

# Crowdsourcing the Localization of Gone Home

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**GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE**  
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**2014**

# Gone Home

- First-person narrative exploration game
- Player wanders through an environment, examining objects and reading content
- Main storyline delivered through “audio diaries”

# Localization?

- UI programmer on Bioshock 2
  - Localization was a last-minute crisis
  - If you're going to do it, do it right (and early)
- Narrative-heavy Indie game
  - Localization is critical for understanding
  - As wide of an audience as possible
- Accessibility

# Gone Home's Budget

...was basically 0.

- Living off savings in the basement of a shared rental house
- Personally funding every software purchase or outsource task
- Highly motivated to do it cheaply

# Gone Home's Content

- Lots and lots of it. So much text.
  - Important text: story-critical diaries, artifacts, etc
  - Flavor text: product labels, book spines, etc
- Text in images/textures
  - Almost all of the text was baked into the world in some way
- Audio
  - Story-critical voice-acted audio diaries

# HOW MUCH Content?

- 7000+ words in “UI” text
  - 3500+ in subtitles
  - 14000+ in “journals”
  - ...and then we added 15000+ in commentary
  - At \$0.20/word/language...
- That would pay rent for over 3 years

# What to Localize?

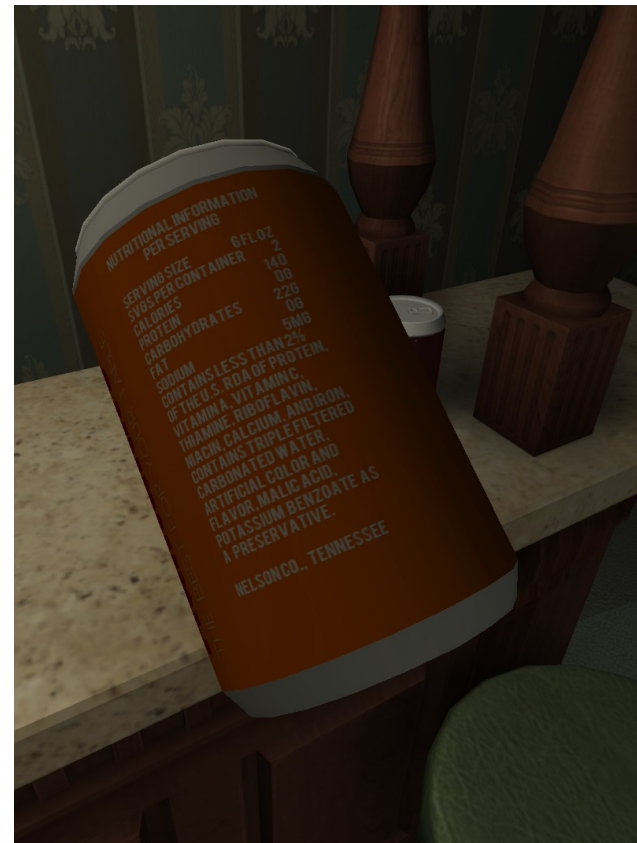
- Audio was superbly acted
- Audio was packaged and difficult to swap
- Text-only!
  - Subtitles for audio
  - Display baked text overtop
  - UI text swapped

**WELLSPRING MOVERS, INC.**  
 1287 HARPER DRIVE  
 FOREST GROVE, OR 97116  
 TEL. 756-8302, FAX. 756-8698

FROM: TERRENCE GREENBRIAR  
 1888 DRY CREEK RD.  
 FOREST GROVE, OR 97116

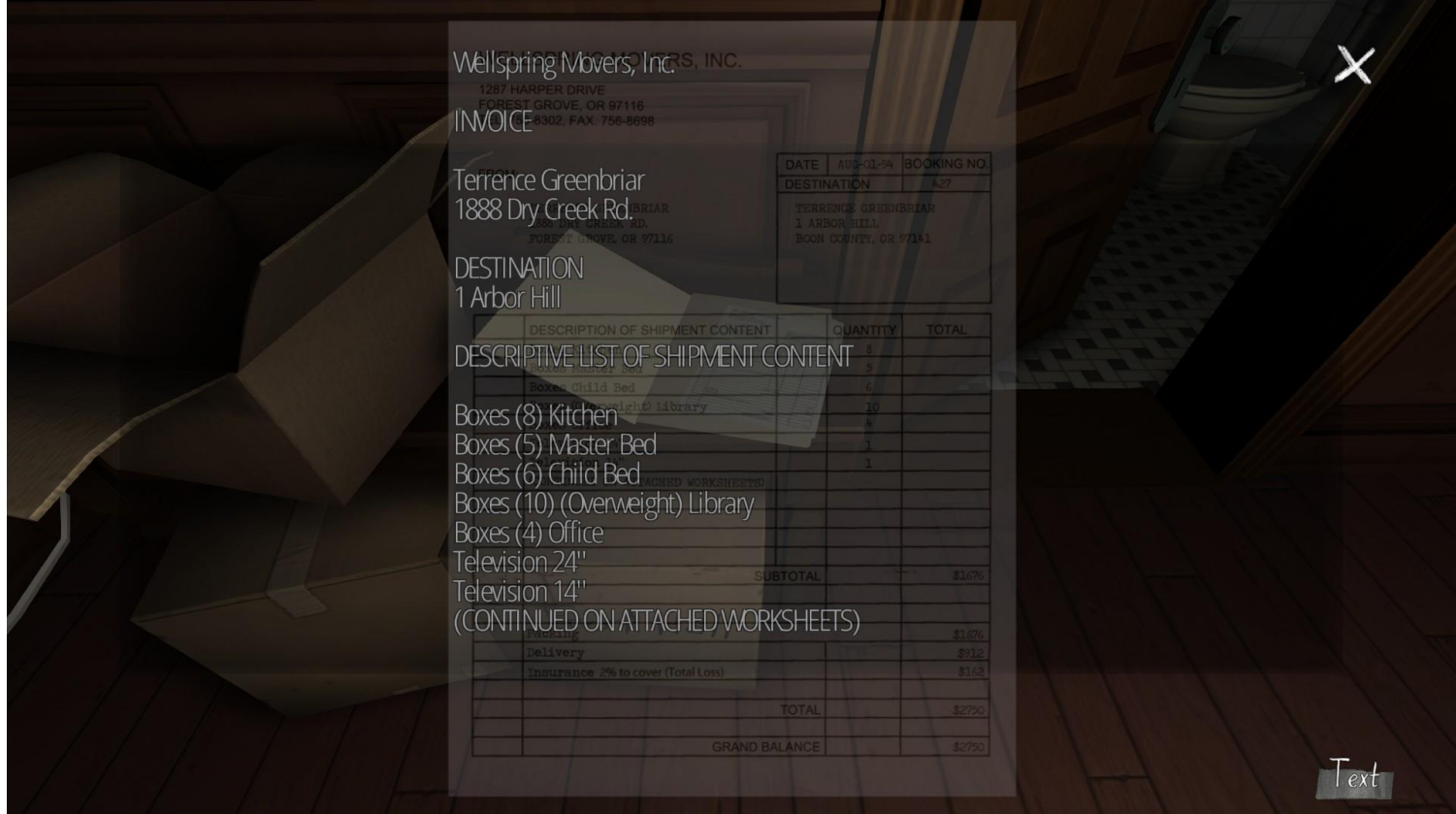
DATE	AUG-01-94	BOOKING NO.
DESTINATION	427	
TERRENCE GREENBRIAR 1 ARBOR HILL BOON COUNTY, OR 97141		

DESCRIPTION OF SHIPMENT CONTENT	QUANTITY	TOTAL
Boxes Kitchen	8	
Boxes Master Bed	5	
Boxes Child Bed	6	
Boxes (Overweight) Library	10	
Boxes Office	4	
Television 24"	1	
Television 14"	1	
(CONTINUED ON ATTACHED WORKSHEETS)		
SUBTOTAL		\$1676
Packing		\$1676
Delivery		\$912
Insurance 2% to cover (Total Loss)		\$162
TOTAL		\$2750
GRAND BALANCE		\$2750

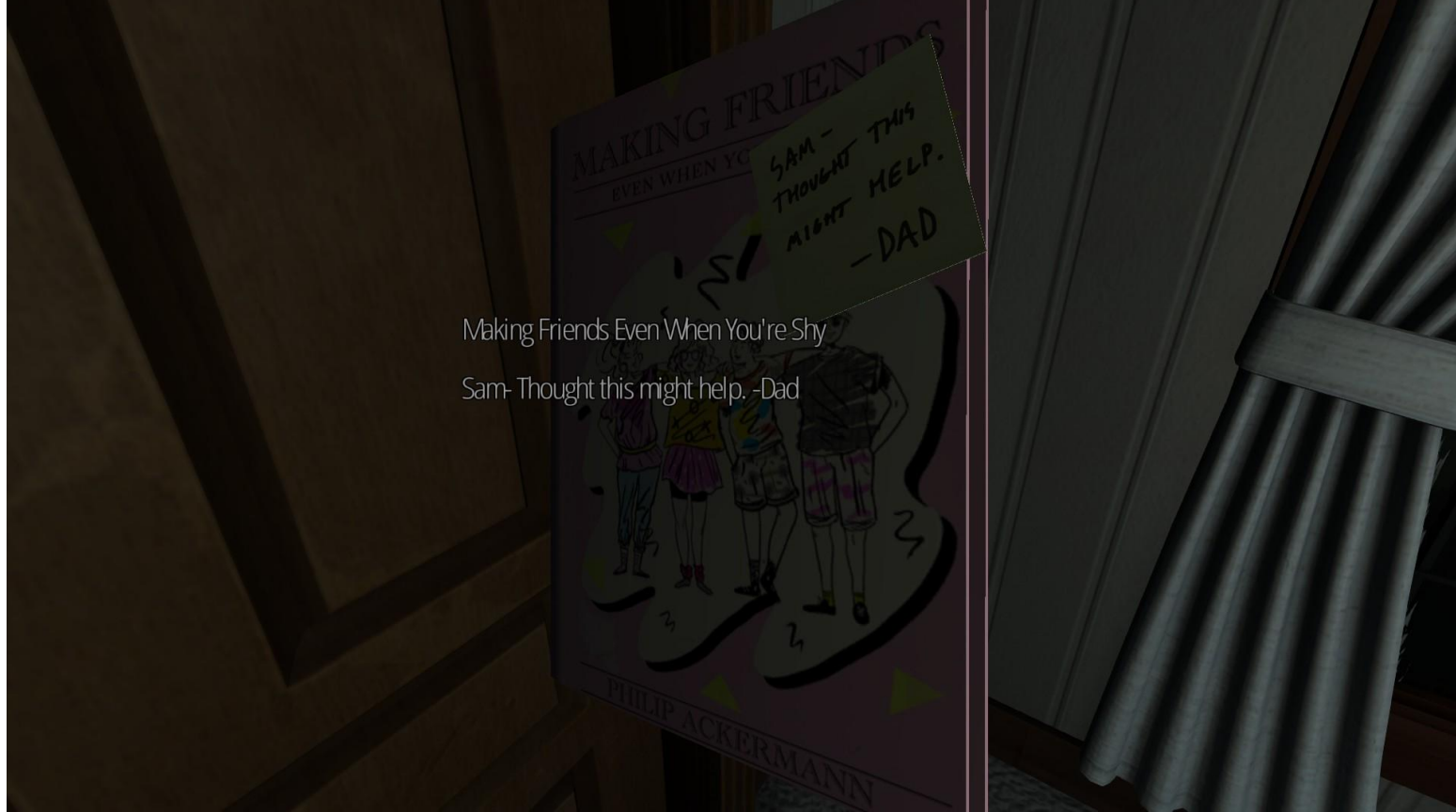


Important and unimportant (flavor) text





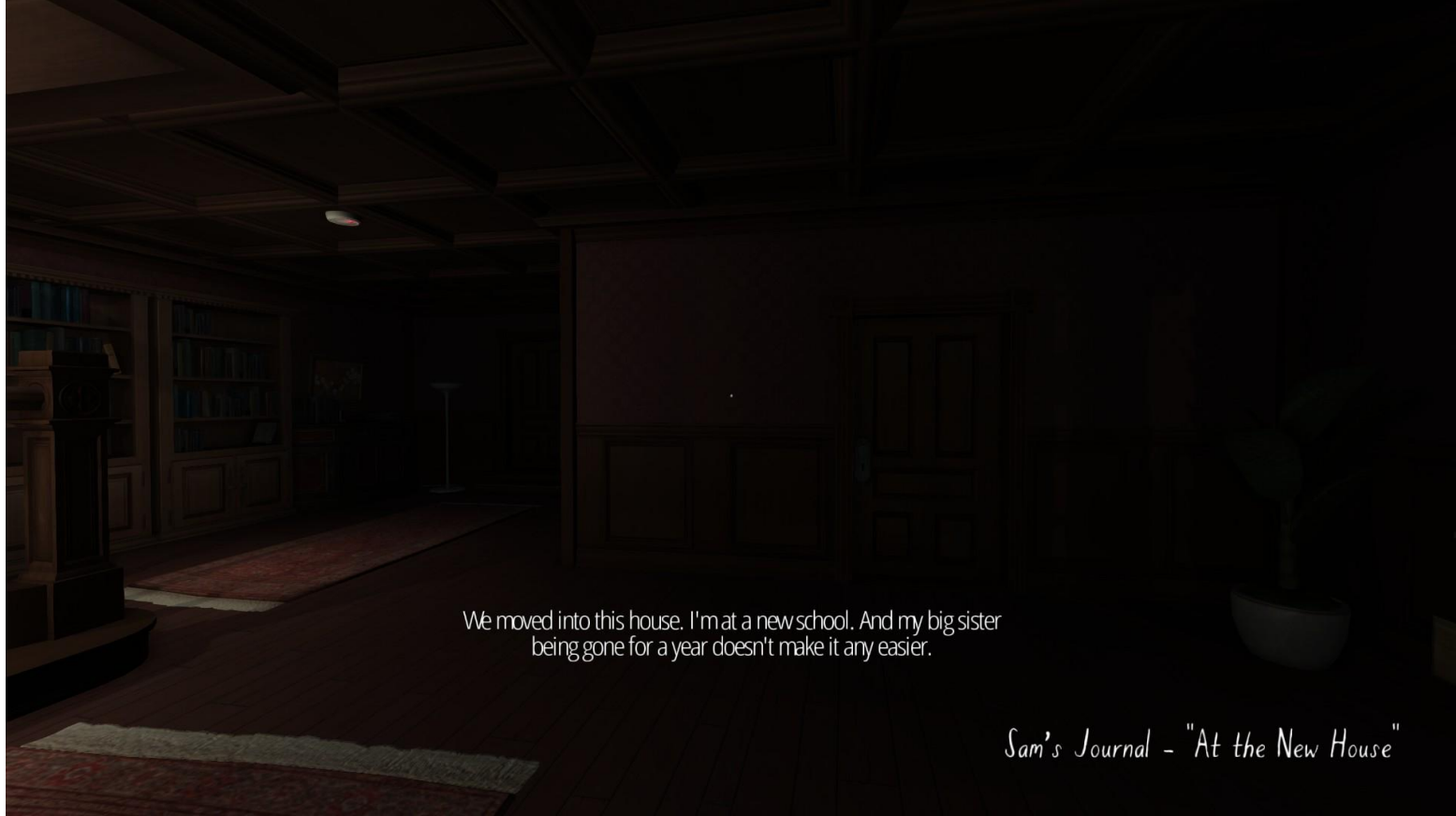
Journal overlay



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Baked-in Text Overlay

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We moved into this house. I'm at a new school. And my big sister  
being gone for a year doesn't make it any easier.

*Sam's Journal - "At the New House"*

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## Subtitles

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# Designing for Crowdsourcing

- Easy to edit for Steve and Karla (the writers)
- Easy to translate for interested fans
- Easy to use for non-technical players
- Solution: All plain-text files (XML for subtitles) placed in a particular location

# Testing!

- Scripts to generate content
  - Reversed
  - Lorem Ipsum
  - Google Translate
- Lots of warnings when content wasn't found
- Localized to English as default

# Your Community Is Helping You

- Crowdsourcing is asking for a lot of labor.
- For free.

# Help Them Help You

- Lots of documentation!
- Make the process painless
- Respect and respond to bugs and clarification
- Give them credit - lots of credit
- <http://thefullbrightcompany.com/localization/>

# What Went Right

- Localized into 12+ languages, for free
- Enthusiastic community support
- Easy to add additional content (commentary)
- Popular languages get support



# What Went Wrong

- Dictionary is very simple
- Fonts
- Testing
- UI spacing
- No Klingon translation

# More Caveats

- Supporting localization is a big task
  - Engineering
  - Writing
  - UI design
- Many hours of testing, fixing bugs, creating content
- Crowdsourcing means no support at launch
  - Possibly never

# Gone Home's Languages

- French
- Italian
- German
- Spanish
- Czech
- Russian
- Korean
- Norwegian
- Portuguese  
(European & Brazilian)
- Polish
- Turkish
- Japanese
- Esperanto

# Thanks & Contact Info

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