

The logo for the Game Developers Conference (GDC) 2016. It features the letters 'GDC' in a large, white, sans-serif font with a thin red and blue outline. To the right of 'GDC' is a small purple square containing the year '2016' in white.

The Narrative Innovation Showcase

**Clara Fernández-Vara
& Matthew Weise**
Fiction Control

GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE March 14–18, 2016 · Expo: March 16–18, 2016 #GDC16





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Welcome!

5 talks, 10 minutes each

- Challenges in narrative design
- Focus on process
- No Q&A – if you have any questions or comments, please join us at the wrap-up room.



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PRY

Player vs Author Control

Samantha Gorman

GDC 16

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PRY opens six years after James—a demolition consultant—returns from the First Gulf War.

Players explore James' mind as he confronts his failing vision and the loss of important relationships forged during war.



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The Challenge

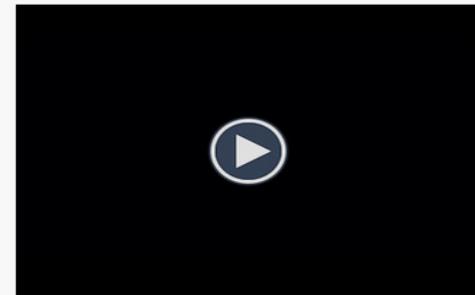
How to create a compelling balance between player and author control of story when integrating text and video.

What We Saw

Point of View

Chapter 1

Point of View



Point of view is the perspective from which a story is told. The speaker can be first or third person. First person narration is when the narrator is part of the action. Third person narration is when the narrator is not part of the action.

First person example:



Take the knife - Interactive video

**TAKE THE KNIFE AND GO
TO YOUR FRIEND'S HOUSE**

**DON'T TAKE THE KNIFE AND
GO TO YOUR FRIEND'S HOUSE**



7:37 / 11:48



YouTube



Our Process: Integration

- Find Prompts in the Narrative Itself
- Pay Attention to Form
- Think Outside the Box (discipline)



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Jessie. We had our own kind of friendship, but her face belongs to a list of people with whom I've lost

That's dumb. People are not lost like rings down the drain. It is vague what you remember, images.

Her taillights low and flat across the plain. Dad, head down, against the kitchen window pane. Out of touch. There's the general impression of features. Jessie had a nice, toothy smile. Her eyes were empty don't go there. . . we fall through the door and she's suddenly near her hand smells like lilac as she rips into me

shelves fall cleaning supplies shatter blue slides around her body stains my fingers on her pulse I'm counting, calculating. Back in service, few women got to where she got. when she took charge, it was hot.

She knew what she was after. Her hand on mine as I reached for the chips "finders keepers," she said. Her nails digging into my knuckles longer than needed. Her fingers long on my palm,





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Solution: Player Author Control

Create an Always Seen Author Defined Narrative Arc
Over a Flexible Space where the Audience Can Explore.
Make interaction possible at all times.

When will the attack happen?

When will the attack happen?

When the reader closes James's eyes
PRY looks at the external video's timecode
and can do any or all of the following:

1. Pause the external video.
2. Seek to a different time in the external video.
3. Add new thoughts to thought queue.



external video

0:00:00

Thought Queue:

thought

thought

thought

thought

thought

external video

0:00:00

Thought Queue:

thought

thought

thought

thought

Reader Progresses to next thought in queue by either:

1. opening James' eyes
2. going into James' subconscious space.

external video

0:20:00

Thought Queue:

thought

thought

thought

thought

new thought

new thought

New thoughts are added to the queue based on the video's timecode when reader closes James's eyes.



damage



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How does this change game
narrative as we know it?



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Thanks!

prynovella.com (PRY is available on iOS app store)

samantha.gorman@tenderclaws.com

@TenderClaws



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Sculpting Story

Aaron A. Reed

University of California Santa Cruz / Independent



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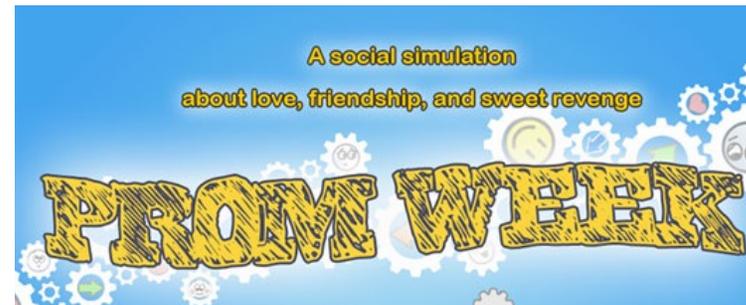
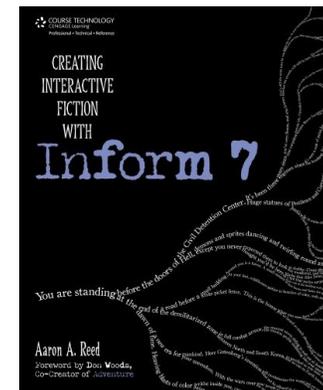
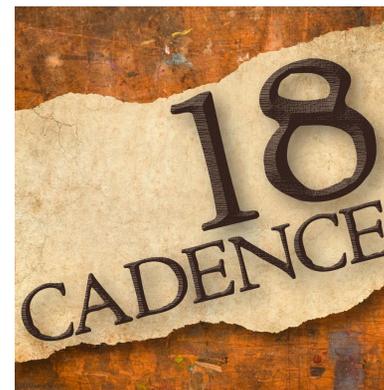
Sculpting Story

Aaron A. Reed

~~University of California Santa Cruz / Independent~~

(soon extra employable!)

You Might Remember Me From Such Titles As...





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t h e

ICE-BOUND

c o n c o r d a n c e

Aaron A. Reed & Jacob Garbe



GDC 13

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the
ICE-BOUN
c o n c o r d a n

Aaron A. Reed & Jacob Garbe



The Ice-Bound Concordance

- What if exploring an interactive story could feel like sculpting with clay?

The Ice-Bound Concordance

- What if exploring an interactive story could feel like sculpting with clay...
 - 1) ... instead of being lost in a maze?

The Ice-Bound Concordance

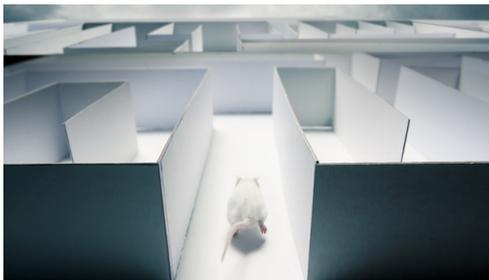
- What if exploring an interactive story could feel like sculpting with clay...
 - 1) ... instead of being lost in a maze?



disorienting

The Ice-Bound Concordance

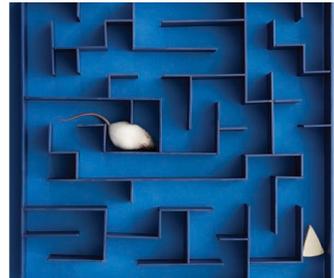
- What if exploring an interactive story could feel like sculpting with clay...
 - 1) ... instead of being lost in a maze?



disorienting
stressful

The Ice-Bound Concordance

- What if exploring an interactive story could feel like sculpting with clay...
 - 1) ... instead of being lost in a maze?

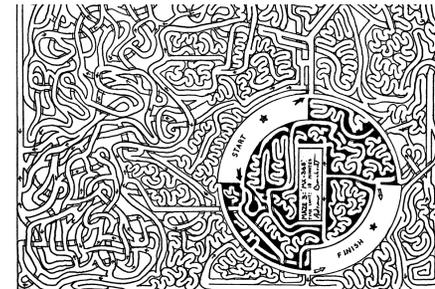
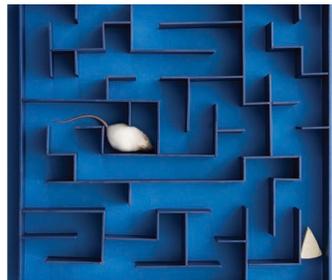


static

The Ice-Bound Concordance

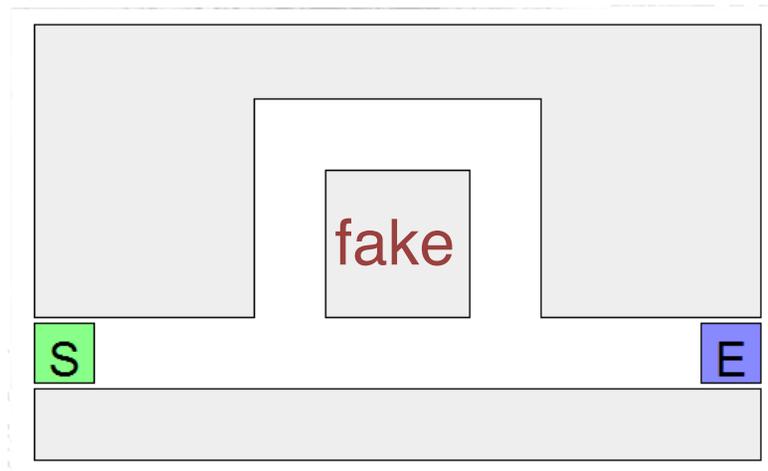
- What if exploring an interactive story could feel like sculpting with clay...
 - 1) ... instead of being lost in a maze?

hard

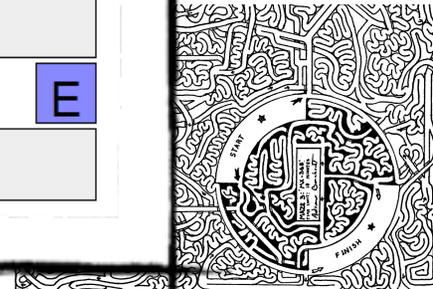


The Ice-Bound Concordance

- What if e... could feel...
 - 1) ... in



story
y...
e?



The Ice-Bound Concordance

- What if exploring an interactive story could feel like sculpting with clay...
 - 2) ... instead of choosing options on your car.



The Ice-Bound Concordance

- What if exploring an interactive story could feel like sculpting with clay...
 - 2) ... instead of choosing options on your car.



The Ice-Bound Concordance

- What if exploring an interactive story could feel like sculpting with clay...
 - 2) ... instead of choosing options on your car.



The Ice-Bound Concordance

- What if **exploring** an interactive story could feel like sculpting with clay...

The Ice-Bound Concordance

- What if **exploring** an interactive **story** could feel like sculpting with clay...

The Ice-Bound Concordance

- What if **exploring** an interactive **story** could feel like sculpting with clay...
 - low cost, reversible decisions
 - the ability to make surprising things



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(The Constraints!)

(The Constraints!)

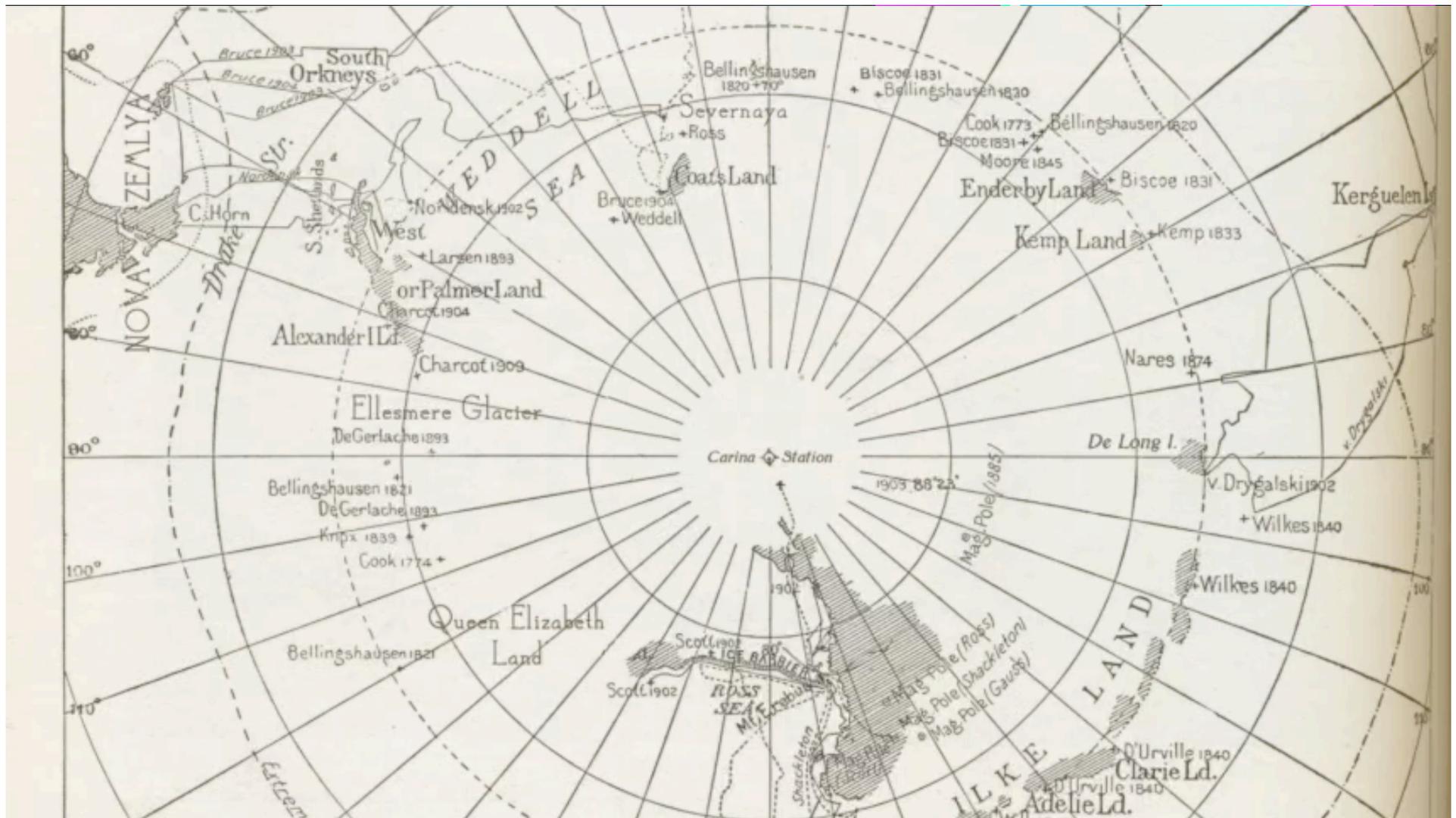
- “Future of the Book”: Digital Game + Print Book

(The Constraints!)

- “Future of the Book”: Digital Game + Print Book
- Text-based

(The Constraints!)

- “Future of the Book”: Digital Game + Print Book
- Text-based
- Two PhD students in spare time





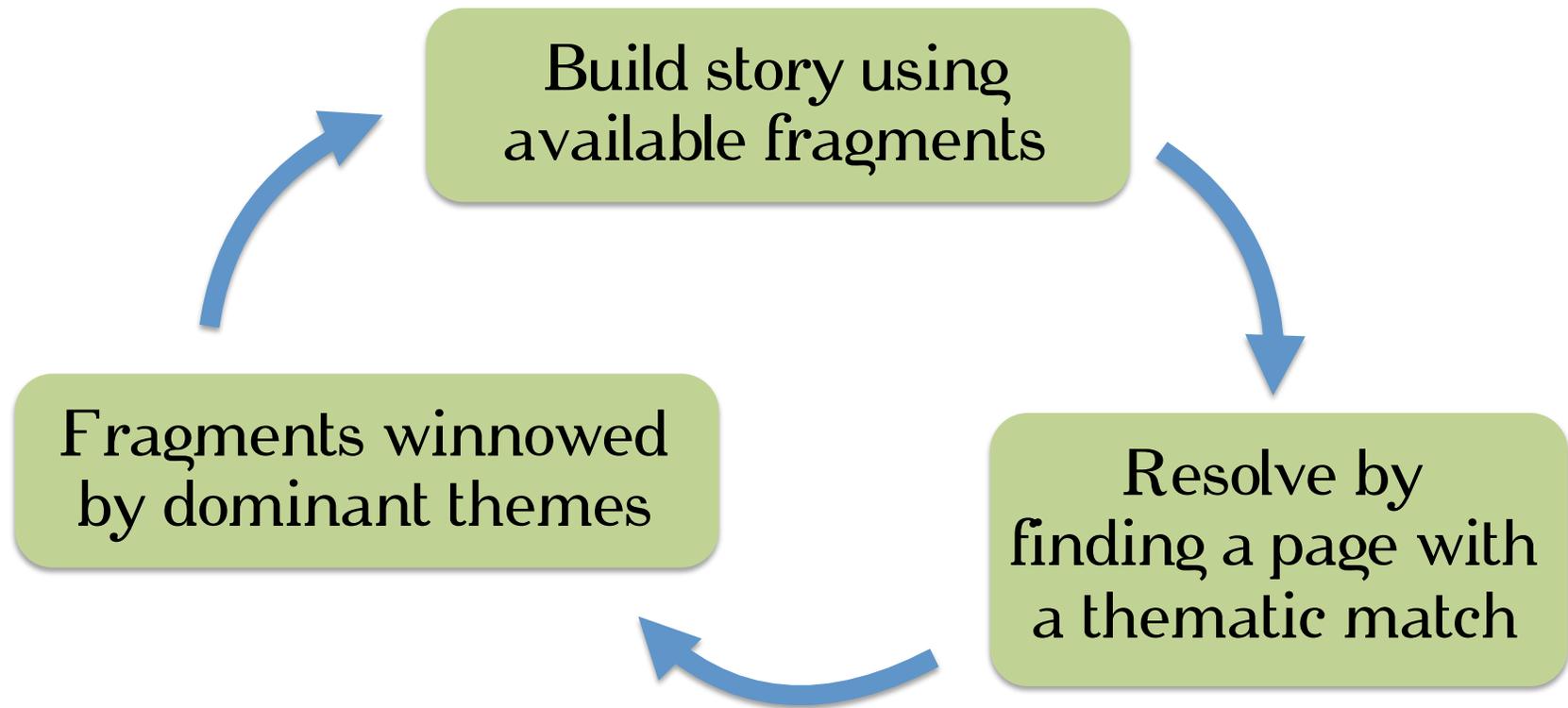
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Build story using
available fragments

Build story using
available fragments



Resolve by
finding a page with
a thematic match





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The Solution to the Challenge





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The Solution(s) to the Challenge



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The Solutions to the Challenge

- Make the story dynamic in multiple ways.

The Solutions to the Challenge

- Making story dynamic on more than one level.



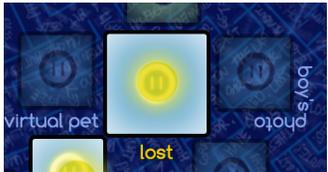
Themes

The Solutions to the Challenge

- Making story dynamic on more than one level.



Themes



Major Story Beats

The Solutions to the Challenge

- Making story dynamic on more than one level.



bit of three sisters

ld gaze squarely at the
fore closing her eyes. In it
x above her younger siste

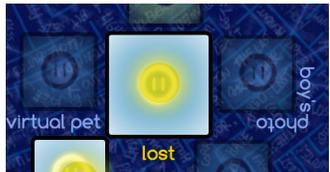
Themes

Major Story Beats

Words and phrases

The Solutions to the Challenge

- Making story dynamic on more than one level.



bit of three sisters

ld gaze squarely at the
fore closing her eyes. In it
x above her younger siste

Themes

Major Story Beats

Words and phrases

Character State

Printed Book

“I’d feel some small but significant change ripple through the game from a choice I’d made... [The Ice-Bound Concordance] is a game that, more than anything else, captures this feeling of editing.”

Rock Paper Shotgun





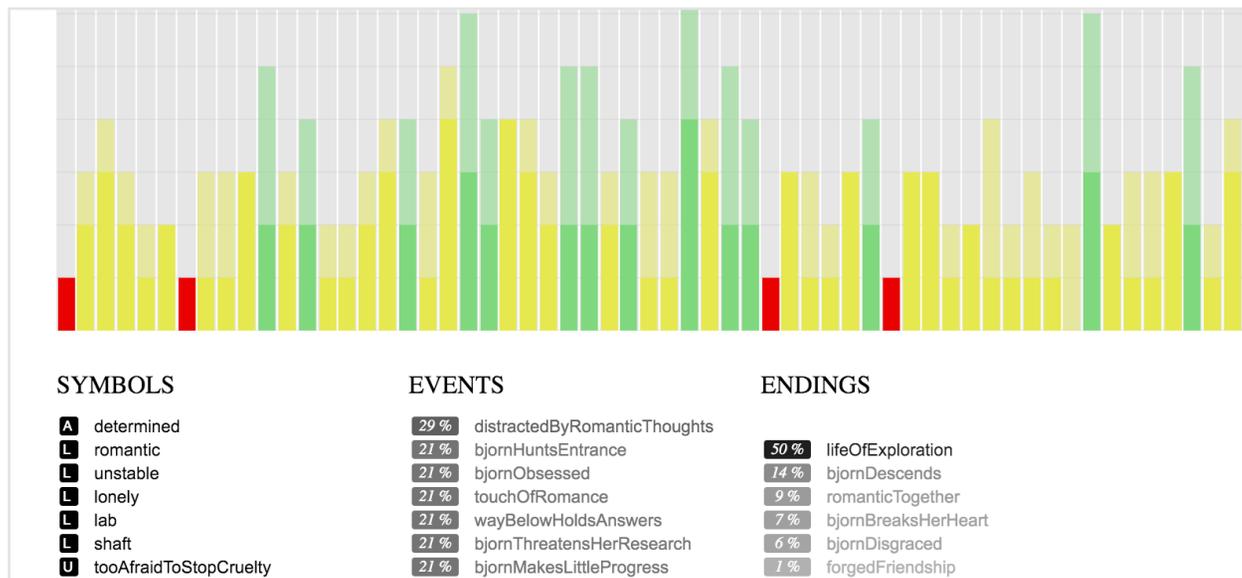
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The Solutions to the Challenge

- When exploring, you need a map...

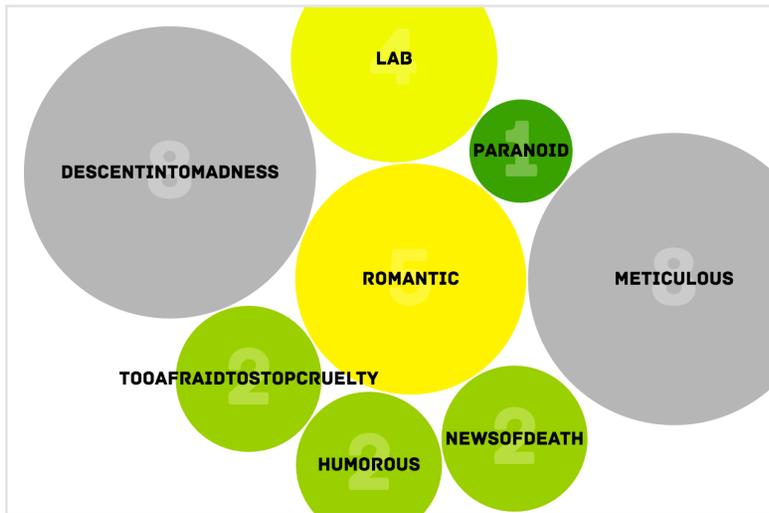
The Solutions to the Challenge

- Authoring and visualization tools



The Solutions to the Challenge

- Authoring and visualization tools



3% 66 problem combinations
2455 total possible combinations

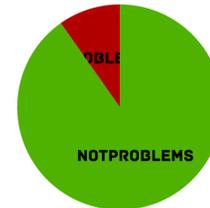
Currently selected

- descentIntoMadness
- meticulous

10% targeted

(8 of 82 total combos with these symbols need content)

Constitutes 12% of this level's combos needing content



8 Combos Involving Selection ±

- descentIntoMadness
- determined
- meticulous
- paranoid
- romantic

The Solutions to the Challenge

- Matching the narrative content to the narrative mechanic.

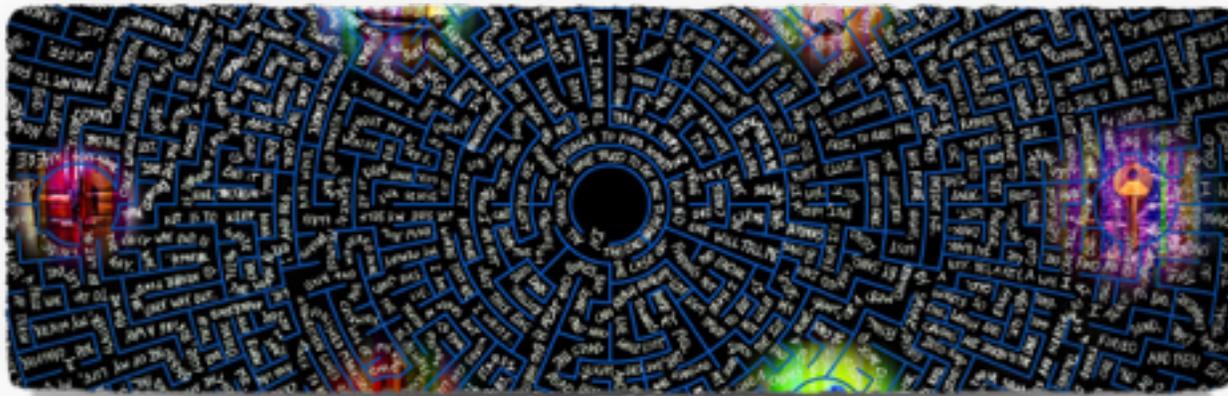
The Solutions to the Challenge

- Matching the narrative content to the narrative mechanic.



The Solutions to the Challenge

- Matching the narrative content to the narrative mechanic.





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How does this change game narrative as we know it?

How does this change game narrative as we know it?

“It’s game narrative, Jim, but not as we know it.”



How does this change game narrative as we know it?

“It’s game narrative, Jim, but not as we know it.”



How does this change game development as we know it?



How does this change game narrative as we know it?

- Players are more engaged if they can build story,
⇒ not just choose story.



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The Ice-Bound Concordance

ice-bound.com

(Get the book at the GDC store!)

Thank you!

Aaron A. Reed - @aaronareed - aaronareed.net



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The Ice-Bound Concordance

ice-bound.com

(Get the book at the GDC store!)

Thank you!

reminder about pending
employability



Aaron A. Reed - @aaronareed - aaronareed.net



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But What If They All Just Hug It Out? Tragedy And Player Agency With *Elsinore*

By Katie Chironis

Team Lead & Writer, Golden Glitch Studios

GDC

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Elsinore



Elsinore is...



+



+



=



The screenshot shows a game interface with a parchment-style background. On the left is a vertical menu with the following items: All, Hamlet, Claudius, Polonius, National Affairs, Odd Occurrences, and History. The 'History' item is selected. The main area displays a list of events: 'My Mother's Death' (My mother died alone, sent to the lazaretto to expire from plague.), 'Hamlet's Foul Mood' (Hamlet is acting very strangely. Something must be amiss.), 'Claudius Killed King Hamlet' (Claudius poisoned his brother to death.), and 'Tragic Nightmare' (I had the most disturbing dream - about tragedy occurring in Elsinore Castle.). At the bottom, there are two character portraits in arched frames. The left portrait is of a woman with dark hair and a purple flower in it, wearing a purple top. The right portrait is of a woman with dark hair, wearing a red dress with a white collar and a gold necklace. Between the portraits is a text box containing the quote: "I had a strange nightmare where I saw the royal court killed." Below the text box is a button labeled 'Tell This'.



"My uncle killed my dad and
slept with my mom! I want revenge!"



"Have you considered therapy instead?"



Queen Gertrude

Act I

Is Queen

Act II

Is Still The Queen

Act III

Is sad that her son killed her husband's advisor

Act IV

Sees Ophelia commit suicide

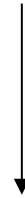
Act V

Gets poisoned, dies



Act V

*Gets
poisoned,
dies*



?

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“How can I turn this situation back onto the player in a negative way?”



A woman with short dark hair, wearing a white dress with a high collar and a small flower in her hair, stands on a balcony or ledge. She is looking out over a vast, dark landscape under a dramatic, fiery sunset. The sky is filled with orange and red clouds, and a winding path or river is visible in the distance. The overall mood is contemplative and powerful.

You're not supposed to win.
You're not supposed to feel powerful.
You're not supposed to gain mastery.

@katiechironis
@goldenglitch
www.elsinore-game.com



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Cibele: A Vignette Game

Nina Freeman

Star Maid Games, Designer

What's a vignette?

“In literature, poetry, and film, a vignette is a brief, indefinite, evocative description or account of a person or situation. Vignettes are usually meant to give a sense of a character rather than to advance a narrative.”

-Ian Bogost, “Videogame Vignette”

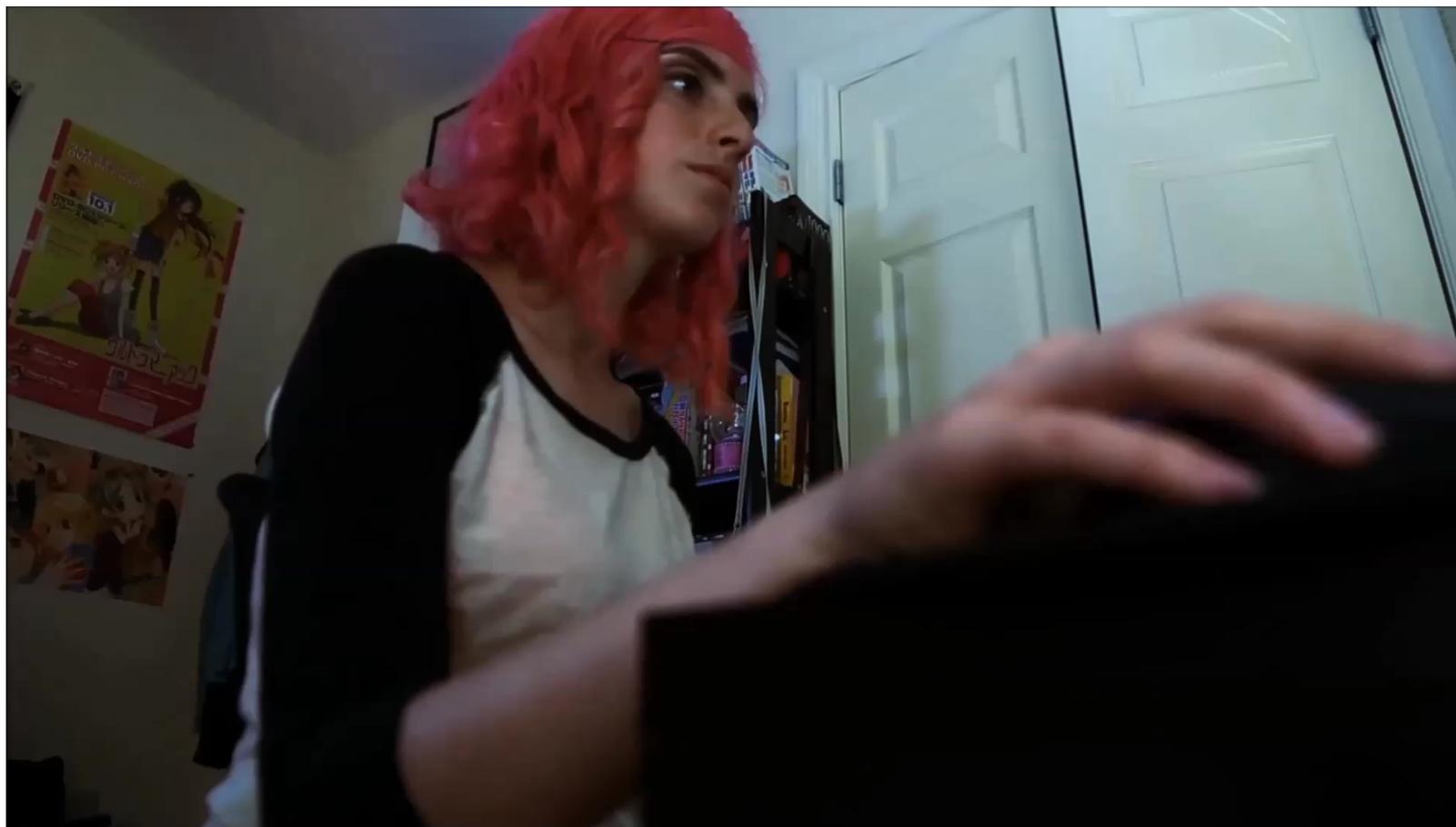
SONG

Did you see me walking by the Buick Repairs?
I was thinking of you
having a Coke in the heat it was your face
I saw on the movie magazine, no it was Fabian's
I was thinking of you
and down at the railroad tracks where the station
has mysteriously disappeared
I was thinking of you
as the bus pulled away in the twilight
I was thinking of you
and right now

by Frank O'Hara

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The Challenge

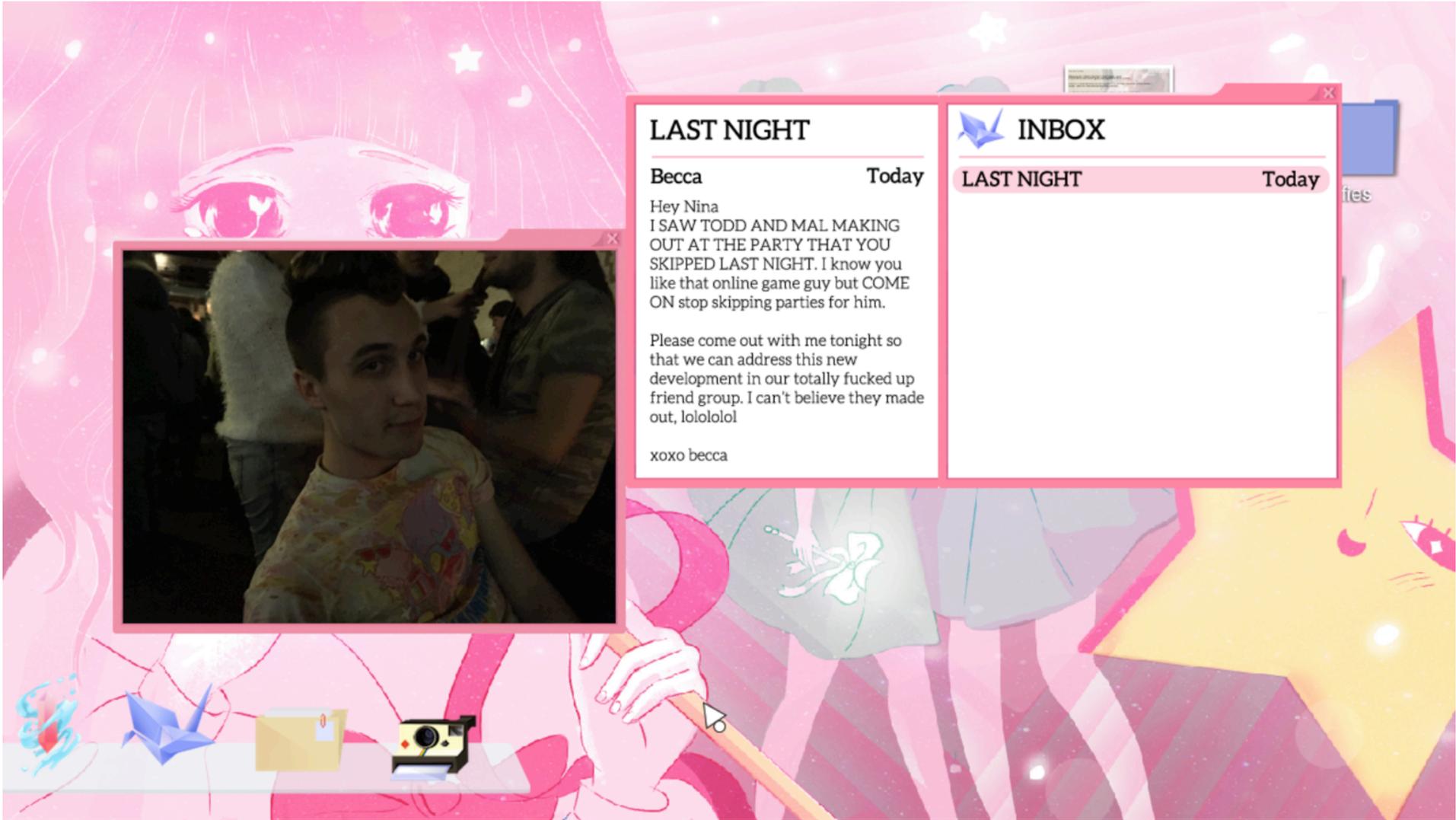
Romantic relationships are full of complexity and nuance.

- How do I tell the story of a relationship without overwhelming the player with information?

The Solution to the Challenge

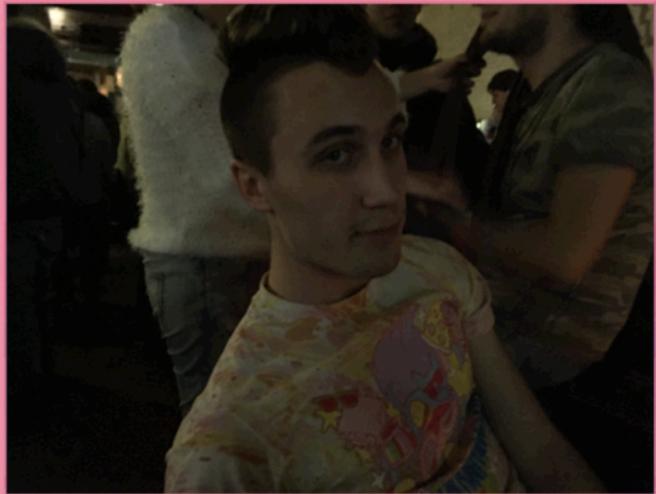
A **vignette** that explores one aspect of the relationship.

- Focus on how and why the couple met up to have sex.



LAST NIGHT

Becca Today



Hey Nina
I SAW TODD AND MAL MAKING
OUT AT THE PARTY THAT YOU
SKIPPED LAST NIGHT. I know you
like that online game guy but COME
ON stop skipping parties for him.

Please come out with me tonight so
that we can address this new
development in our totally fucked up
friend group. I can't believe they made
out, lolololol

xoxo becca

INBOX

LAST NIGHT Today



SNARE

1



tradez

Ichi

Just now!

i will tell you if i think youre cute so send me a selfie :3

here's one of mine, it's a trade.

-ichi



self1



INBOX

tradez

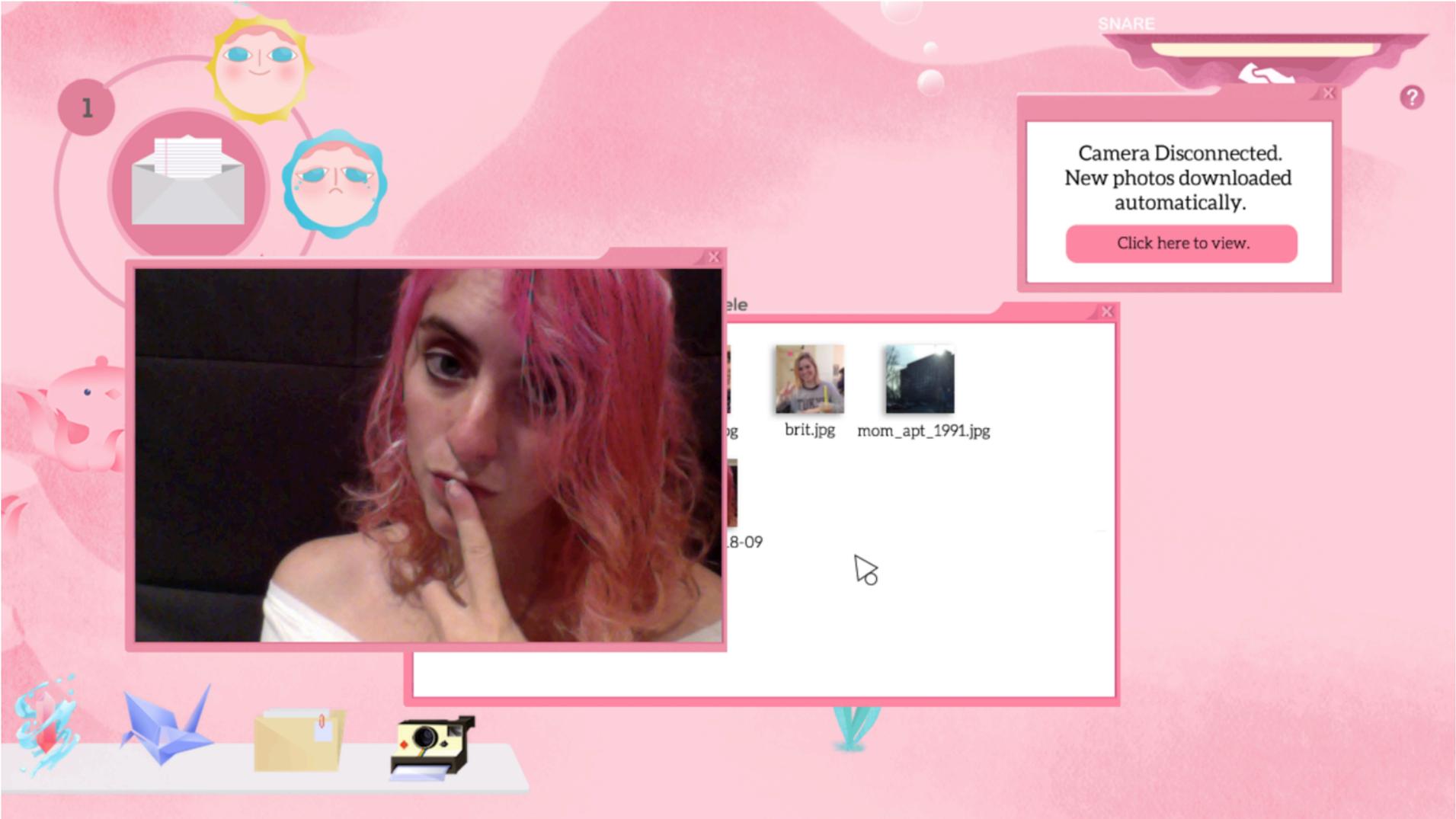
Just now!

LAST NIGHT
coming to nyc yo
bulldog hell later?

Today
Today
Today

Ichi





SNARE

Camera Disconnected.
New photos downloaded
automatically.

[Click here to view.](#)

ele



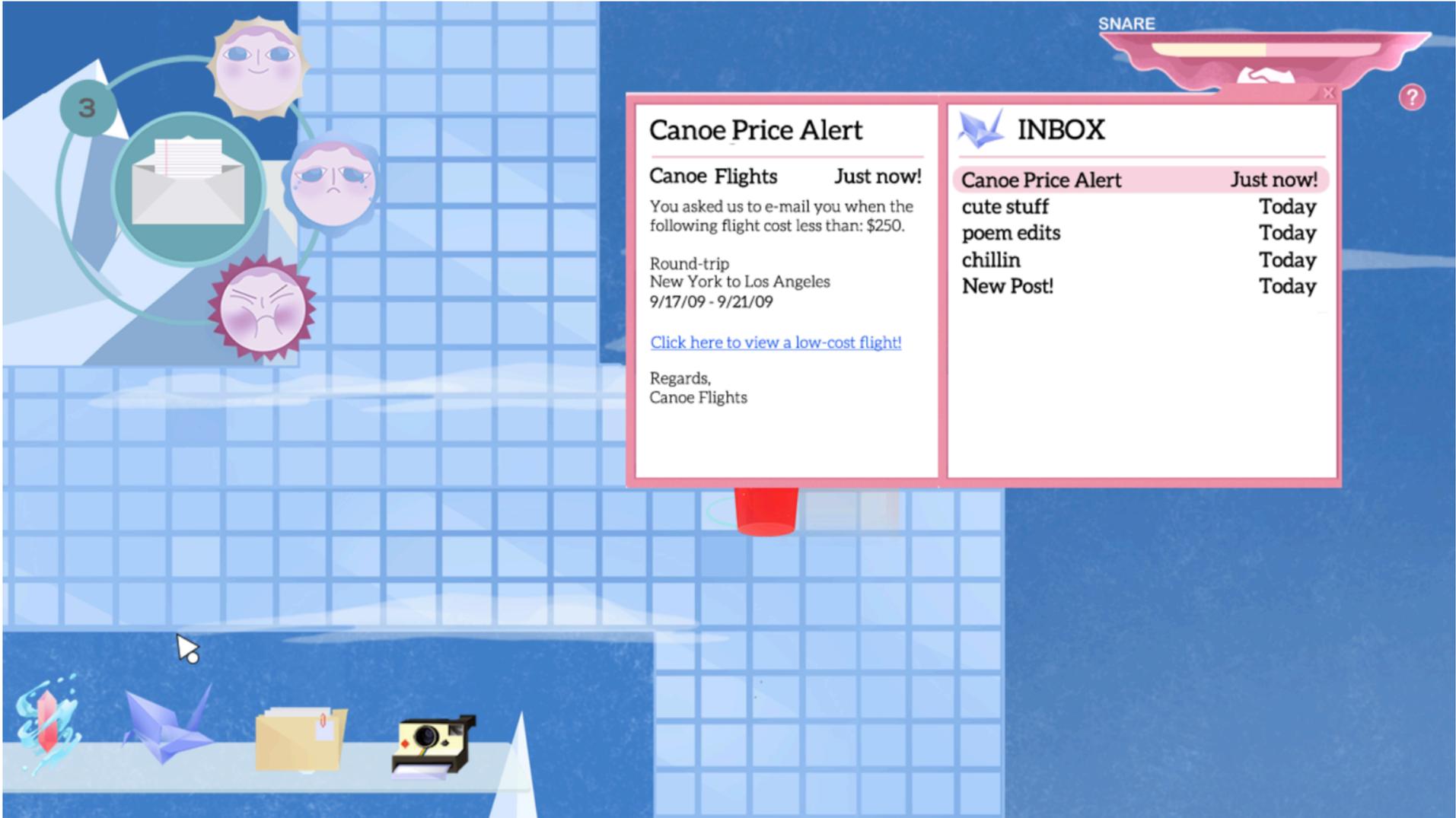
brit.jpg



mom_apt_1991.jpg

8-09





Canoe Price Alert

Canoe Flights **Just now!**

You asked us to e-mail you when the following flight cost less than: \$250.

Round-trip
New York to Los Angeles
9/17/09 - 9/21/09

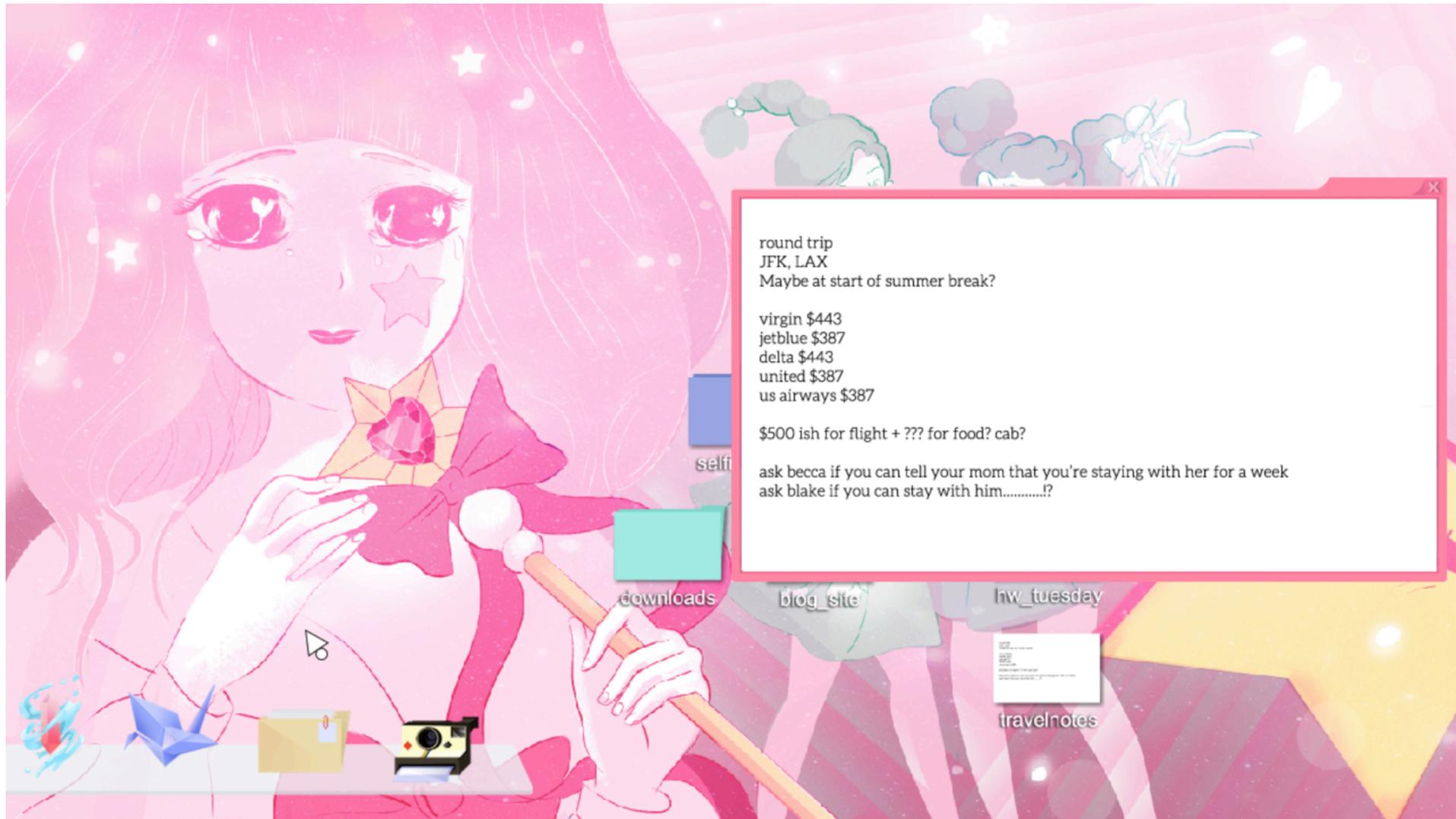
[Click here to view a low-cost flight!](#)

Regards,
Canoe Flights

INBOX

Canoe Price Alert	Just now!
cute stuff	Today
poem edits	Today
chillin	Today
New Post!	Today





round trip
JFK, LAX
Maybe at start of summer break?

virgin \$443
jetblue \$387
delta \$443
united \$387
us airways \$387

\$500 ish for flight + ??? for food? cab?

ask becca if you can tell your mom that you're staying with her for a week
ask blake if you can stay with him.....!?

downloads

blog_site

hw_tuesday



travelnotes



SNARE

1



bday invite...



brit+me.jpg



brit.jpg



mom_apt_1991.jpg

~ IT'S MY BIRTHDAY ~

March 15, 2009

I will be turning 19.
Please join me for Pokeball shaped cupcakes and friendship.

Where? The lounge at STEP Dorms on Fulton St.

When? 9:00PM until.....?

OK SEE YOU THERE BYE <3



Active Target



- No formal plot structure
 - Every aspect of the game is designed to illustrate how and why the couple decided to meet up.
 - It's not about the whole arc of their relationship. It begins and ends within the confines of the vignette focus.

How can the vignette game form influence your writing?

- Experiment with or remove the “beginning, middle and end”.
- Write something plausible, but avoid excessive exposition.
- Evocative details are your best friend.
- Embrace stories with unusual shapes.

WHAT IF



Richard Rouse III
Director/Designer/Writer
Paranoid Productions
@richardrouseiii

GDC Narrative Innovation Showcase 2016

Slides available at: www.paranoidproductions.com

THE CHALLENGE

THE CHALLENGES

Challenge #1
Make an
Action Game
with a Changing
Narrative

File Edit Actions Items Game Help

Chino 9:04 AM

First day, Early Morning

Health 20/20
 Psionics 0/0
 Right Hand: Long Sword
 Left Hand: Empty
 Readied Item: Nothing
 Readied Psi:
 On Body: Ha
 On Head: Ha
 On Feet: Bar
 On Hands: B

Shield
 Nimble
 Sage

Disciplines
 Hand To Hand
 X Bare Hands
 Long Blade
 X

Objects
 Keys
 Usable Objects
 Eban clothing
 Gloving Map
 Torch (2)
 Traveller's Journal
 General Objects
 Wet Note
 Armor & Shields
 X Ring Mail
 Arrows (20)
 Treasures
 Anesthet
 Sapphire

90 gp

ODYSSEY

Niac, the other town on Ua, is to the south of the first town. It is even to the south of the great mountain range. If you go south from here, you cannot miss it. I bid you to be careful however, since the Niacians are a highly aggressive people. Not wearing the right clothes could cost you your life.

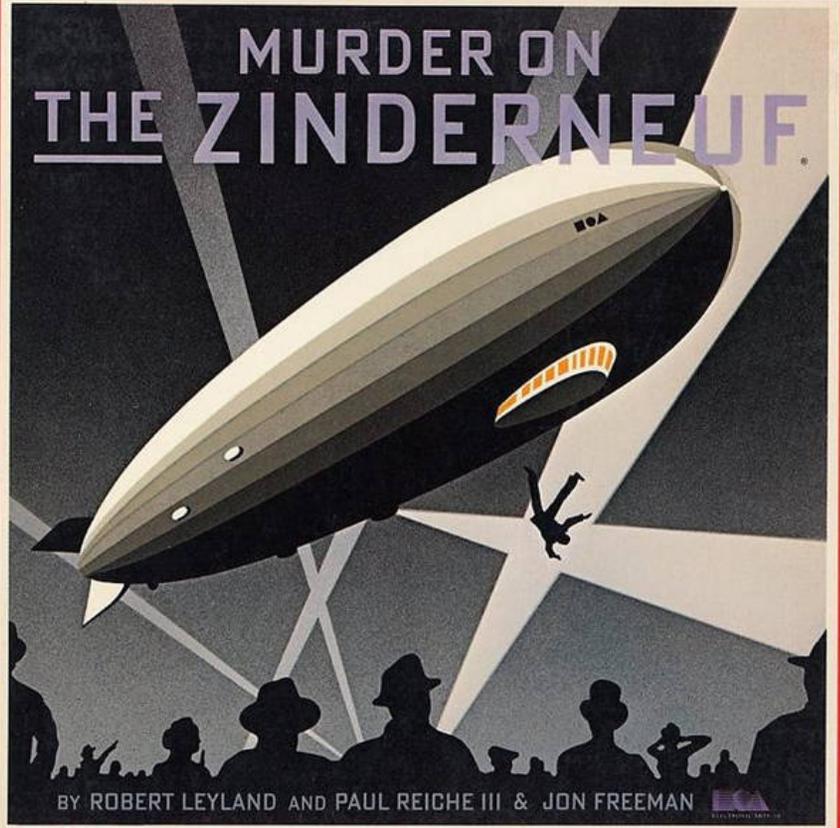
Take Notes
 Ask About: Good-Bye Speak

Messages

r you were the runaway
 There is nothing here you can get.
 You can only make slow progress through a secret wall.
 You take the Traveller's Journal.
 You take the Gloving Map.
 There is nothing here you can get.
 You take the Long Sword.
 You take the Arrows.
 You take the Ring Mail.
 You can only make slow progress through a secret wall.
 You take the Eban clothing.
 That direction is obstructed.

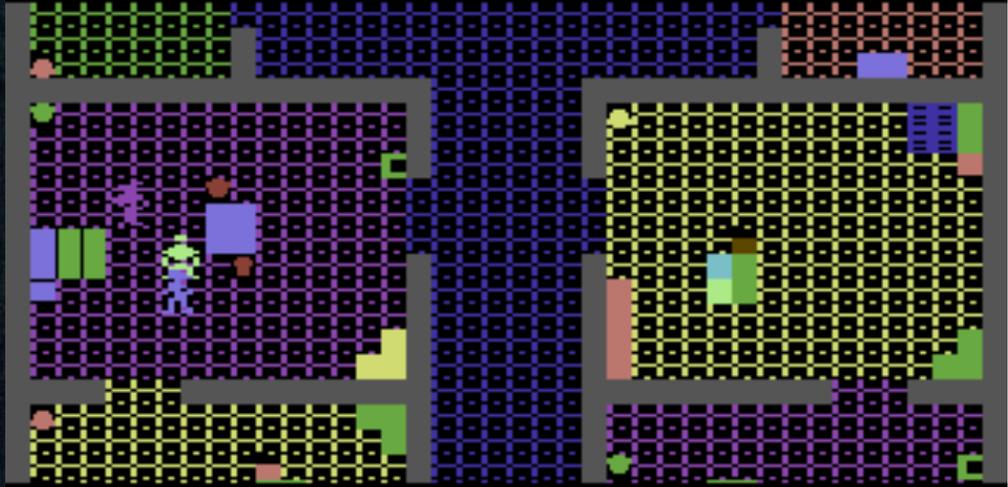


MURDER ON THE ZINDERNEUF



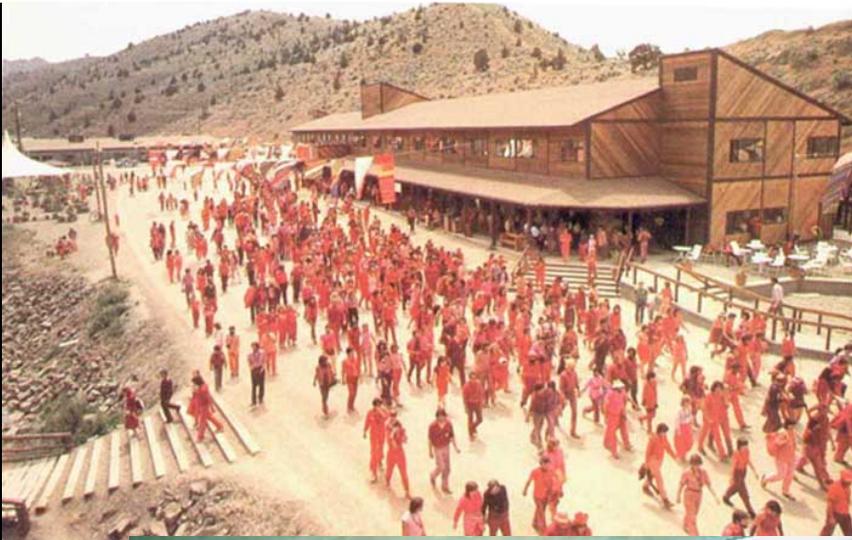
BY ROBERT LEYLAND AND PAUL REICHE III & JON FREEMAN

Suspect: Vincent Van Wente
Hard Seductive Warm **COOL** Helpless

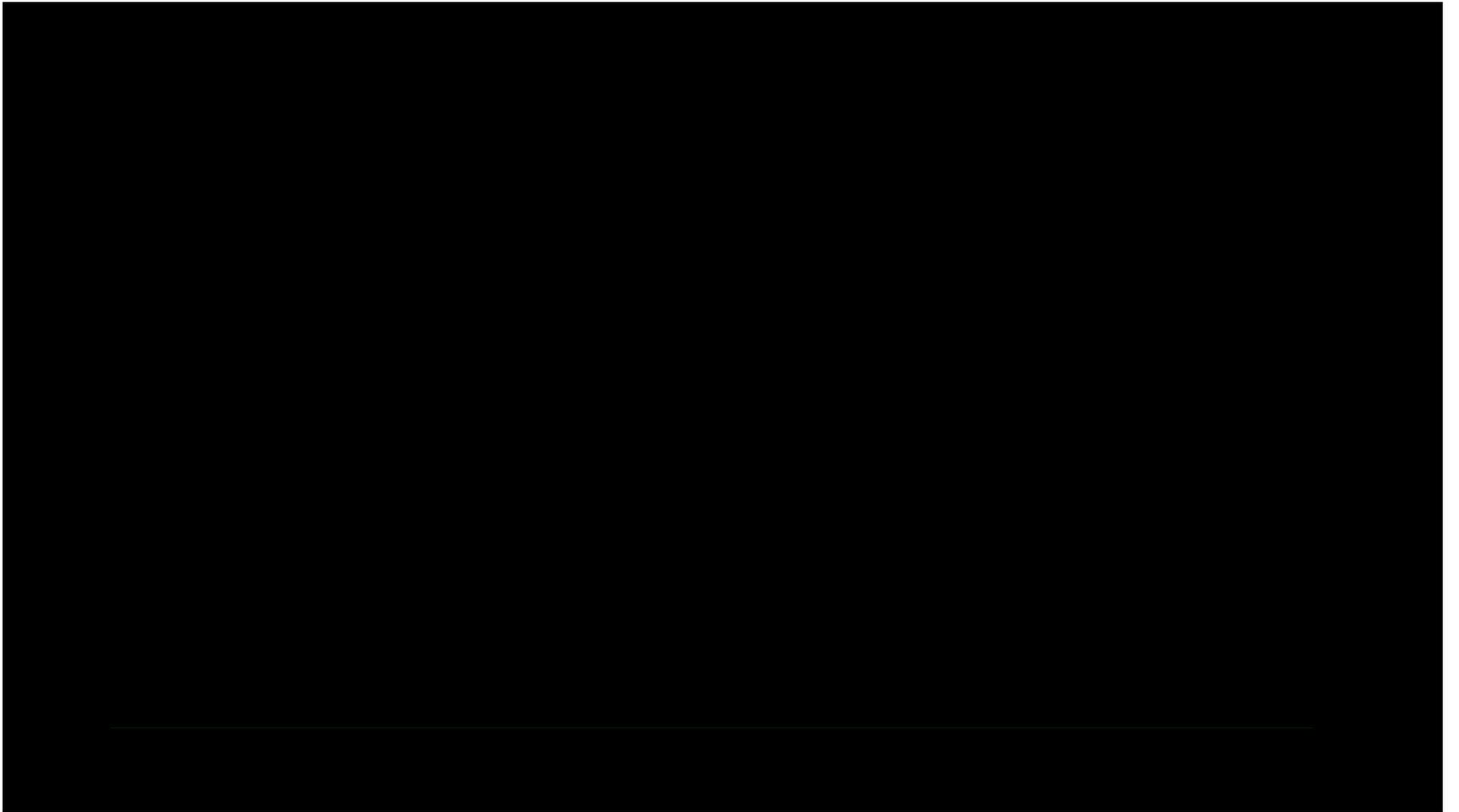




Challenge #2
Explore the
Nature of Cults



THE SOLUTION





THE
CHURCH
IN THE DARKNESS











**COLLECTIVE
JUSTICE
MISSION**



Freedom Town is an agricultural community built and run by the Collective Justice Mission for the good of its people and our humanitarian goals, working hand in hand with the government and people of Battuela.

Dear Mom,

Things are going great down here!
I knew it would be hard working with
the Mission to build a town in the
jungle but it's what we have to do.
It stays hot and humid year-round
here, but I love seeing all the bugs &
birds from South Amer. Food's Great
particularly because we grow it all
ourselves. I know you worry about
me but please don't!

Love, Alex



Mom!
1319 Scott Street
San Francisco, California
94115
USA

NARRATIVE

+

**PLAYER
CHOICES**

=

**POSSIBLE
STORIES**

**NARRATIVE
STATES**

x

**PLAYER
CHOICES**

=

**MORE
POSSIBLE
STORIES**

**HOW DOES THIS
EVOLVE GAME
NARRATIVE?**

with our hands out and a book on our heads in gym class I always fell over. I couldn't ride a horse or ski, the two things I wanted to do most, because they cost too much money. I couldn't speak German or read Hebrew or write Chinese. I didn't even know where most of the odd out-of-the-way countries the UN men in front of me represented fitted in on the map.

For the first time in my life, sitting there in the sound-proof heart of the UN building between Constantin who could play tennis as well as simultaneously interpret and the Russian girl who knew so many idioms, I felt dreadfully inadequate. The trouble was, I had been inadequate all along, I simply hadn't thought about it.

The one thing I was good at was winning scholarships and prizes, and that era was coming to an end.

I felt like a racehorse in a world without race-tracks or a

I saw myself
death, just bec
figs I would ch
choosing one
unable to dec
one by one, t

Constantin
cream. All th
such a resta
places, whe
day and fou
a long glare

To reach
lit steps int

Travel p
picture w







WHAT IF?



**COLLECTIVE
JUSTICE
MISSION**



**"The freedom
to start again..."**

Where all are equal



THE
CHURCH
IN THE DARKNESS

@richardrouseiii
@churchdarkness

PARANOID
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www.paranoidproductions.com



GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE March 14–18, 2016 · Expo: March 16–18, 2016 #GDC16

What we learned today

Going beyond genre fiction shows us the way to other ways of telling videogame stories.



Fragmented, modular narratives can encourage players to explore their possibilities and generate stories of their own.



Lego Sculpture
By Nathan Sawaya

Well-placed gaps encourage players to explore and interpret



Don't discard FMV just because it's was done badly in the past.





GAME DEVELOPERS CONFERENCE March 14-18, 2016 · Expo: March 16-18, 2016 #GDC16

See you in the wrap-up room!

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