The behind-the-scene of writing Rebecca Robinson

A lot of invisible work went into the creation and the writing of Rebecca. I had quickly abandoned Season 3 because of the overwhelming amount of posts, but I didn't do nothing during that time. I imagined the early concept of Rebecca and worked on her since then. This making-of is a compilation of actual preparatory notes coupled with commentaries made for the occasion.

1. The concept

The first idea behind Rebecca's character was to make her... a comic relief. She was supposed to be just a funny psychopath. But the fact that she was an ex-child soldier was also set from the beginning, and obviously, the more I developed her backstory, the darker the character became.

I don't usually like to use this adjective, but because of those two polar opposite sides of her personality, Rebecca became a fairly complex character. On one side, she is funny, but on the other, she is tragic. She is hot-blooded and reliable. She is murderous and caring. She is fearless and afraid. She is strong and fragile. Because of this whole contradiction, the character became pretty interesting, I think.

What I hope most is that you found her funny.

2. Sources of inspiration

As someone spotted it, Rebecca is mainly inspired by anime characters.

Concept: Jonah (Jormungand), Trevor (GTAV), Sasha (Attack on Titan)

Personality: Chinatsu (Jormungand), Revy (Black Lagoon)

Appearance: Suzuha (Steins;Gate), York (Deadly Premonition), Mikasa (Attack on Titan)

Suzuha from Steins; Gate is also the character who served as my forum avatar for the duration of the season.

It was not intended but it could be noted that the final version of Rebecca has similarities with Balalaika from Black Lagoon for the "ex-military woman becoming mafia with her troops" thing, and Gunslinger Girls was also reported on the subject of child soldiers.

3. Name

The name Rebecca is taken from Revy (Black Lagoon), and Robinson from JJ Robinson (Gatchaman Crowds). Originally, Rebecca's family name was John. The weirdness of having a first name as a surname was meant to represent the silliness of her personality. But then I realized that she would be mainly called by her surname in-game, so I changed it in favor of an alliteration with a name that sounded less generic.

4. Ideas list

At some point, I started taking notes on the character, setting a lot of ideas in advance.

- -Rebecca Robinson is a fake name she has been using since the end of the civil war of her native country. She got an actual passport under that name from XCOM.
- -Nicknames: "Black Dog" as an obedient but insane child soldier, she doesn't like it to be mentioned again. "Crazy Rebby" (in English) or "Big Sister" as a mafia leader.
- -She gives names to her guns.
- -She calls her fellows soldiers "brother" or "sister" if she has fight alongside them.
- -Makes poems and songs about aliens (haikus for simplicity).
- -Panic causes diarrhea.
- -Eats a lot. Childish and simple tastes in food.
- -Doesn't dream. Only dream in the Psi-pod.
- -She is an ascetic person; she never consumes any drug or alcohol.
- -Never swear.
- -Refuses scars to be hidden with plastic surgery.
- -Asexual.
- -Can be a mother figure for others. She is protective of children.
- -Likes animals, especially dogs.
- -Is wary of psychological experts.
- -Worried that her home country is not part of the Council and therefore not protected by XCOM.
- -Will get more aggressive or not depending of some of the Commander's choices.
- -Will keeps track of what kind of aliens she has killed. Wants to make a "collection" of all of them.
- -Act stupidly but is actually pretty smart. She remembers every person she has killed. She gives names to the ones she didn't know and recites the entire list from time to time. It's the "warrior chant".

As you can see, not all the ideas were used, either because I didn't got the time or the chance to display them, or because they felt too ridiculous and inappropriate, like the songs-making and the "warrior chant". Some others were only hinted at, like the asexuality, and finally some were slightly changed, like Rebby's "stomach problems" which happened from any stressful mission even if she didn't technically panic, because panic from her ended up never happening.

5. Inspirational Musics

Why. Or Why Not, the ending song of Higurashi When They Cry, the anime Pretty representative of Rebecca overall mindset.

<u>Vogel im Käfig</u>, from the Attack on Titan OST I mostly listened to this one when I immersed myself in Rebecca's mindset during her breakdown period.

A remix of <u>U.N. Owen was her?</u>, from Touhou Project Perfect to get in a psychopathic mood.

<u>Ichiban no Takaramono</u>, from Angel Beats OST For Jeanne's feelings toward Rebecca in her diary.

6. First background version

There's basically four parts in Rebecca's story: child soldier, mafia leader, XCOM soldier, and then a potential epilogue (more on that last part later).

In the first draft I wrote for the biography of Rebecca John, the second part of the story was very different. She had never made companions during the war, and when it finished she was recruited by an international arms dealer as a bodyguard. The big difference with this scenario is that Rebecca had no home whatsoever to long for, she was much more independent and carefree. Inspired by Trevor from GTAV and to make things more interesting, I made *her* into the arms dealer. Her new situation as a mafia leader and children benefactor helped me flesh out the reasonable and motherly side of her personality. Inspired by the older version of Suzuha (from Steins;Gate) in one of the spin-off manga, I also made Rebecca a bit older (John was around 25, Robinson is around 30).

7. Multiple endings

In the case Rebecca survived the season, I had imagined from the start the different directions her epilogue could take depending on what had happened during the season. The major factors were the evolution of Rebby's aggressiveness, the survival of her home, and how other people's choices and mentalities influenced hers (both fellow soldiers and the Commander).

A few others events could have heavily influenced her: becoming a Mech trooper would have been an immediate bad-ending trigger. Becoming a psionic would have highly intensified whatever evolution she was going through. Becoming the Volunteer would have gave her the temptation of taking the Ethereals power for herself but she would have eventually obtained redemption through her self-sacrifice.

A bad ending would basically revolve around Rebecca becoming a merciless killer once again, most probably working for the ambitious Lucy Ferdinand. If her home survived, the people from the Ranch would follow her in the G-Woman's plans.

A good ending would revolve around her setting into a new and more positive life, potentially as some kind of international benefactor.

The possible endings of the first version of the character, Rebecca John, were a bit different. Bad ending meant going back to shady businesses without caring much about others, and for a good ending, I had specifically imagined her settling in Texas, working as a self-defense teacher and becoming an influential member of a women's rights organization.

I don't know really know why, but I found interesting the idea of Rebecca Robinson becoming disabled due to a grave injury at some point and needing an exoskeleton derived from the Mech technology to use her legs again and continue the fight. I am noting this here because I had rather imagined it as something that would happen to Rebecca *after* the events of XCOM.

8. Home location

While the character application left that fact ambiguous, afterwards I quickly decided to canonize that Rebecca's imaginary country was somewhere in Africa.

The state of the Ranch and its inhabitants was thus dependent of Africa overall panic level. As seen above, the original idea was to have Rebecca worrying about her home from time to time, but since Africa went to shit very quickly, it changed to her home being immediately lost and her having a mental breakdown over it.

9. Romance

Every time I create a character for XCOM roleplay, I purposefully give them traits which are the opposite of what was popular in the previous season. My barely-used character for season 3 was a very composed and professional man because the trend of season 2 was unstable and hot-blooded hero-wannabes with a personal revenge to take against the aliens.

In season 3, at least toward the end of it, the main trend was romance, so I made Rebecca impossible to have a romance with, in particular by making her asexual and aromantic (in other words, she finds nobody sexually attractive and she is not interested in romance). Also, the reason why I gave Rebecca a facial scar is not so much to make her look like a badass rather

than to make her unattractive (by our society standards in any case). It's one of the reasons why the scar itself is coupled with other disfiguring features: the injured eye and the permanent loss of hair. I also gave her a few wrinkles even though she isn't that old, and I implied that she was very muscular through the journals mentioning her intense love for working out.

It can be noted that Rebecca has a particular body image. She doesn't consider herself to be attractive, but it's not like that feeling is bothering her that much. She is more interested in her physical shape rather than her attractiveness. In any case, she would have been really surprised if someone told her that they find her attractive (Jeanne did find her attractive, but never told her).

10. Secondary characters

Recurring secondary characters were forbidden for this season, but I played with the rule by making one-time characters whose purpose was to help developing Rebecca outside of the XCOM setting. In the end, I ended up actually cheating by bringing them back for the conclusion.

Lucy Ferdinand, the G-Woman.

When I saw that many people also included a more or less detailed mention of their character's encounter with a G-Man, I decided to change Rebecca's G-Man into a woman, just to make things different, which at the same time gave me an idea for making her into an actual character. Instead of using my application for a detailed rendition of the meeting, I waited for the first occasion Rebecca was not sent on a mission to do that in a journal with a flashback. The woman got named Lucy Ferdinand, which is... a pun. **Lucy Fer**dinand. Once you see it, the symbolism is pretty obvious: Rebecca made a pact with the devil.

At first, I wanted to make her a relative of Officer Bradford, and I imagined the Bradfords as a powerful and patriotic American family heavily involved in the diplomacy of the Council and the XCOM operation. But since someone was playing Officer Bradford for this season, I had to cut that part out. I was also planning to maybe propose her as a main character next season and play her, but once again Officier Bradford's role ended up being very similar to what I had imagined doing with her. Lucy is basically just an evil version of Johnny Asakawa's Officer Bradford.

Lucy is inspired by two characters: Kyoko Kirigiri from Danganronpa, and Saber from Fate/Zero.

Jeanne Robinson, Rebecca's first lieutenant

She is named after Jeanne d'Arc, for no particular reason. As many of Rebecca's companions did, she chose the same family name as her when they left their past identities behind them.

She is another child soldier, who admired Rebecca for her fearlessness, without realizing her own courage. Since she was invented after the beginning of the season and she died immediately after her introduction, I haven't developed a lot of ideas concerning her.

If anyone is wondering, Jeanne is lesbian.

I invented the idea of "Rebecca finding ways to reconcile her familial affection with Jeanne's romantic feelings with non-sexual affectionate gestures, like kissing her on the forehead" after reporting her death, because I felt bad about it. What was just an idea in my head became canon when I wrote Jeanne's diary.

She is never physically described (apart from her height), but I picture her in my head with a similar appearance to Mikoto Urabe from Mysterious Girlfriend X.

Rebecca's mentor

An unused idea was to develop who exactly had taught her skills to Rebecca when she was young. The only thing I have ever determined about this character was for him to be male.

11. Commentary of all the journals

Journal 01

I'm pretty satisfied of this one. The transitions are fluid and it has an overall theme with the habits. Giving a precise timestamp to the journal also allowed me to make a transmedia joke: Rebecca hopes that she will be able to sleep without interruption tonight, and if you watch the video and compare the time, you can see that she will not. Ideally, that's how all of my journals would be written.

I felt pretty lucky with this start of the game: Rebecca really needed to be on the front lines in order for her character to work as planned, and the assault class was also perfect for her. Having the first alien kill was also pretty good writing material.

I learned later in the Think Tank that having something similar to a bar in a military base is actually pretty common, and thus Rebecca's reaction to it was retconned as naiveté due to her particular background.

The very first paragraph is a hint about Rebecca's asexuality: "As if I could help them with that", "you're the ones obsessed with that!"

"February is a short month." Before writing this, I actually check if 2015 was indeed not going to be a bissextile year.

The "hunting collection" was kind of an Interface Spoiler, since at that time Rebecca had not way to know that XCOM would meet different species of aliens and that she would want to kill them all. There is also a small spelling error: sectoid is written with an ï. This is due to the spelling of the French version of the game, "Sectoïde", which got me confused.

Journal 02

One of the problems with Rebecca bipolar personality is that others roleplayers were at first describing her like a hard-ass, based on her dark background, while I intended myself to have her act in a more silly manner. The biggest example of this dissonance happens with the second mission, where she was described as unflinching when hit by the same plasma that made Arsène panics, while I described her being in severe pain at the medbay. This kind of retconned itself into Rebecca's mind getting too hazy under the adrenaline of the battle to fully sense the pain at that moment. And later, she luckily gained the Will to Survive perk which made her resistance into an official thing.

This journal contains the first instance of direct speech from Rebecca. I tried to show that her pronunciation of English is imperfect, but I quickly abandoned this idea in the next journals since I don't actually know how to write badly-pronounced English (not the kind of things you learn in school!)

I had considered having Rebecca hearing Arsène screaming in French and transcribing the sentences in the journal, but even if I can do that, there is no reason for Rebecca to be able to. I can't see why she would have ever learn French.

Journal 03

As said somewhere above, I waited for the first week with Rebecca not going on a mission to produce a flashback of her encounter with the G-woman. I have already said a lot about Lucy Ferdinand and I don't think there is anything worth repeating about her in particular.

Rebecca being dominated by someone else for the first time was interesting and fun to write.

The "bet" Lucy talks about is of course a meta-reference to the game, in which Rebecca's role and survival depended a lot on random numbers and simple luck.

Rebecca's home got named "the Ranch" and I gave a few details about it. But I kind of forgot to mention the weapons trade in all of this, which is supposed to be their main source of income.

Two sentences in the dialogue are put between those arrow symbols <>. It indicates that they are spoken in Rebecca's native language.

Starting with this journal, I had Rebecca calling her adopted family her "siblings" instead of her "brothers" in order to be more inclusive of the female members of the group (without having to write "brothers and sisters" which is kind of heavy).

Journal 04

Three different collaborations are mentioned in that one, this was a busy week!

Rebecca was very influenced by her discussion with Arsène... in a bad way. He showed and reminded her that you can live with nothing.

Rebecca's attaching the locket to her arm is symbolic: she is holding together the objects of memories.

Steve's breakdown was supposed to be dramatic, but Rebecca's negative perception of it changed that a bit.

"It's a secret to everybody" is an intended reference to Zelda.

Journal 05

The collaboration with Sarge-Pepper was a bit chaotic and in the end, I made the journal purposefully short in order to suggest Rebecca's distress without actually showing it.

The letter was a good way to show Rebecca's intelligence (and how she is able to temporarily push aside her own feelings for the sake of the mission). She can write English better than she speaks it, and she can be very composed and polite if she feels she needs to, especially to a superior officer.

Rebecca's constant use of letters also shows that she prefers them over emails.

Journal 06

Writing Rebecca's breakdown was pretty hard! I hesitated a lot about how to go with it. In the

end. I was not as direct with it as I could have been.

Because I had decided that Rebecca's home and adopted family were already lost, I had to develop her relationship with them now or never. So I used the Jeanne flashback, which was originally meant for later, and exploited the shock value of revealing her death just afterward.

I feel a bit sorry for killing Jeanne off immediately, especially since she is a queer character. I blame Chris for losing the African countries!

If you don't consider the other hints (and aren't very aware of other sexualities outside of the trio hetero/homo/bi), Rebecca being unable to "reciprocate [Jeanne's] feelings" may make it sound like Rebby is heterosexual. This is kind of an unintentional red herring.

Ackermann is an AK-47, in case this wasn't obvious.

Journal 07

And now Rebecca is back to being a full-on psychopath with no care in the world. It was scary to have her go through this evolution so early on. And I mean that from a writing perspective, as after a change this absolute and backward, what kind of character development was left for her afterward? There was a high risk of her becoming boring. But we may never know if that fear was correct or not.

While looking up things about hair colouring to see how could Rebecca go back to her original color, I discovered that "dye" is actually the wrong word to use when referring to this subject, you have to use "tint" (even if "tinting" sounds a bit silly).

Journal 07-collab with Sarge-Pepper

I feel the need to address this particular collaboration on the same level as my normal journals. After the previous collaboration which led to an unsatisfactory result, this one surprisingly turned out amazing. None of it was planned, I just wrote Rebecca speech on the fly and went all out with it.

I initially meant this scene to be just comical, but it turned out into a great demonstration of Rebecca's bipolar personality.

As you may have read above, the original plan for Rebecca's way of speaking was to *never* have her swear *ever*. But when I wrote her speech, I felt I could instead use this particularity to empathize a moment where she *does* swear (the less you use something, the more powerful it is when you finally do). The whole scene is written from Steve's perspective, but I cheated a little with the narrator suddenly becoming omniscient for the sake of pointing out this aspect.

There is a small incoherence due to Sarge adding a small part at the end without consulting me (and I didn't realize the mistake before I checked the in-game time for my last journal), he has the scene immediately transitioning to the two characters getting called for the Zhang mission, which happens at 2am, while this scene itself is mentioned to happen at 14pm.

This collaboration really made me question if I should diversify the points of view used in my journals. The first speech narration has its advantages but also its limits. Portraying the character from an external point of view can be very powerful in its own way. For obvious reason, we may never what I would have decided in this regard, though I did a little experiment with the last journal.

The content of this collaboration ended up being very ironic since both Rebecca and Steve died just afterwards.

"Constant vigilance" is an intentional Harry Potter reference.

Journal 08

The final journal! And it's quite long because of the double perspective.

Rebecca had no on-going subplot, but I still wanted to give a final note to her story, so I made her secondary characters come back to provide their perspectives on her, which also allowed me to develop them a little more.

Since I felt bad for killing Jeanne, I wrote a journal from her in order to develop her relationship with Rebecca. I hesitated a bit about actually showing the most intimate part of this relationship (felt like voyeurism), but I wanted to show its full extent, even if it's more direct than what I usually do. They also still sleep in the same bed from time to time but I found no way to mention it without making it sound creepy or silly somehow.

It's the only instance of Rebecca being called "Rebby" in-story. She would have allowed other XCOM soldiers she had bonded with to do the same if she had had the time.

While looking up if there was a cool well-known person or character named Rebecca to explain in a retcon from where my Rebecca took her new name, I discovered that the English name of Pocahontas was Rebecca Rolfe, which would have been perfect for Rebby since their stories have some similarities (taken from their family as a child into a new and hostile world). If I could travel through time, I would totally replace the name Robinson with Rolfe.

"I know nobody will ever take her from me" The last hint of Rebecca's asexuality.

A cutted line from Jeanne's journal: "For most people who know her, Rebecca is a scary and scarred woman, but for me she is the most beautiful human I have encountered."

And then, after such an admirative look on Rebecca, we switch to the present with Lucy's cold and calculating perspective, but this was also the occasion to humanize her a bit (though not as much as I had planned in the end)!

Lucy's part is written on purpose in a way that contrasts with Jeanne's affectionate journal. The sudden third-person narrative is there to add to this.

As the text implies, Lucy did this in Japan.

"And, after all, maybe Lucy had took a liking to the woman upon meeting her, and wanted to do something to reward her beyond her death, to repay for her sacrifice" Is this the truth, or not? The ambiguity is on purpose.

There is a Book End with Lucy lacking sleep and jumping because of the alarm, just like Rebecca did in the first journal.

The theme of this final journal is all about "who was Rebecca Robinson?". The two different perspectives of this final journal are there to symbolize the bipolarity of the character.

12. Early prototype: the interview of Rebecca John

This is an extended presentation of the first version of Rebecca which was meant to be included with the application to complete the shorter biography (I don't have Rebecca John's biography anymore unfortunately). It develops some details which are left unexplained in the final version (her eye's health, her mastery of English).

Also, you will see that the writing style I intended to use was different. It's heavily inspired by World War Z.

A detail I also find interesting to note here is that Rebecca was not yet asexual in this version. Rebecca *Robinson* considers objects as only friends, but Rebecca *John* sees them as everything and anything: friends, family, lovers. The reason for that difference is due to the fact that I have been working on Rebecca since almost the beginning of season 3, and it's toward the end of it that the romance became a trend and that I wanted to subvert it.

Video recording of a journalist interview:

[A young, tall woman is sitting on the plastic chair across the table. She is manipulating a Beretta 93R with confident motions.]

"Could you present yourself?"

"Crazy Rebby."

[She continues to focus on the gun for a few seconds, before looking up at someone sitting next to the camera, off-screen.]

"Ah, I mean, that's how the guys call me. Rebby for friends. It's Rebecca on paper, Rebecca John. I don't remember which employer gave me that name. I hope I didn't forget to thank them either. That's useful, a name, an actual one. Do you know that feeling, when you feel freer when you have a new thing chainin' you?"

"We are here to hear about your opinion, not mine. What kind of people employs your services?"

"Hah! Ya know, many people have questioned my intelligence trough my 'hole life, and my ability to do anything else other than holding a gun for that matter, but I'm sure I can remember some terms in my contracts about not saying anything about that. Or else they'll make me into fish food or somethin'."

"You don't need to name anybody, just describe their activities."

"Oh. Arms dealers. I protect arms dealers while they sell their guns, all 'round the world, some big shots. I've been with a big international company that does this shady work in secret. You've probably buy one of their home appliance without having any idea you are also financing their side job."

[She starts to dismount the gun with a small screwdriver.]

"That's what I've been doin' for the last ten years, being a bodyguard for those guys. That's like high-class employment compare to my previous... thing. Good pay, comfortable bed, cool colleagues, great drinking parties, at least when the work goes right, and good pay. And I learned a lot! One of my bosses was super nice, and paid me some lessons in order to perfect my English. Or maybe my broken English was just really annoyin', anyway, best job ever. See this hot guy?"

[She shows all the parts of the now completely dismounted gun.]

"Ah, I mean, you saw him."

[She starts to mount the gun again]

"It's Raphael. Okay, he's not that hot, but you don't find many guys like him. He is a rarity. And I customized him a bit. His grip is like of a friend, his fire power of an able lover, and his rate of fire of a brother bashing the skull of the guy who insulted you. And he is not alone; I've got a whole collection. With the wage I got, I had to put the money to good use."

[With a smile, she looks intensely at the man off-screen]

"Do ya like your job? A good pay's a thing, but nothing's better than a good pay for doing something you love."

"What part of your job do you like?"

"Bashin' skulls of course, nothing beats that. One thing I can say I learned very well is that an arms dealer has many enemies. And many will want to bash your skull first if ya stand in their way. See that? [She points at the scar on the left side of her head, going on a slightly diagonal curve from her injured eye of a yellowish color, through her eyebrow and forehead, to her brown hair with missing strands] Crazy guy tried to open my skull with a machete. He thought I was dead but I showed him how Altaïr- I mean, my Desert Eagle, had better piercing power."

[She pretends to fire at the wall with the now re-mounted Beretta while harboring a childish smile]

"Is that something you enjoyed too during your previous... 'thing'?"

[Her smile vanishes. She slowly turns to look at the man off-screen and gives him a suspicious stare. She opens her mouth, but then closes it without answering.]

"I believe you had a different nickname back then, "the Black Dog"... Is that black strands of hair that I see growing under the dyed part?"

[Her stare become furious, but after a few seconds she finally relax and put the gun back on the table.]

"Jeez, fine, okay, you've win. I just don't like that name anymore, it gives me stress, and stress gives me digestive problems, and the next person going to the toilet giving me strange looks afterward will give me even more stress. Don't say it again, please. Anyways, most of what you've heard about me is certainly the truth. Is that what you wanted to know?

"Could you be more specific about what is true about your past? Some of these rumors

contradict each other. I want to hear it from you."

"Goddam it, fine. I was a child soldier. Small and frightened and an AK thrown into my hands, with a revenge to take against 'them', the enemies of our country, the enemies of our families, the Enemy. [She shrugs] We basically had two choices: to be consumed by hatred or to be consumed by apathy."

"But you chose a third option, isn't it?"

"Well, don't you know everything, huh? ... [She cracks a smile] We live in a cruel world, brother, but damn, isn't it fun? I hate shivering of fear, I already told you why, but there is a different kind of shiver that makes me feel great, really super great. At some point, I realized that. The world was burning around me, death raining on us, on me, every ally -every other *kid*-on sight dead, and I was on the verge of tears, silently hoping that *someone* would save me."

"What happened?"

"Why, I found that *someone* of course. He was in my hands the whole time. Ackermann. Never complaining, and always ready to help me do what we were meant to do: bash the skull of our enemies. And I did exactly that, while laughing. Not like villains do in the movie, *no*, like a kid do when he is having the best fun of his life. With a friend so reliable at my side, that battleground was the best playground ever. [She shrugs, her smile bigger than ever.] I never cried again... Or, I mean, I did cry once, when Ackermann broke down and I had to replace him, but each battle was a blast. And my superiors liked that! They taught me a lot of cool... things, and gave me that stupid nickname. But whatever, who said learning was boring? I loved that. The excitement of battle is a thing, but nothing is more fun than to walk in the territory of your enemy in broad day light because you are clothed and talking like one of *their* boys and they don't give a damn enough about them to see the difference before you got a knife up in their throat. [She goes back to playing with the Beretta.] I can swim and crawl into whatever hole you want, hide for days before taking a precision shot, lead men to death for a cause or keep them in line to protect a VIP, dismount my guns myself and adapt them like I can adapt myself. I can even train dogs to an extent. Whatever you need me for, I am sure I can handle it.

... I'm sorry? I work for the Dail-

Come on, bro, I wasn't born yesterday. I met some war reporters back in the days, you're nothing like them. So just tell me, do I get the job? Whatever it is, if the pay is good, I'm in. I could use the cash.

I have one last question then. To what point are you able to tame your fear in battle?

Tame my fear? Fear ain't no animal, brother. You don't tame fear, you learn how to embrace it.