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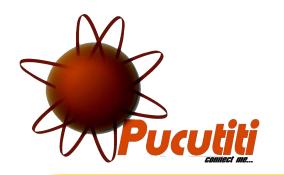
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Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice



Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice is a dark fantasy action-adventure game developed and published by the British video game development studio Ninja Theory. Inspired by Norse mythology and Celtic culture, the game follows Senua, a Pict warrior who must make her way to Helheim by defeating otherworldly entities and facing their challenges, in order to rescue the soul of her dead lover from the goddess Hela. It was released worldwide for Microsoft Windows and PlayStation 4 in August 2017, Xbox One in April 2018, and Nintendo Switch in April 2019. Hellblade features support for virtual reality, which was added in a 2018 update.

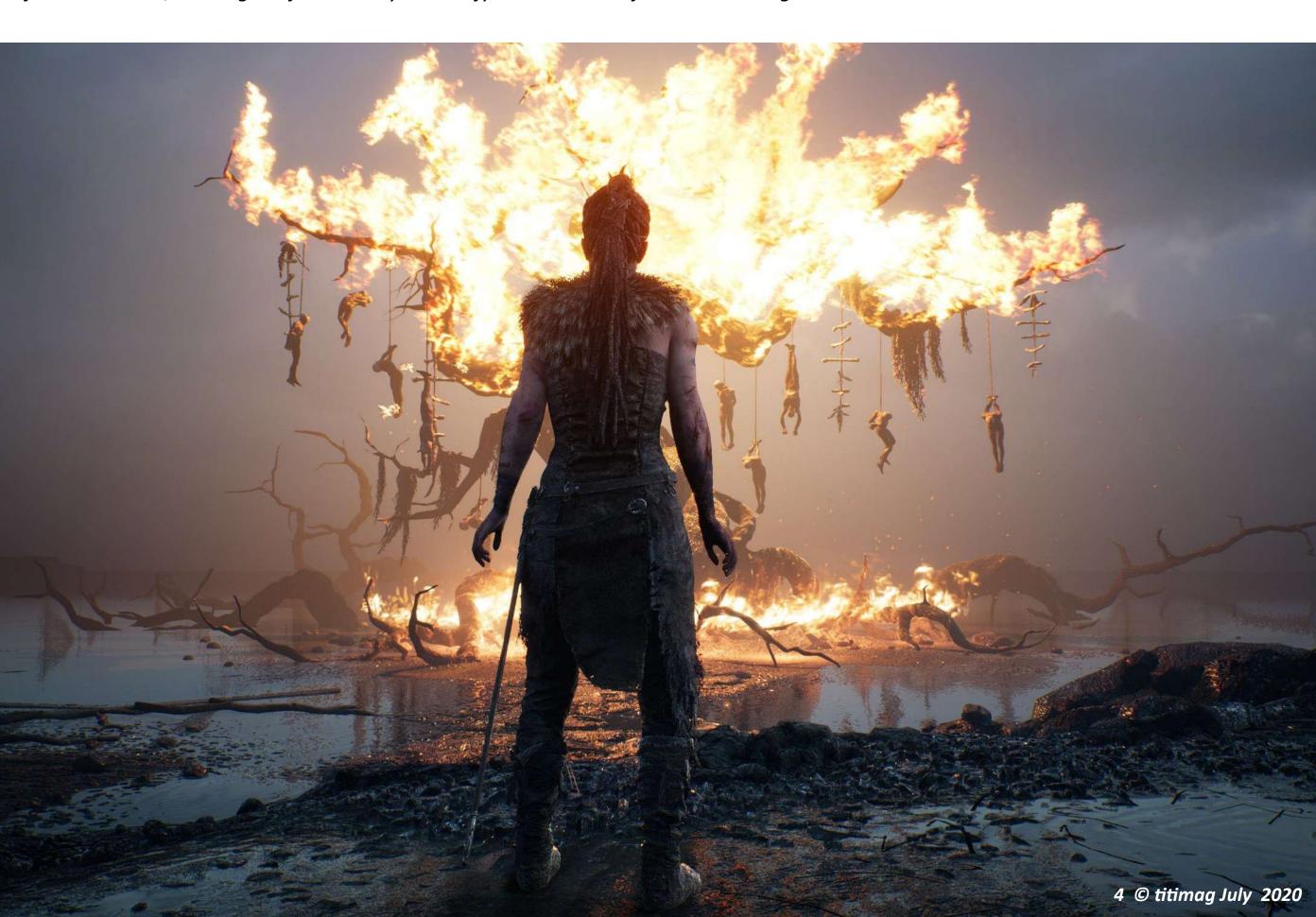
Self-described as an "independent AAA game", Hellblade was created by a team of approximately twenty developers led by writer and director Tameem Antoniades. The game blends several genres, including hack and slash, puzzle solving, and psychological horror. Voice acting is an integral part of the game, while its cutscenes combine motion capture by Melina Juergens, and live action performances by other actors. The game's narrative serves as a metaphor for the character's struggle with psychosis, as Senua, who suffers from the condition but believes it to be a curse, is haunted by an entity known as the "Darkness", voices in her head known as "Furies", and memories from her past. To properly represent psychosis, developers worked closely with neuroscientists, mental health specialists, and people suffering from the condition.

Hellblade was a commercial success and was well-received by critics, who praised it as a work of art and applauded its uncommon choice of revolving around psychosis, the quality and uniqueness of its approach of the condition, and its story and main character. Its overall presentation, along with Juergens' performance, were also considered superior in quality to what independent games usually provide,

although its gameplay and other elements received some criticism. The game sold over a million copies across all platforms by June 2018. A sequel, Senua's Saga: Hellblade II, was announced at The Game Awards 2019.

Gameplay

Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice is divided in two types of gameplay: the first allows Senua to walk freely and interact with her surroundings. Those parts focus on either story via voiceover, as Senua travels from one location to another, or the resolution of a puzzle or challenge of some kind to progress further. She can use a capacity known as "focus", in reference to her tendency to see things differently from other people due to her condition, to trigger puzzle-related events. If she uses her focus on totems hidden throughout the game, it triggers a memory via voice-over of her friend Druth telling her of the stories of the Norsemen; activating all forty-four of them triggers a bonus cutscene shortly before the game's climax, that extends on Druth's backstory. Several areas feature their own exclusive mechanics or trials, such as reaching a safe zone in time before Senua dies, or using the focus ability to modify the structure of her surroundings.







Developer: Ninja Theory **Publisher:** Ninja Theory **Director:** Tameem Antoniades **Producer:** Rupert Brooker **Designers:** Joe Nelson, Juan Fernandez **Programmers:** Gavin Costello, Loong Wei Ding, Melanie Hall, Stefano Prosperi **Writer:** Tameem Antoniades Composers: David García, Andy LaPlegua **Engine:** Unreal Engine 4 Platforms: Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch Release: Windows, PlayStation 4- August 8, 2017 Xbox One- April 11, 2018 Nintendo Switch- April 11, 2019 Genres: Action-adventure, hack and slash **Mode:** Single-player TiTi Rating: 8/10 6 © titimag July 2020 In addition, Hellblade features fights against malformed representations of Northmen who block her progression, including occasional bosses. During those fights, Senua has her sword drawn out, and is turned towards one of her enemies, on which the camera is automatically focused; she can use two kind of attacks, quick or heavy, kick an enemy to prevent it from blocking her attacks, parry, or dodge. She can also charge the opponent she is focusing on, to either get closer or directly attack or kick it. If she parries or dodges enough, she can use her focus ability in battle to move faster than her enemies or dissipate the shadows some of them are made of, which makes them impervious to regular attacks. Once she obtains Gramr, Senua can charge her heavy attacks for additional damage and parries more efficiently, both of which can allow her to use her focus ability. If Senua suffers a strong hit, or several hits in a row, she falls to the ground, and the player must press the corresponding button repeatedly as fast as possible before an enemy deals her a fatal blow; if she does not get back up in time, she dies. The closer she is to death, the more difficult it is for her to get back up; she can also die from a regular hit, if she was already very close to death.

Hellblade does not feature any heads-up display or tutorials. Instead, Druth, Furies, or the Darkness, provide audio indications on game mechanics, and how to progress through levels and puzzles. The Furies provide Senua advice in battle, notably warning her if an enemy is attacking from her back. They react when Senua takes damage, and panic heavily if she is close to death: how nervous they are when she takes a hit is representative of how much damage she can still take. The nature of most apparitions, events witnessed, or voices heard, is purposely left unclear, and can be interpreted as either an actual apparition by a spirit, a memory of Senua, or a trick created by the Darkness or one of the deceptive creatures she has to face. As such, the clues given during the game are not always reliable, except for Druth's: certain Furies try to demotivate Senua, or give false indications such as telling her she took the wrong way, or that she is walking into a trap. Another core mechanic is the possibility of permadeath, which is meant to delete the player's save data after they surpass a number of deaths.

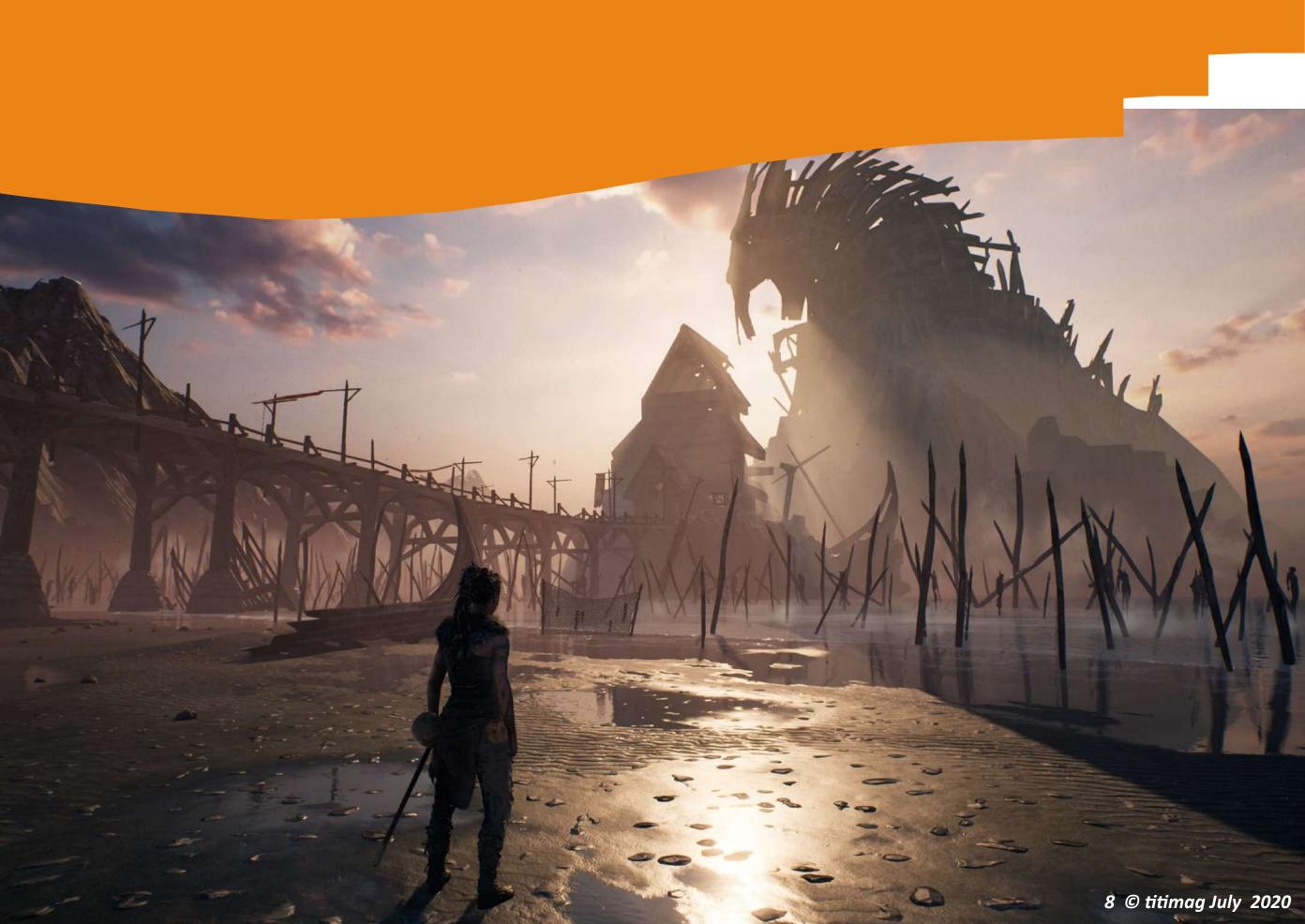
Plot

Set in the late 8th century, the game starts with Senua (Melina Juergens), a Pict warrior from Orkney arriving at the border of Helheim in a quest to save the soul of her dead lover, Dillion (Oliver Walker), from the goddess Hela. Senua believes she suffers from a curse and hears "Furies", voices in her head commenting her every action, notably one, the Narrator (Chipo Chung), who is aware of the player's presence and talks to them. She is followed by the Darkness (Steven Hartley), a dark entity at the core of the curse. She carries Dillion's severed head to use it as a vessel to his soul and is guided by her memories of the stories of Druth (Nicholas Boulton), a former slave of the Norsemen well-versed in their legends, now deceased, who became her friend and mentor during a year-long self-imposed exile. To enter Helheim, Senua defeats both the fire giant Surt and the spirit of illusions Valravn, but as she crosses the bridge to Helheim, she is attacked by Hela, who defeats her with a single blow, shattering her sword. Barely surviving the encounter, she follows visions of Druth and a man-shaped light she believes to be Dillion to a great tree where she faces four challenges linked to her past and is rewarded with the legendary sword Gramr, strong enough to kill gods.

Meanwhile, Senua's backstory is unveiled through her hallucinations, revealing that her mother Galena (Ellie Piercy) suffered the same curse she did but did not believe it to be dreadful. However, Senua's devoutly religious father, Zynbel (also performed by Hartley), did and burned Galena alive. Senua witnessed the event at age five, which caused her psychosis to worsen significantly and led her to convince herself her mother died willingly. Her father, convincing her that her condition was a curse, abused Senua emotionally and physically and isolated her from the rest of the world until she met Dillion when he visited her village. The two fell in love, and Senua left her father to be with him, as he saw her as different and misunderstood instead of cursed. However, after a plague killed many in Dillion's village, Senua, believing the fault to be hers, left in exile. When she returned a year later, having hopefully left the Darkness behind, she found everyone killed by Norsemen, who had invaded, sacrificing Dillion in a blood eagle to their gods. Remembering the stories of Druth, Senua departed on her journey to save Dillion's soul from the gods of the Norsemen.







Ultimately, Senua fights against the influence of the Darkness and defeats the beast Garm. She realizes the Darkness is a representation of her father's abuse and beliefs and frees herself from the Furies. Soon after, she faces a legion of Hela's warriors in a hopeless fight and is killed. In her final moments, she recalls Dillion telling her of the importance of the acceptance of loss. As the imagery of Helheim fades away, Hela drops Dillion's head into the abyss, but as the camera returns to her, Senua is standing in her place, with a dead Hela in place of Senua's body. Having accepted that it was never possible to bring her lover back and that she is not responsible for his death or anyone else's, Senua frees herself from the Darkness' influence and accepts the Furies not as a curse, but a part of who she is. She invites the player to follow her, while the Narrator says her goodbyes to the player.

Development

Hellblade was announced for the PlayStation 4 at Sony's Gamescom media briefing on August 12, 2014, where a trailer was shown. In a joint statement, Ninja Theory described the game as "an experience focused on delivering a deep character in a twisted world, with brutal uncompromising combat", and stated that they wanted to "make a smaller, more focused game experience that is uncompromising in its combat, art and story". The developers called it an "independent AAA game", with their goal being to make a game with all the qualities and production values of any AAA game on the market, but with creative freedom and an "indie spirit". The team eventually succeeded in releasing the game independently, but to achieve this could only release it via digital distribution.

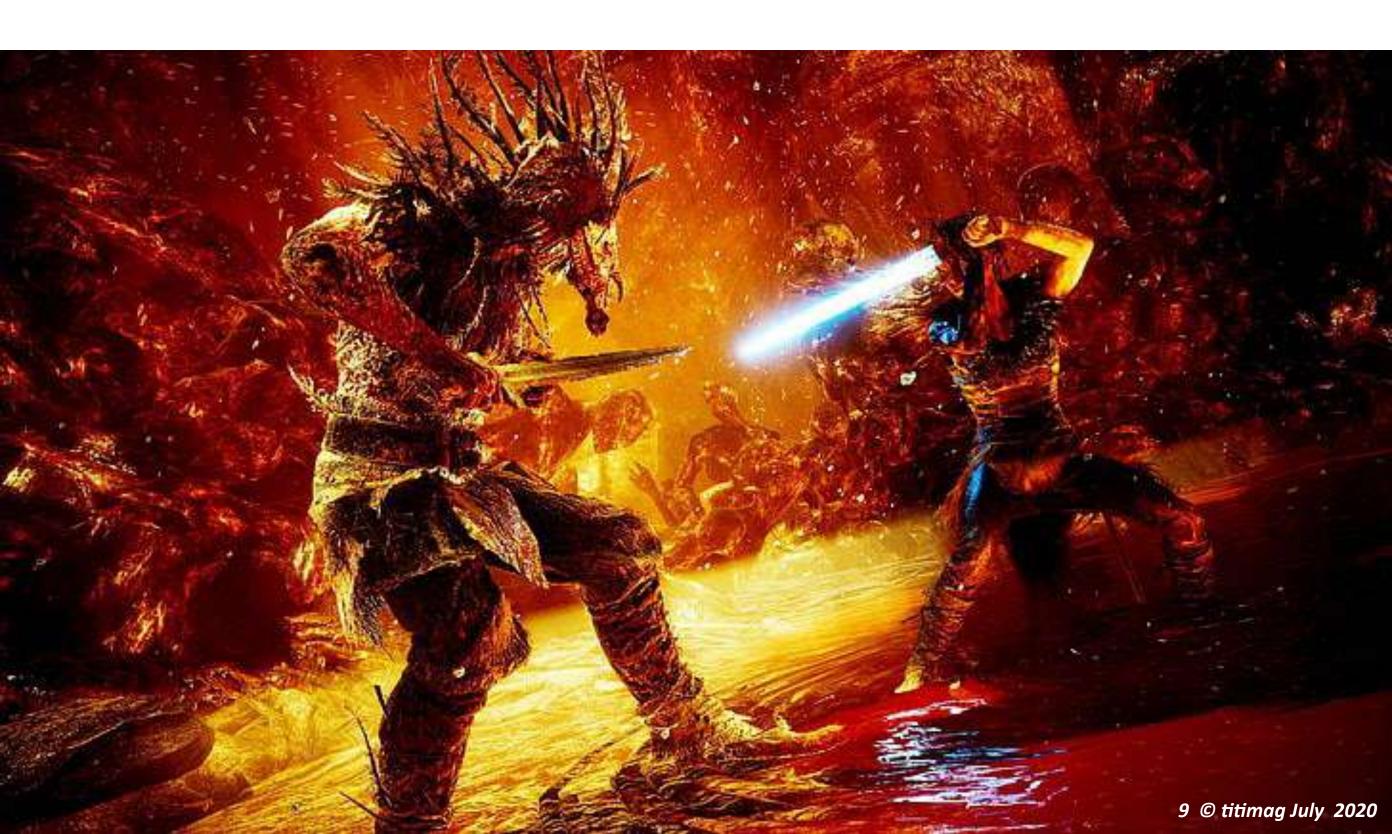
Hugues Giboire, art director of the previous Ninja Theory game Heavenly Sword, rejoined the studio to work on the game. A Microsoft Windows version of the game was announced on January 9, 2015. The game is powered by Unreal Engine 4, and was made by Ninja Theory with a team of around twenty developers. Its subtitle, Senua's Sacrifice, was announced in March 2016. Hellblade: Senua's Psychosis, a short documentary film included with the game, details the concept behind its story and inspirations, notably the team's study of mental illness. It was written and narrated by Antoniades, and edited by Juergens.

Release

Hellblade was released for Microsoft Windows and PlayStation 4 via digital channels on August 8, 2017. Following the period of timed console exclusivity for the PlayStation 4, a version for the Xbox One, with enhanced graphical support on the Xbox One X, was released on April 11, 2018. On July 31, 2018, an update added full virtual reality support via the HTC Vive and Oculus Rift headsets. On February 13, 2019, the game was announced for Nintendo Switch later in Spring of the same year.

Sequel

Senua's Saga: Hellblade II was announced during The Game Awards 2019, with plans for release on Microsoft Windows and the new Xbox Series X console.





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Agents of Mayhem



Agents of Mayhem is an open world action-adventure video game developed by Volition and published by Deep Silver. The game was released in August 2017 for Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, and Xbox One. The game's themes are based on Saturday-morning cartoons and superhero films. It is set in the same fictional universe as Volition's Saints Row series, and includes several plot and character crossovers. Agents of Mayhem received mixed reviews; it was generally praised for its humor, characters and combat but criticized for its repetitiveness.

Gameplay

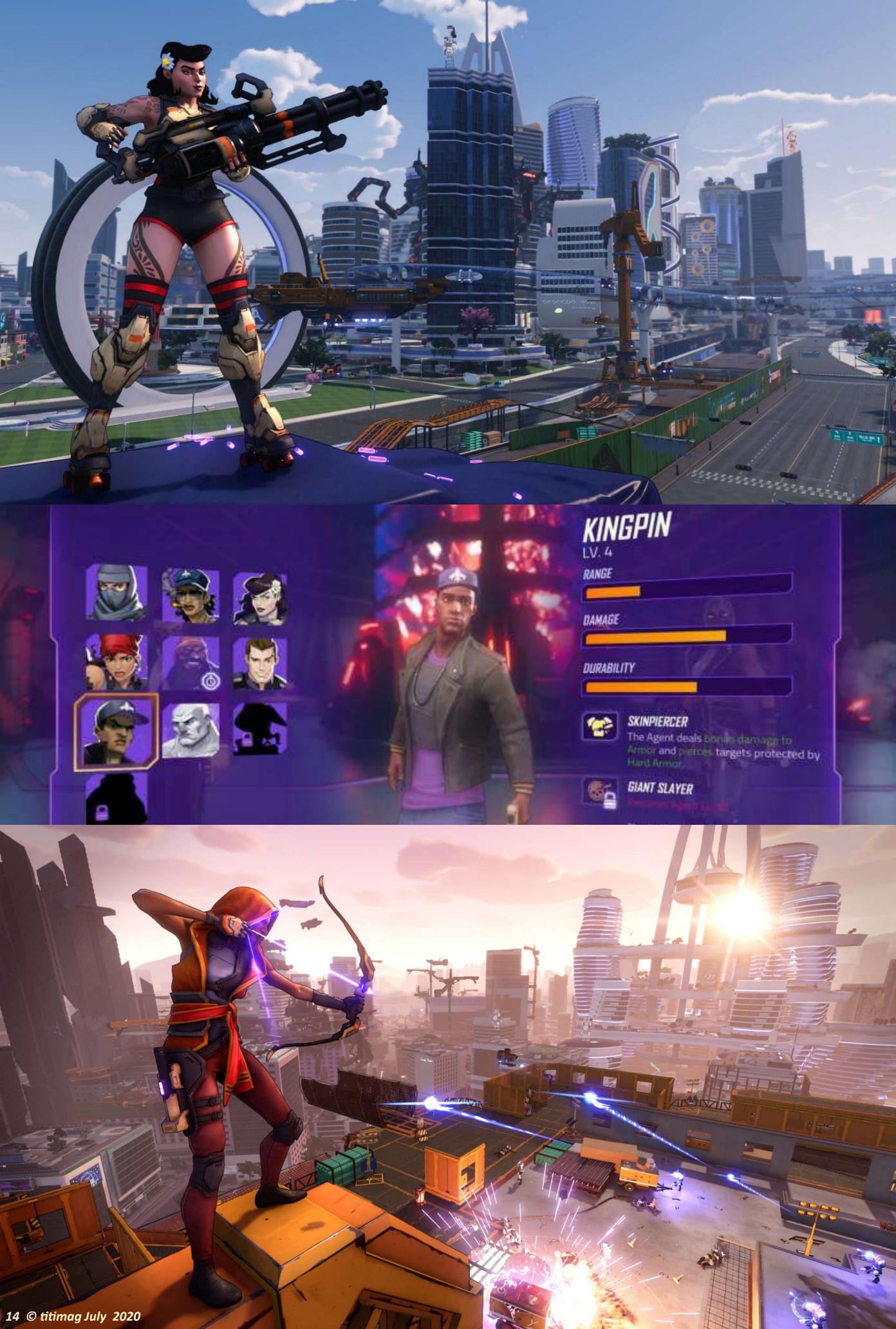
Agents of Mayhem is an action-adventure open world game played from a third-person perspective. The game features twelve agents, and players can choose any three to complete missions and explore the world. The agents are comprised in four trios: the Bombshells (Italian engineer Joule, Indian immunologist Rama, and German football hooligan Red Card); the Carnage a Trois (American field strategist Braddock, American derby driver Daisy, and Russian "Cold Warrior" Oleg Kirlov under the alias "Yeti"); the Firing Squad (American gang leader Pierce Washington under the alias "Kingpin", Japanese hitman Oni, and Middle Eastern assassin Scheherazade); and the Franchise Force (Colombian former sky pirate Fortune, United States Navy chief petty officer Hardtack, and Canadian actor and proclaimed "Face of Mayhem" Hollywood).

Each agent has their own unique play-style and abilities. For instance, Hardtack uses shotgun as his primary weapon, while Hollywood utilizes his assault rifle. As players deal damage to enemies with their weapons, players accumulate points that will fill up a bar. When the bar is filled, players can utilize the agents' Mayhem abilities, which are superpower moves that greatly aid player in combat. Different agents have different mayhem abilities. For example, Fortune can use her drone, GLORY to stun enemies, while Hollywood can trigger massive explosions around him. Players can switch between the three agents they have selected freely, and experiment with different combinations of agents to see which trio of characters suit their playstyle the most. Movement in the game is fast. The agents can triple-jump around the city or use cars to traverse the game's world.

In addition to main campaign missions, there are also unlock missions, which unlock new agents for players to control, and personal missions, which delves into the back-story of these agents. Different agents will have different personality, and their responses to in-game events vary. As the player progresses in the game, the agents will gain experience points, cash, skills, new gadgets, and mods that enhance their combat efficiency. There are also cosmetic customization options for the agents and the weapons featured in the game.



Developer: Volition **Publisher:** Deep Silver **Producer:** Greg Donovan **Designer:** Anoop Shekar **Artist:** Matt Flegel **Writer:** Jason L Blair **Composer:** Malcolm Kirby Jr **Platforms:** Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, Xbox One Release NA: August 15, 2017 AU: August 16, 2017 EU: August 18, 2017 **Genre:** Action-adventure **Mode:** Single-player TiTi Rating: 7/10



Plot

In the backstory, Persephone Brimstone was once part of the supervillain organization L.E.G.I.O.N and part of their plans for world conquest, as well as married to the Minister of Envy. Persephone learned that L.E.G.I.O.N's leader, the Morningstar plotted to harvest the power of Dark Matter to alter reality and ascend into godhood. Persephone put a stop to those plans and took off with an airship called the ARK, and in retaliation, L.E.G.I.O.N. and her husband launched an attack on her home city of Paris. Having turned against L.E.G.I.O.N completely, Persephone used whatever recourses she could get her hands on to form M.A.Y.H.E.M and take revenge on L.E.G.I.O.N.

L.E.G.I.O.N would later reveal themselves to the public with a worldwide attack to topple the world's governments. This event would later be called "Devil's Night" and would play into the backstories of many of M.A.Y.H.E.M's agents, such as the Franchise Force, consisting of Rod "Hollywood" Stone, a former actor turned self proclaimed "face" of M.A.Y.H.E.M; Marina "Fortune" Santos, a sky pirate who was recruited when Persephone was impressed with her thieving skills; and Ishmael "Hardtrack" Funderburke, a former Navy officer whose ship was destroyed by L.E.G.I.O.N. Other agents include Janel Braddock, a former drill sergeant and girlfriend to Persephone's right-hand woman Friday; Piper "Daisy" Andrews, an ill-tempered derby girl and Hollywood's on again off again girlfriend; Cosima "Joule" Bellini, a fashion model and brilliant engineer; Masamune "Oni" Senichi, a Yakuza assassin who turned against his crime family when he learned they were working for L.E.G.I.O.N; Pranati "Rama" Malhotra, an immunologist who seeks to find a cure for a plague L.E.G.I.O.N set loose upon India; Ingo "Red Card" Rotkapp, a crazed soccer fan who incited a riot to fight off a L.E.G.I.O.N attack; and an enigmatic assassin that goes by Scheherazade. This game also features Saints Row characters as playable agents, such as Pierce Washington, who has become the kingpin of Stillwater, and united the gangs to fight off a L.E.G.I.O.N attack; and Ji-hoon "Johnny" Gat, who has become a police lieutenant with the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency. The events of Devil's Night put Johnny in a coma. When he woke up, he found that he was the sole survivor of the SMPA, which has been replaced by robot cops.

At the start of the game, Persephone sets up M.A.Y.H.E.M in Seoul, South Korea where they track down Dr. Babylon, the ambitious leader of the Ministry of Pride for L.E.G.I.O.N. who plans on harvesting a giant dark matter crystal from a comet. The Franchise Force is sent to kill him but fail. To distract M.A.Y.H.E.M, Babylon uses his lieutenant Hammersmith to cause destruction around Seoul to distract M.A.Y.H.E.M before Hammersmith is defeated by the agents. Babylon then uses August Gaunt, a young singer and another one of his lieutenants to brainwash his fans and attempt to turn the city of Seoul against M.A.Y.H.E.M, but the agents confront him at his concert and shut down his technology, exposing Gaunt as a fraud.

M.A.Y.H.E.M then plans to retrieve a sentient computer program called AISHA, a virtual female idol group that L.E.G.I.O.N is using as a virus, but one of Babylon's cybernetic lieutenants by the name of Steeltoe falls in love with AISHA and starts a relationship with her. Steeltoe and AI-SHA intend to merge their AI's, but Steeltoe is killed by M.A.Y.H.E.M'S agents at their "wedding". A vengeful AISHA, led by their red avatar, begin a smear campaign against M.A.Y.H.E.M, eventually taking to creating a musical single that would kill its listeners, before eventually starting an attack on the ARK'S computer programs. The other AISHA's realize how unstable Red Aisha is, but most of them are killed leaving only the Red and Purple AISHA. The Purple AISHA willingly defects to M.A.Y.H.E.M as their agents destroy the Red AISHA.





Getting desperate, Babylon sends in Ariadne, the brilliant daughter of a scientist Babylon killed before trying to brainwash her with a microchip. Ariadne overcomes the microchip, but the effort drove her insane and she plots revenge on Babylon. Ariadne launches robot attacks on Seoul, and abducts multiple people, including M.A.Y.H.E.M's technological engineer Katy "Gremlin" Fox. The agents go on to rescue Gremlin, but while they are successful, Ariadne manages to escape before cutting the microchip out of her head.

Finally, M.A.Y.H.E.M seek to find Babylon's giant robot called Project Damocles, but when they eventually uncover it, Babylon launches a citywide attack, and even an attack on the ARK before commandeering Damocles and extracting the dark matter crystal. It's then revealed that Ariadne had placed her microchip in Damocles to drive Babylon insane as revenge. This backfires, when Babylon realizes he now has the ultimate power in L.E.G.I.O.N and goes on a bid to usurp the Morningstar and remake reality in his image. Babylon uses Damocles to go on a rampage and the power of the dark matter crystal to begin to rewrite reality where he rules the world. The agents enter the rift to battle Babylon and his recreated minions, and eventually destroy the dark matter crystal. With the crystal destroyed, reality goes back to normal as the Damocles crashes to the Earth. Babylon and the agents survive the crash, but Babylon is taken and presumably killed by L.E.G.I.O.N enforcer Marcus Longinus as punishment for his failure, while Persephone has M.A.Y.H.E.M pull out of Seoul.

Development

Development of the game began shortly after the release of Saints Row IV. The game began its development cycle as some concept art and character descriptions, and after receiving positive comments from outsiders who have listened to their pitch, one of whom described it as "G.I. Joe versus Cobra Megafight 2020", the game soon entered full production. Unlike previous Saints Row games, which have only one player-controlled protagonist, Agents of Mayhem introduces multiple playable characters. This was done because Volition reflected on some of their previous fan events, where fans opted to cosplay as the supporting characters rather than the central character. They considered it an evidence to show that fans of the franchise would be interested in a character-focused game. Another reason is that the company, inspired by League of Legends and Dota 2, wanted players to form a strong connection with the characters. Volition also thought that the game, being a single-player title, has a great advantage, since most games with a diverse cast of characters are multiplayer-focused. The game's tone and style was inspired by 1980s action cartoons such as G.I. Joe, He-Man, and television series like The A-Team.

In 2014, after receiving \$200,000 in incentives from the city of Champaign, Illinois, Volition began hiring upwards of 100 employees to begin work on a new project.[15] Little was known about this game until a trademark for Agents of Mayhem filed by Koch Media (Deep Silver's parent company) was discovered in May 2016, along with résumés linking the project to Volition. Further speculation arose from a 2013 Polygon interview with Volition's Scott Phillips, referring to Saints Row players as "agents of mayhem". The game was formally announced on June 6, 2016 with a cinematic announcement trailer released via IGN. Agents of Mayhem was released in North America on August 15, 2017 and in Europe on August 18, 2017.





Dishonored: Death of the Outsider



Dishonored: Death of the Outsider is an action-adventure stealth video game developed by Arkane Studios and published by Bethesda Softworks. It is a standalone expansion pack following Dishonored 2, and was released 15 September 2017 on Windows, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One. The game takes place in the coastal city of Karnaca after the events of the previous title. It follows the former assassin Billie Lurk as she reunites with her mentor Daud and come up with a plan to kill the mysterious entity known as The Outsider. The game is played from a first-person perspective and the player has access to a variety of supernatural abilities to complete missions in a multitude of ways, from stealth to purposeful violent conflict.

Death of the Outsider was originally planned as a downloadable content for Dishonored 2, but became a standalone expansion after the team decided to explore different approaches with its story and gameplay. Lurk was chosen as the protagonist for being a favorite with the developers. The narrative was conceived to tie loose ends left by the previous games, offer a different perspective to the player and end the narrative arc that began with the original Dishonored. Gameplay elements were reformulated or completely removed to differentiate the game from its predecessors, adapt it to the standalone expansion format and encourage the player to experiment and explore their choices.

The game was first announced during the Bethesda press conference at E3 2017. Death of the Outsider was well received by the critics, who praised its game design and considered a good ending to the Dishonored series up until that point. However, the main criticism was focused in its weak narrative and levels considered unremarkable when compared to its previous titles. The game was nominated to a few industry awards, Outstanding Achievement in Videogame Writing at the Writers Guild of America Awards. After its release, Arkane Studios announced that the Dishonored series would be entering a hiatus.

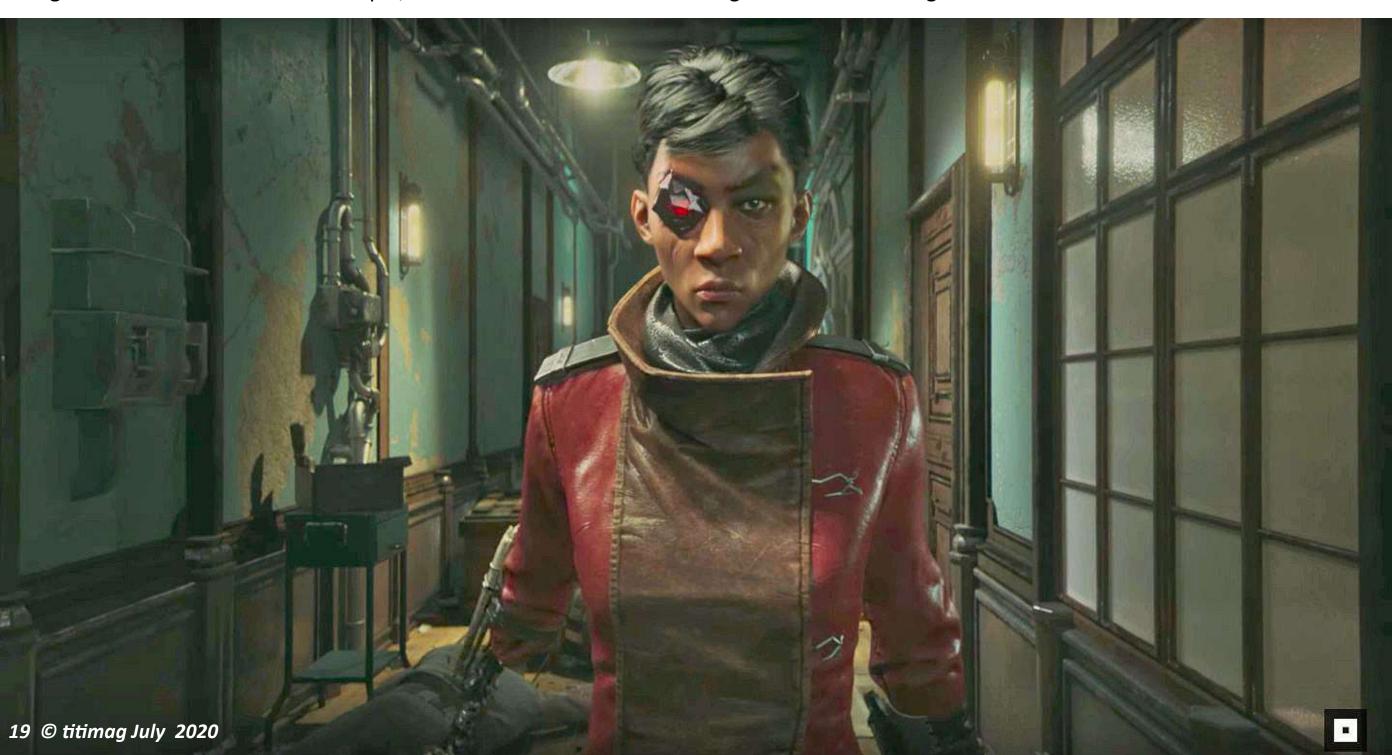
Gameplay

The gameplay is similar to Dishonored and Dishonored 2. The player is equipped with a short sword. If the player sneaks up on a foe, they can stab them to death quickly and quietly. The player has other gear, such as a wrist-mounted crossbow, land mines, and grenades. A new item is the hook mine, which grabs a nearby enemy and knocks them unconscious, or they can be set to kill.

After the first mission, the player gains access to three supernatural abilities. Unlike previous games in the series, the player does not purchase them with "runes"; they are all fully unlocked from the start. These abilities cost energy to use, but unlike in the previous games, the player's energy regenerates fully on its own; there are no consumables to replenish energy.

Lurk's main mobility power is "Displace", which allows her to set a marker in the world, and teleport that marker at any time. "Semblance" allows the player to take the faces of living non-player characters (NPCs) and use them as a temporary disguise, though they can only take a character's face once. The disguise drains power as the player moves, but not when they are standing still. Using Semblance on specific named NPCs may produce unique interactions. Completing the game unlocks an "original game plus" mode, where the player has access to some powers featured in Dishonored 2. As in the previous games, the player can collect "bonecharms", which are scattered throughout the levels. Wearing a bonecharm provides minor upgrades to the player's abilities.

During missions, the player may pick up optional "Contracts" at black markets, which are side missions that involve doing tasks such as assassinating another character. In one example, the character is tasked with killing a mime and making it look like a suicide.



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- DEATH OF THE OUTSIDER"-



Plot

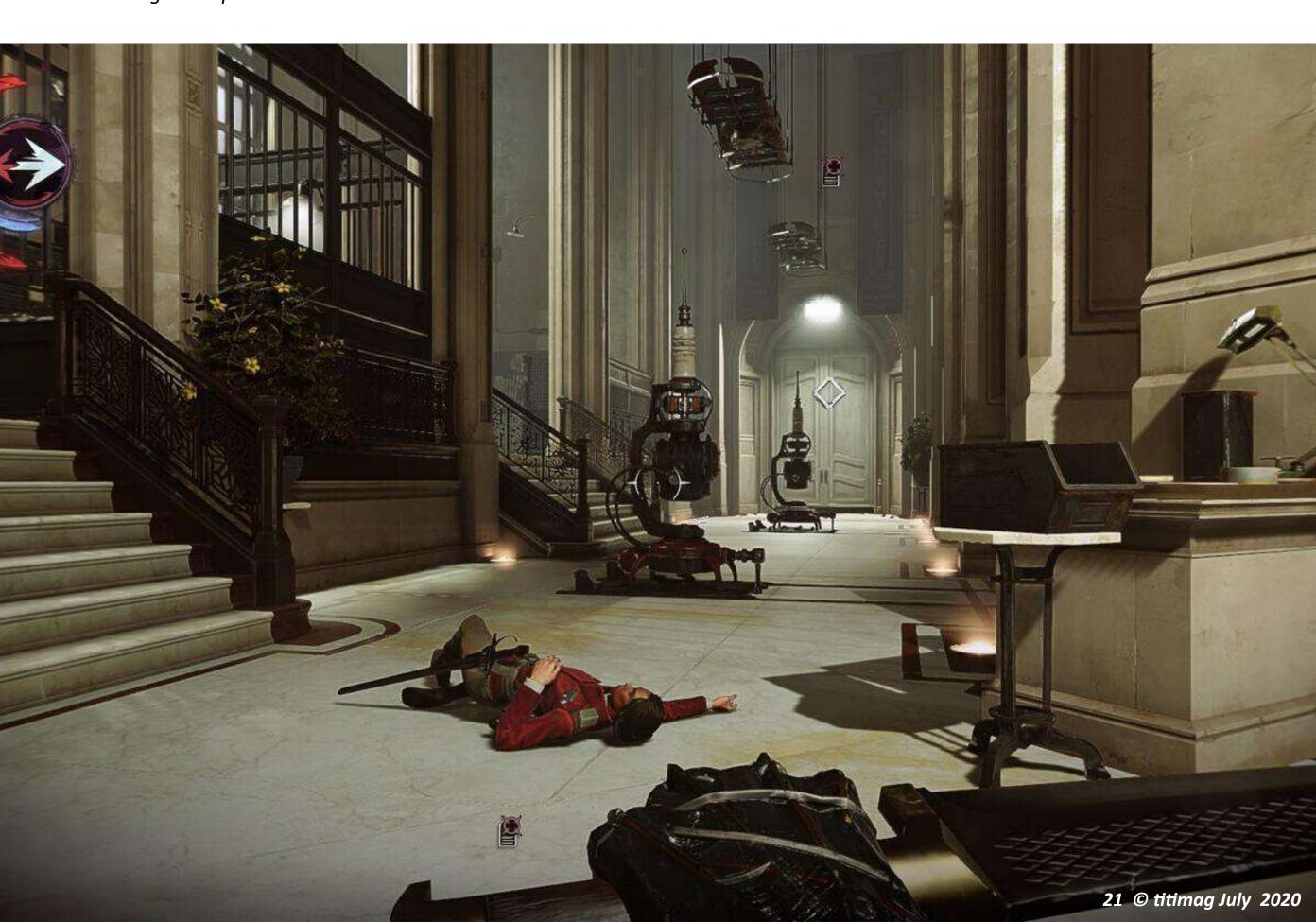
After the events of Dishonored 2, Emily Kaldwin is reinstated as empress and begins to salvage the Empire previously broken by Delilah's rule. Billie Lurk wakes aboard her ship, the Dreadful Wale, having a recurring nightmare regarding her right arm and eye. Billie has tracked down her old mentor Daud's whereabouts to a boxing club in Albarca Baths. She makes her way to Daud's location, finding that the boxing club is run by a Void-worshiping cult called the Eyeless.

Lurk witnesses Daud being restrained by a special device that cancels out his Void-given powers. She disables the device, thereby freeing Daud. Daud is happy to see Billie and asks for her help in one last job: killing the Outsider, to which Lurk agrees. On board the Dreadful Wale, Daud explains that the Eyeless are in possession of a ritual knife, a special blade that was originally used to create the Outsider thousands of years ago. Daud surmises that the blade will allow Billie to kill the Outsider. Billie is then visited by the Outsider, who gives her a cryptic message, whilst simultaneously replacing her right arm with a Void-made arm, and her eye with a special red artifact, the Sliver of the Eye. The arm gives Lurk supernatural abilities.

Billie makes her way into the city once again to investigate the leadership of the Eyeless. Upon figuring out the identities of the leaders, Billie steals two keys to a safety deposit box in Karnaca's largest bank. She is able to infiltrate the bank and steal the knife, while also discovering that one of the Eyeless' leaders attempted to abandon the group and hid important documents in the Royal Conservatory. Once Billie retrieves the knife, the Outsider appears and explains that he knows more than most, revealing that Daud had died of natural causes aboard the Dreadful Wale while Billie was on the heist, much to her dismay. She returns to the Dreadful Wale and cremates her mentor's deceased body, thus also burning down the Dreadful Wale (an anagram of 'Farewell Daud').

Billie then infiltrates the Royal Conservatory, where she finds the documents. They detail the location of a Void portal at an abandoned mine outside Karnaca. Billie travels to the mine, which is now overseen and operated by the Cult that originally created the Outsider. The Cult members discuss occult sciences while marveling at the Void creatures walking about near the dig site. Billie learns from their notes that the Mark of the Outsider is actually his name, written in an esoteric script that only the dead can read. Billie makes her way to an artifact called the Eye of the Dead God and absorbs it, allowing her to safely enter the Void portal.

Once inside the Void, Billie makes her way to the Ritual Hold, where the Outsider resides. There she finds the Outsider, seemingly bound and immobile. Billie is then given a choice, to either return the Outsider to the mortal realm by having Daud's Void spirit pronounce the Outsider's real name to him, or to use the ritual knife to kill the Outsider. Either way, the Outsider is displaced, and Billie acknowledges that with the Outsider gone, the world will be changed in innumerable ways. However, the Void will continue to exist and there is no longer anybody who can decide who will gain its power.



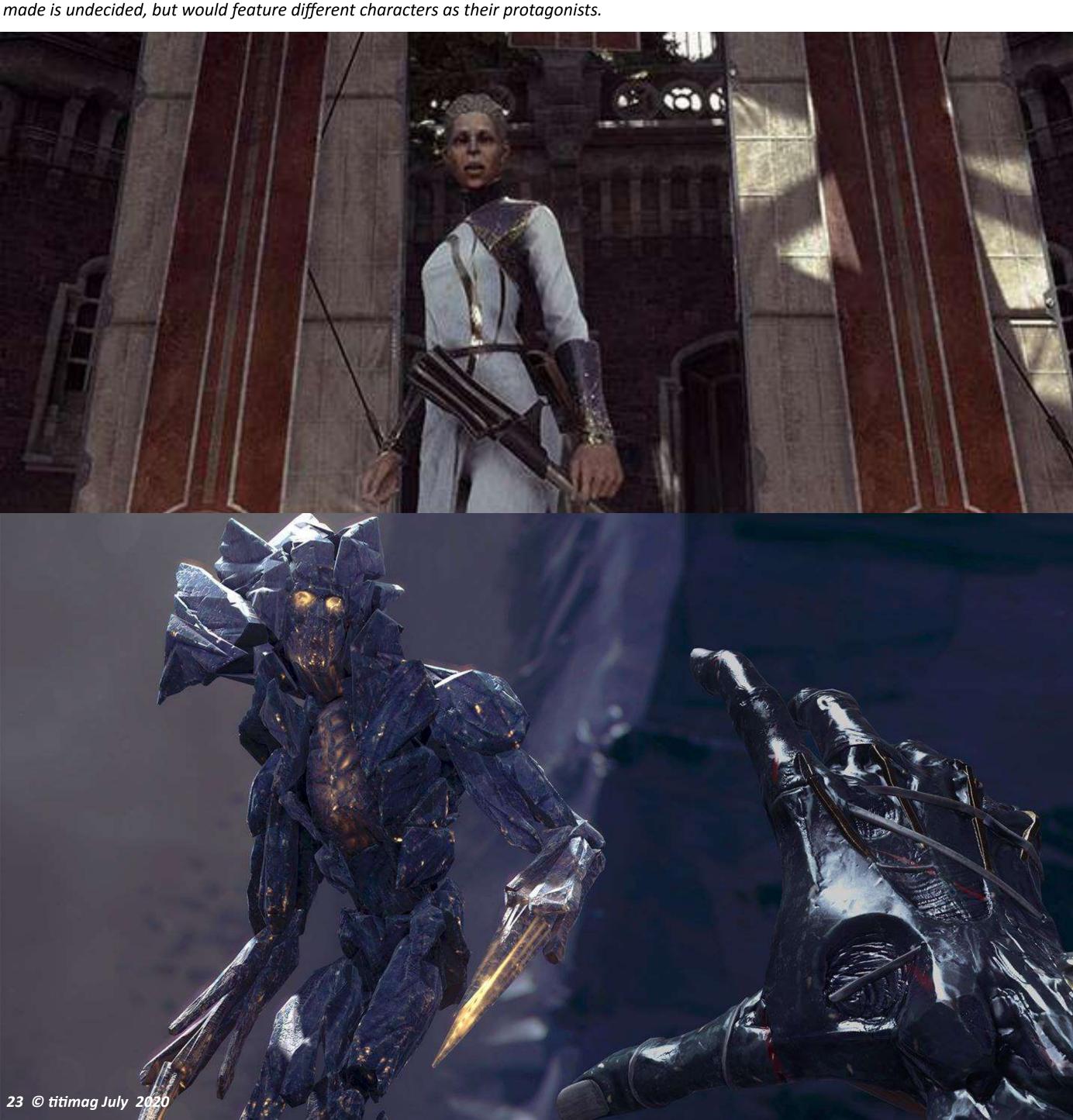


Development

Dinga Bakaba, lead designer of Dishonored 2, was one of the initial people arguing for making the Death of the Outsider a standalone title. The game removes the chaos system featured in previous games, which tracked how many characters the player killed and altered the world depending on if the player had a high bodycount. Developers felt that removing the need to find elixirs, which were previously required to fully restore energy, encouraged players to experiment more with the full range of powers. Giving all the powers at once was "liberating" for Arkane, as they knew the full extent of what any player could do at any point in the game. Time restraints meant that levels could not all be "themed" in the same way Dishonored 2's levels were, though some levels are intended to make the player rely on different powers than others. Co-creative director Harvey Smith had concerns about the Semblance power when it was pitched, as he felt implementing the idea appropriately would take an excessive amount of work; ultimately the full extent and ramifications of the power were reduced to more "manageable" levels, and Smith was glad for its inclusion.

Hazel Monforton, one of the writers for Death of the Outsider, was hired by Arkane after posting an analysis of the Outsider in Dishonored 2 via Twitter thread, comparing the Outsider's death to the Ancient Greek ritual of pharmakos. She was eventually, according to her portfolio, brought onboard permanently as a narrative designer.

Death of the Outsider is meant to bring an end to "the Kaldwin era", an arc that began in the first Dishonored with the assassination of Jessamine Kaldwin and followed characters involved with it, such as Corvo Attano and Emily Kaldwin. Whether any future Dishonored games will be made is undecided, but would feature different characters as their protagonists.





Quantum Break



Quantum Break is a science fiction action-adventure third-person shooter video game developed by Remedy Entertainment and published by Microsoft Studios. The game was released worldwide for Microsoft Windows and Xbox One in April 2016. The game centers on Jack Joyce, granted time manipulation powers after a failed time-machine experiment, as he comes into conflict with former friend Paul Serene over how to deal with an apocalyptic "End of Time". In addition, the game includes platform game elements in less action-oriented segments. There are also "junction points" that affect the game's outcome. The game features episodes of an integrated live-action television show, featuring the actors of the characters. The characters interact with the player's choices, displaying the results of the decisions made.

The game originally was envisioned as a sequel to Remedy's previous game, Alan Wake. The game's focus was shifted to time travel, as Microsoft wanted a new intellectual property with interactive storytelling. The team consulted scientists while creating the fictional science in this game. While the video game portion was developed internally by Remedy and directed by studio veteran Sam Lake, the TV side of the game was developed by Lifeboat Productions and directed by Ben Ketai. Shawn Ashmore, Aidan Gillen, and Lance Reddick portrayed important roles in the game. The game uses a new engine developed by Remedy, the Northlight engine, and a technology called Digital Molecular Matter. The game was announced in mid-2013 and was set to release in 2015, but its release was delayed to avoid competition with other Xbox One exclusives. It received a positive reception, with critics praising the game's graphics, gameplay, presentation, and story. Critics had mixed opinions regarding the platforming elements, the convergence of video game and television, and the overall quality of the TV show. The Windows 10 version was criticized for its technical issues. Quantum Break was the best-selling new intellectual property published by Microsoft since the launch of Xbox One.

Gameplay

Quantum Break is an action-adventure video game played from a third-person perspective. Players play as Jack Joyce, who has time manipulation powers in a world where time stutters, making everything freeze except Joyce. Players face a variety of enemies, including Monarch security guards; Strikers, who are equipped with specially-designed suits which allow them to manipulate time; and Juggernauts, heavily armored enemies equipped with very strong firearms. Different enemies have different behaviors, and the game requires players to deploy different tactics and strategies in order to defeat them.

To defeat enemies, players can make use of various offensive and defensive abilities. Jack can find four types of firearms: pistols, assault rifles, shotguns, and carbine rifles. He also possesses several types of time manipulating powers. "Time Stop" freezes time around enemies with a time bubble. If the player shoots an opponent trapped in the bubble, its power amplifies, and the bullets will kill the enemy when the bubble vanishes after a short period of time. "Time Rush" allows Jack to dash next to an enemy and perform an immediate melee takedown. He can also use this power to speed up time and dodge between cover to confuse unaware enemies as to his location. "Time Blast" levitates enemies and freezes them. The defensive ability "Time Shield" deflects all incoming damage, while "Time Dodge" allows players to dash quickly to evade attacks. Most of these time manipulating powers have a short cooldown period after use. In combat, Jack automatically takes cover when he is standing next to environmental objects. However, the artificial intelligence in the game is designed to push the player out of cover by coordinations.







Jack has other time powers that are not used in combat. "Time Vision" reveals points of interest, and highlights interactive objects and enemies. "Time Echoes" allow him to replay past events, providing additional information about the story. The game features several types of collectibles known as "narrative objects", including quantum ripples, documents, computers, and media. Players can collect "chronon sources", which can be used as experience points to purchase time power enhancements. There are also less action-oriented segments in the game, where players have to solve environmental puzzles, which usually function as a 3D platformer. With time stuttering and collapsing, objects may get trapped in a time loop and either become platforms for players to proceed into the next section of the game, or create dangerous environmental hazards, which are extremely unstable. In the latter case they become obstacles that block the player's path. Jack can overcome them by using his time manipulation powers, such as slowing down or stopping time, so that he can proceed without getting hurt. He can also revive frozen non-playable characters at several specific points of the game.

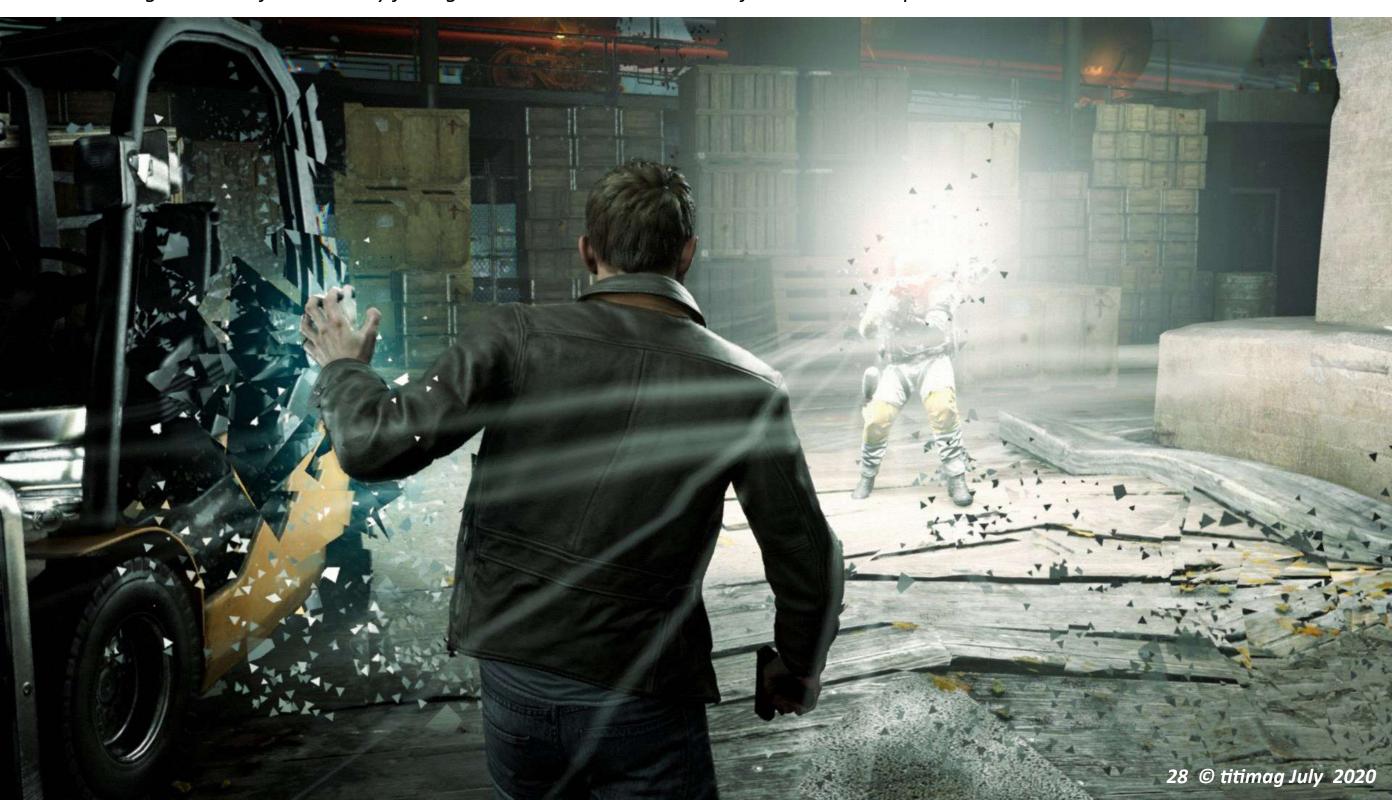
The gameplay splits into five acts. After playing through an act of the game as Jack Joyce, players take control of the antagonist Paul Serene for a pivotal concurrent decision that impacts the plot, before an episode of the digital show will play. In the game, the video game portion tells the story of the protagonists while the show tells the story of the antagonists. Players can make choices at the beginning of each episode of the TV show, also known as "junction points." These decisions influence the state of the game. As Paul Serene has precognitive power, players can view the consequences of each choice before making a decision.

Plot

Agreeing to help his best friend Paul Serene with a demonstration, Jack Joyce learns that Paul has been expanding on the physics work of Jack's estranged brother, William, and has built a time machine that works using "chronon particles." Paul activates the machine, only for it to jam shut and break as William appears. Will demands Jack and Paul stop their actions, else "time will break." The machine becomes unstable and douses Jack and Paul in chronon radiation that gives them time-based powers. Monarch Solutions soldiers appear and steal the time machine's core, Jack and Will meet an older Paul. Claiming to have seen the "End of Time", this Paul refuses Will's suggestions of fixing the fracture, claiming time cannot be changed. Paul has the building detonated, causing Will to be seemingly killed by falling debris. Jack is knocked unconscious and captured by Monarch.

Escaping Monarch during a time stutter, Jack rescues either Nick or Amy, students apprehended by Monarch who agree to help him. Working off a clue with Beth Wilder, a friend of Will's working as double agent inside Monarch, Jack heads to the abandoned Bradbury Swimming Pool, where he finds that Will has built his own time machine and a counter-measure to fix the fracture, called the Chronon Field Regulator (CFR), but the time machine is inoperable. Jack suggests they kidnap Dr. Sofia Amaral, Paul's head of chronon research. Learning she will be attending a Monarch gala, Jack surrenders to Monarch and learns that Paul was accidentally sent to the end of time in the future, only escaping by traveling in Will's machine back to its first activation in 1999. Escaping through the Monarch Labs, Jack and Beth pull Amaral out of the path of a hacked drone before it explodes. Beth escapes by the sea with Amaral while Jack steals Paul's car.

Paul, revealed to be dying from "chronon syndrome," lashes out at his second-in-command Martin Hatch, as Amaral was the only one capable of administering his treatment. Now paranoid, Paul places all of his trust in either Amaral or Hatch, who claims that Amaral left willingly with Jack. Paul recognizes Beth from security footage— she was also at the end of time and attempted to kill Serene.



Taking Amaral to the Bradbury Pool, Jack and Beth force her to help repair the time machine. With Will's documents noting that the CFR disappeared in 2010, Jack and Beth plot to head to 2010 and steal it, closing a causal loop. Beth steps into the machine as Amaral sabotages the computer and alerts Monarch. Leaving Amaral with Nick/Amy, Jack heads to 2010 and finds Beth, much older and disturbed. Beth explains that Amaral sent her to the end of time, where she met the younger Paul. Failing to kill him, Beth followed him back to the first activation in 1999 and stopped him from murdering Will. After directing Will to create the CFR, she has waited eleven years for Jack to arrive in 2010. Beth and Jack reach Will's workshop and find the CFR, but Paul corners Beth and shoots her when she refuses to co-operate. The CFR is accidentally activated, causing a chronon burst; the exposure throws Jack forward to 2016 again and causes Paul's chronon syndrome. Beth shuts off the CFR but is executed by Paul while Jack can only watch through time.

Increasingly paranoid and ill, Paul is informed that, despite his lab being destroyed by Hatch, one damaged treatment has been recovered. Paul either decides to take it and buy time for himself and his plan or succumb to paranoia and illness. As stutters become nearly constant, Jack fights through the Monarch HQ with the guidance of either head of surveillance Charlie Wincott or Wincott's close friend Fiona Miller. Reaching Paul's lab, Jack finds and receives Wincott's aid or fights high-level Monarch security officer Liam Burke. Acquiring the CFR, Jack learns that Paul was using it to power a "lifeboat," a small bunker where researchers could devise a solution to the end of time while protected from it. Unable to work the CFR, Jack uses Monarch's time machine (equipped with the stolen university core) to travel back to its first activation: the night of Will's death.

Rushing through the University, Jack narrowly rescues Will from the falling debris. Will warns Jack he cannot simply repair the fracture then and there, as it would erase key future events and risk a time paradox. Passing a frozen Beth during a stutter, Jack reaches to unfreeze her but hesitates and leaves. Reaching the Bradbury Pool, Jack and Will travel forward in time, only to find Paul and Monarch waiting for them. Paul is intent on either retrieving the CFR or destroying it. Jack fights and kills him. Hooking the CFR into his time machine, Will asks Jack to jumpstart it with chronon energy. The CFR activates and blasts the area with chronons, which in turn restabilises but does not fully repair the damage done to the Meyers-Joyce field and also disintegrates Paul. As Will examines the CFR, burnt out from the blast, Jack has a vision of his future self-traveling to the end of time and begins exhibiting symptoms of chronon syndrome.

In a flash-forward, Jack is shown approaching the frozen Beth back at the University, whispering that he'll come back for her. An epilogue shows Jack leaving an interview and being approached by Hatch, who explains everything has been simply blamed on Paul, and offers Jack a place at the renewed Monarch; Jack is shown seeing a split pathway similarly to Paul, ending before he makes a decision.

Release

Quantum Break was announced on 21 May 2013. Gameplay trailers were released at major conventions, including Electronic Entertainment Expo 2013, and VGX Awards 2013. Remedy released the first gameplay demo at Microsoft's conference at Gamescom 2014, with Lake saying that the demo would make viewers "speechless". The game was originally set for release in 2015, but Microsoft held it to 2016 to avoid competition with other Xbox One exclusives including Halo 5: Guardians, Rise of the Tomb Raider, and Forza Motorsport 6, incidentally giving Remedy more time to refine the game. At Gamescom 2016, Microsoft announced that the title would be released on 6 April 2016. The show was released separately and was not available in the game's retail edition in an effort to save disc space. As a result, both Xbox One and Windows 10 users need to stream the show. Microsoft initially considered other options, including releasing it as a standalone show or a separate Xbox



Though Quantum Break was originally announced as a Xbox One exclusive, Microsoft announced in February 2016 that the game would be released for Windows 10 (Universal Windows Platform) as well, to launch simultaneously with the Xbox One version. Developed internally by Remedy, the PC version would only be released on Windows Store and would require DirectX 12. This created a backlash among players, who criticized Microsoft for misleading them into buying a Xbox One by not revealing the PC version's existence when the game was announced. Microsoft's Phil Spencer replied by saying that delivering a game to a broader audience "a good thing" and that it could increase the game's sales. Lake added that he was "confused" and "baffled" by the responses of the community.

Players who purchase the Xbox One version of the game would receive a digital code for the Windows 10 version. Alan Wake, along with its two downloadable special episodes "The Signal" and "The Writer", as well as American Nightmare, would be available for free for players who purchased the game through backward compatibility. Players who had not reached 18 years old by the game's release would get Kameo: Elements of Power as their pre-order bonus instead. In January 2016, Puha revealed that the game was very close to completion, and that the team was "tired". On 21 February 2016, Remedy co+nfirmed that the game had gone gold, indicating it was being prepared for duplication and release. Microsoft celebrated the launch with launch parties in various Microsoft stores in the US and Canada, and in Sydney. Released alongside the game was a novel titled Quantum Break: Zero State.

A standalone PC version, released through Steam, and the physical Timeless Collector's Edition (which includes a development documentary, a book detailing the game's development, a soundtrack CD, and posters) was released on 29 September 2016. Unlike the Windows 10/UWP version, it supports Windows 7 and newer on 64-bit platforms. Nordic Games, who had assisted the PC distribution of Alan Wake, Ori and the





Middle-earth: Shadow of War



Middle-earth: Shadow of War is an action role-playing video game developed by Monolith Productions and published by Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment. It is the sequel to 2014's Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor, and was released worldwide for Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, and Xbox One on October 10, 2017.

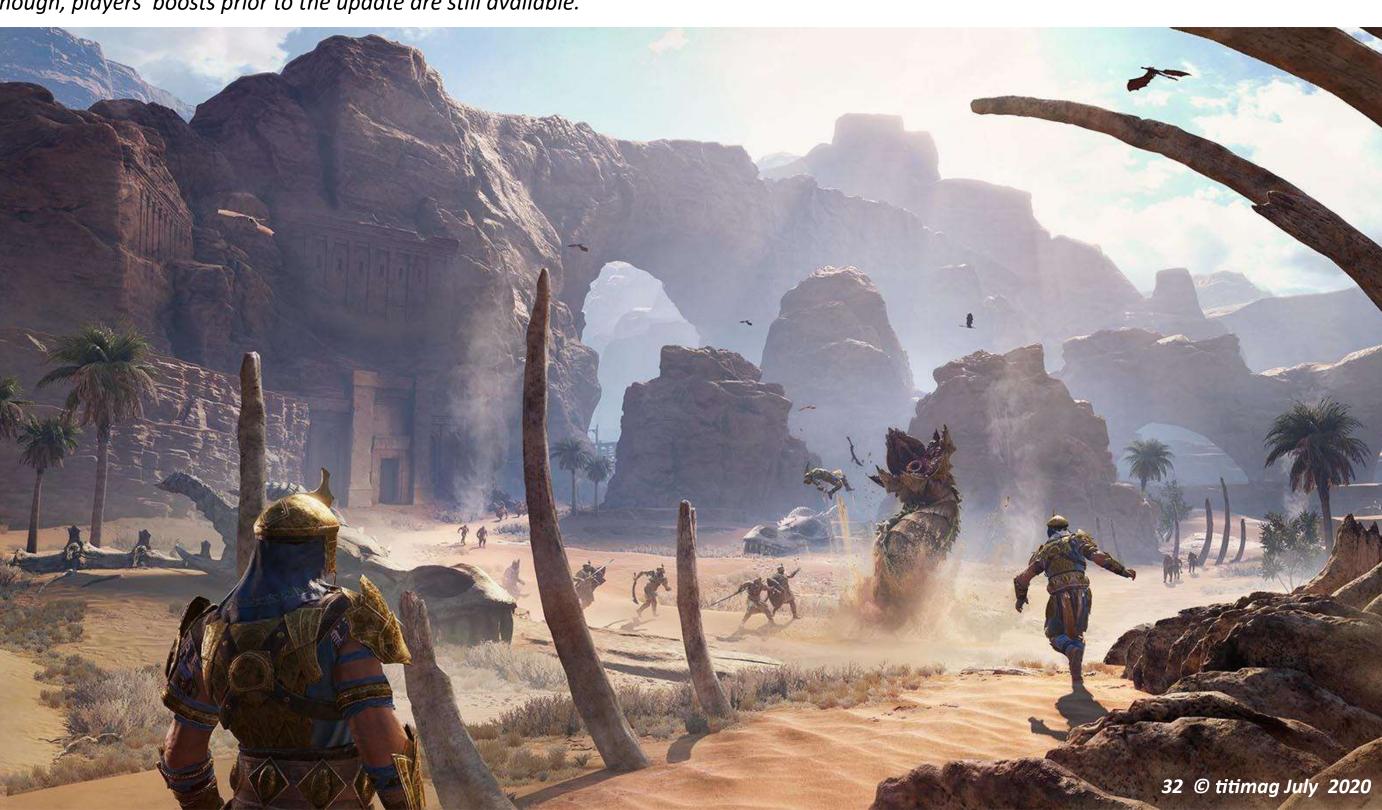
Shadow of War continues the previous game's narrative, which is based on J. R. R. Tolkien's legendarium and set in between the events of The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings. Like its predecessor, the game is inspired by director Peter Jackson's The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings film adaptations. The player continues the story of the ranger Talion and the spirit of the elf lord Celebrimbor, who shares Talion's body, as they forge a new Ring of Power to amass an army to fight against Sauron. The game builds upon the "Nemesis System" introduced in Shadow of Mordor, allowing Talion to gain followers from several races of Middle-earth, including Uruks and Ologs, and plan out complex strategies using these to complete missions.

Shadow of War had a generally positive reaction from critics, albeit more mixed than its predecessor; praise was aimed towards the gameplay and an improved nemesis system, although story elements and changes made to established characters received some negative reactions, as well as the inclusion of micro transactions and loot boxes. A free-to-play companion game for iOS and Android devices was also released. In July 2018, Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment removed all microtransactions from the console/PC versions of Shadow of War. The following year, it also announced that the mobile version will no longer be available to play on June 6, 2019.

Gameplay

Middle-earth: Shadow of War is an action role-playing game set in an open world environment and played from a third-person perspective, following from its predecessor. The player controls the game's protagonist Talion, who has several natural athletic and combat abilities as a ranger of Gondor, but also has unique abilities provided by the spirit of the elf lord Celebrimbor, with whom he shares his body. The player uses their combined abilities to complete various missions, typically aimed to disrupt the armies of Sauron. The game includes main quests that drive the game's narrative, and numerous optional quests that can help the player boost Talion's abilities and Followers via the game's "Nemesis System". In contrast to the previous game, which was more of a hack and slash, the game has an action role-playing approach, creating a more personalized experience for each player. It also features a dynamic weather system as well as day-night cycle which affects the gameplay and enemy behavior.

The Nemesis System expands upon its introduction in Middle Earth: Shadow of Mordor to apply to a larger part of the world, including other characters called Followers that have behavior guided by how the player-character has interacted with them. The player is able to transfer their top Nemesis and their most loyal follower from Shadow of Mordor into Shadow of War. It also includes a garrison from which the player can access their Followers that has either been obtained from multiplayer, relocated with a reassignment order or through opening 'War chests' prior to the game's July update, it also contains loot boxes that players have already obtained, players' unused loot boxes that have been obtained prior to the removal of the market still remains. The Garrison also contains training orders that are purchasable with Mirian, it's in-game currency. "Spoils of War" and "XP" boosts are still available and can be activated but not obtainable as of the July 18th patch, although, players' boosts prior to the update are still available.





The game's multiplayer features a "Social Conquest mode", in which players are able to invade other players' fortresses and attempt to conquer them. This mode has two settings: friendly and ranked. Friendly allows the player to invade someone's fortress, without the risk of losing your army. Ranked, on the other hand, allows the player to invade, but with a risk of losing some of their Orc Followers permanently.

Mobile versions

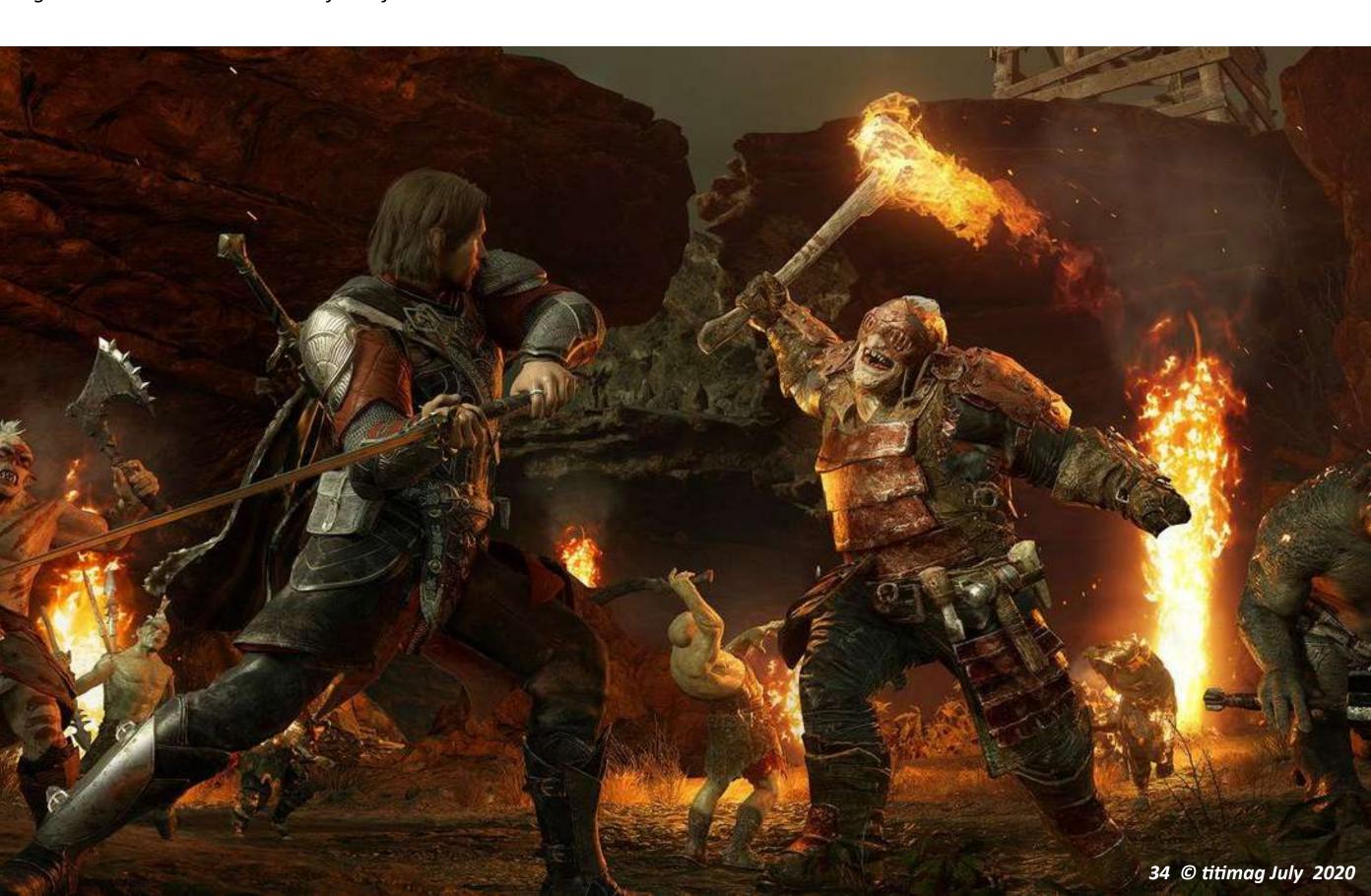
The mobile companion versions of Shadow of War are played as a real-time strategy role-playing game from a top-down perspective, where players can recruit characters from not only the console/PC versions of the game itself, but also characters from its 2014 predecessor Shadow of Mordor and even The Lord of the Rings film trilogy to fight Sauron's forces in small-scale, action-packed battles. Like the console/PC versions of the game, players can make use of the Nemesis system to gain extra advantages in battle, as well as make optional in-game purchases.

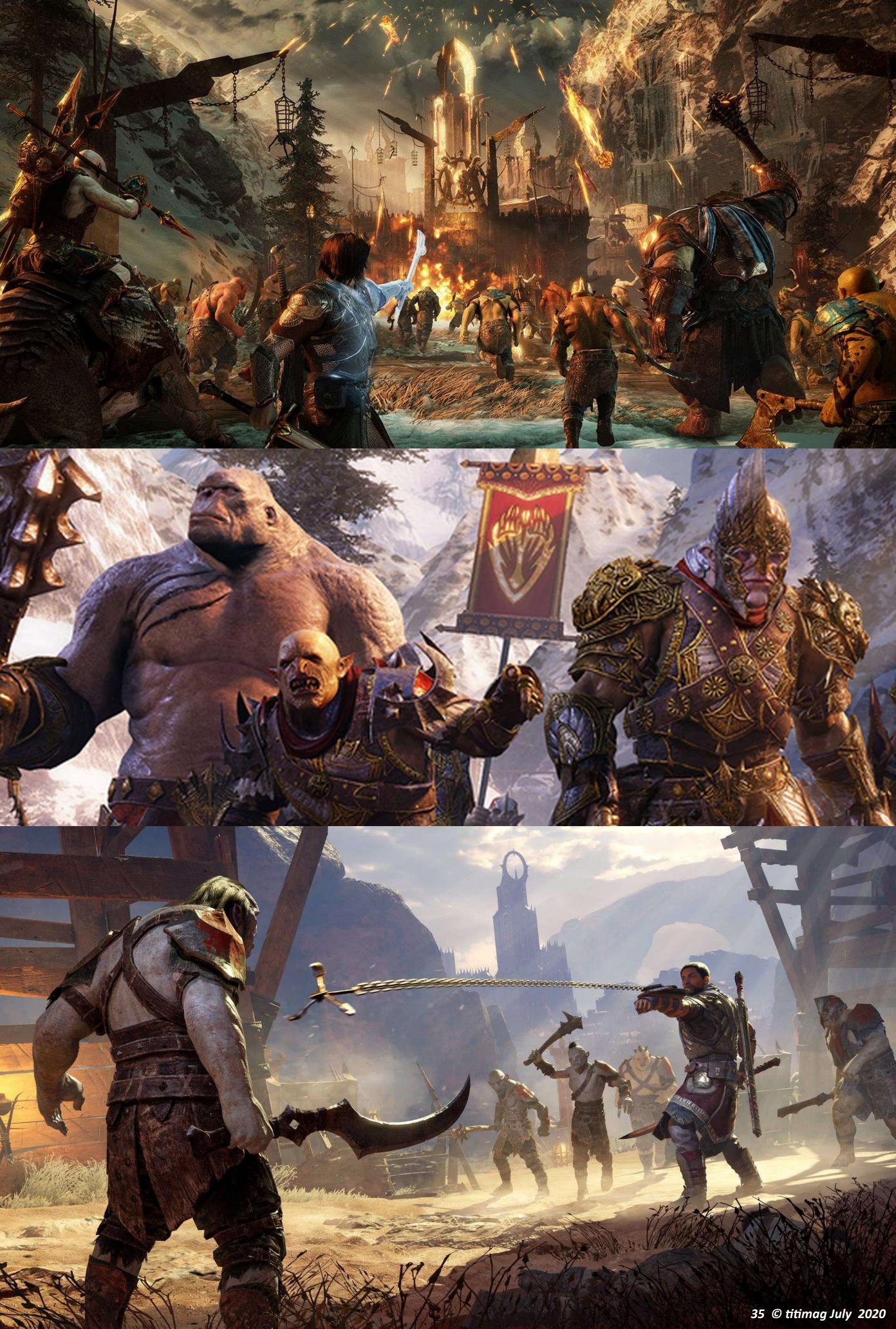
On April 16, 2019, Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment announced that the servers for the mobile version will be shut down on June 6, 2019 and removed it from the App Store and Google Play Store. The developers expressed reluctance over their decision to discontinue the mobile version, but emphasized that they are doing so in order to refocus efforts on creating new Middle-Earth games.

Plot

Shadow of War continues the narrative from Shadow of Mordor, following Talion who is still infused with the spirit of the elf lord Celebrimbor. Talion and Celebrimbor travel to Mount Doom, where they forge a new Ring of Power free of Sauron's corruption. However, once the Ring is complete, Celebrimbor is abducted and held hostage by Shelob, who asks Talion to hand over the Ring in exchange for Celebrimbor. Talion reluctantly agrees and gives the Ring to Shelob, who claims they have a common enemy in Sauron. She uses the Ring to see into the future and directs Talion to the last Gondorian stronghold in Mordor, Minas Ithil, which is under siege by Sauron's forces due to the city's possession of a valuable Palantir. The Palantir would allow whoever possesses it to see anything they wish, making it a valuable tool for Celebrimbor and a dangerous weapon for Sauron.

Talion travels to Minas Ithil and quickly comes to odds with Celebrimbor. Talion wants to help his fellow Gondorians, while Celebrimbor believes the city is already lost and the retrieval of the Palantir must take priority. Talion reasons that protecting Minas Ithil will also protect the Palantir and he meets up with the city's defenders: General Castamir, his daughter Idril, and his lieutenant Baranor. Together, they sabotage Orcish efforts to break into the city until Castamir betrays them, allowing the Orcs to breach the gates and handing over the Palantir to the Witch King of Angmar in return for sparing Idril. Castamir is killed by the Witch King and Talion is barely able to escape thanks to the help of Eltariel, an Elven assassin working on Galadriel's behalf. The Witch King seizes Minas Ithil, renaming it Minas Morgul. With the Palantir, Sauron realizes that Shelob is holding Celebrimbor's Ring and sends the Nazgûl to attack her. Talion is able to save Shelob, who returns the Ring to him and tells him that the fate of Middle-earth is in his hands.





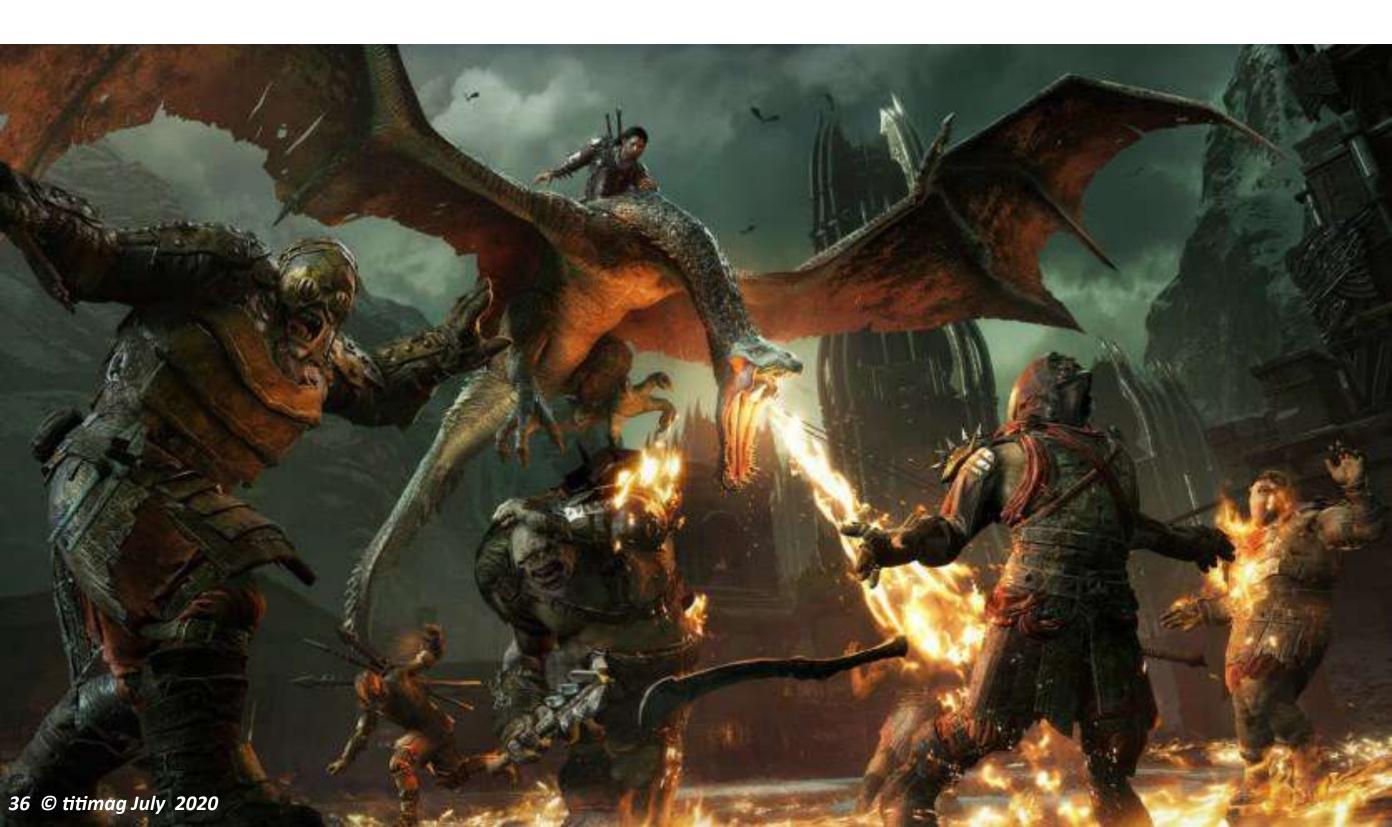
With the Ring back in his possession, Talion begins to use its power to dominate Orcs and build his army. During this time, he assists Idril and Baranor in rescuing Gondorian survivors, helps the nature spirit Carnan defeat the Balrog Tar Goroth and the necromancer Zog, is betrayed by one of his followers, and hunts the Nazgûl alongside Eltariel. Eventually, Talion builds up enough strength to assault Sauron's fortress directly. During the battle, Talion faces Isildur, now corrupted into a Nazgûl. Talion manages to defeat Isildur, but upon seeing his memories of how he was corrupted by the One Ring, decides to destroy Isildur and release his spirit rather than dominate him. Celebrimbor remarks angrily that Isildur would have been a valuable asset to their cause, leading Talion to realize that Celebrimbor wishes to replace Sauron by dominating him rather than destroying him. Talion refuses to follow Celebrimbor's orders any more, causing the wraith to abandon him and possess Eltariel instead.

Without Celebrimbor or the ring, Talion begins to die, but is visited by Shelob in a vision. Shelob informs him that if Talion had gone on to fight Sauron, they would have succeeded and Celebrimbor would have enslaved Sauron and marched on the rest of Middle-earth. She implores Talion to continue to fight to contain the darkness within Mordor. Deciding to put his fate in his own hands, Talion picks up the Ring of Power Isildur was wearing to preserve his own life. He then uses the power of Isildur's Ring to assault and seize Minas Morgul, defeating the Witch King in the process. Talion then takes possession of the Palantir and observes Celebrimbor and Eltariel making their assault on Sauron. The two manage to gain the upper hand and Celebrimbor attempts to dominate Sauron, only for Sauron to cut off two of Eltariel's fingers, one of which is adorned with the Ring of Power, and merge himself with Celebrimbor. As a result, Sauron and Celebrimbor remain trapped in Sauron's tower in the form of a flaming eye as their spirits continue to battle for dominance. Knowing he will not be able to resist the ring forever, Talion decides to use Minas Morgul as a fortress to keep Sauron's forces contained in Mordor as long as he can.

Decades later, Talion succumbs to the corruption of Isildur's Ring, and joins Sauron's forces as a Nazgûl, where he goes with the others to hunt Frodo and the One Ring. However, with the destruction of Sauron and the One Ring, Talion dies with the rest of the Nazgûl and his spirit is freed. He is last seen in the afterlife discarding his weapons and armor as he walks off into the west.

Blade of Galadriel

Following the final battle between Celebrimbor and Sauron, Eltariel recovers Celebrimbor's Ring, and receives orders from Galadriel to continue hunting the remaining Nazgûl, including Talion. Eltariel reluctantly confronts Talion, who manages to convince her that by working together, they can keep Sauron's influence contained within Mordor. However, he informs her that a new warchief is leading a massive army and has attacked many of his fortresses. Talion tasks Eltariel with defending one of his remaining forts while he goes to defend another fort in Seregost. Eltariel manages to recruit several new tribes of orcs to fight for her and she successfully defends her fort from enemy attack, though Seregost falls. A pair of rogue Nazgûl arrive, revealing they are the ones leading the new orc army as they plan to take advantage of Sauron and the Witch-King's weakness to take over Middle-earth. After rendering Seregost uninhabitable with poison gas, Eltariel and Talion pursue the Nazgûl twins to their stronghold, where Eltariel is able to defeat both of them. Despite their defeat, Talion begins to succumb to the temptation of Isildur's Ring, forcing Eltariel to battle him. Though Eltariel is victorious, Talion tells her that he will inevitably be resurrected by Sauron. Afterwards, Eltariel continues to battle the forces of Mordor until she witnesses the destruction of the One Ring. Upon seeing Celebrimbor's spirit freed from Sauron, Eltariel decides to go track him down.



Desolation of Mordor

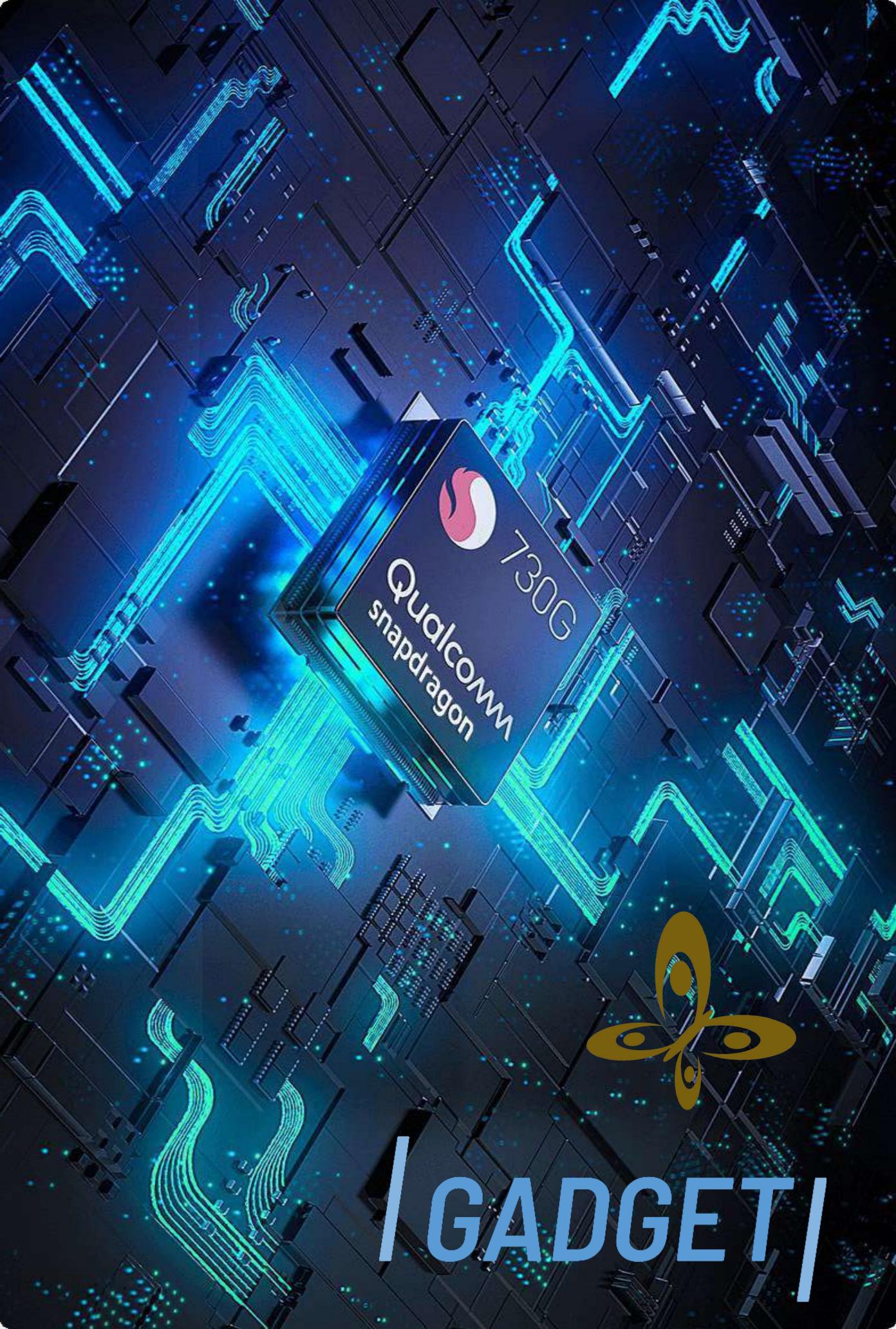
After the fall of Minas Ithil, Baranor journeys through Mordor seeking to hire mercenaries to help him seize the fortress of Shindram. On the way, he is attacked by wyrms and rescued by the dwarf Torvin, who helps develop gadgets for Baranor such as a grappling hook and a glider. Baranor continues to the Vanishing Sons mercenary camp, where he discovers they are led by his estranged older brother Jagai, who now goes by the name of Serka. Serka reluctantly agrees to help Baranor take Shindram in return for all of the loot stored inside. However, another mercenary, Zhoja, betrays Serka and sends him to fight in an orc fighting pit. Baranor rescues Serka, who reasserts control over the Vanishing Sons and executes Zhoja. After repelling an orc attack, Baranor and Serka lead their army and seize Shindram. However, rather than hold the fortress, they leave a trap for the orcs sent to retake it. Baranor and Serka then leave to seize more fortresses, deciding that Gorgoroth will be their next target.

Release

Shadow of War was released for Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, and Xbox One. The Play Anywhere feature extends to Microsoft's premium console, the Xbox One X.

The title was originally scheduled to be released in August 2017, but in June of that year, Warner Bros. Interactive announced that the release would be put off for two months, until October 10, 2017, to make sure the game meets "the highest quality experience" for players. Despite this delay, the mobile companion versions of Shadow of War were released on September 28, 2017, ahead of the console/PC versions.



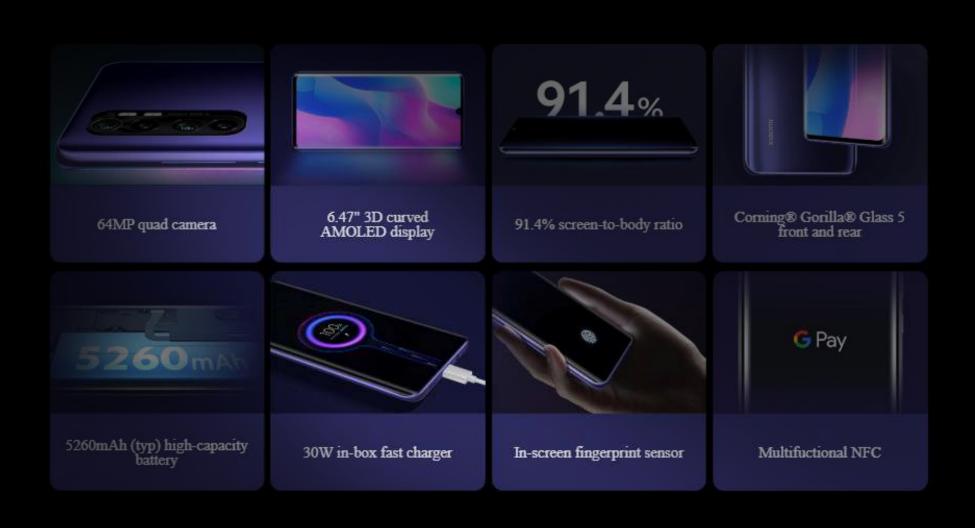


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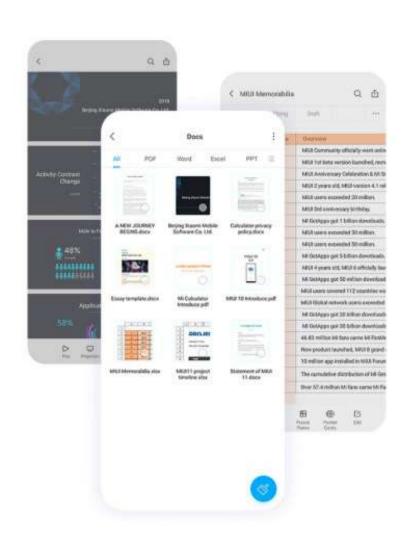


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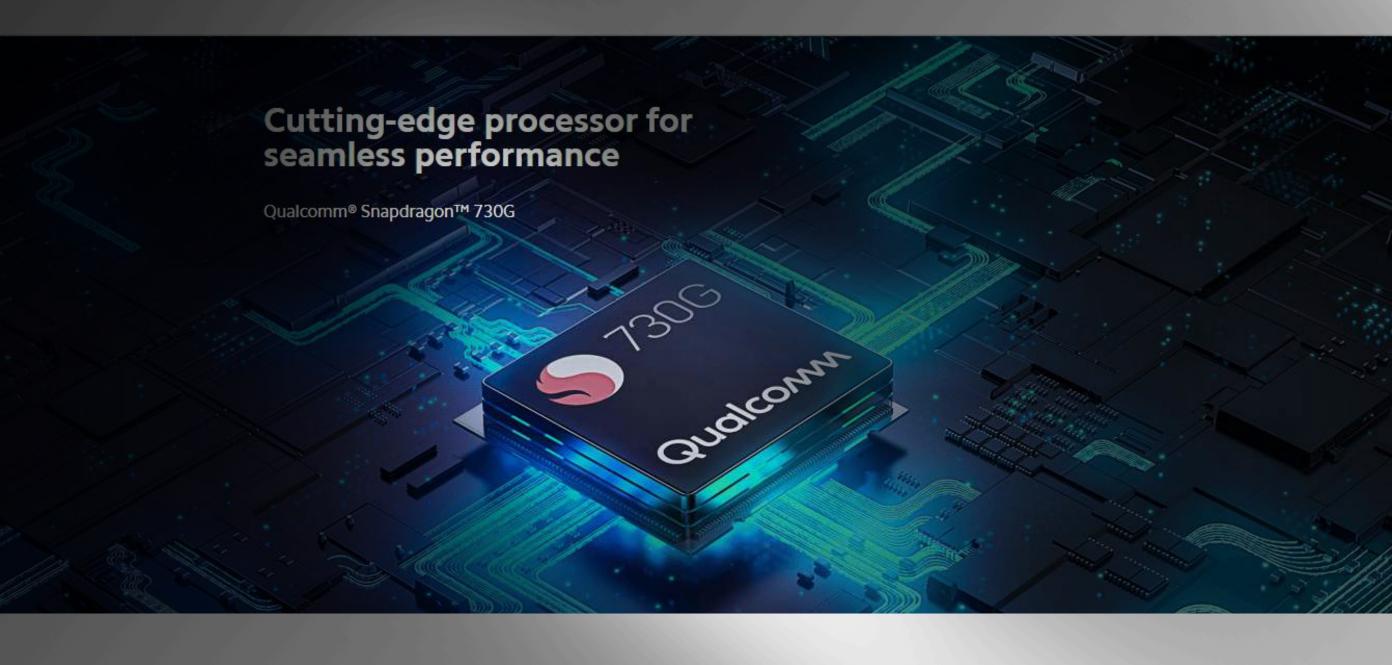


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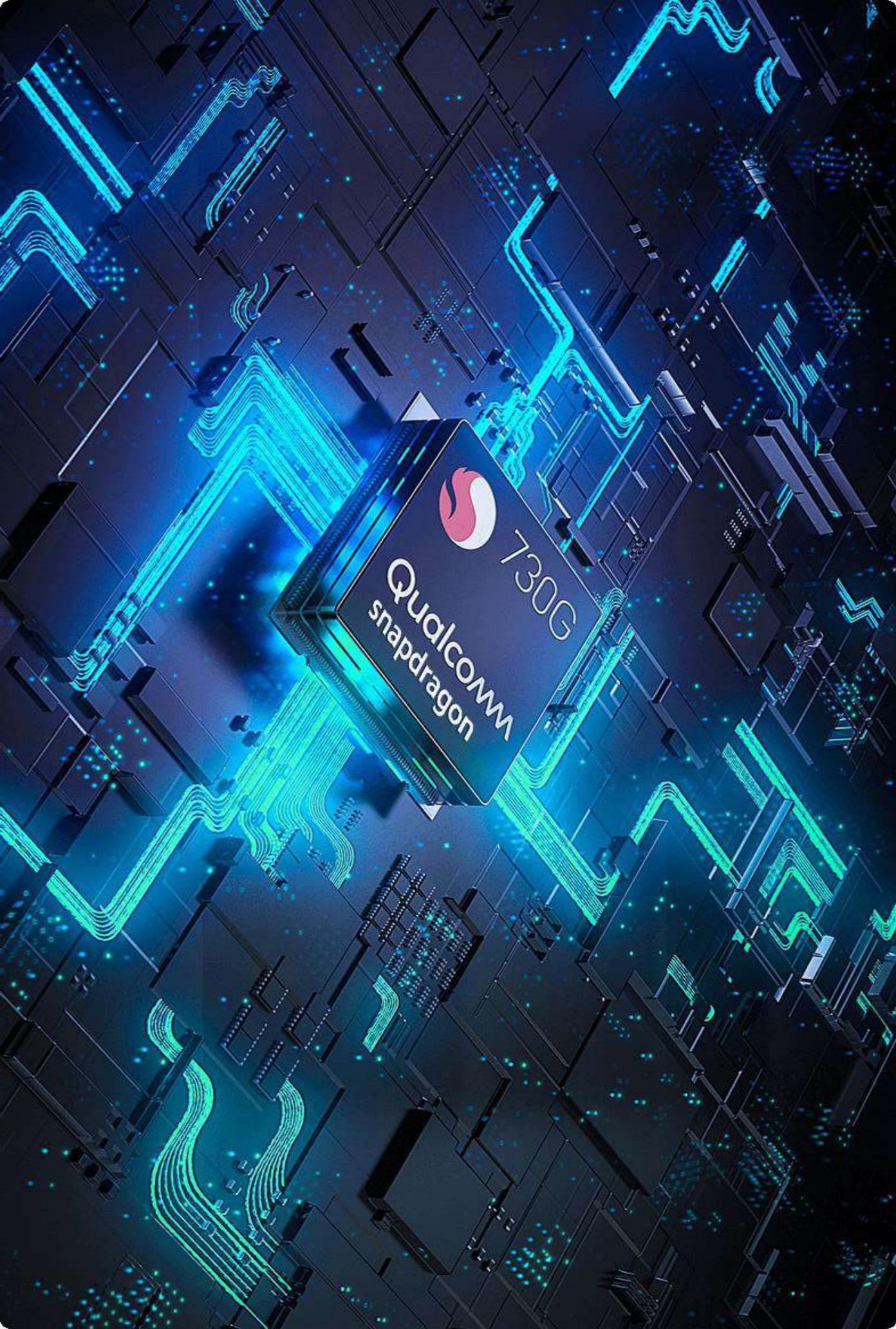
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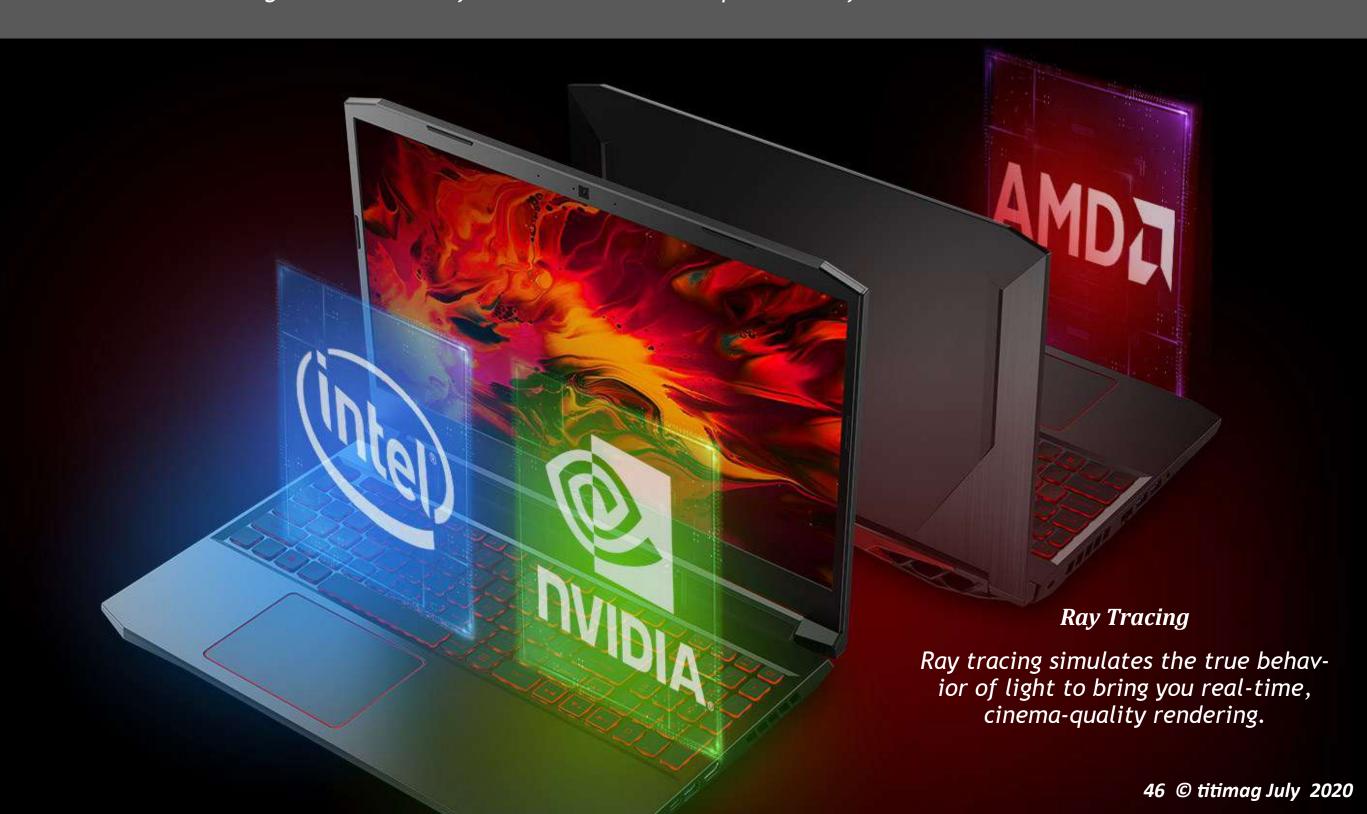






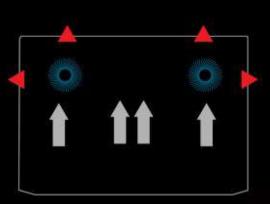
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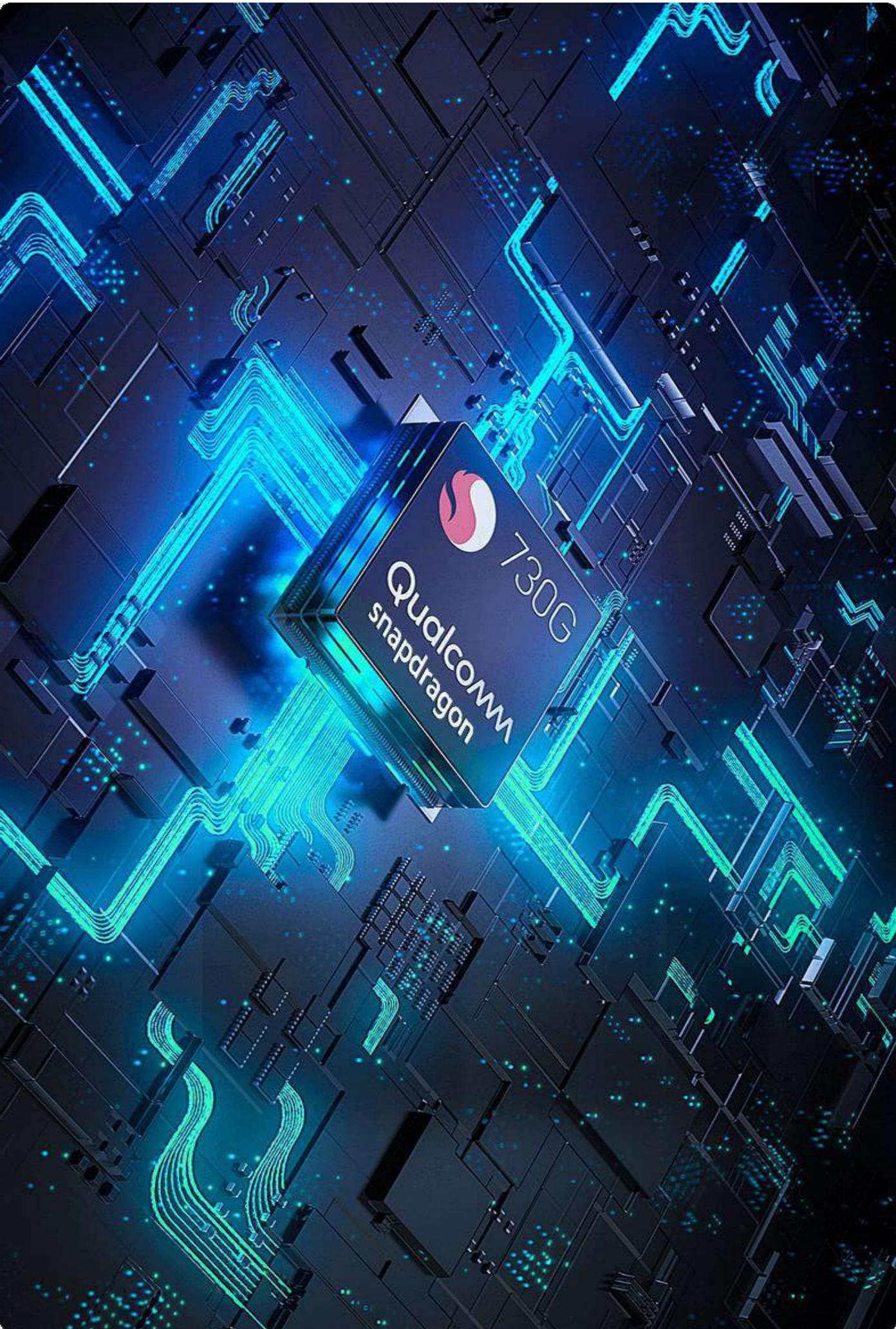




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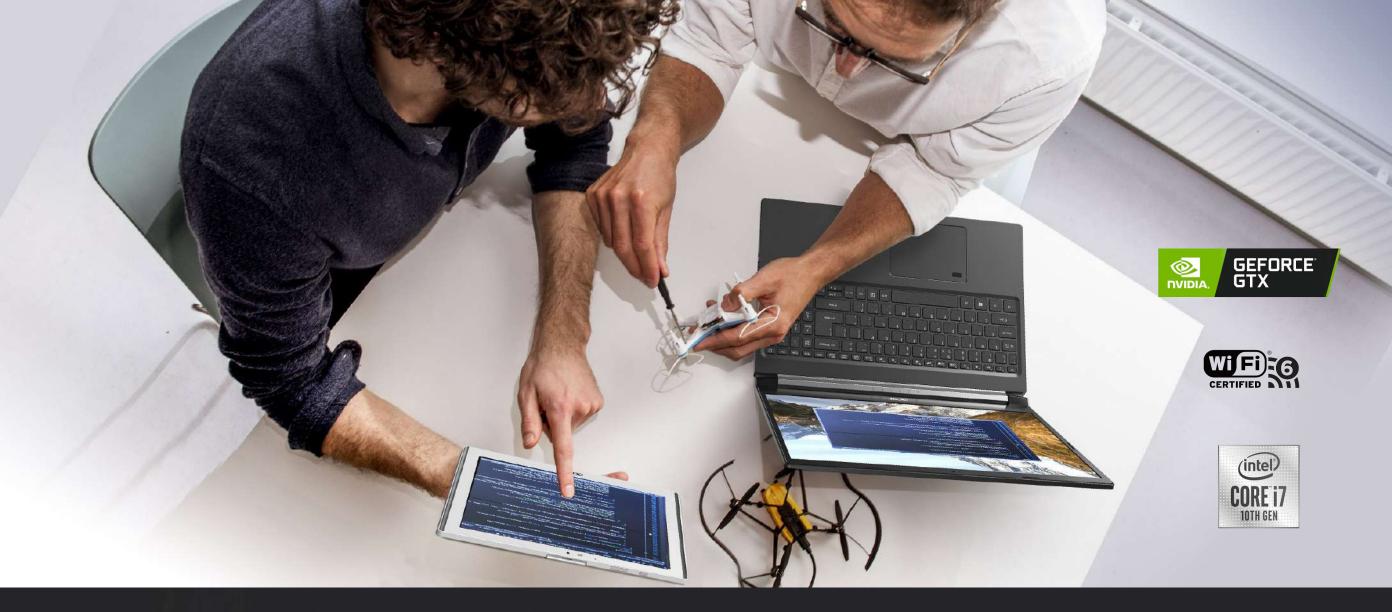


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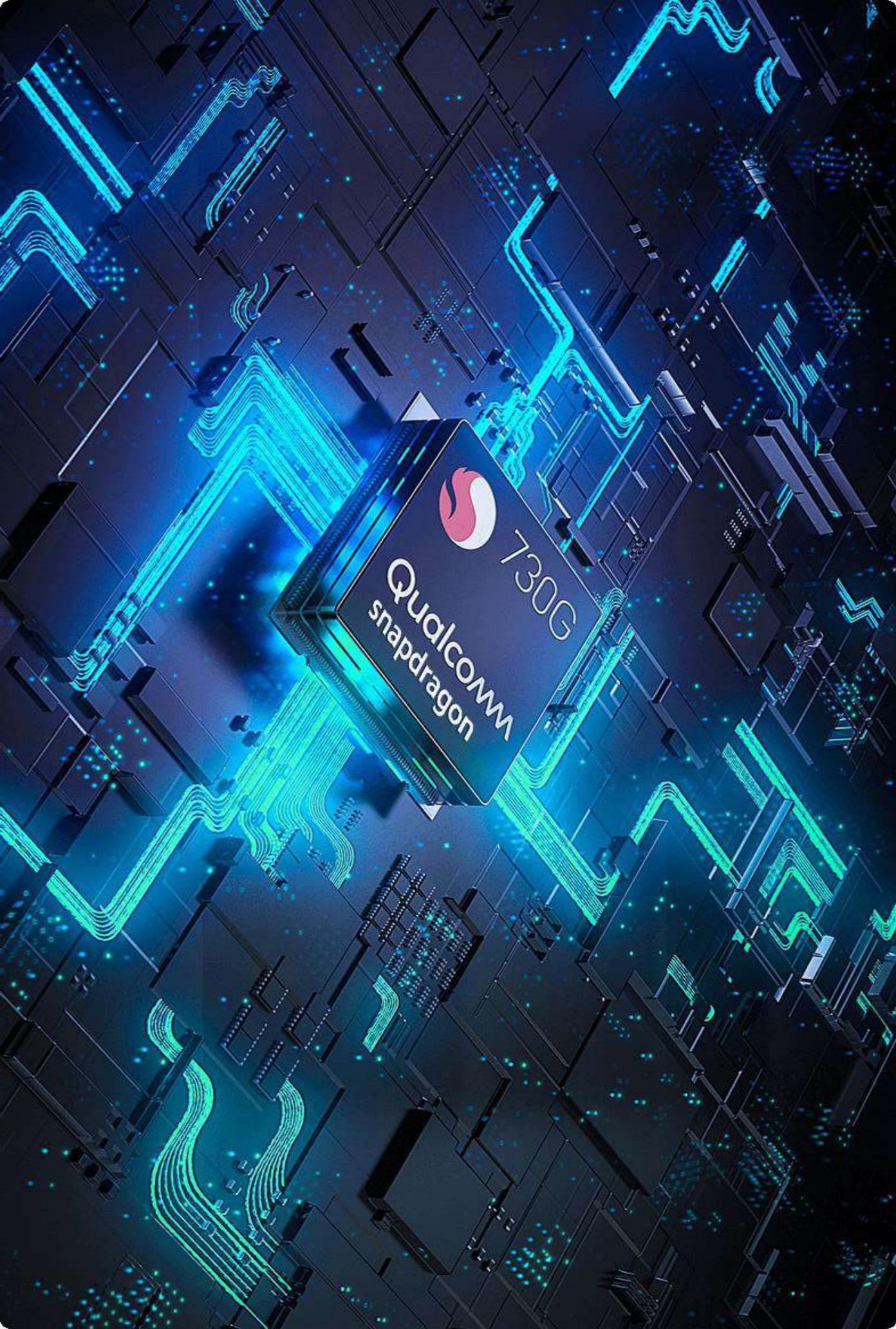
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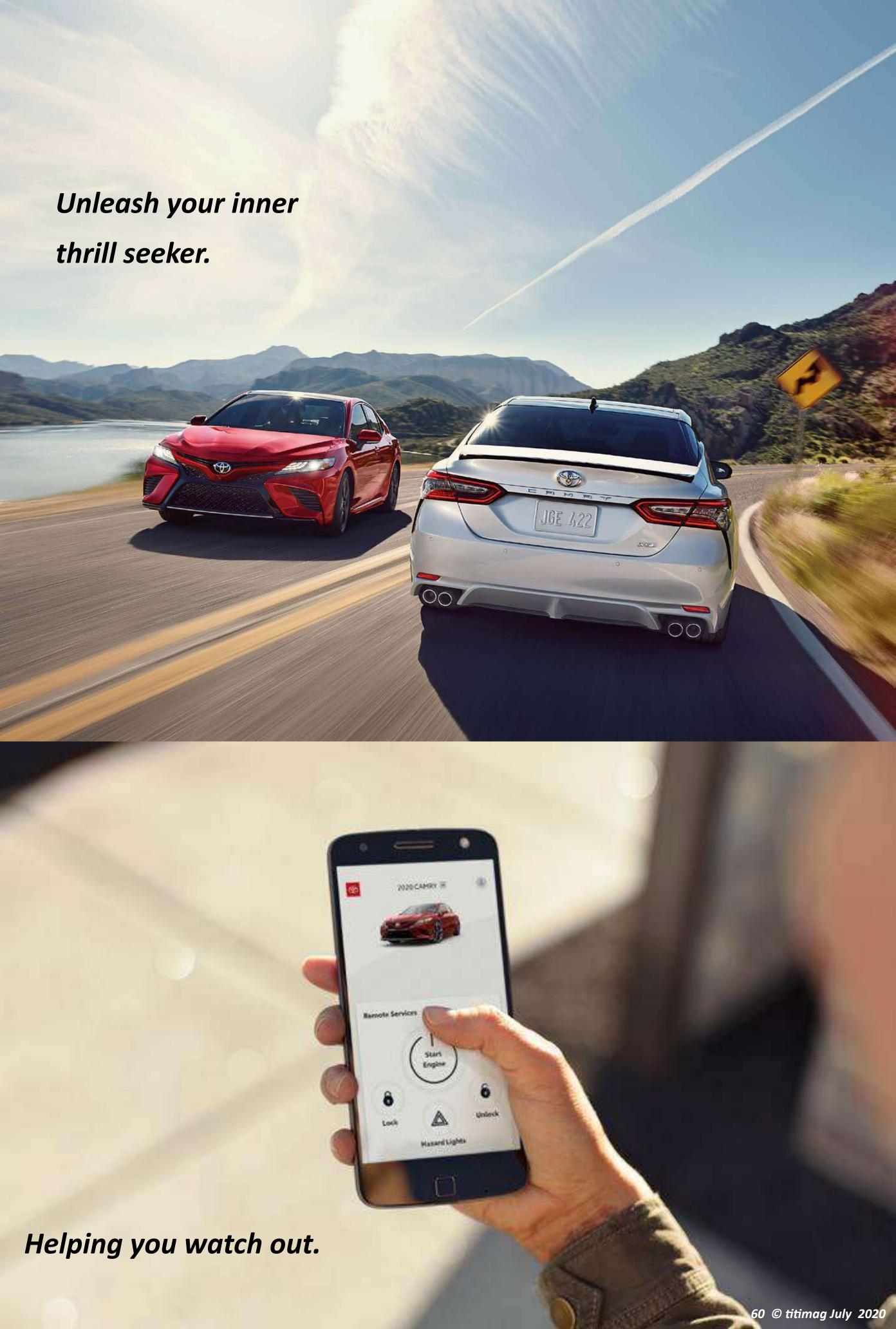


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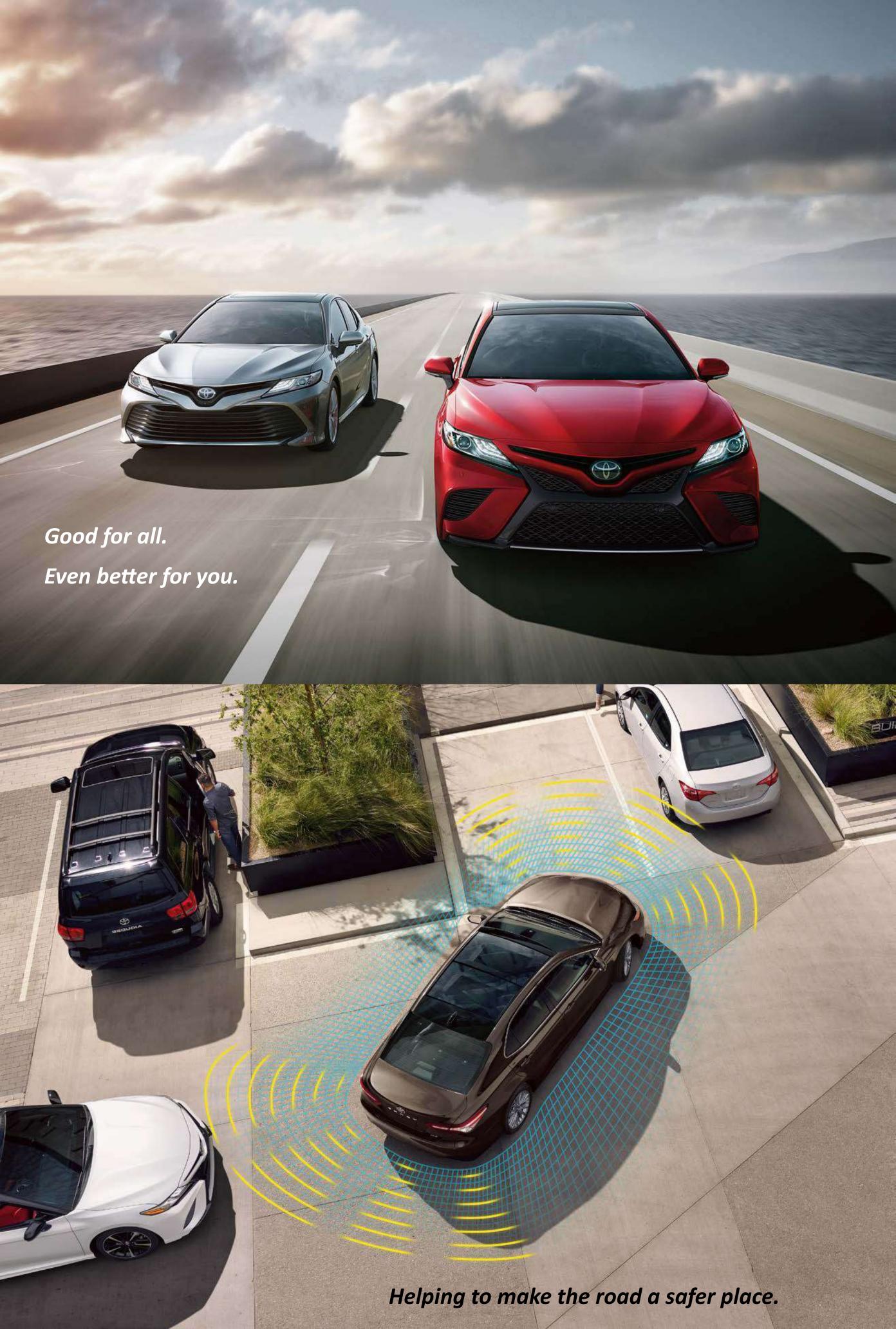
























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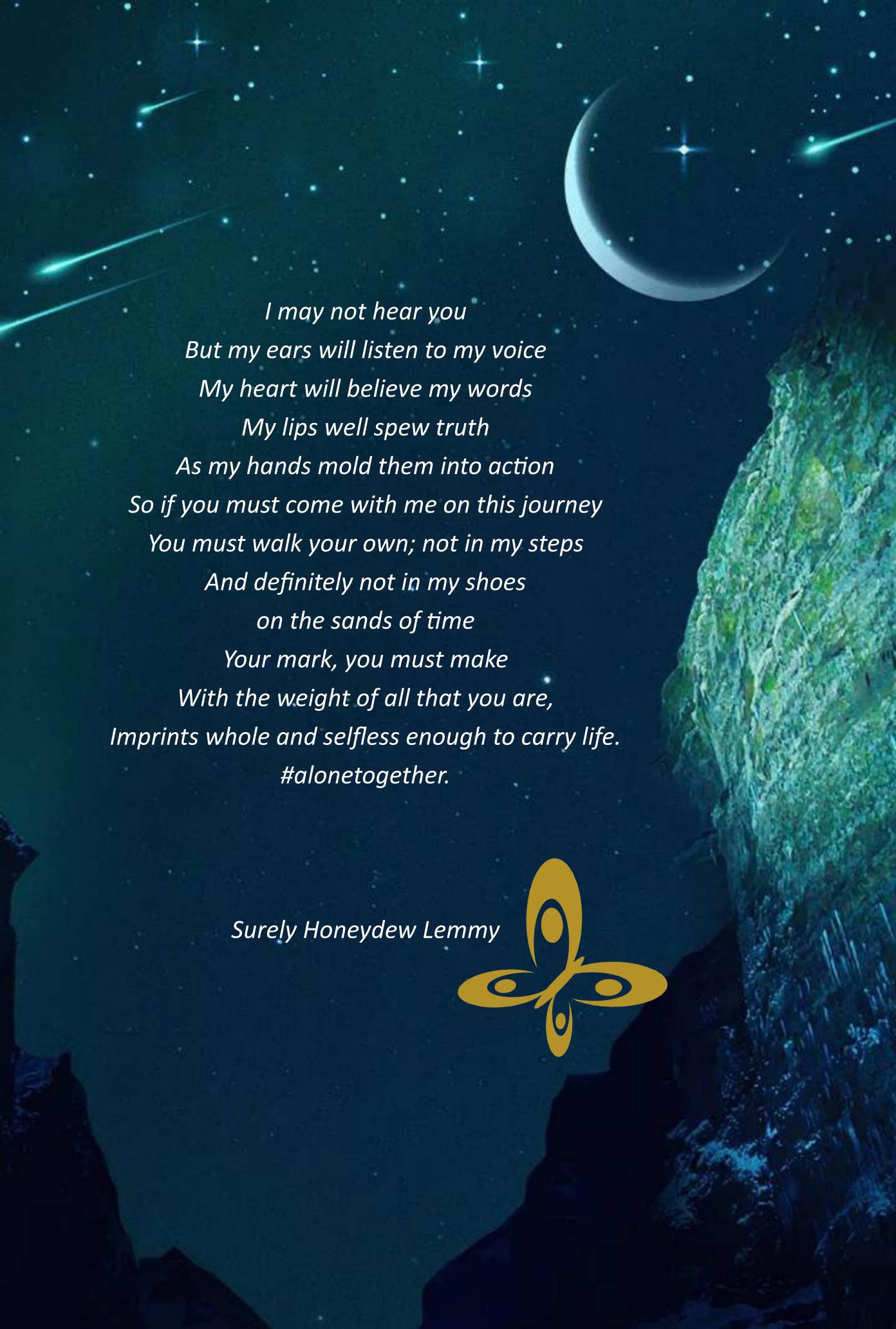




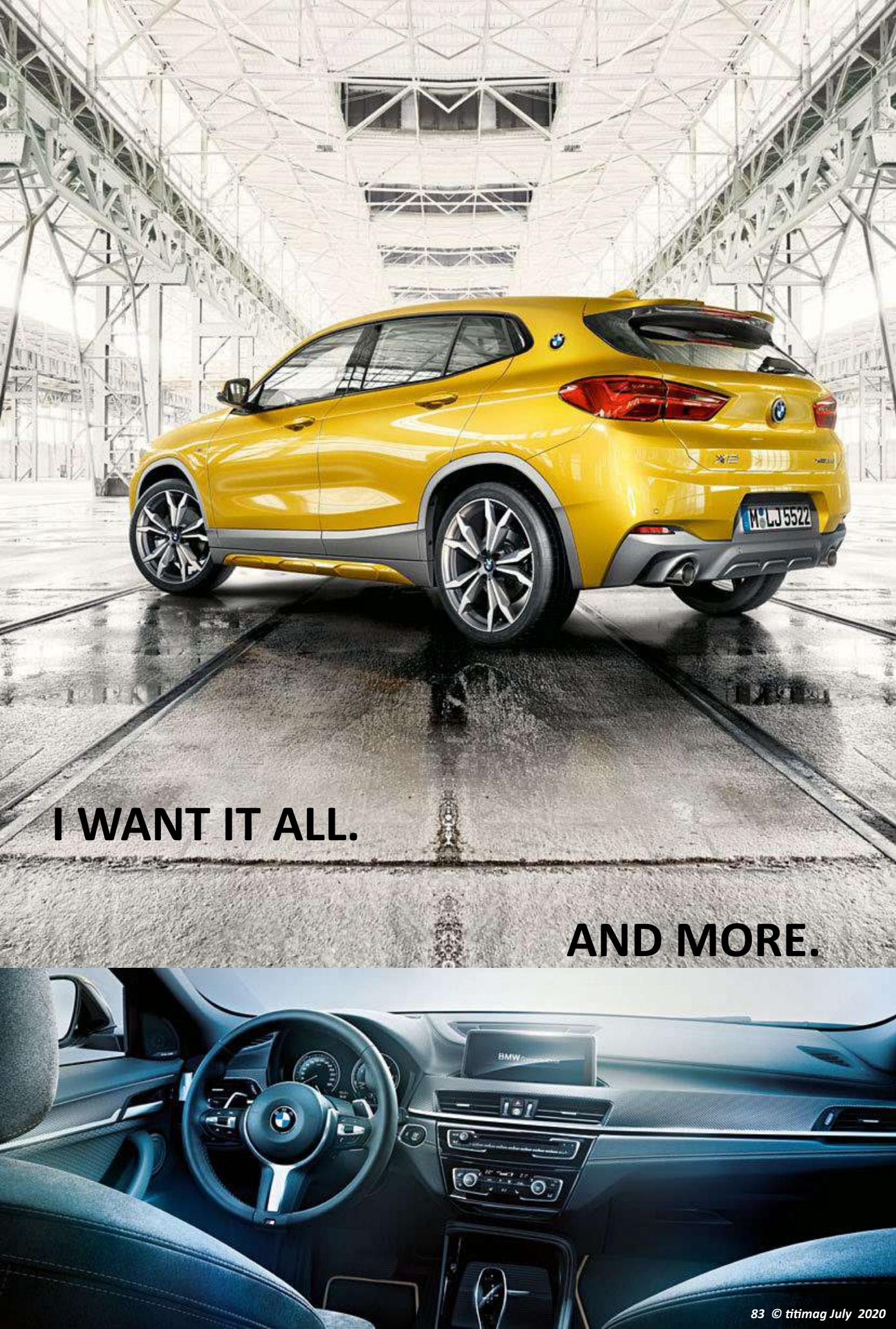
































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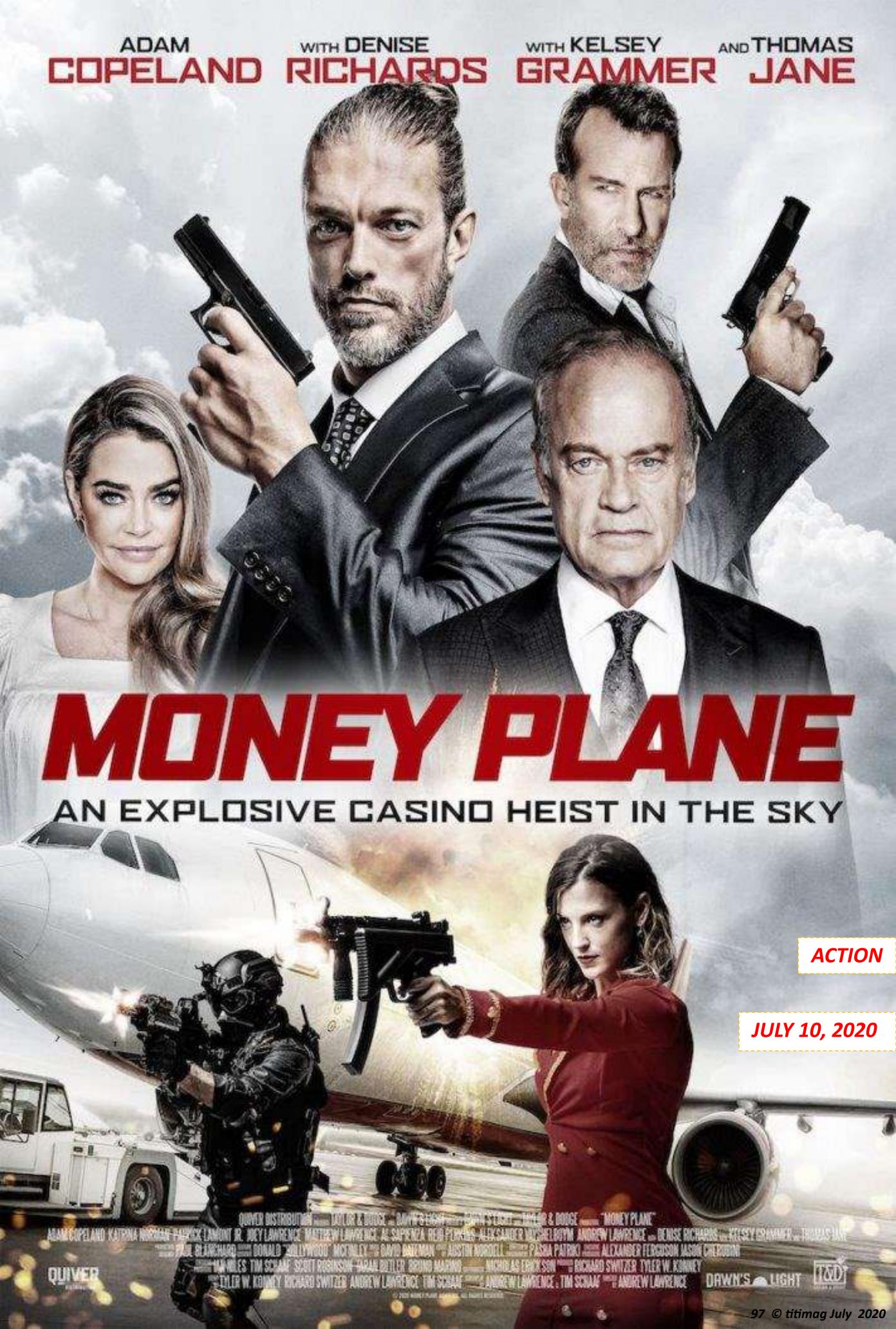
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