in the industry has led to ever more lifelike graphics and gameplay. This year the folks at Baka-Mitau Studios have taken this trend to the next level and produced what promises to be the most realistic Action/RPG game ever made.

The release of *Tsumannai: Humdrum Hearts*, marks a crowning achievement in game design. Developers reportedly spent more than three years refining the game engine and tweaking the gameplay, all of which, according to the press release, takes place in real-time. Unlike less realistic titles from Square Enix and EA that permit characters to advance after only a few hours of play, leveling up in *Tsumannai* involves consuming gallons of protein drinks and working out (pressing X a lot). In fact, the AI is so realistic that you won't even see results until after three weeks of X pressing have passed.

Many epic-scale RPGs allow players to earn knowledge of computer systems or spells, helpful in later levels, by finding randomly placed icons. In this game, however, such skills acquisition requires enrolling in the local community e-college. You won't have enough credits right away so you'll have to apply for in-game financial aid and wait the requisite 6 weeks for approval.

In addition, every other weekend you must take a pair of moody pre-teens along with you on your missions, keeping them safe from harm no matter the surrounding danger. You may refer to them as your sidekicks if you want, but they are actually the unhappy by-products of a previous marriage and you must wipe their memory on Sunday or lose partial custody, which means you'll never get 100%.

Every richly-detailed *Tsumannai* mission is followed by the meticulous filling out of forms, hours of debriefing and a short jail stint [since most missions require the killing of a large number of people].

It is also significant to note that the anal rape simulator in the game is almost Oz-like in its edgy realism.

Objects and currency in *Tsumannai* are handled in the most naturalistic way possible. When a player acquires a new weapon (even one found on dead enemies), he must first file for the proper permit and wait several days for return mail before using them- and that does not include the mandatory five day waiting period.

Like the Final Fantasy titles, you can gamble in this game as well, but you have to pay taxes on everything you win. Also, your unseen ex-wife gets half of everything you earn or win. Failure to pay results in more jail time.

To regain health after a battle injury, you must visit the nearest medical facility. Remember to pack your Blue Cross card in your questing sack or you'll be out of luck. Depending on how you rolled your healthcare plan at the outset, the co-pays could be a real nightmare, so beware. A big part of winning the game is keeping records and paperwork nearly filed and organized.

To keep up with other feature-rich games of its category, *Tsumannai* also offers loads of minigames sprinkled throughout the expansive game environment. They cost about 50 credits each, but insiders say the price can drop as low as 20 if you wait a few thousand hours. Hard core players say there is even an easter egg hidden deep inside the final level, a minigame remarkably similar to *Tsumannai* itself in which the player can play as the player playing the game playing the minigame.

They warn against unlocking it, however, for that way lies madness.

In perhaps the most innovative turn of all, the game has no "respawn" in the traditional sense. It's far too realistic for that. If you die in a mission, you will witness a stunning afterlife cut-scene, be reincarnated, begin the process of growing to adulthood, learn your skills again, and after about 18 years or so of this you can begin the level all over again.

Still, this is better than the original version in which the screen blanked out upon death and the player was required to purchase a new game disc.

Early on, some beta testers complained of the inability to save one's game state due to the game's mind-numbing realism. IGN now reports that the designers came up with a compromise of sorts, inserting several secret save points- though no one can say for sure where they are.

Some players believe that you can get saved by going to one of the many tent revival stations and depositing all your credits in the impeccably textured wicker collection baskets. Others argue that this theory is utter crap. Either way, experts say it's probably best not to stop playing or turn off your machine.

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