

Firstly, congratulations of course to Lone for completing this game. There are things that were done well, but at the same time, there were things that...weren't. I think it's important that these things are mentioned, for the sake of future F-games. Some mistakes are blatant, some might be opinionated, but I think that for every criticism someone has, it should be listened to and considered to a degree. I have a unique role in this game in that I am a "co-GM" and have been able to observe this game from both sides of the party. My opinions will reflect that, and be as unbiased as possible. Which means I have things to say to the players and to Lone himself. I have some thoughts that I will organize into a nice, long, comprehensive post that you don't have to read, but I highly suggest you do if you are planning on running a future game.

The Tribulations of Having a Co-GM

For the record, I want to start that when I intended to co-GM this game, I didn't really think the workload I would have received would be...so little. It might have been my fault, but I didn't get a sense that my role in this game would be to *just* answer questions, that I didn't even really have the capacity to answer, so in a sense I didn't have a role in this game *at all*. Again, if Lone intended to make it clear that my involvement would be minimal, and I didn't catch that, it would be my fault.

That being said, for future GMs, if you decide to embark on the journey of having someone run the game with you, I think you should consider letting them have a greater role in the game. I'm not even talking about creative control. While I think sharing creative control should be in place, there were things Lone should have done with me that he didn't.

I didn't even really get an opportunity to proof-read anything. None of the executions were screened to me beforehand. I didn't see most of the alibis until after they were completed and sent off to their respective person. If I'm not hand-in-hand creating the alibi with the creator, how am I supposed to answer a question like "what does the water dripping in Ohishi's RC mean?" I don't fucking know, I had no involvement in that alibi so how am I supposed to answer that question?

And it does have a mental aspect to having such little involvement, too. I'm not even listed as a co-GM on the main post. Hell, not even the *sign-up* page. I wasn't even considered a co-GM **before the game started**. No one really considers I had any role in F2 at all. And they're right. My contribution to this game was making a few suggestions in regards to quality, and playing the ever lovable Monomi. That's it. I was also able to help plan out some of the murders. But the dangerous thing about not letting your co-GM do much of anything is they stop caring.

I've made mistakes as a co-GM, sure. I should have probably planned some murders more, and actually voiced these concerns to Lone. Despite falling on deaf ears, sometimes.

[Pancakez]: *not even really co-modding at this point, just being a BP.*

[Lone]: *eh, the point. how about I give you a job. answer all of SC's questions for me. including when he asks for music requests.*

[Pancakez]: *no thanks, :p*

[Lone]: *well then, stop complaining about having nothing to do*

Not like none of my suggestions weren't listened to. I've suggested several changes throughout the course of the game that made it in the final product. But many times, that has not been the case. The second trial was a good example. I have chat-logs of how I, admittedly a bit late, asked Lone and F to change the smoking gun. I didn't have any ideas, because they started planning so suddenly, but when the smoking gun happened and the players had to guess that ridiculous guess, I just sat there, apathetic.

You have to give your GM work to do, otherwise they don't feel involved in the game. That is, if you are intending for them to actually be alongside you, running the game in the first place. I wasn't even made aware of the executions. Never asked for any input in them. Rarely asked to proofread alibis for grammar or for any mistakes. Could barely make any announcements because I was not really made aware of administrative choices.

My mistake was not communicating my dissatisfactions to Lone clearly enough. I take full responsibility for that, so anyone who plans to hop alongside someone else's game should be ready to argue with your other half for the duration of the game, and get your time's worth. Otherwise, you really are just sitting out of a game you could be playing in.

In my defense, it's clear Lone wanted full control of everything behind the scenes, so I doubt my role could have been expanded if I were accused of complaining about having nothing to do, even though I was stating a true statement and the only extra job Lone was willing to give me at the time was babysitting Southern Corn on Court-Records. Thanks, Lone, I feel really appreciated.

As I sit here watching people react to this game, I'm nodding at the lack of recognition, fully aware that I didn't have the opportunity to do enough to warrant any. In the end, I can't lie: I felt cheated, not only out of being a potential player of F2, but if I ever wanted to GM another F-game, I'm sure I'd have to wait a while since I already "had my turn." Which is a shame – I'd love to actually have a creative part in handling an F-game, or hell, even an administrative one where I at **least** get to make some announcement. But that won't happen until what, at the very least a year, and at that point, who can say if I'll still be around?

The Characters

Everyone's problem with F1's cast can be summed up with two statements.

- 1) Too nice.
- 2) Self inserts.

The problem with F2's cast, and this is mostly the fault of the player, as it was in F1, can be summed up with two statements.

- 1) Too mean.
- 2) Boring.

Obviously, this is more of an opinionated aspect rather than objective. The strength of F1's cast was how united everyone felt though, at least to the players. People were pleasant, and we had group unity throughout the myriad of events we had planned ourselves on the Discord channel.

On the flipside, you have the F2 cast, staring blankly at a board game, not making a move. I liked to use that example a lot in the Discord channel while venting out my frustrations about the cast, but it really is a great example to use. The interaction was just not there. A cast is not just about individual characters, it's about the strength of the group as a whole. Can the lack of group interactions be a fault of the setting? To an extent, yes. F1 obviously had more exotic environments to send your characters around and have fun with.

Blaming the setting entirely though is just plain wrong. How can you blame the setting for skipping Colin's wedding ceremony? That isn't the setting, that's poor communication between the players, as players were confused as to if the wedding was even going to happen. How can you blame the setting for being unable to start a board game? You can't. You can blame it to an extent, which is totally fair, but not taking some of the blame yourselves is deflection and absolutely wrong. I think this is objective. We *planned out* so many things in F1, but I saw none of that in F2. Heck, School Mode had greater planning, and I think the SM cast benefited from strong group interaction.

Another issue I have with the characters are their lack of willingness to change. I'm so glad you made a character designed to be stoic and unfriendly throughout the entirety of the game. Really, I am. But as someone *watching* the game, which you might not care about...it sucked. Unless you plan out some linear series of events with the GM, you have to be willing to change.

It's a strong idea to pre-plan murders for this very reason. You can circumvent the problem of a player's stubbornness by planning this out and forcing them to either undergo growth or highlighting their personality quirks by sending them through scenarios that will make those quirks flourish. But if the GM does not do that, then you as a player have to understand that if you cannot make necessary changes, your character might suffer as a whole. You can take the risk and ignore this warning, and your character might actually turn out strong, but from looking at many, *many* characters in F2, it's a risk I wouldn't take.

It should be mentioned, it is not entirely the GM's control. Here's an example. In order to make the characters have more fun, it was agreed that many of you would go drinking and get drunk. Sounds fun, right? Was it my mistake though, to present that "drink" in an over-the-top way? Listen, I understand. Diaper juice, is gross. I wouldn't drink it in real life. But this is a *game*. F1 had *body-switching*. You're telling me, because it's not "in-character," you're not gonna come up with a unique scenario for your character to drink some weird juice? I might be underselling it, but come on. We played hentai in F1. Fucking hentai.

You absolutely *need* to be flexible. I think after watching F2, that is absolutely apparent.

Some other comments: personality is a subjective thing, so I won't drone on too long about that. In my opinion, it's an exaggeration to say F2's personalities were better than F1. I mean, they were for many characters, but for others, they survived for 4-5 chapters and you could not differentiate them from the most boring F1 character. In F2, there was an unspoken agreement to add some flair to each character, and for individual personalities, that worked out, but for some others, it either didn't come out or was just non-existent.

Another thing to point out: FTEs should be second priority to the main thread. The main thread needs to have the strongest interactions, because that's where events can be read by everyone involved. Otherwise, things might come out of left-field. For example, many romances felt so...tacked on. When in reality, it wasn't tacked on. It was just developed in a separate chat that only you and the other party can read. I won't call out any F2 romances, but I will point to F1, where the romance between Matt and Alchie were at least understandable because of their interaction in the main thread. And that's just one issue that I think FTEs really created. (EDIT: I should point out I had full access to the FTEs, I'm speaking about other players.)

Is this the fault of the system, or the fault of the players? Well, it's definitely both, because I know for a fact that the players were aware that they weren't doing dogshit in the actual thread. Don't pin the blame *too* much on the system, the torch will always fall on the players in the end in issues like this.

GM and Player Interaction

I will preface this saying I knew a lot of things behind the scenes. I knew many things about how Lone wanted to run the game, about the story, about the players, many things. So, here's a summary of how I felt about the communication between the GM and the player...it was bad. On both sides.

To start, the GM. This is going to be very important for future GMs. You disagree with someone's criticism? You hate a player so badly you wanna just strangle them? You're fed up with negativity so much that you have to point out that you're making a hasty retreat? The solution, at least with Discord, is simple. You *ignore it*. That's bad for me to say, since I think you should be able to listen to feedback, positive or negative, and apply it into the game, but the bottom line is I think some people aren't really capable of that. You need to be prepared for the worst when creating a game, and if you don't think you are capable of that, you should not sign up for a game.

You cannot show contempt towards your players. Your attitudes towards the players can greatly have an effect on how they feel towards the game, and you as the person running the game. I think Lone messed up on many occasions, and it's important for him to realize that, but it's important for others to realize what you shouldn't do and should do as the administrative role. I saw instances of this early: you cannot call feedback "nagging," that's just rude. If the players are being rude back, well, then suck it up. You are the **boss** and in that chair, you need to have a set of standards.

The biggest fault of the player was something I made really apparent throughout my time on the Discord server. I was probably being very annoying about it and nagging a lot, but for future games, *focus on the game you are playing*.

Disclaimer: There is nothing wrong about planning future characters or making plans for future games. What is wrong, is letting that take precedence over the game you are literally participating in at that very moment. I would be *pissed* if I were running a game, and people were already moving on to the next one, and at times, that is how it felt. You can make all the claims you want that you are just "getting ready" and that things aren't "set in stone" but that's horseshit. I would feel very unmotivated as an administrator if I saw that we already had soft-locked GMs *two games down the line, before the game was even **halfway completed*** because I have no idea at that point on how much **energy you are putting into the game**. In fairness, if you are dead, it obviously doesn't apply to you. Not to name any names, but I'm talking about those who were...alive. I'm surprised and happy that Lone took our particular situation well.

While I think making plans this early is harmful, at the **very least**, as a **courtesy** to the GM, keep these plans in private. I'm sure many GMs would appreciate it. Keeping plans in private also have the benefit of letting others have the opportunity to plan out *their* plans. When you soft-lock a spot, for example, "I'm already planning a story and murders for F7," then people get the mentality that you are running that game. And because we are nice people, we sort of just give you the role, since we don't want you to feel bad that you made a plan for this game, and we swept those plans under the rug by taking the spot ourselves. It creates a nasty situation **that negatively impacts morale, and when morale goes down, so does the quality of the game.** That's not exclusive to "forum games."

I think it's redundant for me to say this to several people, since I am aware that I have been bitching about this topic for a while, but this is an important thing to keep in mind for future games, should the games even last that long. Feel free to disagree with me, but I think at the very least, I'm being fair.

Again, I don't want people to think I have problems with people planning things in advance, but people have to understand that doing things too early can be harmful. For example, when discussing a fantasy setting, there were a myriad of posts saying they wouldn't want to do that game because they had already planned a complete character that would not work for that setting. What if the game was set in the 1600s, and your character was the Ultimate Computer Scientist? There is a certain extent to where you have to be reactive. That being said, changing talents can also be an aspect of flexibility. You should be willing to change a character if you like them enough in order to make them work for the game.

Subjective Thoughts

Here are just some subjective thoughts I had about the game. These are thoughts regarding the quality of things such as trials, story, etc., and as a result, you are free to ignore these if you aren't interested in hearing my thoughts about these aspects.

That means that the thoughts I had before, I thought had at least a semblance of objectivity, but regardless, let's take a look at some of my thoughts about certain aspects of the game.

The Trials

I honestly think the alibi discussion worked well, because it gave the players time to react. Now granted, barely anyone reacted, but that's on the players for making their characters seem so greatly uninterested throughout the course of the game. Otherwise, it worked the same as F1,

where the first day was always done by sharing alibis in order to jumpstart discussion. Aside from the investigations, which I wish were more detailed and allowed for character interaction like in F1, the structure was essentially the same and I think worked okay for the most part.

I'm not an expert on murder mysteries, but I thought most of the murders were not done well at all. That's my honest opinion, and I think that's because of the "simple but effective" mantra that was done with a majority of these trials. For the record, we should establish that simple **does not mean easy**. One of Lone's rebukes about these trials not being effective was because no one was "wiping the floor" with them.

All simple means is that the **amount of evidence there is to discover is less than a complex trial**. And in order to ramp up difficulty, you had to cover up a LOT of the evidence, which made these simple trials difficult. The best example of this is F2-2, which was an absolute disaster – the murder weapon hardly was required in order to find the identity of the killer, which was a shame because the concept of feeding the eel to the students was a great one. No, the only thing that mattered was the *guesswork* required of Zuzu's helmet; most of the issues around these trials are the lack of solid evidence which leads to simply guesswork. It's not my place to say that you shouldn't be satisfied with these murders, so if you were, then that's great. But I know I would not be satisfied.

The Setting

I think it was a crucial mistake not to take advantage of the "prison" setting. This school did *not* feel like a prison in any means. Oh wow, the kids are sleeping in cells. How prison-like.

Just for the sake of this game, I think Lone was trying to avoid tying in the prison to the story, but that's no excuse to not take any creative liberties with it at all. I was never even trying to make the prison "hyper-realistic," maybe a bit edgy, but in the end, there's nothing to differentiate the prison from a high-school. One of the reasons I saw of why the characters did almost nothing throughout the course of daily life is because the setting was just uninteresting. While I refuse to believe that's the majority reason, it's a valid point.

The setting also plays a crucial role in setting up unique murder situations. Obviously, F1 had the weird setting that let it play around with lots of cool situations, such as body swapping, but that's the importance of an interesting setting. Even if F2's prison setting isn't as exotic as a space station, you can at least take advantage of it to give your murder a personality.

The Alibis

I won't say much here since I think Lone understood a majority of the players wanted detailed investigation. The alibis were made more detailed late into the game, and I think going into the

future, people will at least want detailed alibis. But kudos to Lone for being able to change up his system on this front.

My Feelings on the Characters

My intention for this piece was to be as respectful as possible. Therefore, as reactions to characters are obviously subjective, I won't go through each character and shit on each one I don't like. If you're interested on my opinions on that, I'm not that uncomfortable to hide it, but I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings here.

That being said, I think a lot of the characters needed work? I think a part of it was because we didn't get a sense of backstory, which traces back to the FTE issue where certain people know certain aspects of each character, but I as someone watching the game do not, and therefore have no real reason to care about that character. That's a bad thing to do as a player, for the record, since I can survive till Chapter 4, and still have no feelings about someone else.

I think it'd be better instead to congratulate certain characters on accomplishing roles that I think were necessary for the game, so that others can try and emulate those successes in the future. That being said, it does not mean you should carbon copy that character. Because for a couple reasons: one, this is my opinion. And two, it would be weird.

I think these were the best moments that accomplished a certain something within the group. If you aren't mentioned, that doesn't mean I don't like your character or think you did something wrong, I think these are just things that people did well with their characters. On the flip side, if you are mentioned here, that doesn't mean I liked your characters either. I'd rather just focus on the positives.

Simon & Raymond get special mentions for being the most flexible with their characters and trying to give them growth and change. Whether or not these characters were successful in these are debatable, but they should get special mention for at least *trying*.

Colin & Ohishi both added interesting personality in the game without, in my opinion, being too overbearing about it. It's important to have different personalities in a group dynamic in order to keep everyone from being stale. That's not to say everyone has to be wild & quirky, but I think these are the characters that just did it best.

Maribelle was probably the one who felt the most united within the group? Using the term "mom of the group" is sort of weird, but that's the impression I got from the general thread.

I think something else to be added, and this should probably go into where I mentioned the alibis, is that the alibis *can* give a character something interesting to react to and take

advantage of. Forgive me for calling you out, but I know PB was a bit frustrated with Simon throwing Giles into the incinerator, but stuff like that is the stuff you can use to make your character more interesting. In F1, there were instances like the fire drills for Van, Sakura's weird origami escape methods, Ryuji's cross-dressing, the Matt & Alchie romance, and most of those were decided by the GM, and written into each alibi.

Overall, I will admit, my impression on the cast is not very positive, but focus on the things you did well with your character and move on.

Conclusion

My final feelings of this game? I won't lie, I was very indifferent throughout a large portion of the game because of how mishandled I was as a co-GM, but even with that, I had an insider's look into a large portion of the game. In the end, my overall thoughts of this game lean on the negative side, but I think some of the experiences during F2 were good ones, and other experiences will help the future of the F-games in the future if we are able to learn from them.