

Animated Narratives wk7

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Chapter 1 development

Based on the game structure overview I had from folio 1, I continuously develop the plots and objectives in each chapter. There are three chapters in this game.

Chapter 1

For Chapter 1, the objectives are mission set up and warm up interactions for player to get familiar of how to navigate through the game. After the start menu, the player first see an animation clip of people in town talking about a missing girl. Then the scene move on to the player controlling the protagonist character in the game.

Scene 1.1: Alex's room

For the first navigation scene, the setting is a house indoor. It tarts out from Alex's room. Player controls Alex to navigate in the room. There are interactive props in the Alex's room, bed, cellphone, desk with laptop and a bucket fill with water (as a small room pool), which serve different action purposes through out the game.

When Alex interacting with the bed, it ends current day and move on to the next morning. The desk and bucket boost different stats, wits and charisma, where the values influence the triggered events and interactions with characters. The cellphone will serve as a narrative element, showing messages between Alex and other characters, and also as an indicator of the relationship stats with others (more messages with the character, stronger bound with him / her etc.).

In this beginning scene, when Alex interacts with the cellphone, he wonders why Alphie (the missing girl) has not messaged him back for a while. He decides to go looking for her at her place. Here is where the player gets the indication / current objective for this sequence of the game. The player then move on to navigate the house.

Scene 1.2: Other parts of Alex's house

There are 3 different interactive scenes in Alex's house, living room, kitchen and Alex's room. Asides from Alex's room, the kitchen and living room serve mainly as stages where Alex interacts with other characters and some trigger events.

Alex leaves his room and reach for the front door, a speech bubble pops up where Alex thinks to himself that he shall leave the house after letting his mother know where he's going. Then the player navigates through the house and find Alex's mother in the kitchen.

Alex's mother is the first interactive NPC the player encounters in the game. Players read through conversation and pick a response when prompted.

Alex comes into the kitchen and finds his mother having tea at the table. He greets her and the conversation starts. Alex's mother, Mary, breaks the bad news to Alex. People in town have been talking about the missing girl, and that girl is Alpie. In surprise, Alex decides to go to Alpie's house to find out more.

Sequence 1.1 and 1.2 of the game serves as a warm up session for basic UI and an outline of relationships the protagonist has with other NPCs.

By clicking around in the room (a common action for most point'n'click game), the player learns to identify interactive props. For the interaction with desk and the bucket in the room, the player acknowledge that interactions with these items boosts stats. Not until later on, the player then discovers there are trigger-able plots related to these stats. In order to unlock the plots, the player has to reach a certain required stat values or sometimes below them.

While player takes the opportunity to interact with the phone, the messages reveal an outline of the relationships between Alex and other characters. There are message history that the player can go through. The messages give sneak peek into some characteristics of Alex's friends. Pam, the chill capybara, puts canned response and only manually replies when Alex demands. Pam only give short replies on instant messenger. On the other hand, Krist, the chicken, texts a whole lot, complains about everything in his life and cannot shut up. Alpie, the missing alpaca the player is going to try to save in the game, is on the chat list on the phone as well. However at this point of the game, the player do not have access of the chat. Alex looks at the chat with Alpie and only sees she does not reply to his message, which he was checking up on her a few days back. This narrative is to create an open direction for the later on plots, where the player can build and shape the relationship with Alpie based on the choices of interaction.

Scene 1.3: The town, Alpie's house and other interactive locations

Alex leaves the house and head for Alpie's house. There are three parts (three scenes) of the town. Asides from town scenes, there are also scenes for school, playground, lake and other characters' houses.

Alex has to go all the way to the other side of the town to get to Alpie's. Alex passes through the town where he heard people gossiping about Alpie, which the player will discover whether the pieces of stories are true or false later on in the game.

In the process, Alex also checks out the interactive places, objects and NPCs. Alex may run into his two friends, Pam and Krist, and is promoted to invite them to join him

to Alphe's. The group gets to Alphe's and finds the Bates, the family who adopted Alphe, seem relatively composed, almost cannot care less, about the incident.

The Bates claims that the girl has run away since she has not been getting along with the family whole this time. The group suspects it is a lie and the Bates are trying to cover something. They got no evidence to support their suspicion. The group part way and returns home at the end of the day.

Alex gets home disappointed and his mother tries to comfort him explaining Alphe ran away from home might just because she needed some alone time. Alex gets back to his room and checks his phone for messages before he goes to bed. The player is again prompted to message Alphe again or not. Afterwards, Alex puts down his phone and thinks back to the day when his mother and him just moved to the town. The game goes on to chapter two with a title scene.

In this sequence, the objectives are exploring the environment, interacting with NPCs, gradually providing pieces of plot. This is where the player maps out and navigates through the environment, while Alex passes three parts of the town to get to Alphe's place. The interactions with Pam and Krist is another warm up session for player to get familiar with prompted options and relationship stats building. At the end of chapter one, the goal is for the player to establish a good understanding of how to utilize the actions of Alex, getting to see the full story by making the right (scripted) choices and to achieve the objective of the game, saving the friend, in the end.

reflection:

The work from this week examines ideas of player experience at the start of a visual novel type of game. Even there are choices prompted throughout the game and the decisions does impact the endings achieved, the general plot remains scripted. By working on the chapter objectives and story boards, I gradually mapped out a few ideas to have an efficient approach of guiding the player diving into the plot. While there are limitation in a 2D game medium, the approach is to work out a balanced point where the player is aware of being a reader as well as participating in the story.

My project aims to raise awareness of human trafficking issue and focus on creating an experience that the target audience can take away with and further more take action in real life.

A 2D visual novel is a good solution for my project, because it creates a stage where I can convey my idea and have the player participating in the process instead of just reading through it as an outsider.

This simulation technique is being used in most of the RPG games both 2D and 3D. For 2D visual novels there are works like *Night in the Woods* by Infinite Fall (2017), *Cinders* by MoaCube(2012) and *Hatoful Boyfriend* by Mediatonic (2011). A rather popular and a personal favorite is *Assassin's Creed* series by Ubisoft, a great example of RPG in 3D. These are works based heavily on the scripted narratives and yet the player is easily to immersing in the plots. Even though the visual presentation of a 3D game is often more sense-stunning than 2D, the processes of guiding the player to step into the stories with mini navigating exercises and warm up missions are highly identical.

By examining the similar simulation games in the fields, I reflected the approach of the gameplay at the beginning of the game does not necessarily have to focus on jumping into the plot right away, but rather trying to present interesting characteristics and as well as leaving a trail of the main plot with small pieces of information.