

Homebound-XIX:

A tale of love, fear, and video-game magic

by

Ben Kim Paplham

synopsis: Matthew Lykander and Ticonderoga Knight battle death, social media, and video games to overcome fears of love

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CHARACTERS [8 total]

2 Male [M], 4 Female [F], 2 Neutral [N]

	<u>age</u>
TICONDEROGA KNIGHT / "FERRULESFERRETS (FERRY)" [F]	30
MATTHEW LYKANDER / "HOMEBOUND [HB]" [M]	30
YOLANDA "YOTTIE" LYKANDER [F]	22
FERRY AVATAR [F]	30
HOMEBOUND AVATAR [M]	30
CHAT [F] / HARMONIA KNIGHT / ALETHEA LYKANDER	55-65
CHAT [N] / EDITOR / RAIL OPERATOR / LATE NIGHT HOST	30+
CHAT [N] / CROAKERED	16-60

Other roles CHAT occupies, at various intervals:

- newscasters 1, 2, & 3
- professor
- podcast hosts 1 & 2
- doctors 1& 2
- gamer
- message board/bloggers
- FPS (sniper, knives, grenade)
- band members

\*from p.3\*

(CHAT enters, taking their place at CWS. "CHAT" is sometimes the personification of text that a person might read in a text message, email, speech bubbles in a video game, or the rapid-fire comments on a livestream. Sometimes "Chat" is the amalgamation of several people, the representation of an idea, the projected imagtion of a specific individual.

CHAT is as a modern Greek Chorus -- a babble of voices represented by a few. The script is written with 3 performers in mind, but more can be added at the production's discretion.)

SETTING

Chicago. Summer-Winter 2021. Heart of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

SCENES

Scene 1: Tutorial	Matthew's Apartment	June 2021
Scene 2: Escape Room	Matthew's Apartment	November 2021
Scene 3: Board Games	Train Platform	Same day
Scene 4: Circulation	Matthew's Bathroom	Later
Scene 5: FPS	Matthew's Apartment	Weeks later
Scene 6: Kingdom	Ticonderoga's Apartment	Meanwhile

## ACT I

### SCENE 1: TUTORIAL

(June 2021. MATTHEW's Apartment.

The floor plan is spacious, open to allow for a wheelchair or electric scooter to freely move around.

There are 5 main sections onstage:

- The UPPER LANDING [UL]
- TICO's WORK STATION [TWS]
- MATT's WORK STATION [MWS]
- CHAT's WORK STATION [CWS]
- LIVING ROOM [LR]

#### UPPER LANDING

The Upper Landing [UL] is upstage [US]. There are two paths: the Ramp and the Stair.

Note: the Ramp, at stage-right [SR], is most often used by MATT.

The backwall of the UL is split into 3 partitions, each covered with a curtain. The center section is the largest, double-curtained.

- OBERON KNIGHT's [OBI] Mural
- The "CASTLE"
- TICO's Office

The double-curtained Castle also serves as a projector screen.

There is a Cupboard underneath the center platform of the UL. Above this Cupboard, along the UL, there is a Railing, which is strung up with Christmas or LED lights, the kind streamers/gamers often use.

Behind the Railing, on the UL, is OBI's Memorial Display.

### TICONDEROGA KNIGHT'S WORK STATION

TICO's Work Station [TWS] is on the UL, at the stage-left [SL] side. She doesn't have an established setup the way MATT does, but whatever paraphernalia the production wants to add to it.

### MATTHEW LYKANDER'S WORK STATION

MATT's Work Station [MWS] is at center-stage [CS]: currently just an empty desk, but the features of a full-time streamer/gamer will be added in short order, including:

- two gaming monitors
- gaming keyboard / mouse
- headsets
- camera and mic
- desk piano
- snacks / trash can

Note: the desk needs to be wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair.

A Couch is downstage [DS] of MWS.

### CHAT'S WORK STATION

There is a second Work Station for CHAT [CWS] at SL. The space is outlined in a box with white tape. There are boxes of costumes nearby.

### LIVING ROOM

The Living Room [LR] is at SR: a Bookcase, Dresser, and a Safe [the door faces away from the audience])

(TICONDEROGA KNIGHT, 30, a fidgety woman with a questing spirit, enters with the remains of her father: OBI's Funeral Urn. She's wearing a golden necklace.

TICO sits on the Couch, cradling the Urn in her lap, a moment that feels dynamic without movement, with sharp lighting and deep shadows -- a baroque painting. Abruptly, she slaps herself in the face.)

(Start-up music of a video game.)

(CHAT enters, taking their place at CWS. "CHAT" is sometimes the personification of text that a person might read in a text message, email, speech bubbles in a video game, or the rapid-fire comments on a livestream. Sometimes "Chat" is the amalgamation of several people, the representation of an idea, the projected imagtion of a specific individual.

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(On the double-curtain of the UL, a Projection of the main menu screen of a video game.)

(TICO uses a video game controller to toggle through the various options.

CHAT says the words out loud anyway.)

CHAT

(the title menu; all together)

HOMEBOUND

(alternating, with exaggerated tones)

- NEW GAME
- SAVE GAME
- LOAD GAME
- AUDIO-VIDEO SETTINGS
- CREDITS
- QUIT GAME

TICONDEROGA

Do you have to do that?

(TICO selects LOAD GAME. The projected menu screen changes to: a box against a dark screen. She selects the box.)

[Note: Where it is not specified, it is up to CHAT performers to delegate lines. If a line starts a new paragraph line, then it is a different chorus member.]

CHAT

Load save file:  
"Oberon Knight's 2021 mod"?  
Yes? No?

(TICO selects "Yes.")

(Projection screen: off.)

(Phone notification sound.)

(TICO looks at her phone.)

CHAT members don a cap or some other costume "shifting" device to create mini-scenes of the past and present. They uses props from the box, the Cupboard, or darts offstage for their costume pieces.)

CHAT (editor-in-chief)

(announcing the app)

"Text message, Editor-in-Chief."

(personification of the content)

Tico, did you finish the draft? Deadline was yesterday.

(TICO writes/dictates at TWS.)

TICONDEROGA

"Waiting For My Mother at My Father's Funeral." My dad could make friends with just about anyone. For him, making friends was as natural as breathing, and it gave me the impression, perhaps falsely, that people exist to be social creatures. Perhaps that might explain my father's death this past year.

(The LYKANDER siblings enter through the Castle's curtains. They're covid-masked, but remove their masks once inside.)

MATTHEW LYKANDER, 30, a man with messy hair -- which we'll call pandemic growth, the slightly unkempt appearance of a bachelor -- and a wry calm. He has a disability that leaves him wheelchair bound. He's in boxers and a white shirt.

YOTTIE LYKANDER, 22, a college student with a vibrant fearless energy. YOTTIE is transporting boxes and other storage containers with all of the furnishings of MATT's apartment: books, electronics, knick-knacks, games, movies, food, etc. She loads up the Bookcase.

CHAT (newscaster 1)

Johns Hopkins University reported today that the U.S. has exceeded 600,000 deaths from Covid-19, even as vaccinations have sparked a resurgence in summer fun.

CHAT (newscaster 2)

Despite warnings by the CDC to postpone travel and stay home, more than 7 million people were screened at TSA checkpoints over the last week.

(CHAT exits.

TICO slaps her face again, hard.)

MATTHEW

This may sound childish to say, Tico. but why are you hitting yourself?

TICONDEROGA

I'm just...hiding. Thanks for being here. You didn't have to be.

MATTHEW

Meh, it's really not that hard for me to self-isolate. And I wanted to be. Your father was special and he has a special daughter. But you still look like you want to punch something. You can punch me if you'd like.

TICONDEROGA

I'm not punching you when you're in a wheelchair.

MATTHEW

That's ableist. I've done plenty of things that's deserved a good *whallop*. I only get away with it --

TICONDEROGA

Because you're disabled?

MATTHEW

Because I'm pretty.

TICONDEROGA

You're an ass.

(about the Urn)

Hey, could you hold onto this for me? I can't have it around my place anymore.

(MATT puts it on the Memorial.

CHAT, as newscasters, enters, briefly.)

CHAT (newscaster 3)

Elsewhere, 2020 was also a record-setting year for video games. According to the VGD, sales increased by 20-22% from 2019, a \$57 billion-dollar growth.

TICONDEROGA

My father was somebody who only saw beautiful things. He could paint someone's exact insecurity.

YOTTIE

What if I just put everything on the top shelf?

MATTHEW

What if I just run over your foot?

YOTTIE

You'd have to catch me first.

TICONDEROGA

Not like a caricature artist but a detective. Your eyes, your smile, a mole, a scar, the way you carried your shoulders or the hitch in your gait, and he would paint you with such color and contour that you wanted to say, "Why can't this be me? Maybe it already is." In a way, he could see the future.

YOTTIE

Hey wait a sec! This game is mine!

MATTHEW

What, no it's not.

YOTTIE

Yuh-huh! Mom gave this to *me*, you dunderhead.

MATTHEW

I have literally never seen you play it.

YOTTIE

That doesn't change the fact that you're trying to steal from me.

MATTHEW

If you want it so bad, just take it.

YOTTIE

Nah I don't want it. I just felt like it was important for you to feel very guilty about yourself.

MATTHEW

Have you ever tried not being the most annoying person in the world?

YOTTIE

I did, once. It was a very boring experience.

(YOTTIE puts the card piles and card holders on the Safe. Then she sets up the electronics at MWS.)

TICONDEROGA

But my father never made any money from painting. Real money. In between being a rail operator for the L, he'd get commissioned for the odd project around the city. His favorite was this mural for this historic building and I remember my dad saying that he wanted it to be so beautiful that you'd be ashamed to tear it down. So if you're ever in Wicker Park, it's the grey woman at a 3-quarter profile, head bowed, eyes piercing your soul, a hint of a shared secret, a deep colorful scar running from ear to mouth, and from within the scar, a menagerie of animals dancing into a sunlight. To be honest, it's a little kitsch. But that was my dad. He didn't know what to do with the ugliness of the world.

(CHAT, as podcast hosts, enter, briefly.)

CHAT (podcast host 1)

The fact is Fauci lied about herd immunity so he could sell vaccines to the public. He lied about the effectiveness of masking to engender the impression of safety and progress. Why? Control over honesty.

CHAT (podcast host 2)

Hey man, all I'm saying is -- who knows who voted? Illegals, mail-in ballots, signing grandma's name cuz she don't even know what day it is. And I'm not saying it's deliberate but Covid did provide a really interesting smokescreen for a lotta these procedures.

[Note: [ ] around a piece of dialogue shows the approximate place where the next character starts talking over them.]

YOTTIE

OHMYGOD A SPIDER! [Kill it! Kill it!]

MATTHEW

Whaddya want me to do about it?

(YOTTIE grabs MATT's wheelchair and smushes the spider under the wheels.)

[NOTE: // means speaking simultaneously.]

YOTTIE // MATTHEW

// Die die die die die die die!

// Hey hey hey! Watch it, watch the chair!

(CHAT, as Croakered and gamers, enter.)

CHAT (croakered)

Listen, I think Homebound is a great player. He's done a lot for *River Rift* and exploding the scene for other streamers, but he can suck my dick.

(The other CHAT members laugh.)

CHAT (gamer)

Yo, Croakered, you still tilted over that charity game?

CHAT (gamer 2)

Yeah you saw what happened during their match, right? Croakered cursed the shit out of HomeBound, threatening to dox him and everything.

CHAT (croakered)

Bro, he threw man. He absolutely threw. Just because he got matched up against this girl he's been streaming with. What's her name? "FerrulesFerrets." He's totally simpin' for her. It's cringe, man. Total incel.

(CHAT exits.)

TICONDEROGA

And I think Covid is what made him sick, but it's the ugliness that killed him. In his last few years, my father stopped painting. He said he lost the feeling. Couldn't read people anymore, see their future, which makes you wonder: Where do oracles go to die? According to legend, when the newly Christened Romans destroyed the Temple of Delphi, Pythia's well ran dry. I guess the same thing happened to my father's paints.

YOTTIE

Hey, is Tico going to upload the funeral?

MATTHEW

Yeah. To YouTube or wherever.

YOTTIE

M'kay. Tell her I'm sorry I couldn't be there.

MATTHEW

Yeah, I mean nobody really was. Most were Zoom-ing in.

YOTTIE

Could you text me her number? I thought I'd call her later or something.

MATTHEW

Sure.

YOTTIE

Oh, and also send it to Mom.

MATTHEW

Mmm.

YOTTIE

What? What's with that face?

(beat)

Do you want help getting dressed?

MATTHEW

I can do it myself.

YOTTIE

Just if you wanted to be fast about it.

(YOTTIE grabs a shirt and pants from  
CHAT's box and tosses them to MATT.

MATT starts to put the pants on.)

MATTHEW

Are you just gonna watch me or...?

YOTTIE

Just making sure you're not going to fall.

MATTHEW

I've done this a gazillion times, Yottie.

YOTTIE

Yeah I know. Just... call Mom, 'kay?

MATTHEW

Mm-mmm.

YOTTIE

She's your best friend, Matt. Mom just wanted [to] --

MATTHEW

Why?

YOTTIE

I don't know. Maybe she wants someone to talk to  
because you never do.

(YOTTIE exits; MATT finishes dressing.)

TICONDEROGA

Apparently, I take after my mother. I've been told she  
didn't know what to do with the beauty of the world. He  
would say she would sometimes lose herself, and turn  
into a real monster, and I guess I think that sounds  
like someone who believes each person is allotted a  
certain amount of happiness in their lifetime and she  
had already overdrawn hers. [And I guess a stupid part  
of me believed -- ]

(MATT reads this last line simultaneous with TICO, continuing the reading of the article. TICO exits.)

MATTHEW (cont. from TICO)

...that if she was also someone who knew the ugliness inside of her, but also thought of happiness and suffering as games of probability and chance, then she would also think of Oberon Knight's funeral as her last chance to make the ugliness right. So when I submitted his obituary last month, the part of me that still wants to believe in the beauty of the world, that the wellspring will never run dry, that part believed my mother would read it and show up. And as I was standing in the parking lot, waiting for my mother at my father's funeral, I felt shy and embarrassed to explain to my best friend why I wanted to punch myself.

(beat)

Jeez Tico.

(CHAT enters. This one is different -- an older woman dressed very formally and taking a more prominent role onstage.)

(Phone notification sound.)

(MATT looks at his phone.)

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

"Facebook Messenger message." Hello Matthew. This is Ticonderoga's mother. Can we talk?

(MATT laughs, unbelieving, *pissed*. He presses the start call button.)

MATTHEW

Listen here you little piece of shit. I don't know if this is your idea of a sick joke, but it's *not funny*. I don't usually respond to trolls, but unlucky for you, I just read something that really ruined my day, so I'm taking the time to personally tell you that I don't want fans like you. Now *fuck off!*

(MATT hangs up the call.)

CHAT pauses, taken aback. CHAT presses the start call button.)

MATTHEW

Did I not make myself clear? You're a sadistic evil fuck and if I ever find out who you are, [I will --]

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

Tico was wearing a necklace, right?

MATTHEW

What?

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

A golden necklace. The front is an eagle with 4 wings.

MATTHEW

Okay, but you could just have seen the video of the memorial [service].

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

The clasp is 2 snakes joining mouths when it's locked.

MATTHEW

Well, I mean, I haven't [seen the --]

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

If you don't believe me, you can ask her yourself.

MATTHEW

Okay... Let's say I'm... Are you really Mrs. Knight?

(CHAT [Harmonia] draws close to MATT, as if they're having a real conversation.)

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

I haven't been called that in years. It's Harmonia.

MATTHEW

Harmonia. Right. Why did you want to talk to me? And not, you know, Tico?

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

Because I had to warn you.

MATTHEW

Ri-ight.

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

You need to stay away from Ticonderoga.

MATTHEW

I think it's a little late to be the overly-concerned parent, you know?

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

No, it's... My daughter is cursed.

MATTHEW

What?

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

My entire family line is. It's the necklace.

MATTHEW

Aight. I'm gonna hang up now.

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

It appears when you're in love.

MATTHEW

I'm sorry?

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

That's what my mother told me. And her mother before her. They all tried to destroy it. My grandmother threw it into a giant kiln and thought it melted. My mother took it to sea and tossed it into the waters. But every time it reappears. In a store window that you just happen to be passing through. In a box buried deep in your closet. My mom took it out to sea 10 times before she gave up entirely.

MATTHEW

And, uh, what did you do with it?

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

I ran away. I thought if I kept it with me forever, the curse would be broken. Without her mother, maybe Ticonderoga would never really know what it feels like to fall in love. Maybe the curse would never come to her if she doesn't know it even exists. And I never ever took it off. But then one morning I woke up, and it was gone. Then I saw the obituary, and the video of the funeral, and when I watched it, I saw how you both depended on each other to get through the service, and I knew that you were perfect for my daughter, which is why I can't let you be together.

MATTHEW

Um, but we're not.

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

Perfect! Don't. Stay away from her or you'll be cursed.

MATTHEW

And what exactly is this curse?

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

The necklace brings misfortune to the wearer and their lover's family.

MATTHEW

Okay, but we're not lovers.

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

Love doesn't have to go both ways.

MATTHEW

And, to be honest, "misfortune" is rather vague. Like death? Just never gonna win the lottery? Cash in on a sports parlay? Because I could live with that.

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

Listen, all I can do is warn you. And I've done that. So if you don't want to take this seriously, I'm afraid I've done my part.

MATTHEW

Nominally.

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

You seem like a kind, young man. I don't want your life to be ruined because of my daughter.

MATTHEW

And I'm sure you're an expert in ruining lives.

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)

That's the necklace. Maybe the real curse is that we're just born with too much love. We're bound to fall for someone eventually.

MATTHEW

Sure.

CHAT (Harmonia Knight)  
Oh, and under no circumstances can you tell Ticonderoga  
that I called. It would break her.

(CHAT [Harmonia] hangs up. Exits.)

MATTHEW  
What the fuck?

(Vision of the Future:)

(FERRY and HOMEBOUND enter. They sit on  
the couch, HOMEBOUND resting his head on  
FERRY's lap. She presses a few buttons on  
the video game controller.)

Oh no.

END SCENE