

The Chiral World: A Death Stranding Theory

Prologue

To say that Death Stranding is mysterious would be an understatement... a huge one at that. A game that features a protagonist who has a baby inside his stomach, upside down rainbows, and weird invisible creatures that leave handprints in the soil and a viscous black liquid behind, is just outright bizarre.

As of now, we already have four trailers that are longer than most other game trailers out there, with the shortest among them being 3 and a half minutes long, and the longest exceeding the 8-minute mark. The latest trailer even features some gameplay, but we still have no idea about what the game's story -or even the gameplay, for that matter- is going to be like.

Kojima is playing the mystery box game masterfully this time around, giving us a ton of clues and hints, and even 100% concrete information about the game's world, but all of them are out of context or order, or both, making it very difficult to understand anything or put together information that would make any sense about the game. However, I think that with what we already have, it is very possible to form a clear picture about the game's story and premise, even the more philosophical and meta elements of it, and that is what I'm trying to accomplish here. I will bring the clues Kojima gave us about Death Stranding together, to form one clear, cohesive narrative, that would give you some ideas about what to expect from that game, or at least that's what I hope to do.

Take note that in this theory, I'm only going to discuss the story of Death Stranding, as I believe what we saw from the gameplay is not nearly enough to start making assumptions about it. Also, the later parts of this theory *are* going to rely heavily on interpretation and speculation, or educated guesses at best, so it is fine if you do not agree with me. I'm more than willing to hear your own thoughts and ideas on the game in the comments below.

Please, enjoy!

Chapter 1: Explosions

If I'm hoping that this theory is going to make any sense at all, I believe I should start by explaining my ideas about the world of Death Stranding, because it doesn't take a genius to figure out that the world of this game is very strange, very different from our own. The interesting question about this would be: Why? And that is what I'm going to discuss in this section. I will attempt to answer that question, and I hope it turns out to be a successful attempt.

In the official plot synopsis, which can be found on the website of Kojima Productions or under the E3 2018 Trailer in the description box, the 'Death Stranding' is referred to as some sort of catastrophic or cataclysmic event. The exact quote is as follows: "Sam Bridges must brave a world utterly transformed by the Death Stranding."

I think that provides an answer to our initial question, but it ends up asking a second one: What exactly is the 'Death Stranding'?

Let's go back to the TGA 2017 trailer; the one where Norman Reedus's name is revealed to be Sam for the first time. The trailer starts by mentioning some 'key explosions', if you could say so, that shaped the game's world. The Big Bang that gave birth to our universe, The Super Novas that formed planets and solar systems, The Cambrian Explosion, which initiated the process that eventually caused life to be as diverse and as complex as it is now, and a final fourth explosion that apparently shaped the game's world. And I think we can safely assume that this explosion is indeed the 'Death Stranding' event that the plot synopsis refers to.

I believe that the Death Stranding is an explosion that opened a portal of sorts; an explosion that created a 'strand' if you will, between two worlds, and that's exactly what made the game's world as strange as we see in the game's trailers. Kojima himself provided some sort of proof for this idea when he said that the Timefall, indeed comes from another world.

If you think that I'm jumping to conclusions here, just bare with me for a moment, because I have reasons to believe what I just stated.

A while back, Kojima released some pictures of Mads Mikkelsen's characters model, which were of enough resolution and detail that you could clearly read the word 'Black Hole' written on the barrel of his weapon, implying that this weapon is capable of creating black holes.

This would strongly indicate that humans in the game's world, which looks a bit more technologically advanced than ours, even with all the post-apocalyptic stuff found there, have learned to manipulate and even create singularities, to the point where it is normal to find a weapon that creates a mini black hole around an area. But what does this have to do with anything?!

If you could recall, Kojima released a second version of his TGA 2016 teaser trailer for the game with the soundtrack altered; instead of Ludwig Forsell's sinister music, we had the song "Easy Way Out" playing over the peculiar events of the trailer. And Kojima directly instructed us to pay attention to the lyrics of that song. The song is clearly about someone who made a huge mistake that he regrets, a mistake that created an unsolvable problem that this someone who created it had to leave everything behind and "Take the easy way out."

I think we can agree that in this context, the song is about Del Toro's character, because he appears to be the focus-point of that trailer, so Del Toro is the one who made this mistake. But what exactly is this 'mistake'?

If you look closely at the infamous Bridges badge on Del Toro's suit, you can see a map of the United States, with the words "United Cities of America" written underneath. Why would the name of the US be written like this?

Some would argue that this is just the name of the United States we're familiar with in the game's world, but I don't believe that this is the case, since in the TGA 2016 trailer, we see those 'dead skeleton soldiers' that Mads Mikkelsen is controlling are clearly dead WWII soldiers, and if you look carefully you'll see "U.S" written on the badges on their arms, so the United States is just called the United States in the game's world.

Instead, I think that Bridges is a transportation/delivery company or governmental organization; and the 'United Cities of America' is just a project of the company, that aimed to 'connect' American cities together, through a network of wormhole-induced portals.

If you look at the Bridges badge once again, you can clearly see that the map of the US is missing a chunk where Washington DC is supposed to be located, and the area itself seems to be sort of 'bent' around that area, which suggests that the 'central wormhole' originates from, and then, it exploded, causing the event that later becomes known as the Death Stranding, linking the game's world, and another foreign world, creating a portal between them and allowing the weird creatures we see in the trailers to enter the world of the game; bringing the Timefall with them.

Maybe Del Toro was the lead scientist working on the project (Remember the stitches on his forehead? Maybe he underwent some sort of operation to become artificially enhanced? To be smarter?) and maybe he made a mistake in his work or calculations that caused the explosion, the fourth explosion that shaped the game's world.

Maybe that was his mistake; a mistake that can't be turned around...

Chapter 2: Evolution

It's no secret that evolution has always fascinated Kojima. References to Darwinian evolution can be found all over the place in his previous games, to the point where the latest Metal Gear model introduced to the series was called "Sahelanthropus", which is the name of the first ever human species to learn to walk upright, in reference to the new model having legs and arms, just like a human.

His admiration of and inspiration by Evolution carried over with him to his new studio, and likely to his upcoming game, Death Stranding, as well. Evidence for this can literally be found anywhere you look, starting from the studio's mascot Ludens, passing by the studio's tagline "We are Homo Ludens", and not ending there.

Knowing this, I found it very interesting that Kojima would reference something like the Cambrian Explosion in one of the trailers for Death Stranding, specially that towards the end of the trailer, Kojima intentionally puts the third and fourth explosion together, almost as if he wanted us to make the connection between them, and I have an explanation for this...

What if the third and fourth Explosions were one and the same? Allow me to explain.

One of the most prominent mysteries of Death Stranding would appear to be the several references made throughout the trailers to mythology and religious text. For example, in the TGA 2016 trailer, the baby in the incubator/artificial womb presses his lips together and winks with one eye, and that exact same gesture is referenced in the bible, specifically, in Proverbs 16:30, which says the following : "Whoever winks with their eye is plotting perversity; whoever purses their lips is bent on evil."

Also, in the TGA 2017 trailer, the body that Reedus was 'disposing' of looked much like an ancient Egyptian mummy, wrapped in fabrics like one. It even had a golden mask over it's face, which appeared to be some sort of preventative measure against the Chirals, which didn't work out very well.

Moreover, Ancient Egyptians believed that the esophagus lid directly to the uterus, and in the trailer, it appears that the baby inside Sam's body is located directly beneath his esophagus

Finally, in that same trailer, the incubator holding the baby had a dream catcher attached to it. A dreamcatcher is an object that comes from native American culture, specifically Navajo culture, which was believed to protect infants from danger, specifically, from evil spirits.

So, what does it all mean?

If you are to assume that I'm correct about the wormhole/blackhole portal stuff, then one crucial detail to remember about wormholes is that they don't only bend space, they also bend time.

Let's go back to the Timefall... in Léa Seydoux's words from the latest trailer, the Timefall fast-forwards whatever it touches, and I think that could offer a very neat explanation to the Cambrian Explosion, at least in the game's world. Also, in that very same trailer, Léa eats one of these weird worm things that we see Sam vomiting in the TGA 2017 trailer saying this: "A Cryptobiote a day keeps the Timefall away."

A Cryptobiote is a creature capable of Cryptobiosis, which is a biological process in which an organism can halt or postpone all of its metabolic processes, including catabolism, anabolism, development and reproduction, effectively pausing its... well, life.

If Cryptobiotics are creatures capable of stopping or reversing the effects of the Timefall, then I think it's safe to assume that the Timefall works by accelerating metabolic processes of any organism it touches, making it age much, much faster, and it would seem that's exactly what's happening to the plants that the Timefall touches.

The Cambrian Explosion is a term which refers to a rapid expansion in the number and types of life forms that existed on Earth... it's considered to be somewhat a mystery by evolutionary biologists because it happened in the span of about 20 million years, which sounds like a lot, right? But not when you put it into perspective, not when you learn that it took about a billion years for Bacteria to evolve into the first eukaryotic cell... it's almost like evolution was somehow accelerated... you see where this is heading, don't you?

What if it was the Timefall that helped accelerate this process?

This would even explain one of the minor, but rather weird details seen in the TGA 2016 trailer. If you could recall, this trailer starts with the area

surrounding del Toro's character almost empty, with nothing but bricks around him. However, when the water comes and gets in contact with the walls and the bricks around del Toro, there are suddenly fish and whales where those bricks used to be. It may be that this water was actually water from a Timefall, that caused the bacteria and other micro-organisms in that place to go through an accelerated evolution cycle, turning them into multi-cellular organisms, and then into different types of fish and water mammals. These creatures didn't just pop into existence, they came due to the peculiar effects of the Timefall.

My idea is as follows, the Death Stranding explosion messed with space, opening portals to our world and tying both our world and the game's together, but it also messed with time, spreading the Timefall and its effects throughout *both* space and time, causing a Timefall some 540 million years ago, during the Cambrian period, accelerating evolution, and 'creating' the Cambrian Explosion, while other creatures and phenomena happened to travel to other different time periods, leading the people of these multiple historic ages to record what they actually observed. The ancient Egyptians were not just telling exaggerated legends when they claimed the esophagus lid into the uterus or when they believed people could come back from death, they just encountered people who had the same powers as our protagonist, Sam. The Navajo people were not being superstitious when they thought there were some evil spirits trying to harm the infants, it was the invisible beings from the third trailer trying to kidnap the babies like they do in the first trailer. The bible verse isn't describing some random gesture that's associated with evilness, it's describing the baby from the second trailer.

This was never mythology... it was, in fact, history.

Chapter 3: Chirals

Chirality is a concept that exists in both physics and chemistry. It is used to describe a property of an object that means said object is not identical to its mirror image; the word chirality is derived from the Greek word χείρ (kheir), which means hand; because a hand is a chiral object. Your left hand is not identical to your right. But what the hell does this have to do with Death Stranding?!

As I established before, I believe that the fourth explosion referred to in the TGA 2017 trailer for the game created a link between two worlds, a strand, if you will, but which world is that, exactly?

The question might seem stupid at first. How are we supposed to figure that out when we have no solid information about the 'worlds' or 'dimensions' that exist in the game's universe? Seems impossible, right?

Well, I disagree. While it is true that we have no 100% concrete information about the world of Death Stranding, I believe that we know quite a lot about that other world that 'leaked' into the game's, because we happen to be living in it.

Seems far-fetched? I know, but I have reason to believe that the game's world is a mirror-image of our world, a copy that's not perfect, a chiral world.

There are hints to this idea of chirality scattered through out the four trailers; the most obvious of them being the words 'chiral' and 'chiralium' getting thrown around out of context in the E3 2018 trailer, but what proves that it's our world that the game is linked to? And what does that even mean?

Ever since the reveal trailer for the game surfaced; one thing really confused me, which was the fact that Norman Reedus was scanned into the game with his tattoos, the tattoos that he had in real life. That obviously was a deliberate choice, but why?

Don't get me wrong, the trailer is stuffed with other mysteries and weird choices, but they were all explainable by the 'lore' if you will, of the world that wasn't revealed yet, and the next three trailers helped answer almost

all the questions we had; however, this one little detail was never explained.

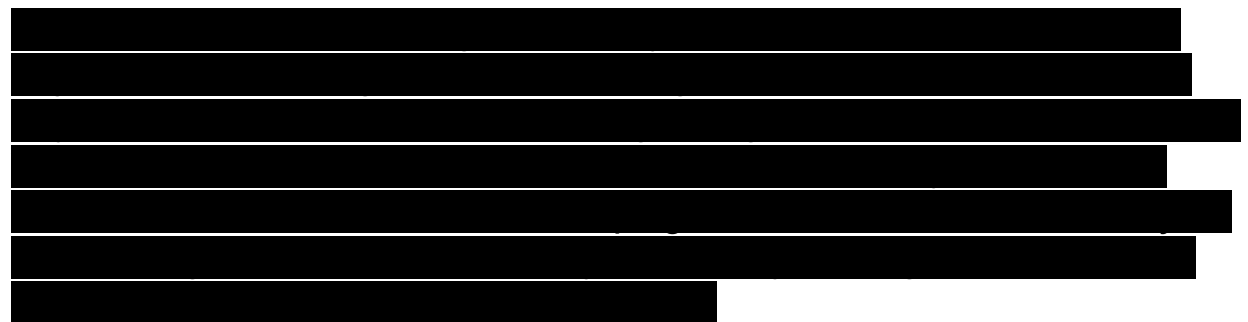
Then after watching the latest trailer, it hit me. The tattoos were a hint at this idea of chirality. If the world of the game is a mirror-image of our own, then it would make sense that Kojima would keep features like the tattoos on the character model.

There are other hints at this idea in the other trailers as well; the upside-down rainbow, and Lindsay Wanger's necklace being mirrored between the poster and the actual trailer.

With that out of the way, I believe that the invisible creatures are called Chirals; somehow, the characters of the game's world know that these creatures come from a world that's a mirror image of our their own; and so, they name them accordingly. That's why when the creatures are starting to surround the building Sam was inside of in the latest trailer, they say that "chiralium' density is increasing."

You may be thinking: "But wait a second, if the creatures come from our world; does that mean they are us? Are the creatures actually real humans?!"

And to that I say yes, the creatures are actual humans that somehow managed to 'enter' the world of a video game, and I think that explains why they appear to be so powerful and so menacing; to the point where attempting to fight them is just one final, desperate measure that will almost always fail.



Also, remember that the band Low Roar is obviously involved with Kojima and Death Stranding in some way; and when asked about the inspiration behind the video clip for the band's song Give Me an Answer, the director, Dylan Marko Bell, had this to say:

“Knowing about the band's past made me think it would be fun to create a world where certain fans could physically enter the game Death Stranding before it came out.”

If that's not a hint at this idea, I don't know what is.

Think about it... wouldn't it make sense that an audience of a video game, a movie, a TV show or a book is actually it's biggest villain? Audiences, have been 'consuming' different forms of media for decades... we are thrilled and excited and entertained by the drama and tragedies of the characters in film and TV, we are shocked; yet we enjoy the Death of different characters in stories. Now imagine that these characters are actually real... they are people that happen to live in a self-contained parallel universe to our own, a universe created by us; just for the purpose of entertainment. How would the people of this universe view us? Put yourself in their shoes... they would view us as utterly evil beings that pray on their lives.

The idea of the 'Chirals' being simply humans who could enter the game's world would help explain their powers. Think about it, if humans (Maybe even the game's developers themselves?) found a way to enter a game's world; physically enter it, it would almost make too much sense that they would have powers that are almost God-like, and it would also help explain some other perplexing phenomena, like the Timefall, which Kojima himself said it comes from another world. A minute in the real world equals a lot more in a game's world, and games with dynamic day and night cycles go through entire days if the player is away for a 10-minute break or so, so if the Chirals bring the Timefall (Which I believe they do, since they always seem to appear when it's raining.) it would make sense that it would have time-accelerating effects.


In the latest trailer, we see Léa Seydoux's character wearing a suit with some spikes on the shoulders, but they only appeared to actually erect when the Chirals are nearby, and if you look closely at the suit, you'd notice that these 'spikes' mimic the behavior of ferrofluid; a liquid which has the ability to become strongly magnetized in the presence of a magnetic field. That would mean that the Chirals sort of emit electromagnetic waves around them, but I think it's more about the 'elector' part, rather than the 'magnetic' part of that word. If these creatures are indeed actual humans that are connected to the game's world, maybe they are represented as

zeros and ones, electric signals that are weak in our world, but magnified in the game's world, emitting a strong magnetic field around these creatures.

Even the umbilical cords make more sense now; these creatures possess them for some reason, but if we agree that these are humans that learned to 'become connected' with a game's world, it would make sense that they use cords... maybe the umbilical cords are not umbilical at all...

Chapter 4: Villain

Mads Mikkelsen's character is just as puzzling as everything else about the game. We have no idea about his motives, his purpose or even his name. All we know is that he's one of the main antagonists of the game, and even that is not 100% accurate, since Mads himself said that his character is not exactly a classical villain, but rather a character with a dualistic nature,

 You might find him to be an enemy as you play the game, but you might also find yourself doing exactly what he did if you were put in his shoes.

To unravel the mysteries surrounding him, we believe that we should start exploring his abilities, rather than his ideology.

In the TGA 2016 trailer, we see Mads 'connected' to four dead soldiers with four 'umbilical cords', and he appears to be somehow controlling them, but how?

If you could recall, Mads had a strange, oily black liquid all over his face in the trailer, apparently, the very same liquid that the Chirals leave behind in the trailers, which I believe to also be Ferrofluid. The very same substance that Léa's costume appears to be made of.

Near the end of the trailer, we get a close up on Mads, revealing that after he frees the four soldiers, ordering them to go after Del Toro, the compass that he had attached to his clothes was spinning like crazy, a behavior that compasses are known to exhibit in the presence of a very strong magnetic field, implying that there is one present around Mads right now, but not only that, it's also implying the field originates from Mads himself. Maybe Mads was injecting some type of ferrofluid into the dead soldiers' bodies, and then using a magnetic field to control them from afar... this idea is backed up further by the appearance of the cords themselves, because they seem to be electricity cords, and we all know that electricity going through a conductor generates a magnetic field around that conductor, which ties in with my previous idea about these cords actually being some sort of digital representation of PS4 cables.

Mads appears to be mimicking the abilities of the Chirals... using cords to connect to the dead, leaving a black liquid behind... this would lead some to

believe that Mads is one of them, but I think it's quite the opposite. Mads is their rival, because he is obviously human, and the statements of the actor himself imply that his character is one with his own agenda and goals, but what would these goals be? And how did he come to acquire his abilities?

In the E3 2018 trailer, Léa Seydoux speaks of some sort of condition that she calls 'DOOMS', which is, apparently, some mysterious ability that allows humans in the game's world to sense the Chirals, or even see them in the more advanced levels of this 'condition', so what if Mads also has this condition?

In the same trailer, the baby we see throughout the three trailers is confirmed to have the ability to detect and expose the Chirals, as it reveals them to Sam through the strange robotic arm hanged on Sam's shoulder, implying that the baby is able to see these creatures, and maybe also implying that it comes from the very same world they come from (More on that later.)

In the TGA 2016 trailer, Mads seems to be able to sense the baby, as he sends the dead soldiers after Del Toro once the baby 'wakes up' in the incubator, and I believe that is precisely because Mads has a very high level of DOOMS (Maybe the highest in the game's world), that he does not just see them, he's able to understand and comprehend the idea that they are real humans that come from our world... he's able to understand their abilities to the point where he's even able to mimic and recreate them, and that is supported by that moment when Mads looks directly into the camera and smiles... he's smiling at us, the players... he's aware of our existence. And I think that is exactly where his 'dualistic nature' comes from.

Picture this, one day, you discover that your whole life, your whole purpose, is simply to exist to entertain some higher creatures, that do not stop at enjoying your 'life' passively, they physically enter your world and start wreaking havoc at everything and everyone, again, for their own fun. Can you imagine how frustrated you would be? How angry? And then, if you acquired the ability to sense them, which evolved into the ability to mimic their powers, what would you do? Would you not seek revenge? Would you not want to destroy them? Think carefully before answering this question.

Actor Mads Mikkelsen had this to say about his character in Death Stranding:

“It is all a challenge; you have to go through these characters to achieve certain things. And it’s also a learning curve, and they will be an obstacle for you sometimes, and sometimes they will be a help for you.”

These words would make sense if Mads is a rival to these creatures like Sam is, even though Mads appears to really want to manage to take the baby from Sam, to acquire a power that we will get into in the next chapter.

██████████, Mads is going to be a true ‘double villain.’

Chapter V: Ludens

Sam Porter Bridges, our main character. He is the man who delivers, but he is also the man who cannot die.

For as long as video games have existed, the player character has always been immortal, the character dies on screen, and then goes back to an earlier point in the game, essentially coming back from the dead, a mechanic that Kojima noted was specifically designed for Arcade Games, to make players put in more and more coins and get another chance at coming back and trying again.

Kojima said that *Death Stranding* would feature that as well, but he said he wanted to add a different twist to that notion.

In most games, with checkpoint systems implemented, dying and coming back to give it another shot almost seems like travelling back in time, as your actions do not really leave a lasting mark on the world, but in *Death Stranding*, this would not be the case. Kojima clearly stated that he wanted the players to know that death is not the end, and that the player's actions would leave a lasting mark on the game's world (i.e. the craters)

So, when you die in *Death Stranding*, you actually die and come back, and the game itself acknowledges this. But why?

We established before that the game's world is 'stranded' with our own, and that the Chirals might be humans that learned how to physically connect themselves to a game's world, and if that's true, who said that we, the players, the people who will eventually purchase this game and play it, do not have the same ability?

In an interview at Comic Con, Norman Reedus talked a bit about working with Kojima, and he gave away some of the information Kojima told him about the game while pitching the idea to him.

Norman asked about the nature of his character in *Death Stranding*, and whether or not the players will get to 'play as him', but Kojima's response was cryptic as always, as his exact response was: "No, they'll be you."

It was obvious that Reedus didn't really understand that concept at first, and that is perfectly understandable. It *is* difficult to wrap your head around

it at first, but think about it for a minute, Kojima said that when the player dies, he and Sam are transported to this underwater purgatory, which Kojima thinks is the equivalent to the “Continue?” countdown screen seen in arcade games. The player will be able to roam freely for some time, before finally deciding to -get this- go back to Sam’s body.

There are two interesting points here. Firstly, Kojima views this specific mechanic as the ‘twist’ he wanted to add to the notion of death in video games, implied by comparing it to the Continue screen. Secondly, Kojima talks of some entity leaving and then coming back to Sam’s body.

What is the only thing that we actually get to see inside Sam’s body? The baby, exactly.

It appears that the baby *is*, in fact, what gives Sam the ability to come back from the dead. The baby is what’s making Sam immortal.

Kojima talked in-depth about how he views games as not just an entertainment medium, but a means of evolution... in his own words, to play is to create. We are homo ludens, we are those who play.

In his mind, ‘players’ are the next step in human evolution... this idea alluded to by Ludens, the studio’s new mascot, and hinted at by the logo movie, which Kojima said it was more or less a metaphor for humans evolving from the single-celled organisms that once lived underwater to the intelligent advanced creature that are us now. Interestingly, Kojima chose the character of Ludens to represent the advanced, evolved human, Ludens can be roughly translated to player.



The baby -which Kojima confirmed was one and the same throughout the trailers- is an obvious nod to that movie, and the connection becomes even more obvious when you consider that Kojima called the baby Lu, which is short for Ludens... the player.

Yes, the baby is the player, the baby is us... just like the Chirals, the other audiences, we are able to enter the game’s world, literally enter it, becoming connected with Sam, through our own Umbilical Cord, our own

cable. It is our connection to him that makes Sam immortal, just like in the old arcade days, when your character dies, you put another quarter in and come back, but in Death Stranding, you sort of 'lose' your connection with Sam when he dies in the game, but once you 'enter' his body, you restore this connection and bring him back to life. Kojima said that in the purgatory state we enter when Sam dies, the player wanders around in first person. Why? Because this time, you're not seeing things from Sam's perspective, you are seeing them from *your* perspective.

In the past, your character was immortal because of your choice to hit continue or put another quarter in, but in Death Stranding, Sam is immortal because you, the player, are connected to him, giving him his unique abilities, and life.

Epilogue

Kojima constantly breaks the 4th wall in his games. It started with the simple, but at the time ground-breaking, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] but I firmly believe that Death Stranding is going to be the game that will eradicate and shatter it beyond any repair.

I think that Kojima is aiming to create something never seen in the history of entertainment before, and its something that only video games would allow, the interactivity and the control they give the player is something unparalleled in any other form of media, and that, in part, is what will allow Hideo Kojima to give us his ultimate 4th wall breaker, his ultimate meta game.

I really hope you enjoyed this theory as much as I enjoyed writing it. I worked really hard on this and I hope it paid off. Please, feel free to offer your own thoughts and ideas in the comments below.

Thanks for reading!