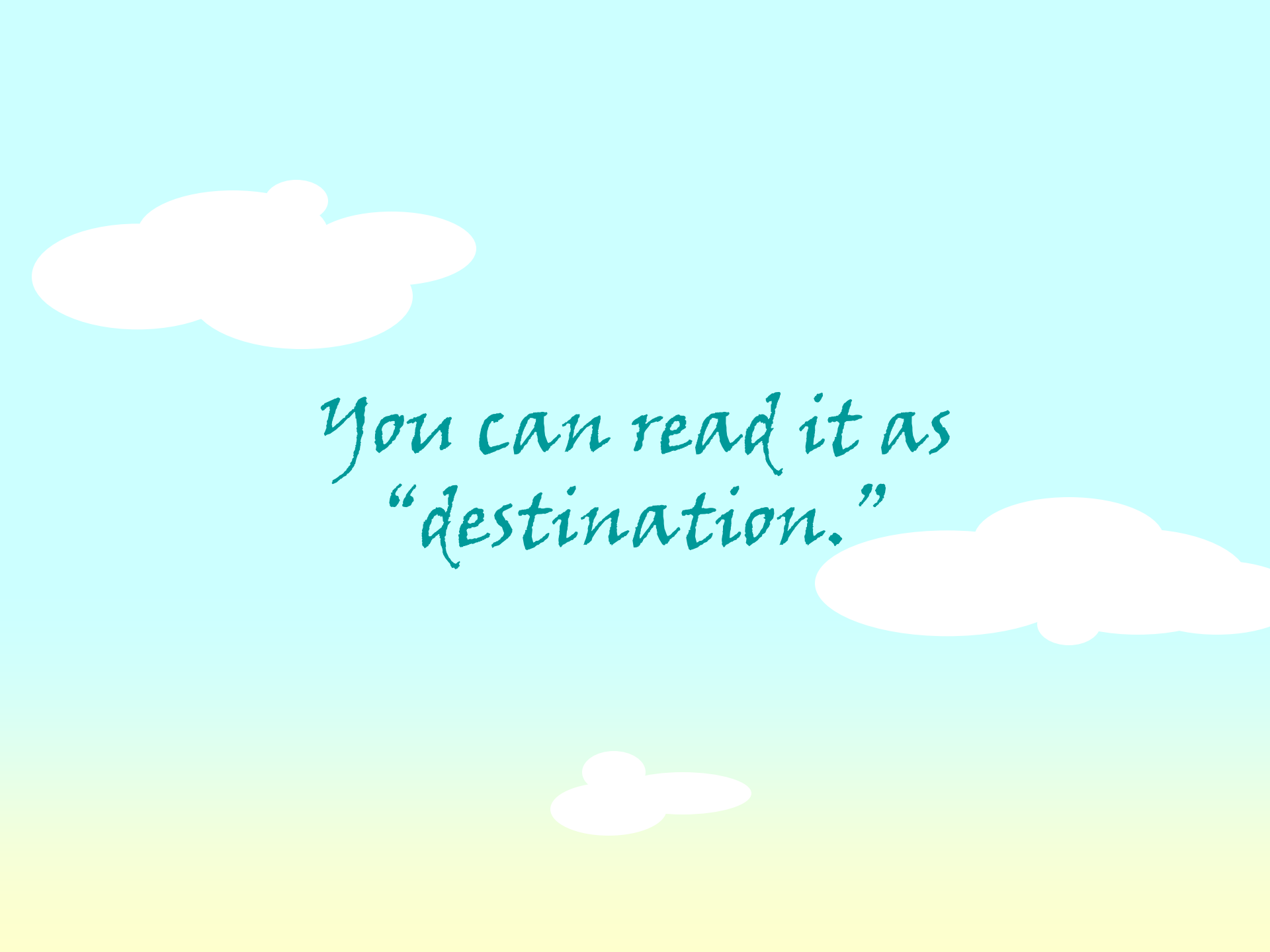


The Destiny of Online Games

Raph Koster

The image features a solid light blue background with three stylized, white, fluffy clouds. One cloud is in the upper left, another is in the lower right, and a smaller one is centered at the bottom. The text "It's a funny word." is written in a dark teal, cursive script, positioned in the center of the image.

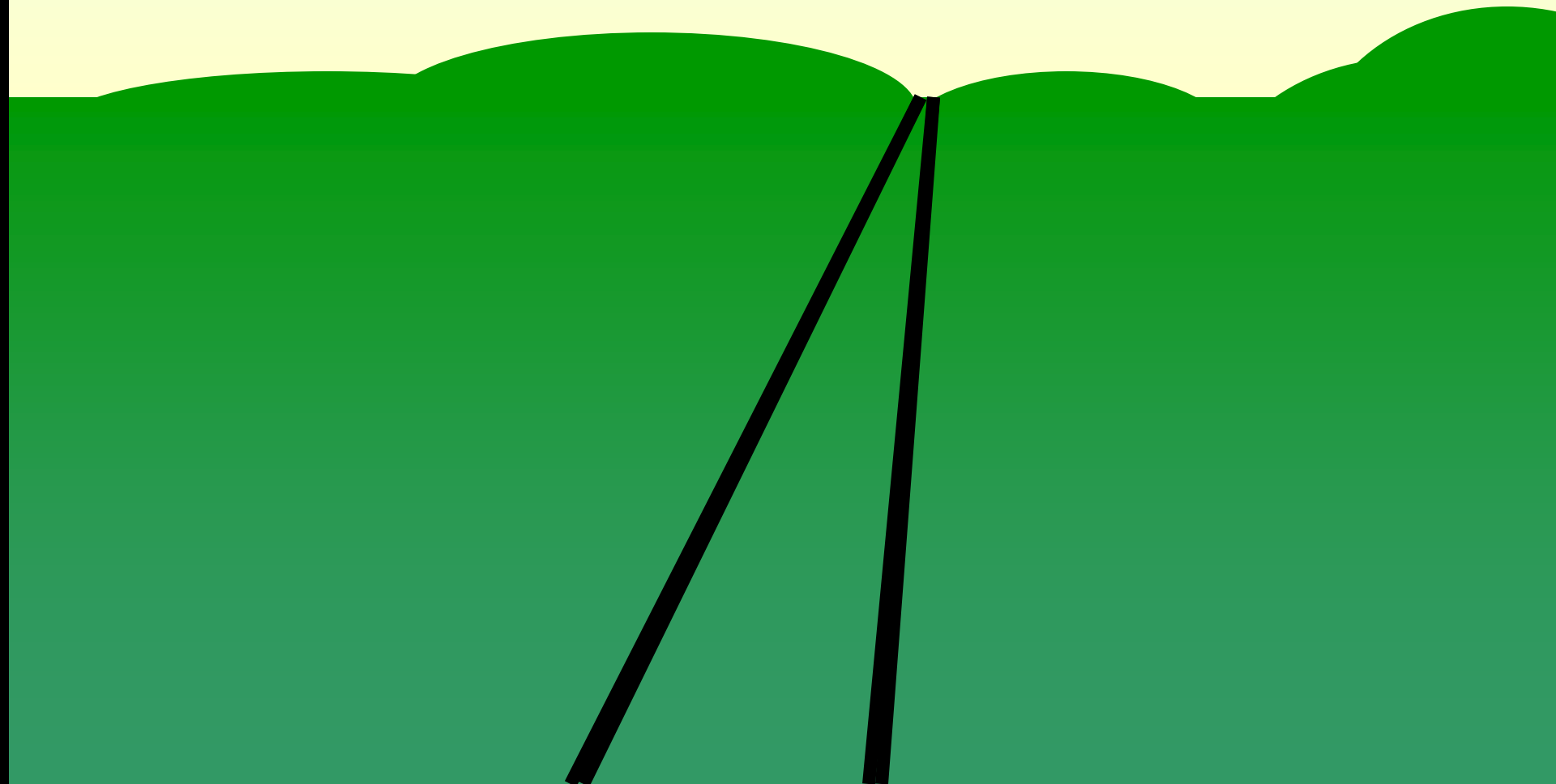
It's a funny word.

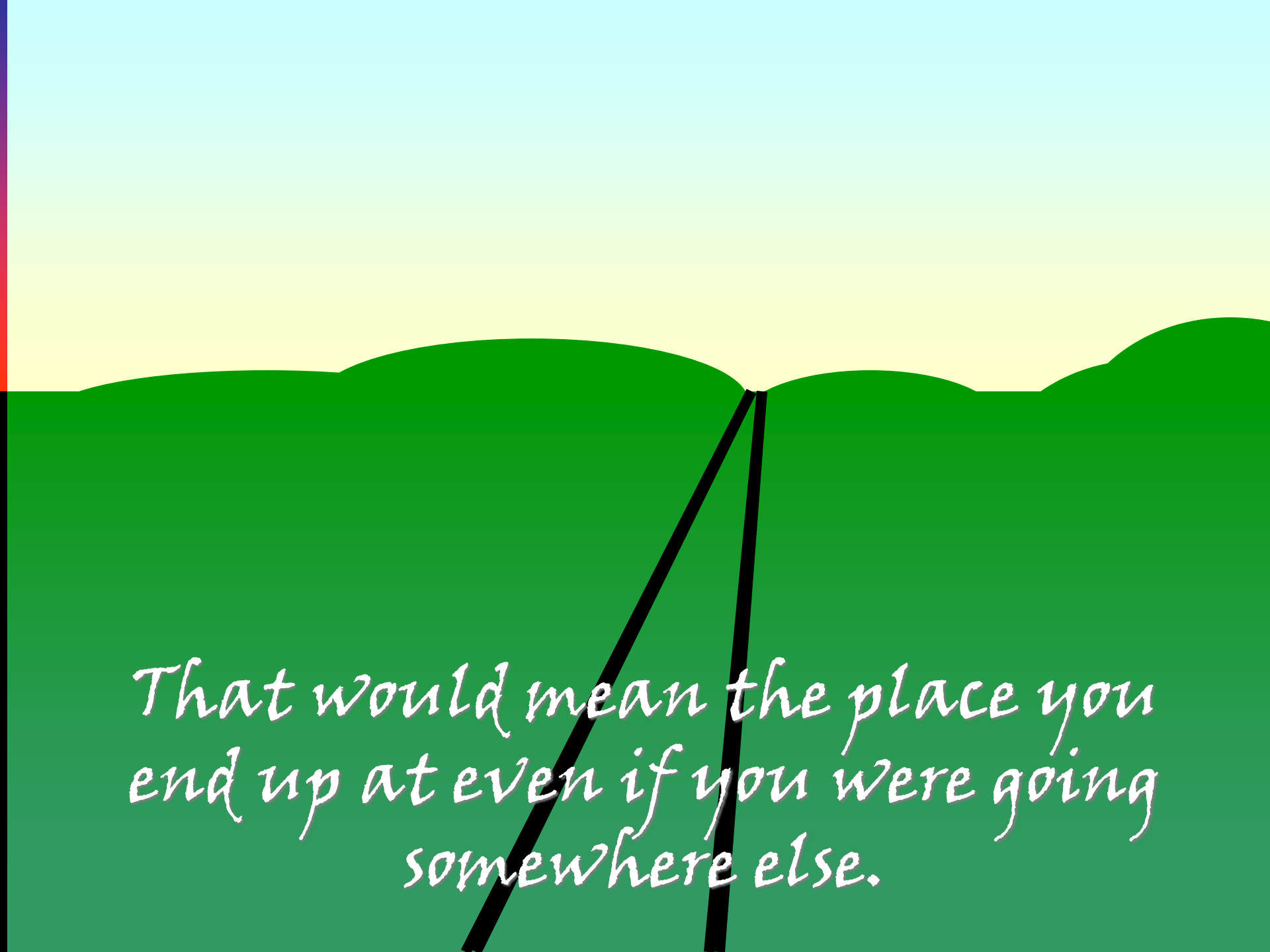


*You can read it as
“destination.”*

*That would mean where you
are going.*

You can read it as “fate.”

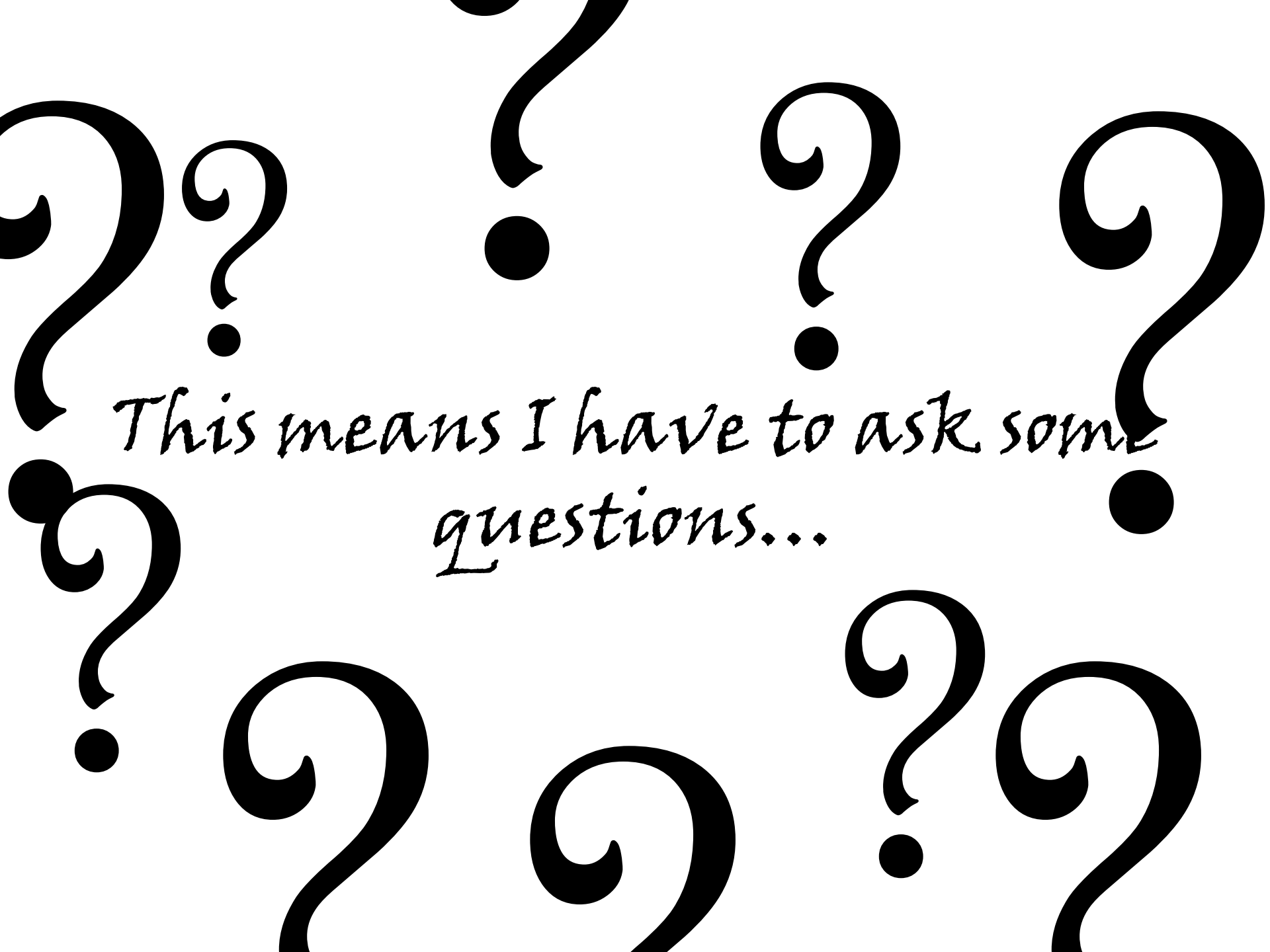




*That would mean the place you
end up at even if you were going
somewhere else.*

*You can read it as a sort of
apotheosis.*

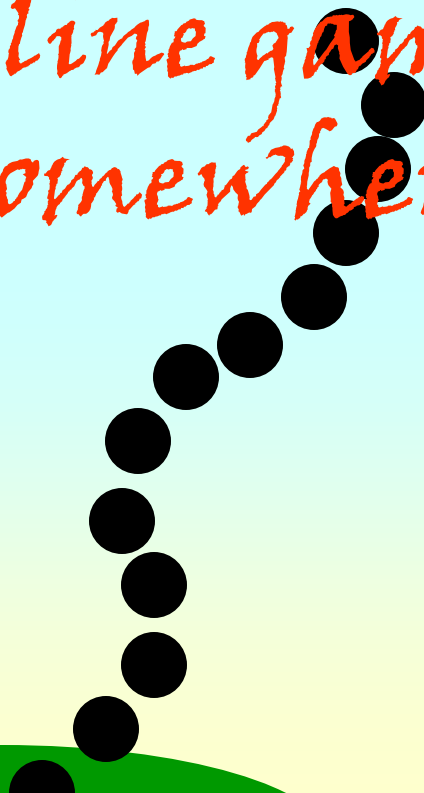
*I am supposed to talk about the
destiny of online games.*



*This means I have to ask some
questions...*

1

*Are online games going
somewhere?*



*What is the fate of online
games?*



3

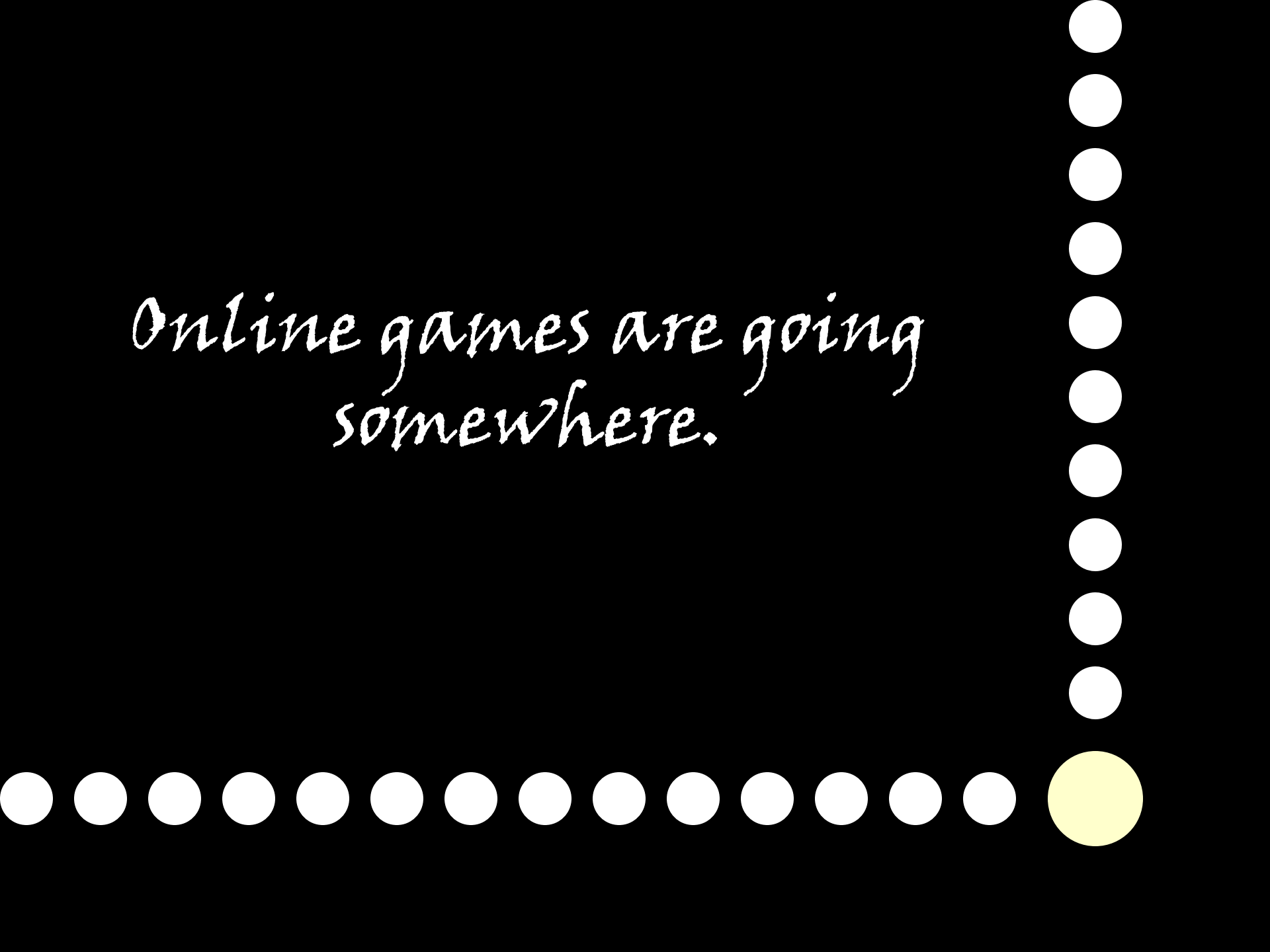
*What is their
apotheosis?*



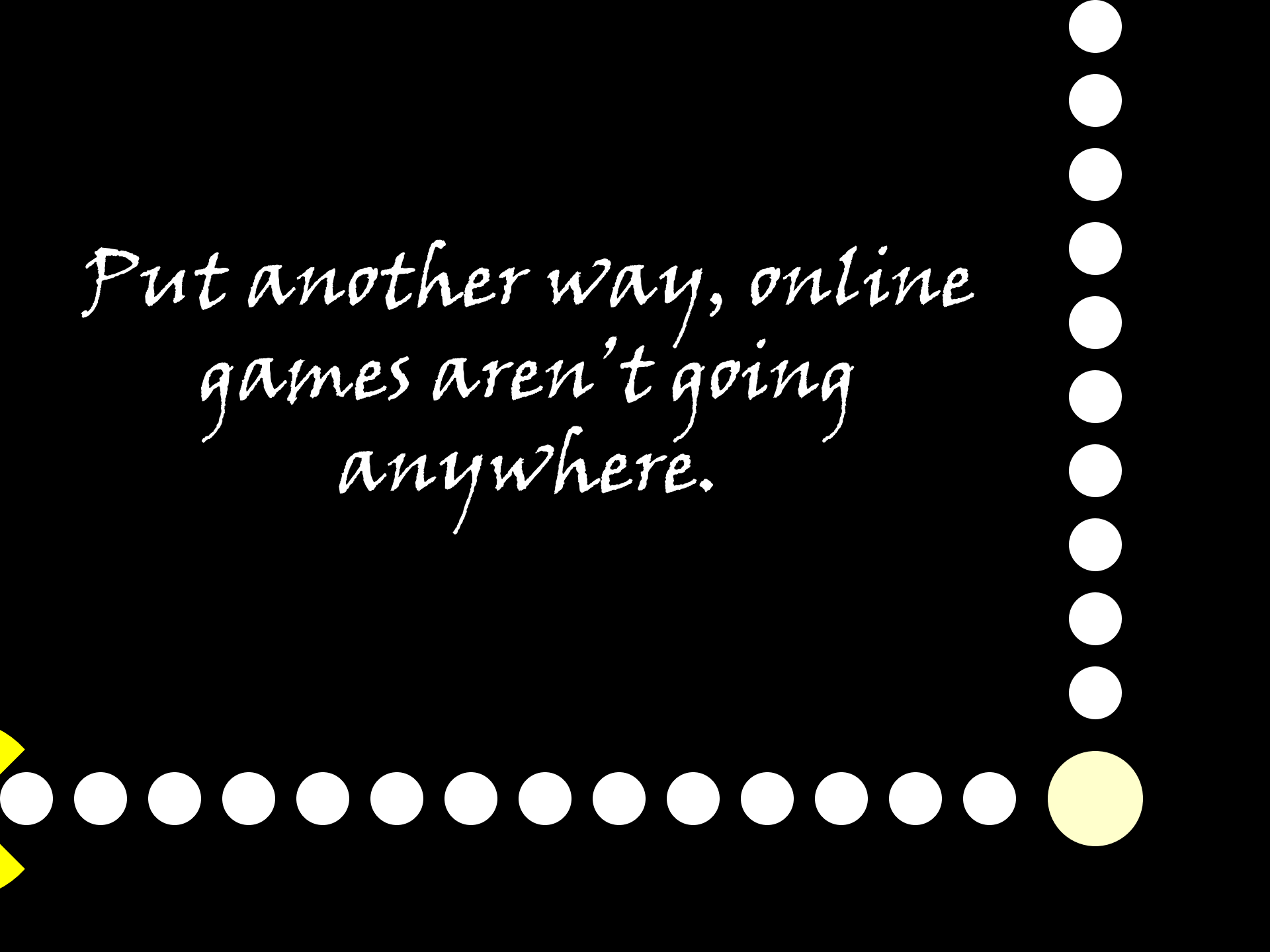
Some of these questions are

Stupid.

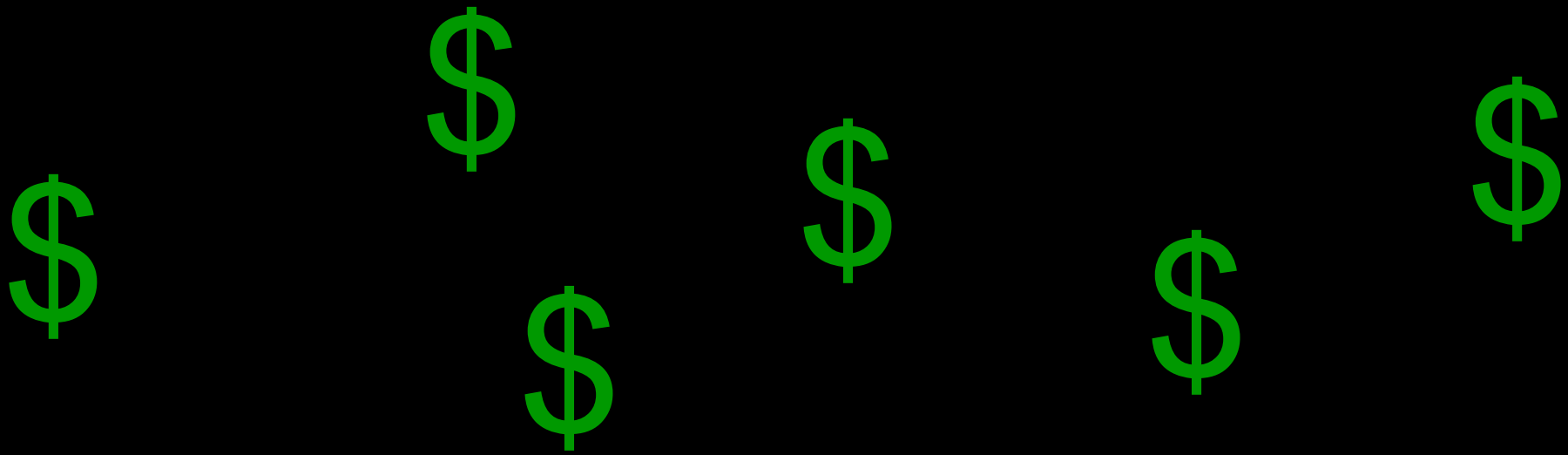
*Online games are going
somewhere.*



*Put another way, online
games aren't going
anywhere.*



*The road they are on has a lot
of obstacles, though.*



*Worldwide, we are amidst the
most luxurious of luxuries.*





*Our games take up a lot of
time.*

They provoke social skepticism.

*Frankly, they are kind of
tacky.*

*We can see the road that is
being taken:*

\$

Lower the entry costs...

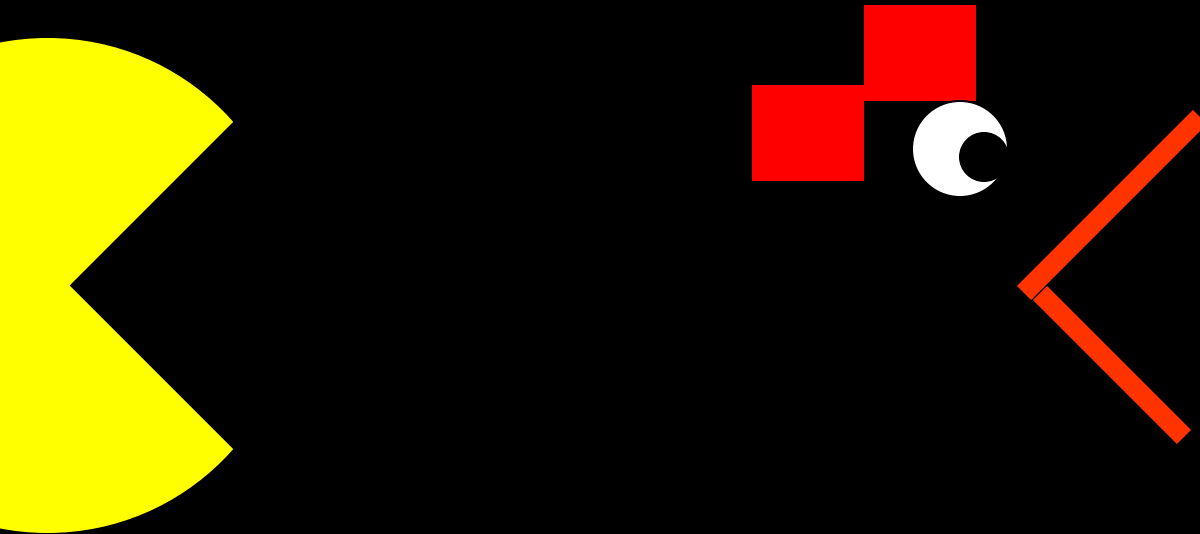
The background of the image is a solid black field densely populated with green dollar signs (\$). The dollar signs are of various sizes and are scattered across the entire frame, creating a textured, financial-themed backdrop. In the center of this field, the text "...but raise the actual costs" is written in a white, cursive script font.

...but raise the actual costs

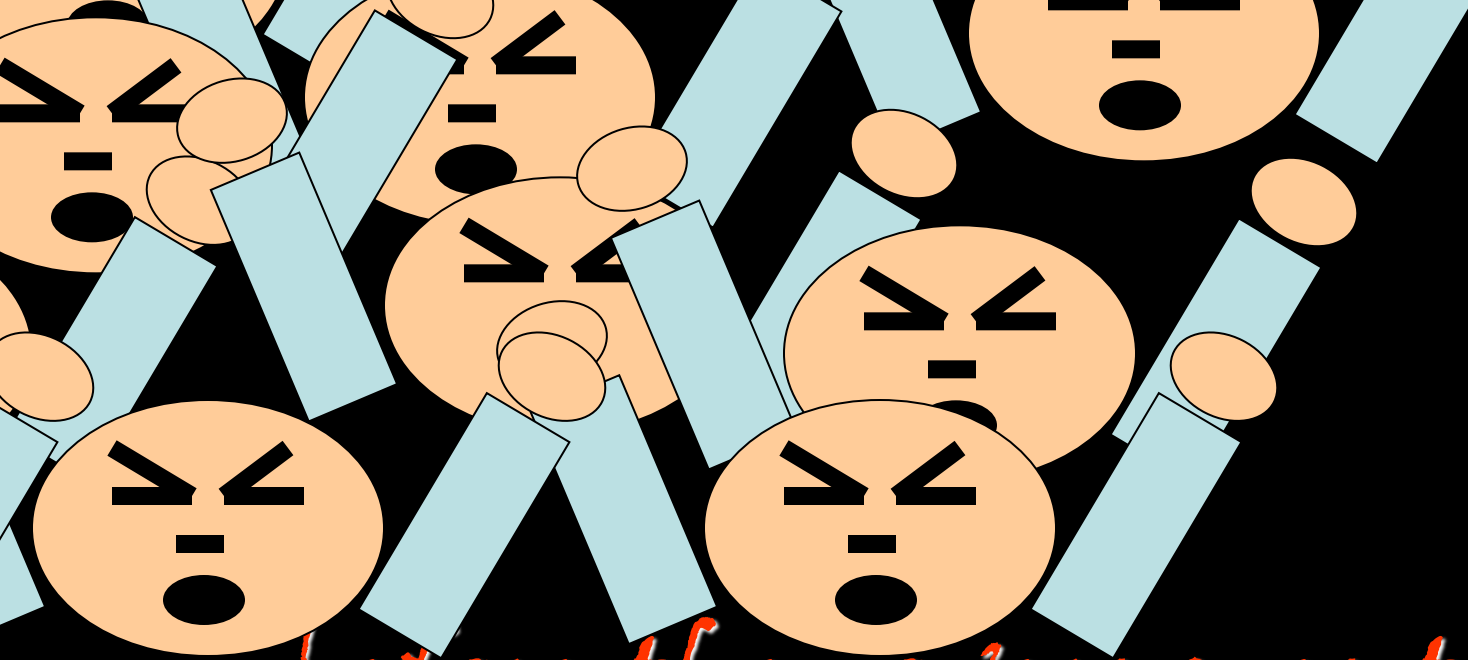


Shorter games...

*...that you can play with
your girlfriends.*



*Different kinds of subject
matter...*

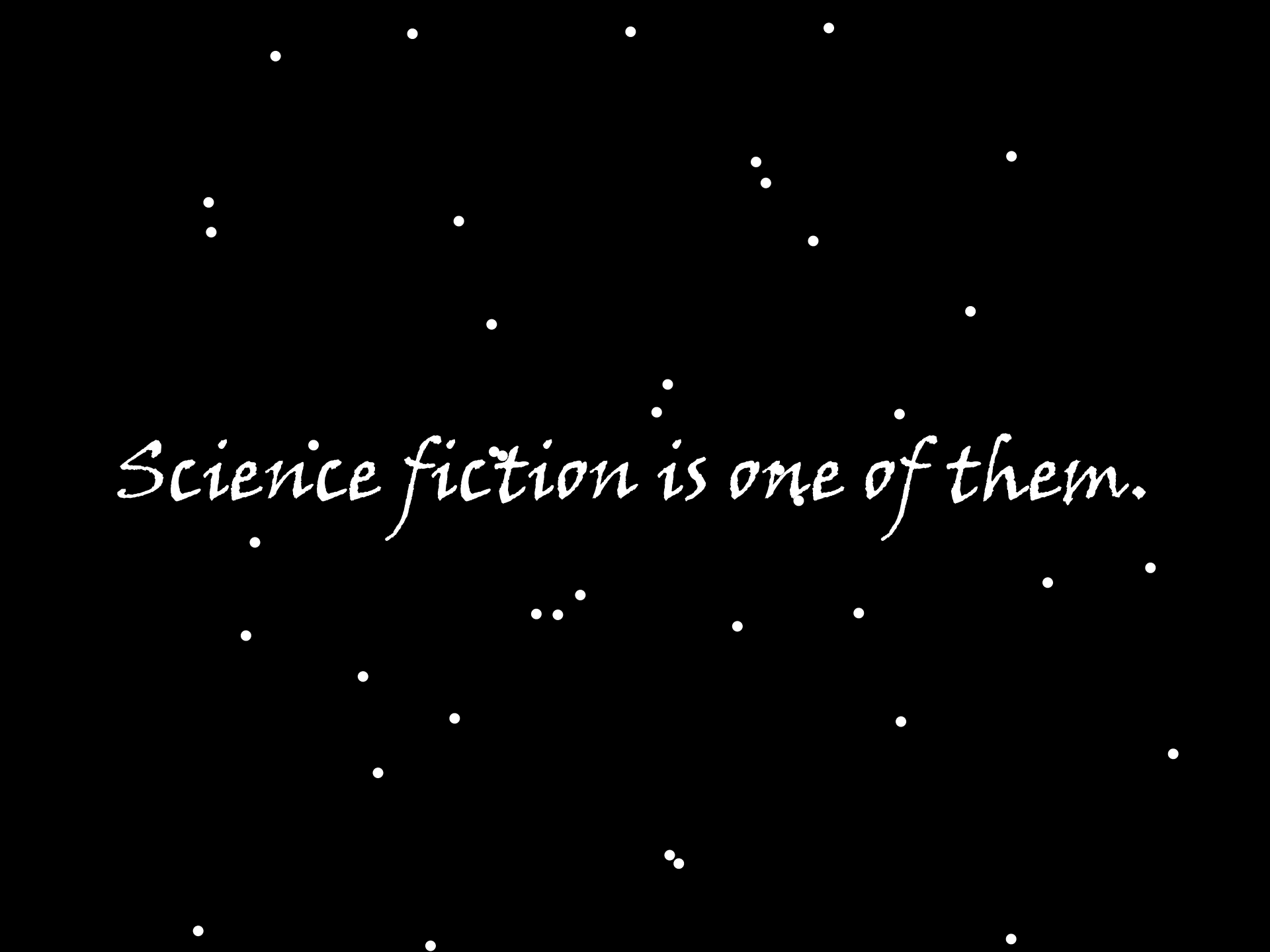


*...before the government tells
us what we have to make.*

The questions get tougher when
we talk about the fate of
online games.

*There's a daydream out there
about what online can mean.*

*It comes from a variety of
sources.*



Science fiction is one of them.

*Technolibertarian politics is
another—the hacker ethic.*

```
bash>chdir \usr\bin
```

```
bash>su
```

```
bash>rmdir *
```

(These are closely related, of course.)

MEMEX

*Library science is another,
believe it or not.*

VANNEVAR BUSH

1000011101001011100101100100
1101001010110100101101001011
0100101010010111010010110101
0010101101001011010110100101
1010101001010110101000011101
0010111001011001001101001010
1101001011010010110100101010
0101110100101101010010101101

*The dream of the Internet
started out being about access
to information.*

*But it also started out being
about wondrous places.*

*It was about shapeshifting,
and powers beyond physics.*

*It was about bars in cyberspace
and duels with swords made of
computer code.*

*When Mosaic came along, we
finally had pictures, at least.*



*But the wondrous dreams
became rather mundane.*

*But the wondrous dreams
became rather mundane.*

*Instead of places for self-
expression,*

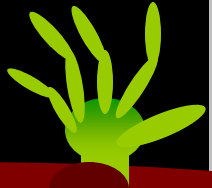
we had places of commerce.

Instead of wondrous worlds,

- ✓ Elves.
- ✓ Dwarves.
- ✓ Magic missile.
- ✓ Castles.
- ✓ Dice rolling.
- ✓ Levels.
- ✓ Classes.
- ✓ Vampires.
- ✓ Werewolves.
- ✓ Undead.
- ✓ Knights.
- ✓ Princesses.

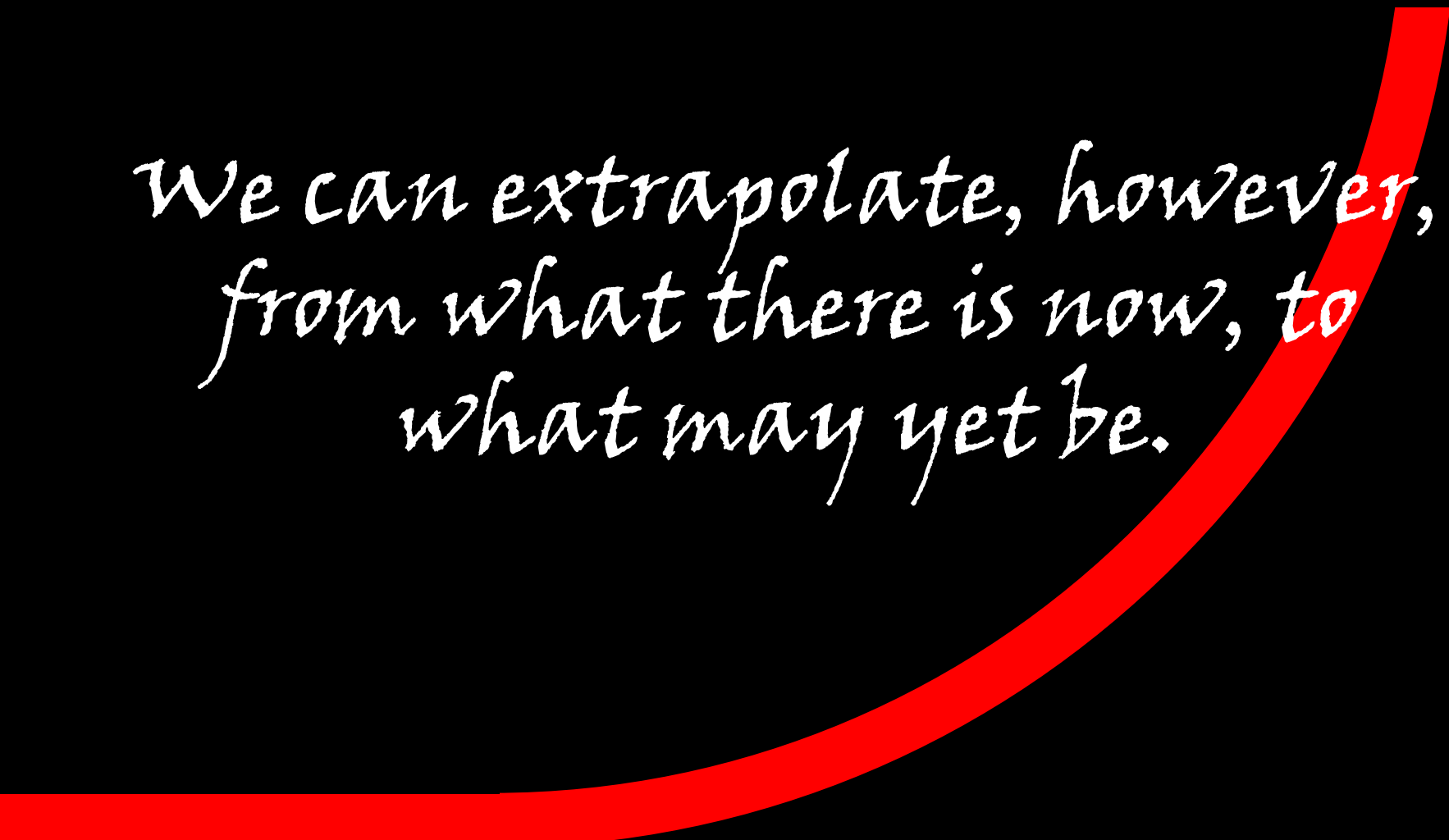
We got ones
we had seen
before.

*This is natural, and not
something to cause despair.*

A green hand with five fingers is reaching up from a dark red mound of earth, which represents a grave. The hand is positioned to the left of a grey tombstone.

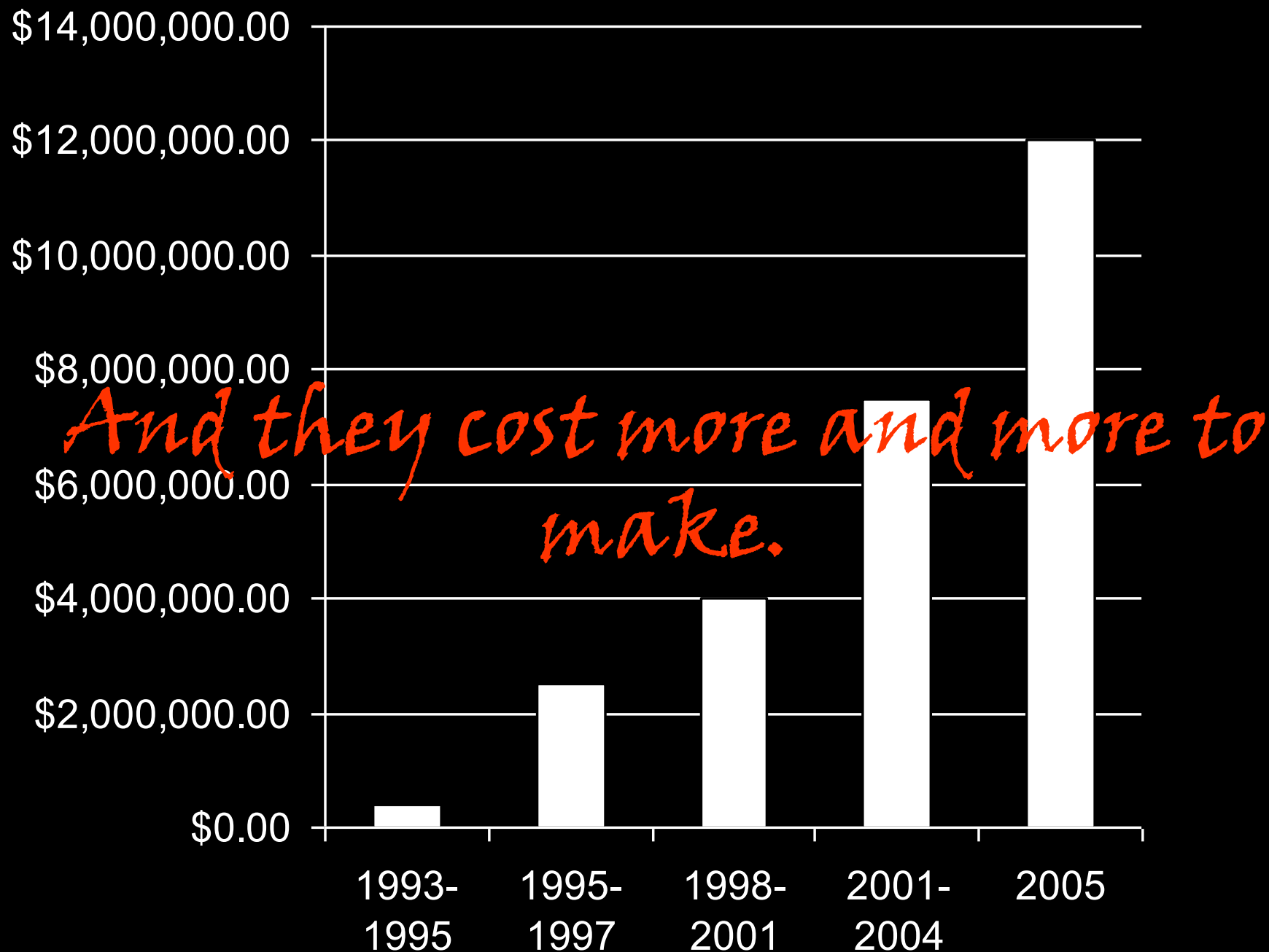
Online
Gaming
RIP

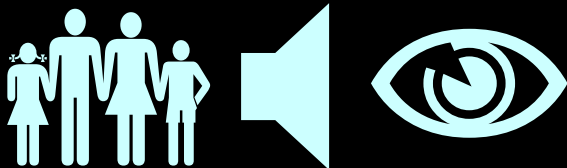
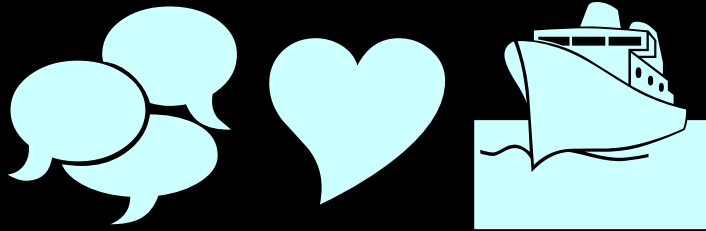
*We can extrapolate, however,
from what there is now, to
what may yet be.*



Let's start with today.

*More and more games are
coming on the market,*





*Places of
commerce
became
places of self-
expression
again.*

[illegible]

*Online worlds went from worlds
to games...*

...and then sort of back to
worlds with embedded games in
them.

*The web changed from being
text links to HTML pages and
then to services.*

Now we live in a world of
dynamic change:

~~Need to keep learning~~
Need to keep learning

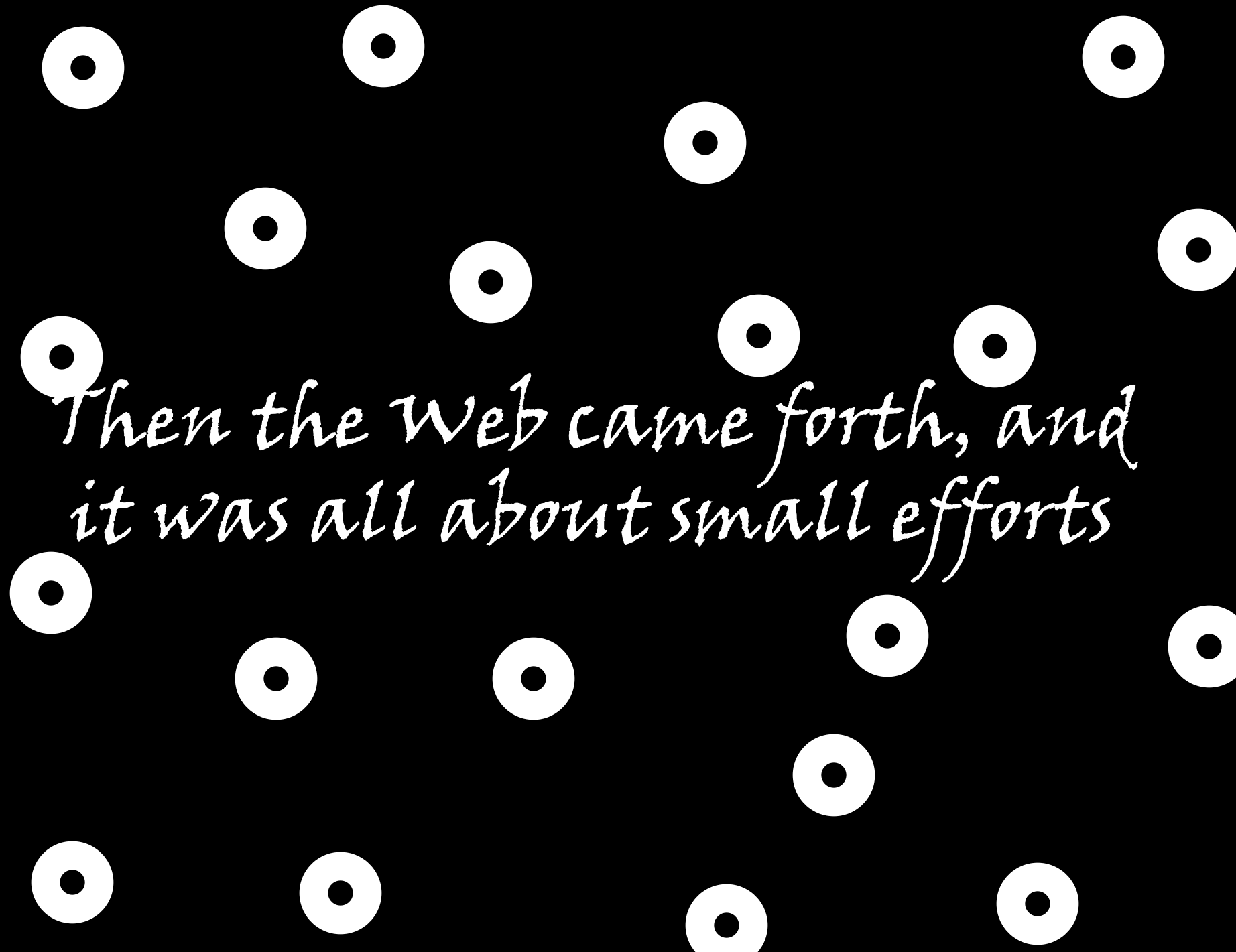
*Look at the history of the
Internet*

*It began as a military-
scientific preserve*

*Then it became an academic
playground*



*Then closed services ruled the
day*



*Then the web came forth, and
it was all about small efforts*

eBay

Amazon

Yahoo

Google

*That became large and
corporate*

*Today the web is
about small pieces
loosely joined*



*The games have followed the
same path*

They were military sims,

Then playful MUD spaces,

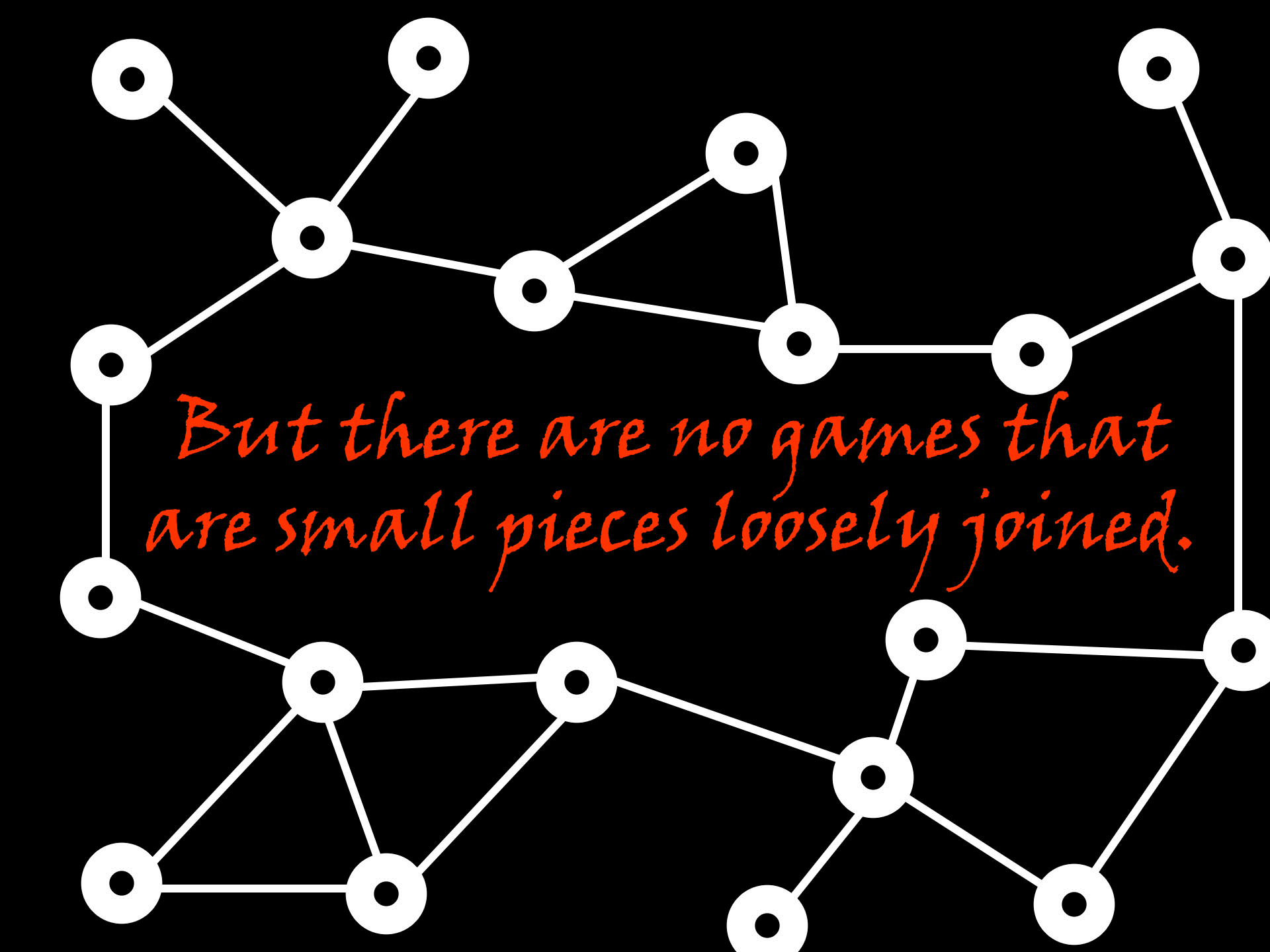


*Then online services where you
paid by the minute,*

- Ultima Online
- Meridian 59
- The Realm
- Kingdom of the Winds
- Dark Sun Online

Then the burst
of MMO
creativity in
1995-96,

which has led to the big
business life that we lead
today.



*But there are no games that
are small pieces loosely joined.*



We see times that are free,



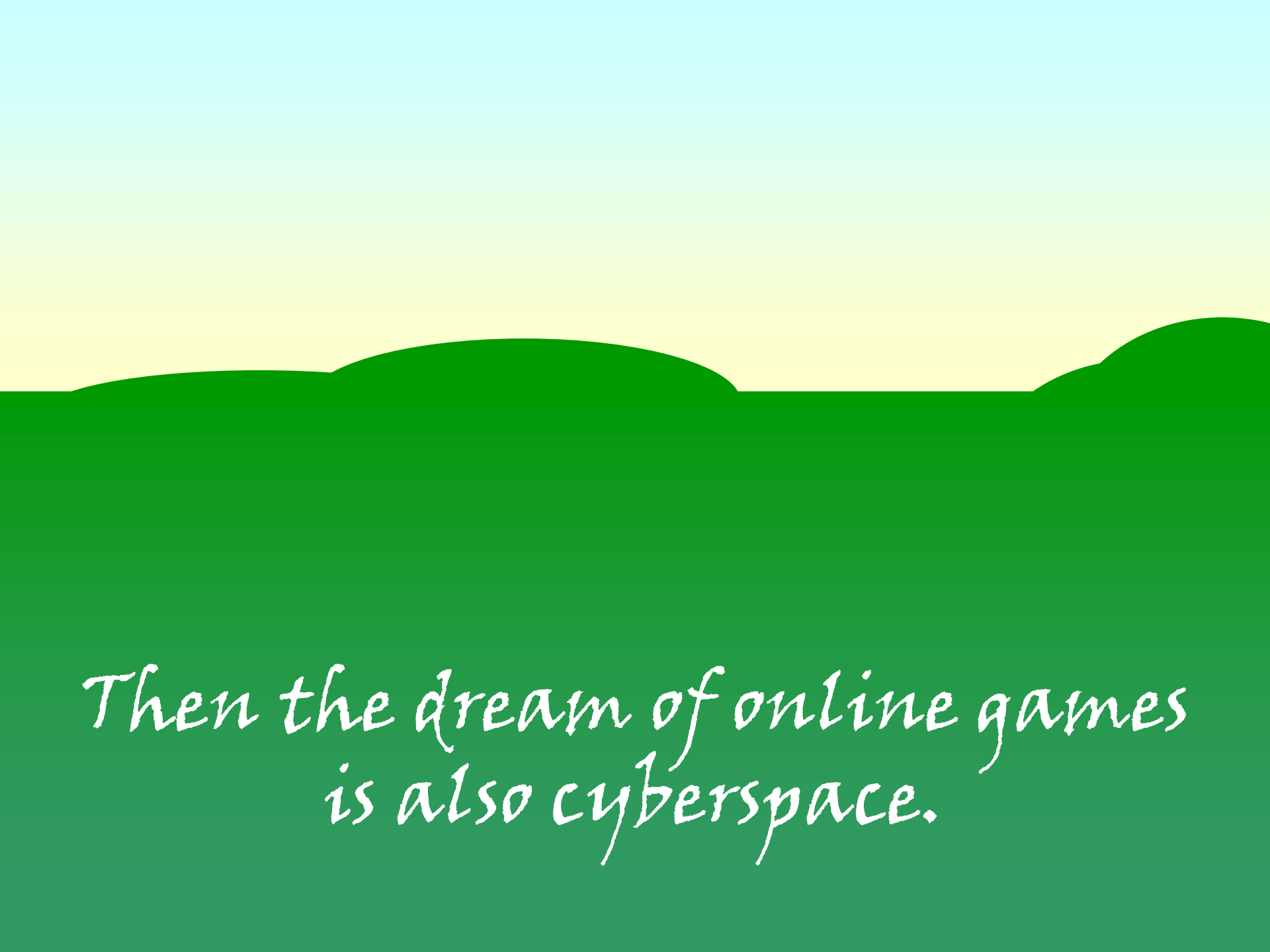
And games that are casual,

But there are no games that
are user-built the way the web
is.



The image features a stylized landscape. The foreground is a solid green field. The background is a gradient sky transitioning from red at the horizon to purple at the top. The text is written in a white, cursive font in the lower half of the image.

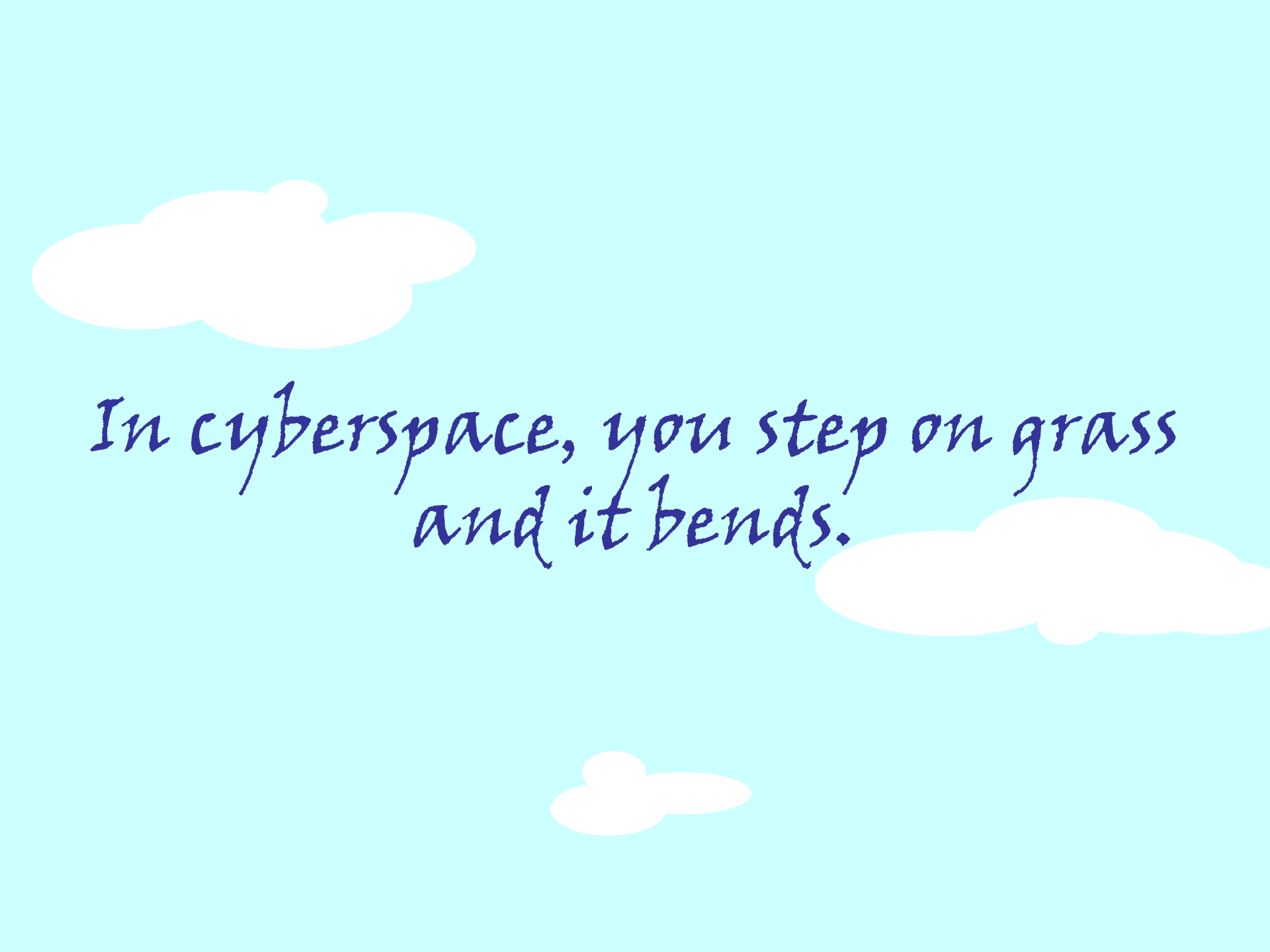
*If the dream of the web is
cyberspace,*



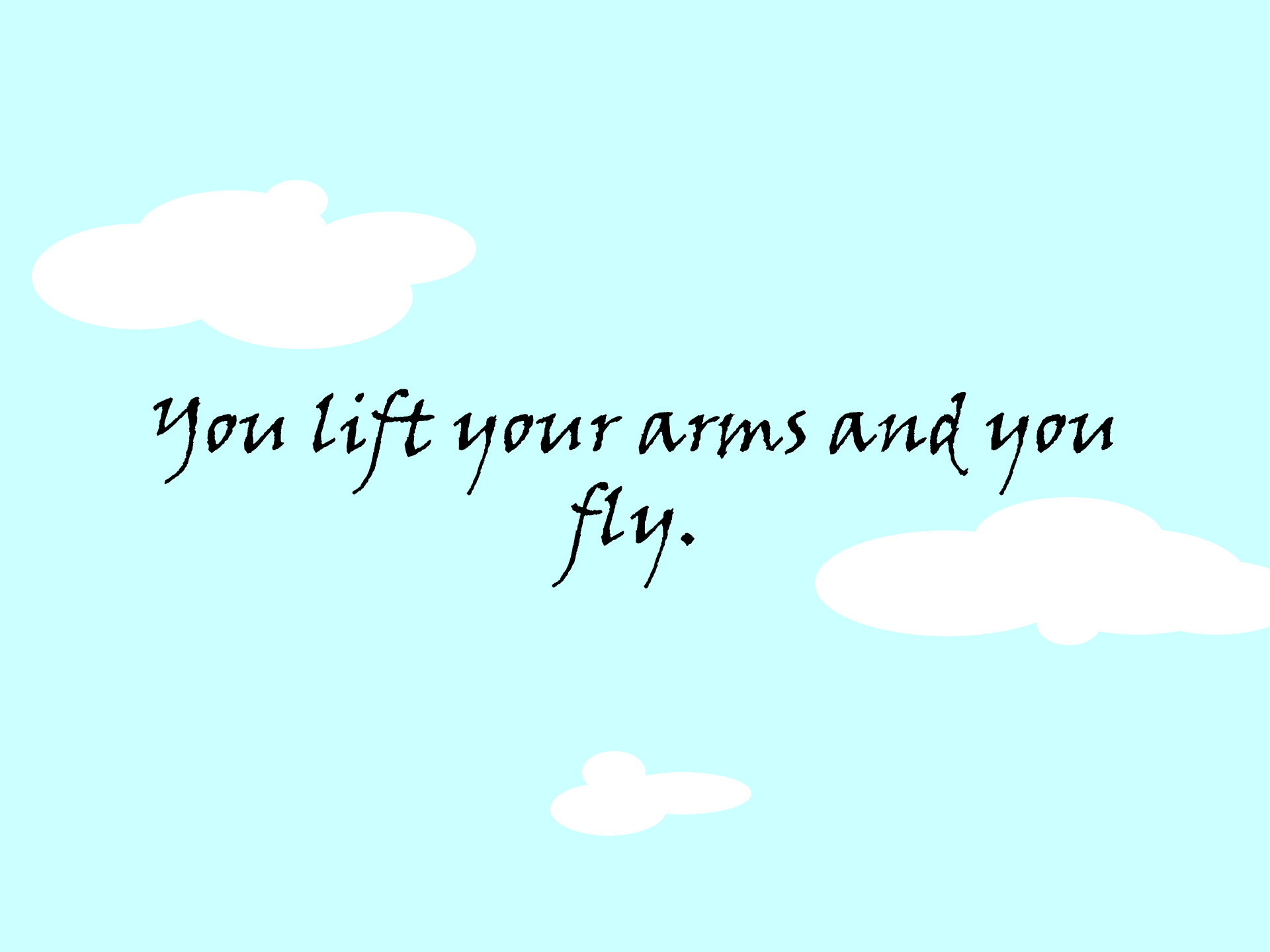
*Then the dream of online games
is also cyberspace.*



*But we've barely scratched the
surface.*

The image features a light blue background with three stylized, white, fluffy clouds. One cloud is in the upper left, another is in the lower right, and a smaller one is at the bottom center. The text is written in a dark blue, cursive font, positioned between the upper left and lower right clouds.

*In cyberspace, you step on grass
and it bends.*



*You lift your arms and you
fly.*

*You see seasons march across the
landscape from your high up
vantage point in the sky.*

*You open a window in the
world and see your favorite
blog.*

*You build your house with
gestures and form a castle in
the air.*

*You listen to your favorite
music and invite friends over
for a virtual salon.*

*You play a game of football, or
race cars, or slay dragons—it
doesn't matter.*



Help you find **your** destiny.



*And that's what it's really all
about.*