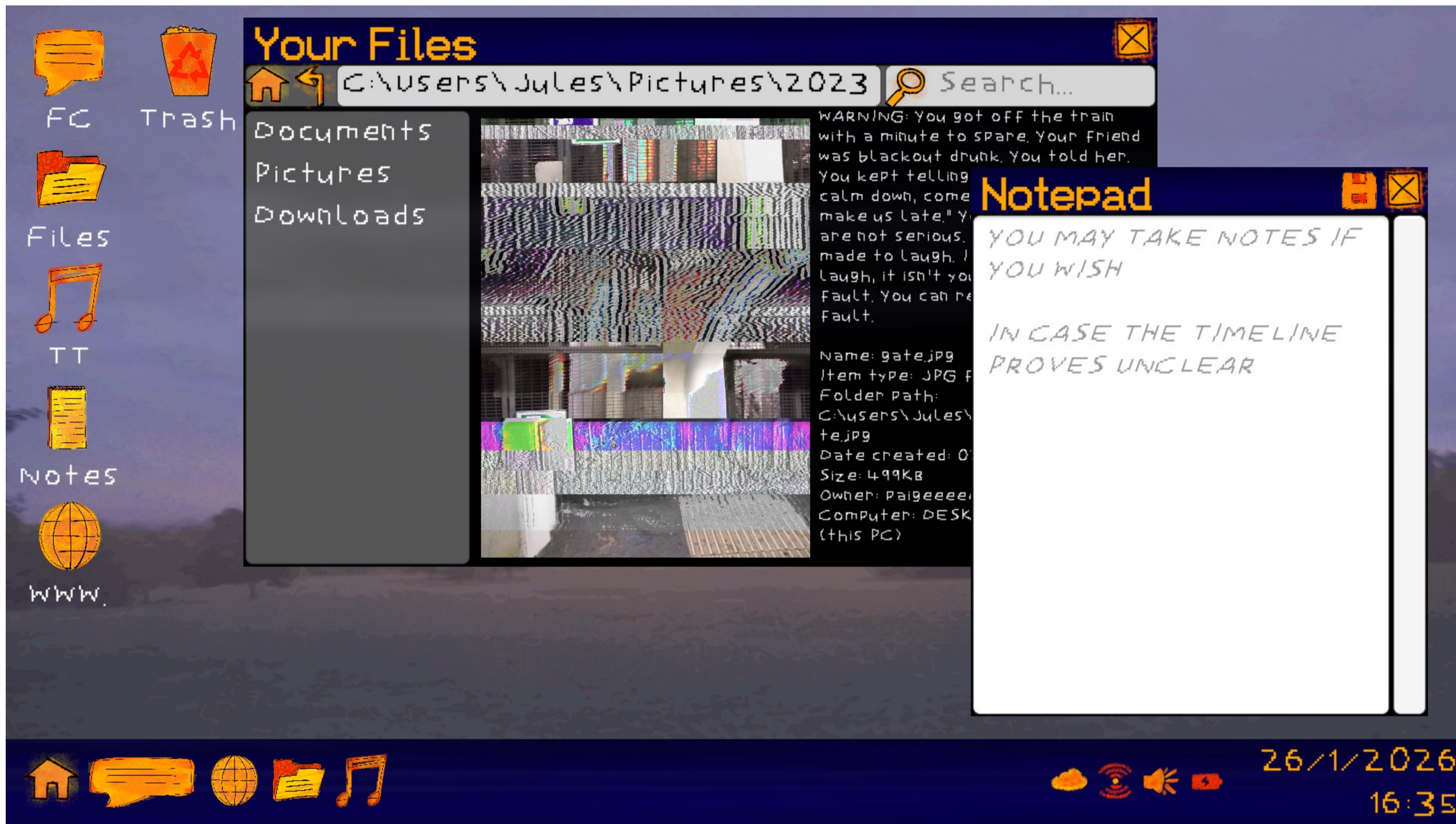


I Dreamt of Something Lost

A Resource for the Creation of Data-conscious Electronic Literature

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Media Futures ●



I Dreamt of Something Lost (IDoSL) is a short, interactive narrative that acts as proof of concept for the Phantasos Template: a code library designed to help digital artists and writers work with a fake desktop interface. It was made with Unity and the ink narrative scripting language.

On a literal level, *IDoSL* is about sitting at your computer and encountering somebody who is no longer in your life. On an emotional level, it is concerned with grief, loss, and memory – as mediated through the vast amounts of data that now permeate our lives. It is about how data can become a kind of haunting, how losing someone means you also lose a version of yourself, and how self-quantifying memory practices can irrevocably warp your relationship to yourself.

Research Question

My objective is to answer the question articulated by Sun-Ha Hong in her article titled 'Data's Intimacy: Machinic Sensibility and the Quantified Self': 'how we might begin to more explicitly discuss the moral and *experiential*, as well as technical and epistemic, stakes in our relationships with new technologies' (2016, 27, emphasis mine). Interactive narratives are perhaps uniquely suited to answer this need, being themselves constructed experiences of play.

Given the particular affordances of interactivity, how might a 'fake-desktop' narrative game examine the experiential qualities of personal data?

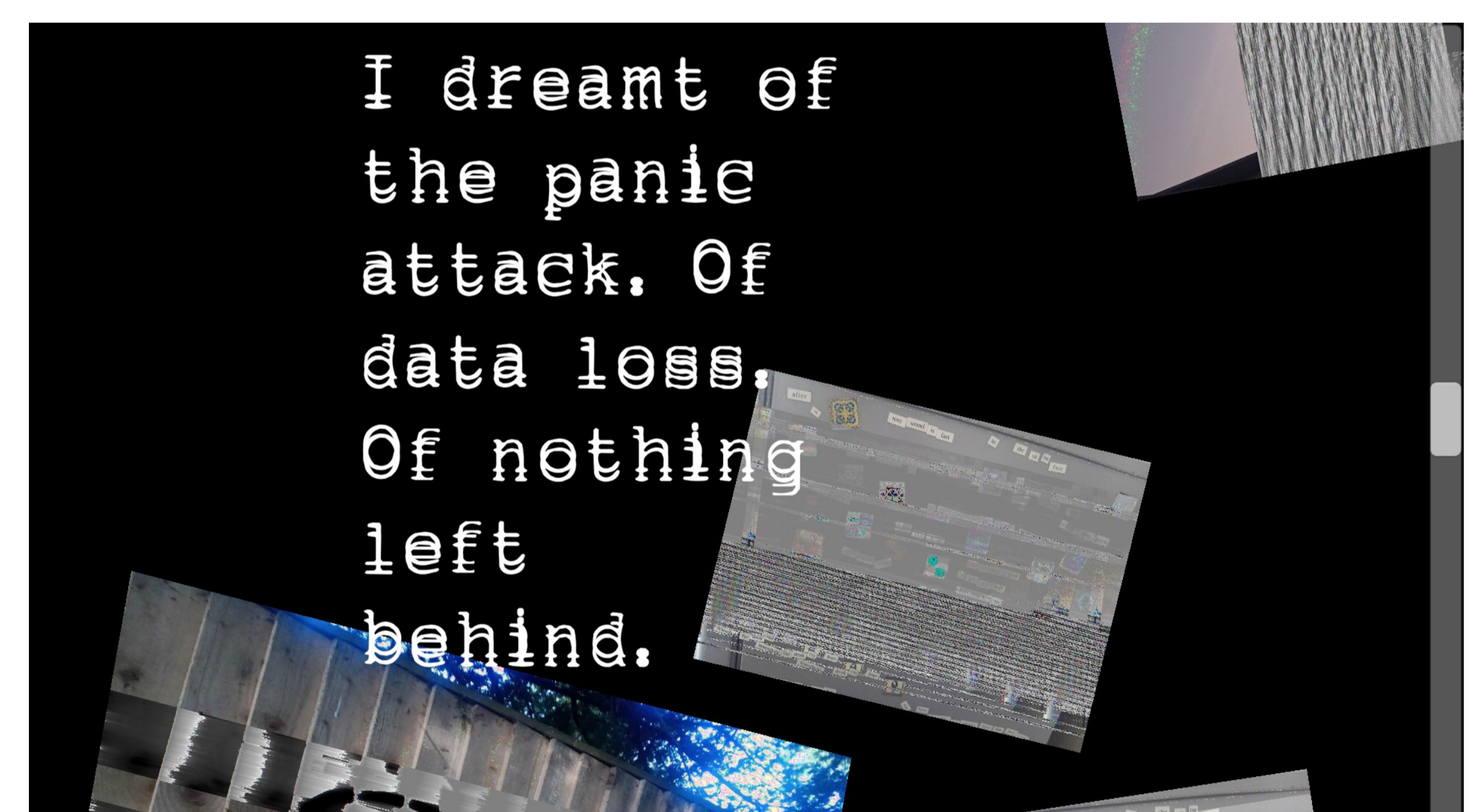
Functionalities

- **Instant Messenger System:** Communicate with other characters, scroll back to view their messenger histories, switch between conversations, receive messages at pre-determined times.
- **Desktop Interface:** Open and close a variety of windows, move them around the screen, view an in-setting date and time system.
- **Folder System:** Navigate through folders and sub-folders, view images and metadata that change over time, edit text files.
- **Music Player:** Choose the soundtrack to your narrative experience (includes five songs).

Aesthetic Principles

IDoSL mimics real-world user interfaces and operating systems while still visibly being a made object. Rather than aiming for photorealism, I intentionally cultivated a certain messiness in the assets I created. Contrary to its usual, sleek visual associations, data is a central part of our lived experience - with all the messiness and disorder that entails.

The intended audience is people of my generation (late Millennial/early Generation Z) who, on some level, are artistically and/or intellectually engaged with what it means to exist in the virtual world. Accordingly, the characters of *IDoSL* swear, reference internet memes, and type in grammatically incorrect sentences. All are intended to address my audience in the language that they are using.



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