



TWO TARDIGRADES “Ripper” (left) was the teleporting tardigrade featured in *Star Trek: Discovery*; at right is the similarly-powered creature from the unreleased point-and-click game, *Tardigrades*, whose creator alleges *Discovery* copied his ideas. *Image/Anastronaut blog*

Indie Gamemaker Sues 'Discovery' for Stealing His Ideas

Lawsuit Alleges CBS Copied Significant Features From Unreleased 'Tardigrades' Game

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By  [Carlos Pedraza](#)

A videogame maker filed suit August 19, 2018, in U.S. District Court against [CBS](#) and [Netflix](#) seeking damages for alleged [copyright infringement](#) in the conception, production and broadcast of *Star Trek: Discovery*.

See also: ['ST: Discovery' Copyright Lawsuit Gets off to Rocky Start](#) and [Tardigrades Developer Raises](#)

Stakes in 'Discovery' Lawsuit and CBS Seeks Meeting with Judge to Dismiss Copyright Case Against Discovery

Analysis: The Case For and Against Dismissing the Tardigrades Suit

Anas Abdin, an Egyptian citizen residing in Kuwait, tweeted he was suing the studio and Netflix, international distributor of the heralded science fiction series, after he tried for months to get them to take his copyright complaints seriously.

DOWNLOAD the 16-page, second amended
 legal complaint
 , filed October 29, 2018, alleging copyright infringement in *Star Trek: Discovery* by CBS and Netflix of plaintiff Anas Abdin's unreleased videogame, "Tardigrades."




Anas Abdin (@AnasAbdin)  9:08 AM - 21 Aug 2018

I tried to prevent this as much as possible but CBS treated me in disrespect. I am officially going to court against CBS' Star Trek: Discovery.

<http://anas-tronaut.blogspot.com/2018/08/tardigrades-case.html> ... #Tardigrades #StarTrek #gamedev #indiegame #indiegamedev #pixelart #adventuregames

Legal Complaint

As revealed in the 13-page legal complaint filed August 19 in federal district court in southern New York, at issue is Abdin's point-and-click adventure game, Tardigrades, which he began developing in 2014. Abdin claims that Discovery copies substantial elements of his work. The game, however, remained unreleased as of this article's posting.

« It's entirely plausible both projects were inspired by similar ideas and developed entirely independently, regardless of both coming to light around the same time. » — John Walker, "A Tale of Two Tardigrades," *Rock Paper Shotgun*

Abdin first addressed the issue in an October 18, 2017, blog post, in which he said fans of his game had told him of similarities between the recently debuted *Star Trek: Discovery* and his videogame. Back then, however, he seemed more concerned about proving he was developing his unreleased game three years before *Discovery*:

I prepared a few screenshots from both the TV show and my game for comparison. I am doing this to clarify that I haven't stolen ideas from the show at all since all of my posts from the [devlog](#) are dated years before the show.¹⁾



TARDIGRADE TRANSPORT Anas Abdin's blog compares his teleporting tardigrade with *Discovery's*.
Image/Anastronaut blog

In a followup blog post August 21, 2018, Abdin said a lawsuit was the only way CBS would take him seriously:

I tried every possible way to have a respectful and reasonable discussion with CBS but they treated me in disrespect and just dangled me around with postponing meetings due to their vacations and being busy. ... I gave them a lot of time to make things right. Unfortunately, I found myself at a dead end with them, and so I had to enforce my rights by filing a lawsuit to treat me seriously.²⁾

The Lawsuit

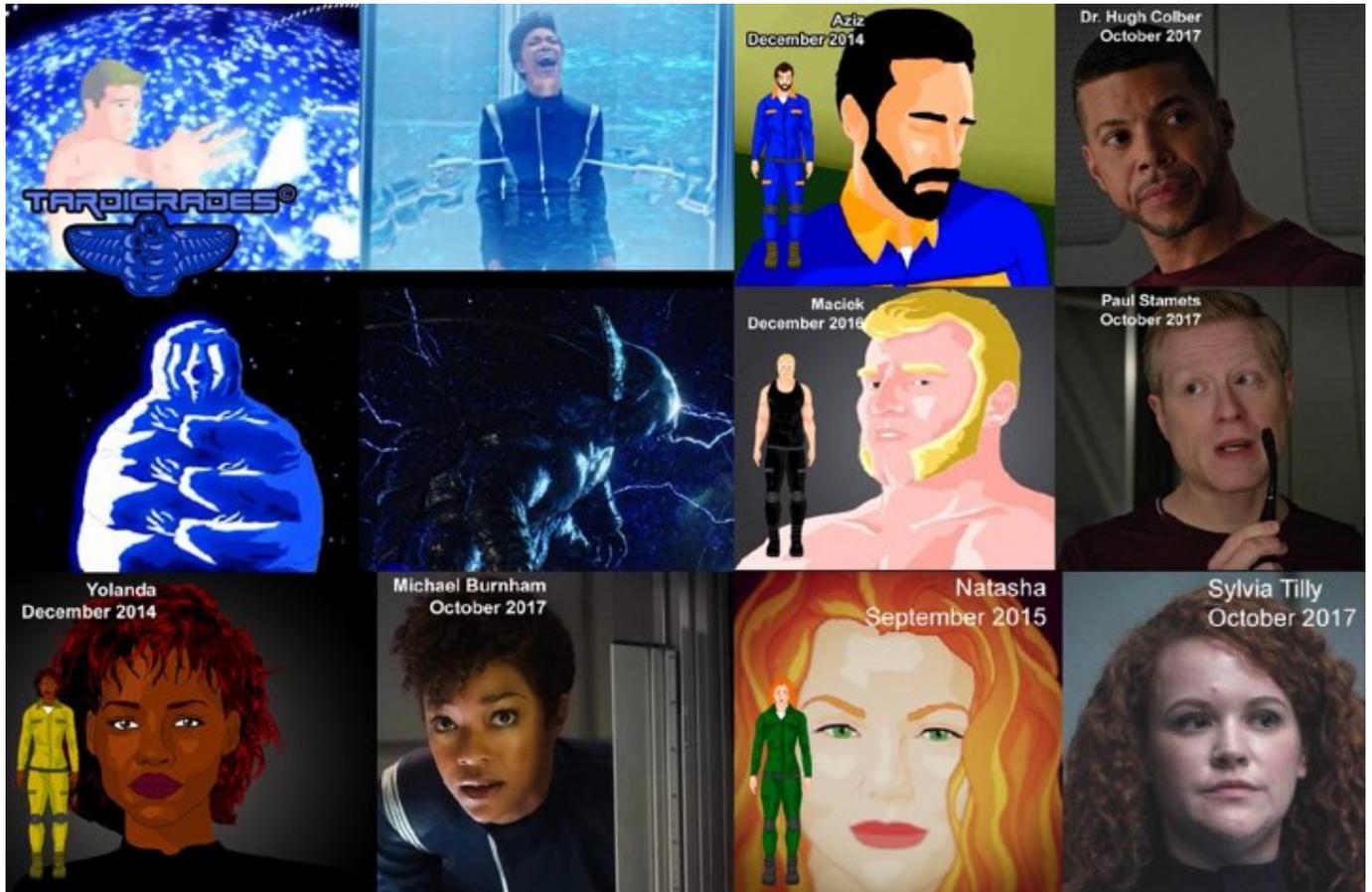
In his legal complaint, Abdin alleges his "fictional characters, aesthetics and re-worked narratives that are unique to [his] Original Work ... appear in the Infringing Work [Star Trek: Discovery]," and that the show's producers, "fully aware of Plaintiff's copyright ... willfully and improperly developed, produced, filmed and released the Infringing Work derived from Plaintiff's Original Work."³⁾

Damages

The complaint seeks unspecified damages pending accounting of *Discovery's* earnings presumably during the suit's [discovery](#) process.

Copied Elements

The complaint lists a dozen copyrighted elements Abdin says are unique to his game and that he alleges CBS "deliberately changed in an attempt to obfuscate the origin of the Infringing Work," adding "the salient aspects of the Original Work shine through."⁴⁾



COINCIDENCES? Anas Abdin charts the similarities he believes proves *Star Trek: Discovery* “willfully and maliciously” copied his unreleased videogame.

Among the allegedly infringing elements:

- Space travel made possible by a blue-hued, bigger-than-human tardigrade (“Ripper” in *Discovery*).
- A gay relationship between a blond white guy who is a space botanist, and a brown guy with sideburns, mustache and beard (Stamets and Culber in *Discovery*).
- A main character accused of treason (Michael Burnham).
- A black woman “with messy curly hair” (Michael Burnham).
- Egyptian cultural influences (the mummification of Klingon war dead. Klingon breastplates). Abdin is an Egyptian citizen.
- A human being “absorbed into the tardigrade,” which has physical features and functionality not previously published by anyone else.⁵⁾



Tardigrades STEAM Trailer

THE GAME The trailer for Anas Abdin's unreleased game, "Tardigrades."

A Tale of Two Tardigrades

In a November 2017 interview, Abdin appeared to be worried CBS would try to prevent him from releasing his teleporting tardigrade game: "My ideal outcome is to get addressed by the producers and [know that they'll] let me be, to finish my project."⁶⁾

The writer of that article, John Walker of the PC gaming news site, Rock Paper Shotgun, however, remained skeptical:

There's every possibility that [*Discovery's*] creative team had been working on the idea for years beforehand or simply came to it on their own. Indeed, put "tardigrade space travel" into Google and you'd perhaps expect to see *Star Trek: Discovery* dominating the results. But no. What you see instead is years and years of popular science articles about the seemingly invincible little Earth beasties, and their notorious ability to survive in a vacuum. And in space. ... It's entirely plausible both projects were inspired by similar ideas and developed entirely independently, regardless of both coming to light around the same time.⁷⁾



YouTuber **Ketwolski**

Interactions with CBS Legal

A YouTube vlogger, [Ketwolski](#), advocating for Abdin, claimed in an August 23 post that in the interactions the game developer had with network lawyers, they had promised to:

- Stop using tardigrades on *Star Trek: Discovery*.
- Not sue Abdin for his use of tardigrades.

In his YouTube post, Ketwolski said he had documentation of Abdin’s interactions with CBS but would not release them prematurely.⁸⁾



CBS Lawsuit

Youtuber Ketwolski advocates for Anas Abdin in the indie game developer’s copyright infringement lawsuit against CBS. *Video/Ketwolski/YouTube*

Reactions

Apart from some public skeptics, Abdin’s lawsuit appeared to touch a nerve among Star Trek fans who don’t like *Discovery* or who are still smarting from what they perceive as CBS’ suit “against the fans” in the [Axanar case](#) that resulted in what they believe are [onerous restrictions](#) imposed on fan films.

Among the commentators was Axanar’s former director, [Robert Meyer Burnett](#), who advised Abdin on Twitter:



Robert Meyer Burnett @BurnettRM 21 Aug 2018

Word of advice...from someone who’s been involved tangentially with a lawsuit involving TREK and CBS...DON’T TALK TO ANYONE except your lawyers about this. Seriously. NO ONE. Go radio silent...like, “Balance of Terror” silent. Trust me on this.



Doomcock @doomcock 21 Aug 2018

What idiots they are, to think they could get away with stealing such a unique idea! Anas, I hope you wind up owning CBS, and when you do, will you please let me personally destroy the STD sets? I think I’ve earned it! No one hates this vile trash more than DOOMCOCK! Hail Anas!☐

Continuing Coverage

AxaMonitor is providing  continuing coverage, including reactions from CBS and Netflix. 



COMMENTS

Discuss this article in  [AxaMonitor's Facebook group](#).

Keywords

[Tardigrades lawsuit, copyright, Star Trek Discovery, CBS, Netflix](#)

1)

["Star Trek: Discovery and Tardigrades," Anastronaut blog, 10/18/17.](#)

2)

["Tardigrades Case," Anastronaut blog, 8/21/18.](#)

3) 5)

[Abdin v. CBS Broadcasting and Netflix Inc., docket 1, p. 4, 8/19/18.](#)

4)

[Abdin v. CBS Broadcasting and Netflix Inc., docket 1, pp. 4-5, 8/19/18.](#)

6) 7)

[John Walker, "A Tale of Two Tardigrades," Rockpapershotgun.com, 11/8/17.](#)

8)

 ["CBS Lawsuit | Studio vs Indie Game Update #1 | Star Trek Discovery Tardigrade Controversy", Ketwolski YouTube channel, 8/23/18.](#)

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