

The Adaptation of Arknights Game Plot into the *anime* Series Arknights Prelude to Dawn

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Abstract. This study examines the process of ecranisation from the *Arknights* game into the *anime* series *Arknights Prelude to Dawn*, focusing on narrative transformations that occur during the adaptation from an interactive medium to a linear storytelling format. Using a descriptive qualitative method with a structural approach, the research aims to describe the transformation of plot, characters, and visual elements between the game and its *anime* adaptation. Data were collected through observation, documentation, and literature study, and analyzed using the theory of ecranisation proposed by Eneste. The findings reveal that the adaptation process involves 11 instances of plot additions, 3 instances of narrative variations, and 2 instances of omissions. Plot additions serve to enrich the narrative and deepen character development, while variations and omissions are employed to fit the more concise and coherent narrative demands of the *anime* format compared to the branching structure of the game. This adaptation successfully delivers a new narrative experience while preserving the core essence of the *Arknights* universe. The study is expected to contribute to the field of media adaptation studies, particularly within the context of Japanese popular culture.

Keywords: *anime*; arknights; ecranisation; game transformation; media adaptation

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Literature is a form of human expression realized through written or oral works, based on experiences, thoughts, opinions, and feelings, presented imaginatively, reflecting reality or grounded in factual data, all packaged aesthetically through the medium of language (Sumardjo & Saini, 1997:3). Literature is also viewed as a product of creative art that uses human beings and their lives as its object, with language as the primary medium. The material for literary works may come from real-life experiences, the author's imaginative ideas, or a combination of both (Semi, 1988:8).

Literary works can be categorized into several types, including drama, poetry, and prose. Each of these types possesses distinct characteristics. Drama is a literary work typically performed on stage, where dialogue between characters, along with gestures and body expressions, serves as the primary narrative element. Poetry, on the other hand, consists of verses or lyrical expressions with specific rhythm and structure, where emotions and ideas are conveyed through dense and imaginative language. Meanwhile, prose is a literary form that uses free-flowing narrative without the constraints of rhythm or structure, often found in novels or short stories.

Beyond these three types, video games can also be viewed as a form of literary work within the entertainment medium. Although primarily known as interactive media, games incorporate narrative elements, characters, and storylines that resemble traditional literary works. In this context, game characters play roles similar to those in films or other literary forms. As stated by Burhan (2018:17), the concept of characters in films is essentially similar to that in literary works, functioning not only

as figures in the story but also as carriers of deep narrative and visual representation, enabling the audience or players to experience emotions and character development. In games, characters are also portrayed through detailed visualizations, which enhance the player's immersive experience, akin to textual literature.

With the advancement of technology and pop culture, the function of film has evolved—films are no longer the cultural center but have become part of a broader popular culture, alongside books, music, and others (Nugroho, 1995:154). This adaptation process is known as *ecranisation* (cinematic adaptation), which refers to the transformation of content from one medium to another by aligning with the characteristics of the new medium. In this adaptation process, changes such as additions, omissions, or shifts in the storyline often occur to match the duration, presentation style, and target audience. Transforming a game into a film or *anime* requires a creative process.

These differences compel filmmakers to be selective and creative in choosing events that can visually captivate the audience. Thus, changes such as plot alterations, character additions, or omissions are common. These modifications are necessary because each medium (novel and film) possesses distinct characteristics aligned with its function. Reconceptualization and rethinking, accompanied by an understanding of each medium's distinct features, are essential (Nugroho, 1995:157). According to Eneste (1991:61–65), the creative process of adapting a novel into a film may involve adding or omitting parts of the storyline, considering both narrative and aesthetic factors. This creative process was applied by Yostar Pictures and assistant director Masataka Nishikawa in producing the *anime* series *Arknights Prelude to Dawn*. The adaptation of the game into this *anime* series serves as the focus of this study.

This is clearly reflected in the *anime* series *Arknights Prelude to Dawn*, adapted from the game *Arknights*. The *anime* not only simplifies the game's narrative but also enhances it with more emotional and cinematic elements. Set in the world of Terra, the story revolves around a conflict triggered by a contagious disease caused by a mineral called Originium. Within this world, an organization named Rhodes Island fights against discrimination and chaos caused by the rebel group Reunion. Through its *anime* adaptation, added story elements and character visualizations—such as those of Doctor and Amiya—offer a different experience from the game. This serves as the basis for studying the adaptation process, particularly focusing on the storyline additions rather than character changes or plot omissions, which are relatively minimal and thus excluded from this research.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the additional plot elements in the adaptation of the *Arknights* game into the *anime Arknights Prelude to Dawn*, using the theory of *ecranisation* through a structuralist approach. According to Ratna (2004:91–94), the structure of a literary work consists of aesthetic elements such as plot, characterization, point of view, language style, theme, and message.

Structural analysis of *ecranisation* is a method to examine the changes and relationships among intrinsic elements in the adaptation process from literary work (such as a novel) to film. This analysis aims to understand how elements such as plot, characters, setting, and theme are modified or adjusted in the film version, and how these changes affect the story's overall meaning and message. As Nurgiyantoro (2000:37) notes, structural analysis aims to describe the function and relationship among the various literary elements that collectively create a unified whole. Through this structural approach, the adaptation process of *Arknights* from a game into the *anime Arknights Prelude to Dawn* can be systematically examined, as this approach emphasizes the interrelation among a work's

fundamental components. Consequently, this research on the adaptation by *Yostar Pictures* is necessary. The synthesis of the background issues leads to the formulation of a research problem. A problem emerges when expectations and theoretical realities do not align. To resolve this, the scope of the issue must be clearly defined and articulated. Hence, the researcher formulates the research question: "How is the process of adapting the *Arknights* game into the *anime* series *Arknights Prelude to Dawn*?" Based on this problem statement, the objective of this study is to describe the adaptation process of the *Arknights* game into the *anime* series *Arknights Prelude to Dawn*.

The benefits of this study are as follows:

It contributes to the development of literary studies, particularly in the analysis of games that are adapted into *anime* series.

It expands knowledge regarding the process of ecranisation (cinematic adaptation) between games and *anime* series, and may serve as a reference for future research.

The findings of this study are expected to benefit readers by enhancing their appreciation of Japanese literary works. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will also contribute to greater appreciation of filmmakers in the *anime* industry, thereby supporting the continued development and improvement of *anime* productions.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The previous study referenced in this journal was conducted by Vinsesa (2022), entitled "*Semiotic Analysis of SilverAsh Character Design in the Game Arknights*." This research is descriptive in nature and employs a qualitative method.

The similarities between the previous research and this study are as follows:

- 1) Both studies focus on the same object, namely entertainment media or games.
- 2) Both use a qualitative descriptive method.

However, there are several differences between the previous research and this study:

- 1) The subject of the previous research was a character in the game *Arknights*, while the subject of this study is the comparison between the *anime Arknights* and the game *Arknights*.
- 2) The previous research used Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to analyze the object, whereas this study applies the theory of ecranisation (cinematic adaptation).
- 3) The focus of the previous study was on character design in the *Arknights* game, whereas this study focuses on narrative comparison between the *anime Arknights Prelude to Dawn* and the game *Arknights*.

Another relevant study is by Yuan (2021), titled “*Gameplay Evaluation in Arknights Using the Mechanics, Dynamics, and Aesthetics (MDA) Framework*.” This research is descriptive and employs a quantitative method.

The similarity with this current study is:

- 1) Both examine entertainment media or games as the object of study.

The differences between Yuan’s research and this study are as follows:

- 1) Yuan used a descriptive quantitative method, whereas this study uses a descriptive qualitative approach.
- 2) The subject of Yuan’s research was the evaluation of gameplay in *Arknights*, while this study investigates the ecranisation process in the adaptation of the game *Arknights* into the anime *Arknights Prelude to Dawn*.
- 3) Yuan’s research focused on gameplay evaluation, while this study focuses on narrative comparison between the *anime* and the game.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method, aiming to describe and analyze the ecranisation process from the game *Arknights* to the anime series *Arknights Prelude to Dawn*. The research is qualitative and descriptive in nature as it focuses on an in-depth analysis of the transformations that occur during the adaptation process. This approach is used to understand how the narrative and visual elements of the game are transformed into the *anime* format.

The data sources in this study are divided into two categories:

- 1) Primary Data: Excerpts from the *Arknights* game and the anime series *Arknights Prelude to Dawn*.
- 2) Secondary Data: Journals and previous studies relevant to ecranisation and media

adaptation. Data were collected through the following methods:

- 1) Observation: Observing changes in narrative structure, characters, setting, and visual aspects between the game and the *anime*.
- 2) Documentation: Collecting references from literature, ecranisation theories, and prior related research.
- 3) Literature Review: Analyzing theories related to ecranisation and media

adaptation. The data analysis was carried out in the following stages:

- 1) Data Reduction: Selecting segments that show significant changes during the ecranisation process.
- 2) Data Presentation: Organizing findings in the form of comparisons and narrative descriptions.

- 3) Conclusion Drawing: Concluding the characteristics of changes from game to *anime* based on Eneste's (1991) theory of ecranisation.

The theory employed in this study is the theory of ecranisation (cinematic adaptation). According to Eneste (1991:60), ecranisation is “a process of transferring or adapting a novel into a film.” This process involves various transformations from novel to film, including reduction, addition, and modification of narrative elements. Damono (2005:95) refers to this transformation with the term *alih wahana*, which implies a broader understanding of ecranisation—the shift from one medium to another. Eneste elaborates on the types of changes that may occur during the ecranisation process. He explains that reductions may involve elements such as plot, storyline, characters, setting, or atmosphere. Due to this process of omission or trimming, not all elements presented in the game will appear in the *anime*. Similarly, additions may also occur, which can involve new developments in the narrative, characters, setting, or atmosphere. Lastly, variations or modifications represent the third possible type of transformation during the adaptation from a literary or game narrative into an *anime* format.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Additions

In this discussion, the researcher identified the addition of narrative elements in the ecranisation process of *Arknights*, from its original game format into an *anime* adaptation. These narrative additions represent one of the key elements that distinguish the storyline of the *anime* from the original game narrative. Such modifications not only expand the plot but also deepen character development and world-building, thereby providing viewers with a more immersive experience.

According to Sugiyono (2005:83), the credibility of research findings is enhanced when supported by documentation such as photographs or relevant academic and artistic works. Data concerning these narrative additions have been successfully gathered and analyzed, highlighting several new events that are not present in the original *Arknights* game storyline. These additions bring new dynamics to the narrative, enrich the audience's experience, and offer novel variations in plot development.

The following is a summary of the findings related to the added narrative elements:

1. Data 1

Episode 1, Minute 20:17



Figure 1. Scene from the *anime* *Arknights Prelude to Dawn*

Analysis:

In this scene, Amiya is shown explaining the discrimination faced by individuals afflicted with Oripathy, a deadly disease in the world of *Arknights*. She elaborates on the transmission mechanism of the disease and emphasizes that, to date, no cure has been found. Since this scene is not present in the original game, it can be classified as a narrative addition. This added moment enhances the emotional depth of the story and offers viewers a more direct understanding of the social conflict within the *Arknights* universe. By providing exposition through dialogue, this scene deepens the viewer's empathy towards the infected characters and sets a more grounded tone for the *anime*'s portrayal of systemic oppression.

2. Data 2

Episode 3, Minute 10:22



Figure 2. Scene from the *anime Arknights Prelude to Dawn*

Analysis:

In this scene, the Doctor and their team are shown evacuating from the city of Chernobog via helicopter. Following the evacuation, the Doctor receives an explanation regarding the origins of Originium and the occurrence of the Catastrophe. As this sequence does not appear in the original *Arknights* game, it is categorized as a narrative addition. This added scene not only enhances the plot's coherence by providing crucial background information, but also strengthens the world- building by contextualizing the central conflict. Through this exposition, the *anime* enriches the viewer's understanding of the setting and stakes, offering a more comprehensive and immersive narrative experience compared to the game's original format.

1. Data 3

Episode 3, Minute 18.36

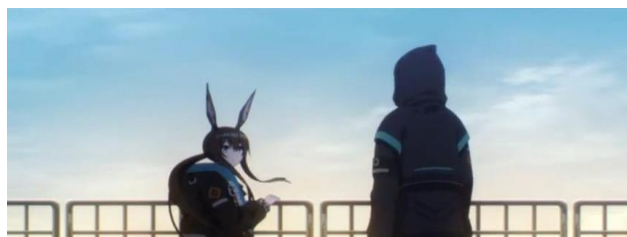


Figure 3. Scene from the *anime Arknights Prelude to Dawn*

Analysis:

This scene depicts a moment where the Doctor meets Amiya after taking a rest. During this conversation, Amiya shares extensive information about ongoing research related to Oripathy and encourages the Doctor to continue fighting for a better future. As this scene is not present in the original *Arknights* game, it is categorized as a narrative addition. The inclusion of this interaction serves to deepen the emotional bond between the characters and reinforce the Doctor's role as a central figure in the ongoing struggle. It also functions as a motivational turning point in the *anime*'s storyline, emphasizing themes of hope and resilience that are more implicitly portrayed in the game.

2. Data 4

Episode 3, Minute 9:56



Figure 4. Scene from the *anime* *Arknights Prelude to Dawn*

Analysis:

In Figure 4, it is shown that ACE survives after fighting to the very end, despite having to sacrifice his left arm. The scene depicts that only ACE and a Guard manage to survive the disaster and the cruelty of Reunion. Since this event is not narrated in the original *Arknights* game, it can be concluded that this is a narrative addition. This added storyline not only heightens the dramatic tension but also highlights the brutal reality of the conflict, providing viewers with a deeper emotional impact and a more vivid portrayal of sacrifice and resilience.

3. Data 5

Episode 4, Minute 2:52

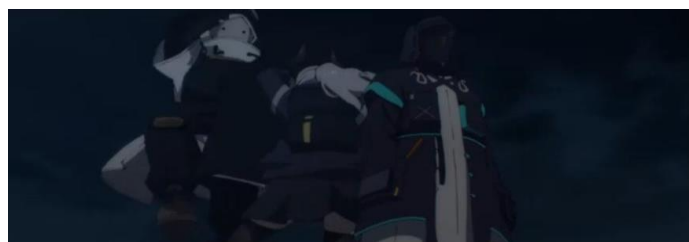


Figure 5. Scene from the *anime* *Arknights Prelude to Dawn*

Analysis:

This scene depicts the Doctor fighting against the Reunion forces while traveling toward the city of Lungmen. In a critical moment, when the Doctor is nearly struck by an attack, Liskarm appears to protect him. Since this scene does not exist in the *Arknights* game storyline, it can be categorized as a narrative addition. This added event enriches the plot by showcasing the camaraderie and loyalty among characters, while also increasing the intensity and excitement of the *anime*'s action sequences.

4. Data 6

Episode 4, Minute 4:15



Figure 6. Scene from the *anime Arknights Prelude to Dawn*

Analysis:

In Figure 6, the scene depicts refugees rebelling as they demand to enter the city of Lungmen immediately. However, the city guards refuse their request and do not allow them to enter so easily. Since this event does not occur in the original *Arknights* game, it can be categorized as a narrative addition. This added scene introduces social tension and conflict, enriching the storyline by highlighting the struggles of displaced people and the challenges of maintaining order in a chaotic world.

5. Data 7

Episode 4, Minute 6:15



Figure 7. Scene from the *anime Arknights Prelude to Dawn*

Analysis:

This scene depicts the Doctor and Amiya being escorted by Ch'en to a diplomatic meeting location. During the journey, Ch'en explains her reasons for rejecting the refugees and shares some of her personal experiences with the Doctor and Amiya. Since this scene does not exist in the original *Arknights* game, it can be concluded that this is a narrative addition. This added moment deepens the characterization of Ch'en and provides greater insight into the political and social tensions within the story, enriching the *anime*'s overall narrative complexity.

6. Data 8

Episode 4, Minute 21:37



Figure 8. Scene from the *anime Arknights Prelude to Dawn*

Analysis:

Figure 8 shows the moment when the Doctor finds Misha being chased by the Reunion forces. At this moment, the Doctor and his team try to convince Misha that they intend to protect her, as well as safeguard other children from the threat posed by Reunion. Since this scene does not appear in the original *Arknights* game, this event can be considered a narrative addition. This added storyline enhances the emotional depth of the *anime* by introducing vulnerable characters and highlighting the protective role of the Doctor and his team.

7. Data 9

Episode 6, Minute 0:26



Figure 9. Scene from the *anime Arknights Prelude to Dawn*

Analysis:

Figure 9 depicts a meeting between Crownslayer and Talulah. During their conversation, they discuss plans to seize control of the city of Lungmen. Talulah is determined to reclaim everything that has been taken from her and to punish those responsible. Since this scene does not appear in the original *Arknights* game, it can be concluded that this is a narrative addition. This added plot development introduces new antagonistic motivations, enriching the conflict and tension within the *anime*'s storyline.

8. Data 10

Episode 6, Minute 10:49



Figure 10. Scene from the *anime Arknights Prelude to Dawn*

Analysis:

Figure 10 depicts a battle scene in which Ch'en attempts to protect Misha from an attack by W. W intends to abduct Misha from Ch'en's custody, resulting in an intense confrontation between the two. Unfortunately, in this scene, Misha is ultimately taken away by W. As this event does not occur in the original *Arknights* game, it can be concluded that this is a narrative addition. This added sequence contributes to the dramatic tension and expands upon the conflict dynamics between Rhodes Island and Reunion.

9. Data 11

Episode 8, Minute 22:40



Figure 11. Scene from the *anime Arknights Prelude to Dawn*

Analysis:

The image above portrays Amiya in a moment of deep internal conflict, reflecting on her future and leadership role. She expresses guilt over the death of Misha's relative and questions her own ability to lead Rhodes Island moving forward. Doctor reassures Amiya, encouraging her to remain optimistic and affirming that no one blames her for her actions. Since this emotional introspection and dialogue are not found in the original *Arknights* game, this scene can be classified as a narrative addition. This addition enriches the character development of Amiya and highlights her psychological burden as a leader, thereby deepening the *anime*'s emotional narrative.

Modification

Based on the collected data, three instances were identified where the narrative underwent modifications that can be classified as variative changes. These alterations were made to enhance the flow and structure of the storyline, aiming to make the *anime* adaptation more compelling and emotionally engaging for viewers. Such changes not only serve to intensify dramatic tension but also allow for deeper character development, enabling the audience to more clearly understand and empathize with the characters' emotions and motivations.

Moreover, these narrative variations were implemented to align the storytelling with the characteristics of the *anime* medium, which, while more limited in interactivity compared to games, offers richer visual and expressive capabilities. As a result, these modifications contribute to a more immersive viewing experience while preserving the core essence of the original story presented in the *Arknights* game.

10.Data 12

Episode 1, Minute 10:08



Figure 12. Scene from *anime* Arknights: Prelude to Dawn

Analysis:

Figure 12 depicts a scene in which ACE throws a stun grenade toward the Reunion forces surrounding Doctor and Dobermann. His swift intervention allows the team to overcome the threat and escape safely. This sequence can be classified as a variative change because, in the original game narrative,

Doctor and the team only encounter ACE after they have escaped from the underground facility. However, in the *anime* adaptation, ACE appears earlier in the storyline to assist Doctor and Dobermann during a moment of crisis. This adjustment introduces a shift in the sequence of events, enhancing dramatic tension and emphasizing ACE's role as a key protector figure. The variation not only enriches the plot but also strengthens character dynamics in a way that suits the cinematic format.

11.Data 13

Episode 1, Minute 16:21



Figure 13. Scene from *anime* Arknights: Prelude to Dawn

Analysis:

Figure 13 presents a dramatic moment in which a mother and her child are captured by Reunion forces. Just as they are about to be attacked, Doctor and the team arrive to rescue them in an intense and emotional battle sequence. This scene can be categorized as a variative change. In the original game, only a child is depicted as being captured, with no mention of the mother figure. Despite this difference, both the *anime* and the game portray Doctor and the team successfully rescuing the child. The inclusion of the mother in the *anime* heightens the emotional stakes and deepens the viewer's empathy, thereby enhancing the narrative impact and showcasing the *anime's* broader expressive potential.

12.Data 14

Episode 4, Minute 0:24



Figure 14. Scene from *Arknights Prelude to Dawn*

Analysis:

At the beginning of Episode 4, the *anime* introduces Misha, a refugee, who is shown helping a group of children hide from pursuing Reunion forces. Before leaving, she gives them a lucky charm and promises to return and rescue them. In the original game *Arknights*, this event takes place only after the diplomatic meeting with Lungmen, specifically in Chapter 2-3. However, the *anime* repositions this scene to occur earlier in the narrative—prior to Doctor's negotiation with the Lungmen authorities. This modification represents a variative change, altering the sequence of events for narrative or emotional effect. By presenting Misha's character earlier, the *anime* strengthens her emotional connection with the audience and sets up her narrative significance more effectively.

1. Omission

In the process of adapting *Arknights* from game to *anime* format, certain narrative elements were omitted due to their perceived lack of relevance or dramatic impact within the context of a serialized animation. While these scenes may enhance the world-building and provide additional background in the game, they were considered non-essential for the *anime*'s streamlined storytelling approach. This editorial decision allows the *anime* to maintain a more focused narrative structure, emphasizing key plotlines and emotional arcs. Two significant scenes that were omitted and thus represent narrative omission are as follows.

1. Data 15

Story 0-2 After Operation

Analysis:

This scene in *Arknights* game depicts a moment of high tension involving Ursus forces, Amiya, Dobermann, and Reunion troops. Although initially marked by distrust due to Amiya's infected status, the scene gradually develops mutual respect amidst the chaos. The confrontation escalates when Reunion launches a sudden attack, prompting urgent collaboration between conflicting parties. The captain of Ursus forces, despite his initial hostility, acknowledges the shared threat posed by Reunion. Amiya and Dobermann's conduct reflects maturity and leadership, while the fragile alliance underscores the complexities of wartime relationships. This narrative sequence emphasizes the thin line between ally and enemy, reinforcing *Arknights*' broader themes of discrimination, conflict, and solidarity.

Because this nuanced interaction and development were excluded from the *anime* adaptation, it constitutes a narrative omission aimed at condensing the story for pacing or thematic clarity.

2. Data 16

Story 0-6 After Operation

Analysis:

This post-battle scene conveys profound grief and ethical dilemmas faced by the protagonists after a clash with Reunion forces, who weaponize infected creatures. Dobermann and the team realize that

these creatures share a kinship with them, generating an empathetic response. Ace's decision to mercifully end their suffering further highlights the moral gravity of the situation.

The dialogue also addresses the urgency of evacuation due to an impending Catastrophe threatening Chernobog, compelling characters like Amiya and Dobermann to prioritize survival over confrontation. This segment vividly illustrates the psychological toll of conflict and the difficult choices necessitated by war, merging themes of compassion, survival, and strategic sacrifice. Given that this emotional and ethical complexity was omitted from the *anime*, it is categorized as narrative omission in the ecranisation process.

CONCLUSION

The ecranisation process of adapting the game *Arknights* into the anime *Arknights Prelude to Dawn* highlights the complex dynamics of narrative restructuring, character development, and visual adaptation. This transition posed significant challenges, particularly in converting an interactive, non-linear medium-where player choices shape the story-into a conventional, linear narrative. As a result, gameplay interactivity had to be restructured into a cohesive storyline, necessitating a reduction in narrative complexity. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of ekransasi, especially in the context of adapting digital game media into visual formats like animation.

Significant changes to the storyline were observed during this process. The anime simplifies several dynamic and branching elements from the game, which originally allowed players to influence the narrative direction. Consequently, player-driven decision-making is diminished in favor of a more unified plot. Additionally, several key characters from the game were either minimized or substantially reimagined to fit the anime's more concise narrative structure, while still preserving the essence of the original story.

The main characters also underwent notable modifications, both in terms of visual design and backstory. The animation medium's stylistic constraints required streamlined visuals compared to the game's more detailed art. Furthermore, the anime places greater emphasis on the emotional and psychological dimensions of its characters, adding depth that was not always explored in the game. Action sequences, which relied on interactive mechanics in the original, were reinterpreted as visually dramatic scenes, effectively maintaining narrative integrity.

This adaptation elicited mixed responses from fans. While many praised the vibrant and immersive visualization of the *Arknights* universe, others expressed concern over alterations to the storyline and character portrayals that diverged from the game's original spirit. This study identified **11 instances of narrative addition**, **3 of narrative variation**, and **2 of narrative omission**, illustrating the breadth of changes implemented. Despite these adjustments, the adaptation endeavors to uphold the core themes and character integrity that define the *Arknights* franchise.

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