

*Rise, Fallen Empire!*: Exploring the Possibilities of Narrative Storytelling in Video Games

by  
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## **Abstract**

Narrative storytelling has come a long way in video games. What was once a man dodging barrels to save his lover from a gorilla is now forming relationships with complex and compelling characters who try to save the world from destruction. In this creative thesis, I take up the possibilities of narrative storytelling in video games by creating a game design document and a prototype for a narrative-driven role-playing game. Building on the video game industry standards for narrative-driven experiences, the game offers an experience shared by four main protagonists; however, the player plays in the perspective of one character per playthrough. They make their decisions that will affect what they can do, how they act, and how their story unfolds.

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## **I. Introduction**

For my creative thesis, I wrote a game design document and a Twine story for one of the protagonists of a medieval fantasy role-playing game with four leads: O'ska, Isabelle, Alice, and E'laga. A standard type of documentation in the video game industry, a game design document consists of the essential features that a game has to offer. It typically includes some core features and mechanics one would experience within the game. My document contains the lore within my game, the backstories of the four protagonists, established game mechanics, and a summary of Isabelle's prologue. I also built a prototype of that prologue in Twine. Twine is a storytelling program where users can create different stories using basic programming. It uses these elements to create and link various passages and messages. They all culminate into an interactive story that others can experience through an HTML file, which I have submitted along with this document.

The project primarily focuses on the aspects of narrative storytelling in video games and the concepts of personal choices and freedoms. The game is set in a medieval fantasy world inspired by the *Final Fantasy* series, *Octopath Traveler*, and *Dungeons and Dragons*. It is set in this world because it presents elements of key decision-making, character development, historical mysteries, and vital discoveries that would not efficiently work in any other setting or genre. The game takes place 25 years after the fall of a prevalent empire ruled by a power-hungry tyrant; it revolves around four protagonists banding together after experiencing a traumatic incident, yet the player controls only one of those four characters per playthrough. It is a narrative-driven storytelling experience where players make certain decisions in the story. Different

decisions can lead to different consequences and events later in the game. The game features various systems for measuring different statistics and personality traits for each character. These dynamic statistics can alter what the player can and cannot say and do. The Twine story I created for Isabelle's prologue explores some aspects of narrative storytelling I want to explore in my game. It showcases various decisions for the player to make and establishes foundational mechanics for the desired experience for my game.

Gaming has been a part of my entire life, and I wanted to be a part of its industry in some way. This project is a culmination of every experience and piece of knowledge I have gained regarding gaming, which includes game design and storytelling. It is a testament to my dedication and commitment to pursuing a career in the gaming industry. The thesis project is fully complete; however, it is a part of a massive project that will take many years of development to complete. This project is essentially the very beginning of a very long process for me. It's a step that tells me whether I have the knowledge and skills to do what I want to do in my life.

## **II. Narrative Games**

Narratives are tied to almost every video game that people play. They help players find a meaningful connection between themselves and the game. The earliest video games ever created often had some sort of narrative tied to them, even if they were simple. Games like *Donkey Kong* and *The Legend of Zelda* included linear narratives that were sidelined in favor of gameplay (Stone). Over time, games placed more emphasis on those narratives so that players could interact and connect themselves more with the games they played.

Eventually, narratives would evolve into multiple layers, as in early narrative-driven games such as *Monkey Island* and *Myst* (Asbell). These narratives presented opportunities for game creators to expand on different possibilities for storytelling in games. However, these games could only expand on those possibilities so much because of certain limitations, both in technology and writing. Almost all storytelling and narrative possibilities in games can take from what *Dungeons and Dragons* managed to do for RPGs. It offers a level of player freedom regarding choices that inspire games like *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* and *Baldur's Gate III* to mimic those features (Gass). The immersion of a game's setting, action, and dialogue also derives from D&D's way of describing those aspects.

There are multiple factors to consider when discussing and creating narratives in video games. For instance, one might ask what kind of narrative story they want to create. They could create a linear narrative where the player's decisions do not affect the overall story. They could also create modular narratives where the player's choices can affect the story (Kramarzewski and Nucci 189, 190). But why do choices matter to designers and players in the first place? This comes from something called narrative strength, which essentially allows a player to become completely invested in a particular story (McCamant). The choices matter because players care about what is happening within a game's story. Narrative strength must be present within the context of the story for those choices to matter. If they are not invested in the game, then those choices will not matter.

The keys to any successful narrative are crafting an engaging story, compelling characters, careful world-building, and emotional depth (Scrltgen). Players need to be engaged with all these elements for them to be engaged with the game. These will be

important points in establishing connections and investments within a given video game. Successful narrative-driven video games capture their audience's attention by creating well-developed characters they can relate to. The world and story for the world must keep players interested in learning more. All these factors must have an emotional weight attached to them because players feed on a game's narrative strength.

### **III. Methodology**

To begin the project, I asked myself, "How can I effectively formulate my ideas for this game into a single document?" After some research, I concluded that the best practice for this process in the video game industry is to make a game design document. Its purpose is to establish everything that a game has to offer, which includes its core features, any important mechanics, characters and their backstories, the story, and any lore attached to it. I also wanted to emulate how different game design documents formatted and discussed their material. I researched some documents for some well-known games, such as *Grand Theft Auto*, as samples for inspiration ("Grand Theft Auto").

The first information I established was the game's lore. I had to consider different key plot points and important information that was necessary for the overall game. I also had to consider consistencies within the lore and character backstories and backgrounds. I then wrote down all the protagonists' backstories and characteristics. I distinguished all of them by imagining what they would be like as player characters in a *Dungeons and Dragons* campaign. Differentiating them that way helped me establish who they are as characters in the overall narrative. Next, I wrote down some key game mechanics I wanted to include for the game. I established core mechanics and features that are



essential to gameplay and narrative experience, including player choices and attributes tied to different personality traits and skills. RPGs typically involve some level of attributes in their core mechanics; however, my game will implement a fluid system of attaining and losing attribute stats throughout the story. I wanted to implement an attribute system that is forever evolving as the game progresses; it further emphasizes that the player's actions will have consequences.

Finally, I chose to write Isabelle's prologue in Twine. Her prologue presents one of the best opportunities for players to fully experience what the game's mechanics have to offer. It simulates how these mechanics operate, including player choices, attribute changes, and personality changes. It also serves as a very early prototype for these mechanics. For example, there are various sentences and phrases in certain passages that link to different outcomes in certain scenarios. The outcome of these scenarios depends entirely on the player's decisions. This falls in line with the modular narrative, a dynamic story that can differ depending on the player's choices. Isabelle also begins with certain statistics regarding her personality and skills. They can change depending on what the player does. There are also instances where the player may or may not require a certain threshold for a certain skill or personality trait to select an option given to them.

Isabelle's prologue also presents opportunities to get to know the game's world and characters. Meeting other characters and encountering different scenarios enriches her story. It ultimately immerses players in a world through her perspective; what she sees and does is part of this game's experience.

#### **IV. What's Next**

This creative thesis has given me a small glimpse of what entails the career of a person in the gaming industry. The work I have done has taken a lot of time over the past year both to prepare and to execute. In my proposal, I wanted to create a physical prototype of my game concept to further test my game mechanics. After creating the video game document and Twine game, I realize now that the task must be reserved for my near future. I do intend to continue developing this game to its completion. It will take a lot of time planning, creating, and managing for my game to be successful. However, doing creative work like this is what I want to do with my life.

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## Appendix

### Game Design Document

#### Overview

*Rise, Fallen Empire!* immerses you in a mythical RPG full of riveting choices, a dynamic personality and attributes system, and an engaging story all in one. Take control of one of the four main protagonists in your goal of stopping an incoming threat to the world! Learn the secrets of the world, your companions, and yourself through various dialogue choices and different adventures!

#### Game Lore

Baccinia. “The planet of dreams and disaster” as everyone calls it now. It is filled to the brim with magic. It is rooted in the very core of this world; everything and everyone has magic that runs through them in various ways such as through sorcery, alchemy, or even different items. Magic has run through this planet’s core for millions of years, before the first civilizations formed and before the supercontinent of Zo’Lentia ever existed. Approximately five thousand years ago, many small islands and land masses scoured the planet and eventually housed some tribal civilizations. These civilizations were the first to discover the planet’s magical resources, but harnessing and honing that magic became difficult for them. Over time, they would learn different ways to use magic such as growing crops, healing, and even traveling, but not to the level that kingdoms use today. About one thousand years ago on a very small island at the center of all the islands, a massive earthquake due to a power surge caused every single land mass on the planet to merge and create Zo’Lentia. Every civilization was thrown into destruction on multiple

levels, whether because of the tectonic shift, conflict with other civilizations, inner conflicts, etc. This shift marked the end of what is now known as The Scattered Era and began The Expansion Wars.

This era housed some of the bloodiest battles in recorded history; civilizations of various races and beliefs fought each other for land, influence, and everything else in between. This era also saw evidence of magic being used for combat, very basic spells, and enchantments. These wars lasted hundreds of years, and the casualties kept increasing, once in the thousands of millions, then in the billions. In 500 A.E. (after the earthquake), a man named Aaragos and his wife Ursula founded the kingdom of Lakanaska. No one knows exactly this couple's origins; however, all knew of the kingdom's primary way of living: no war, only sanctuary. Aaragos promised all people of "Zo'Lentia" that his borders were always open so long as everyone remained civil. His promise would be the start of the Lakanaskan Empire. Over time, people from various civilizations came to reside in Lakanaska, tired of the constant state of war. Lakanaska would then expand its borders overnight to compensate for people coming in. Both Aaragos and Ursula would even go to different civilizations and now kingdoms to negotiate land. As Lakanaska expanded, more and more civilizations would enter peace negotiations with one another, thus ending The Expansion Wars, and beginning The Awakening Period.

The Awakening Period spawned a new beginning for innovations and new ideas. Civilizations opened themselves up to new concepts unheard of in their respective kingdoms and shared their cultures with others. Talks of trade, sharing new religions and philosophies, and even expanding various magic spells and items were just some of the

things that kingdoms explored. At the forefront of innovation was Lakanaska; it essentially pioneered and encouraged kingdoms to share with each other. In fact, Lakanaska received a head start on the new innovations because they focused on building new technologies and forming new ideas during The Expansion Wars. Everything (from people, ideas, goods, and more) ran through Lakanaska, specifically the capital city of Aaros. In 600 A.E., Lakanaska would expand into a massive empire that spanned almost half of Zo'Lentia through financial means. By this point, Aaragos and several volunteers ventured out to The Great Body in search of other civilizations, wonders, and everything in between. One month passed, then a year...by five, Ursula knew something had happened to her beloved and assumed the worst. She continued to rule Lakanaska in her husband's stead; however, she halted any further expansion of the empire and instead focused on tending to the needs of her people. She established groundbreaking policies and laws that set new standards for quality of life in her kingdom. In 620 A.E., twenty years after his first departure from Zo'Lentia, Aaragos returned to Lakanaska alone. Ursula, rejoicing over her husband's return, relinquished the throne back to Aaragos along with the cheers of the kingdom. Little did she know, she gave a completely changed man the crown, a man whose rule would mark the beginning of The Cleanse.

Immediately after regaining his throne, Aaragos announced changes that would alter his empire forever. He first stated a revelation he came to in his journey in The Great Body.

“At the end of it all, this planet is a dog-eat-dog world where only the strongest survive and the weak perish. The Great Body is a prime example of that. It made me come to realize what I must do for my people. From this moment forward, every person

who resides in Lakanaska will be under my new class system! The strongest are placed at the top, while everyone else struggles for scraps. Whether by brute force, steel will, sharp intellect, or raw magic power, you all will determine how you gain strength but know this: not a single person will ever be stronger than yours truly or my beloved! Don't even bother testing that fact; you'll end up six feet under in a heartbeat!" His words reached his entire kingdom, almost immediately, they would devastate many citizens while encouraging a select few. Ursula directly protested against Aaragos's speech, but he simply ignored her pleas and continued his reign. A year later, Lakanaskans would firmly distinguish themselves according to their class rank. The lowest class consisted of most of the kingdom's population, while a select few called The First Line settled closely under Aaragos's direct command. Policies that favored higher classes soon passed without much pushback, except for Ursula's protests. First Line members openly suggested exiling or executing Ursula for these protests; however, such suggestions would be met with threats and even personal executions made by Aaragos. No one even knows exactly why he kept her around; in fact, there is no evidence of their origin before Lakanaska's existence. Nonetheless, Aaragos resumed Lakanaska's expansion, this time taking other kingdoms and civilizations by force. More ideas and innovations poured out of Lakanaska during this time, some more inhumane than others, but they were all designed to keep the empire stable.

In 920 A.E., 300 years after he made his speech, Aaragos had conquered almost all Zo'Lentia. He conquered major kingdoms and seized over smaller civilizations. Few civilizations remained in the continent, and to Aaragos, their days were numbered. Unbeknownst to him, a small revolutionary faction gained traction as he grew his empire.



Over time, they gained members, powerful equipment, and vital intel of Aaragos's every move. By the time Aaragos noticed their presence, they had already garnered a massive army and began conducting rigorous missions for the revolution. Aaragos ordered First Line members to investigate and eliminate anyone affiliated with what he called the "Futile" Front. The investigations surprisingly garnered moderate success: several key members of the group were discovered and executed. These skirmishes between Aaragos's First Line and the Futile Front would go on for another 5 years. Then one morning, the Futile Front marched to the outskirts of Aaros on all sides demanding Aaragos to abdicate his throne. In response, Aaragos sent out all the First Line and divisions of magically experimented soldiers to every entrance of the city and ordered them to eliminate the revolution. Judgment Day had fallen on Lakanaska.

Gruesome fighting between the Futile Front and Aaragos's forces rampaged throughout Aaros as it soon became a warzone. As night fell into the city, many buildings would crumble due to destructive forces within the clashes. They all culminated in the throne building collapsing in on itself. The next day, Aaros was in utter ruins; not a single building or infrastructure was left unscathed from the battle. Casualties ranged from millions of people on both sides. Civilizations and people within Lakanaska received word of the battle days and even weeks after. Although no record showed what happened within the capital building or why it collapsed, the evidence did show that Ursula was the core leader of the Futile Front. She orchestrated various small operations within the capital building and slowly built the faction without suspicion from Aaragos. 3 weeks after Judgment Day, a meeting was held at a nearby town called Uragas to determine the state of the Lakanaskan Empire. A week later, council members of the meeting decided to

split the empire into several different kingdoms and hold elections for different representatives for those kingdoms.

This leads to today, 945 A.E., 25 years after what is now known as the Split. The kingdoms now thrive under their new rulers. People still record the events that led up to the Split and some even speculate what lies in the Great Body. For now, we turn our attention to Uragas again, a now rapidly growing city in the kingdom of Mailia. It is a couple of days until the Festival of Freedom to celebrate the kingdom's inception and Aaragos's downfall. People within the city are beginning preparations for this festival. We now focus on 4 people within Uragas: an orc named O'Ska, a human named Isabelle, an elf named Alice, and a gnome named E'laga. They are all going about their lives within the city; some are preparing for the festival themselves, while others leave it be. It does not seem like it right now, but these four individuals may one day change the fate of Baccinia forever.

### Character Backstories

O'Ska is an orc who spends his days cultivating his farm out in the wayside away from the nearest civilization. He does not interact much with others outside of business, and why would he? He always works on that farm daily; it's his only source of income. Farming and the like come easy for him because of both his strength and magical abilities. However, he did not gain those feats and powers overnight. You see, O'Ska is an experimental orc. Years before his birth, the kingdom had a program that experimented with different species, giving them different powers and abilities mainly dealing with magic. O'Ska came from a generation of experiments that carried raw magic power inside them, but that power had to be harnessed over time through training; he had to

endure almost thirty years of rigorous training to control and master the power he held within. In those thirty years, he allied himself with some other experiments within his generation. They trained together and got to know each other well, to the point where they all essentially became squad mates. By the time his training was complete, a revolution broke out within the kingdom; he was among many of the experiments who were ordered to annihilate those who revolted. Slash after slash, death after death, O'Ska could only think, "Why? Why am I here? What am I doing?" Then he saw them: the bodies, oh, the bodies. Bloody pools, lifeless eyes. It hit him; destruction, chaos, it's...all wrong. *THIS* is what he trained for? *THIS* is why he was created? No; no more. At that moment, he abandoned all his belongings and fled the battlefield. Twenty-five years later, he now resides on the same farm we look at today, tending to his crops and occasionally making a good profit out of them. He has not used his abilities and powers outside of his farm work, so he has no need for training or tiresome sparring.

Isabelle is a rather unique girl, not just for her personality. She does whatever she can for her friends, even if it means cheering them up with her smile. She likes to go to places she's never been before, and it almost always gets her into different kinds of trouble. Luckily, she is cared for by the Xion, a religious organization that helps the local town's residents with apothecary and worship services. Their recent master cleric had just passed away from old age, so they must train Isabelle to be their next head cleric because of her natural talents. It is almost like she is directly connected with divine magic itself. The circumstances of her situation are rather odd. You see, a couple of months ago, they discovered Isabelle wandering through the nearby forest; they asked her who she was, and all she said was her name. She could only remember flashes of her past: a large room

with a large glass painting; some fancy cups laid on a table; and even at some points laying in a massive bed. She does not really know why she was there either; it was almost like she was born right then and there at ten years old. Even though Isabelle appears human, she is much paler and carries faded blue irises. She is a saran, humanoids who always reincarnate after death. Nobody knows how these creatures came to be, nor that she is one of those beings or what her past entails. What we do know is how she lives her life now.

Alice is a 250-year-old elf, which is around 25 years old in human years. Most of her life consisted of traveling from city to city just to get by. It was not always this way. Early in her childhood, she was raised in a small village of elves on the outskirts of the kingdom. They practiced a form of spirituality that communed with the Spirit Realm. One day, various foot soldiers who came from the kingdom rounded up all the village's denizens and sent them off to prison camps. Everyone was separated from each other due to the number of camps and their locations. Life inside these camps was a living hell for all who worked there. Mining metals, picking crops in the scorching heat, tending to the wild animals that ate them on occasion, the list goes on. There were those who resisted these jobs, but they all ended up missing the next day. Eventually, Alice would be the next person to disappear. She was only defending one of her friends from being tortured by a guard; however, that was enough to send her to solitary confinement. They took her to a room and chained her up, leaving her suspended in the air. They left her there to starve and eventually die, but not before hearing the screams of some of the friends she had made within the camp. One day passed, then weeks, then months, and finally, multiple years later, she was still in that room chained up, scars all over her body and as

frail as a twig. Miraculously, she had survived starvation, dehydration, and everything else in between. One night, a guard went to go check on the poor girl, and that's when it happened. Starlight came from the window and gleamed onto Alice. Bright white markings covered her body, and a cosmic mask covered her face. Spirits of the thousands who died in the prison surrounded her. A bright light then luminated from her as she screamed. The next moment, she woke to see the outside of the annihilated prison camp. Flashes of memories flooded her mind as she walked away from the carnage: empty cells, frightened guards, and whispers from the spirits that surrounded her. Having those memories etched in her mind, she travels the world in search of a purpose in her life.

E'laga is a 150-year-old gnome, roughly the same age as a human in their mid-20s. He has always had a way with money and people; he easily makes friends in so many places in the kingdom, yet most of them happen within his domain of business: The Emporium. There he sells all sorts of knick-knacks, weapons, armor, items, and whatever else you can name, but his specialty lies in alchemy. His potions are "second to none" as he would call them. His success stems from the history he has within his family; all of them to some degree know their way around trade. He was no different from them; he learned the tools of the trade and made deals and friends in his youth. Over time, he mastered the skills his family taught him, and soon he joined his family in running their family business. One day, he returned home from a business conference with a brand-new formula book he had found on his way back. After some experimentation, he successfully created the concoction detailed in the book. Right then and there in his lab, he drank the potion...and blacked out for a few seconds. Then he regained consciousness, but not in his own body. Instead, it was horribly mutated, and he constantly heard a crazed voice

from outside. He could not control himself because it was not him anymore; it was someone feral and hyper. Unable to control his body, E'laga completely destroyed the lab, then the building that his family's business operated in for so long. After a while, he regained control of his body, which went back to normal. Having witnessed the destruction he caused; he ran away from the damage. Five years later, he resides in a local town trying to start over again.

## Game Mechanics

### General

- Players will start with the selection of one of the four protagonists. Each protagonist will have different game statistics based on their area of expertise. For example, E'laga will have higher stats regarding conversations and appraisal skills due to his years with his business. Alice will have higher stats regarding survivability while adventuring due to her years as a nomad. Isabelle will have higher stats regarding religions due to her affiliation with the Xion. O'ska will have higher stats related to combat because of his experience as a war veteran. These stats can increase and decrease depending on the player's actions.
- Each protagonist also has varying personality traits that can affect decisions and dialogue options. These traits will change depending on the player's actions and words in the game. For example, if a player does or says something courageous, their courage trait rises. It can also decrease if the player acts on a cowardly decision or dialogue option.
- Players at any point can start a new story through a different protagonist's perspective, thus inviting replayability. However, once a player chooses a

character at the start of a playthrough, they cannot choose another character on the same playthrough.

### **Dialogue/Story**

- As mentioned earlier, each protagonist carries different personality traits at the start of the game. Over time, these traits can change depending on the player's choices in actions and dialogue. Certain actions and dialogue options are locked and unlocked depending on whether the character poses the same traits as the option given to them. Stats can also affect what the player can and cannot say.

### **Isabelle's Prologue**

Below is Isabelle's Prologue that I made on Twine. Exported from Twine using a format called Twee, this text-only version of the prologue combines text from the game itself, HTML and CSS, and code carried over from Twine. In this format, it is written more like a computer program than a narrative game, so it is difficult to read from top to bottom. I have also submitted the game as a playable .html file exported from Twine, but I included the Twee version here so readers can see all the game's components, including developer elements, in one place.

```
:: StoryTitle
```

```
Rise, Fallen Empire! (Isabelle's Prologue)
```

```
:: StoryData
```

```
{
```

```
"ifid": "CDA904C6-C475-4B33-AB68-BD6CDF2D1CDC",  
"format": "Harlowe",  
"format-version": "3.3.7",  
"start": "Beginning",  
"zoom": 1  
}
```

```
:: ...sula... {"position":"875,2950","size":"100,100"}
```

```
//Wha? [[Who's]]//
```

```
:: Are you questioning our message? {"position":"750,3450","size":"100,100"}
```

```
(text-colour:(hsl:120,0.8039,0.5,0.5))[That's not what I said, kid. I understand your  
message, and I'm...well...//mostly//for it. It's just that I would rather rely on myself for  
that instead of a higher being. If they even exist.]
```

```
(text-colour:(yellow))[[I see...About those flyers...->I understand. Where can I place my  
flyers, then?]]
```

```
(text-colour:(yellow))[[You haven't even considered the possibility?]]
```

```
:: Beginning [Waking-Up-at-Monastery] {"position":"650,100","size":"100,100"}
```



//Huh. Is this what a beach looks like? On the ground...is this sand? It's everywhere! Has the sun always been this bad?

I don't see anyone else. Just an endless water...the ocean. And me on this...[[island]].//

(set:\$Lakanaska to false)

(set:\$WhowasAaragos to false)

(set:\$TheBrokenStool to false)

(set:\$TheEmporium to false)

(set:\$OskasFarm to false)

:: Find another place around town. {"position":"825,3975","size":"100,100"}

//Maybe there's a good spot in town for me to place this flyer...Let's look at City Hall.

Hey! There's a board over here. Looks like there's a bunch of messages and flyers here already. It might be too crowded, but I think my flyer will find a nice home here.

There ya go. Over and done [[with->down]]!//

:: Flyers. Three places. Got it. I'm off! {"position":"575,1700","size":"100,100"}

Hold on there, Isabelle. I haven't even told you where to go [[yet]].

:: HEAD {"position":"1025,3900","size":"100,100"}

//It's all I see. No more trees. No more life. Just...misery...death...dispair...then nothing.

Where am I? Is this another dream? Or has Xion come to take me [[home]]?//

:: I can pay for your drink, sir. {"position":"225,3600","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:300,0.8039,0.5,0.9))[At least there's some decency in this world.

Thanks, [[lass]].]

:: I understand. Where can I place my flyers, then?

{"position":"575,3550","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:120,0.8039,0.5,0.5))[Mmm, well, there's the board over in City Hall.

Don't know how much traction you'll gain considerin' there's a heap of flyers on [[there]], but that's usually where everyone places their stuff].

:: Isabelle Initiating Yorga Conversation [Yorga-Conversation]

{"position":"700,650","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:yellow)[Good morning, High Priest [[Yorga!]]]

:: It's only fair that you paid for his spilled drink, sir.

{"position":"350,3600","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:300,0.8039,0.5,0.9))[See? Even the little lady agrees with me. Now fork it [[over]]!]

:: Lakanaska? {"position":"900,1825","size":"100,100"}

Lakanaska was the first great empire of Zalentia, our home continent.

(text-colour:yellow)[[Who was Aaragos?]]

(text-colour:yellow)[[Where exactly are these places?->yet]]

:: Maybe I should just leave them alone. {"position":"75,3500","size":"100,100"}

[[/They can hash out their problem on their own. I'm sure they'll be alright.//->trouble.]]

:: Maybe I should try and help solve their problem.

{"position":"400,3425","size":"100,100"}

//They both look a little tipsy. That is a heavy smell of alcohol even from here. It looks like they're still yelling at each other. This might escalate if neither one of them backs down.//

(text-colour:yellow)[[I can pay for your drink, sir.]](1 Gold)

(text-colour:yellow)[[It's only fair that you paid for his spilled drink, sir.]]

(text-colour:yellow)[[Why don't we all just calm down, take a deep breath, and move on with our day?]]

:: O'ska's Farm {"position":"875,2575","size":"100,100"}

//Yorga said that O'ska's farm's outside of town, right? Did he ever say how far from town it was? I can't remember.

I've really done it now. Darn it, Isabelle. You had one job, and now, you done got yourself lost [[again]]!//

:: O'ska. {"position":"1000,5200","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:orange)[I'll tell you this: you managed to find the farm at [[least.]]]

:: Oh, wait. Silly me, I think that's all of them! {"position":"700,4425","size":"100,100"}

//Wow, what a day! I'm sure Yorga will be happy to hear that I'm done! Unless he gets some complaints...oh, well! Next up is the Festival of Freedom! I should get some sleep to prepare for it.//

:: Place the flyer on the Emporium's side wall. {"position":"700,3975","size":"100,100"}

//I'm sure he won't notice it if I place this somewhere he won't look. He won't mind right?

Oh, I hope he doesn't, or Yorga will get an earful.

Maybe this wall over here will do. I just hope he doesn't come around here before the festival starts to take it [[down]].

:: STOP {"position":"900,3650","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:0,0.8039,0.5,0.8))[Oh, Gods, what have I done? What have I become?

URSULA!!! I CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT [[YOU!!!]]

:: The Broken Stool {"position":"625,2575","size":"100,100"}

//This looks like the place. It's rather dull on the outside. Oh, well. In I [[go!]]//

:: The Emporium {"position":"750,2575","size":"100,100"}

//I don't know what Emporium means, but wow, this place is massive! He has everything!

What was his specialty again? Looking at all these items has made me forget what he's even good [[at.]]//

:: The Festival of Freedom? {"position":"975,1700","size":"100,100"}

It's an annual festival that celebrate's this kingdom's anniversary as well as the freedom

The Council gave all of us twenty five years ago. Were it not for Lakanaska's downfall, we'd still be under Aarago's rule today. We most likely would not exist, too.

(text-colour:yellow)[[Lakanaska?]]

(text-colour:yellow)[[Who was Aaragos?]]

(text-colour:yellow)[[Where exactly are these places?->yet]]

(set:\$Lakanaska to true)

(set:\$WhowasAragos to true)

:: URSULA!!! {"position":"875,3200","size":"100,100"}

//My ears! Who is that? Why are they so loud? The ruins...are they [[changing?]]//

:: Underbite! {"position":"600,2975","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:30,0.8039,0.5,0.55))[I ain't paying for a half pint who can't even hold his  
own [[liquor!]]]

:: Ursula? {"position":"875,3525","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:0,0.8039,0.5,0.8))[Ursula...I'm so sorry, my love...PLEASE, FORGIVE  
ME!]

//!!! What's happening? The ruins...no...the city...it's burning! Screams. Yells. Wails. Oh, it's unbearable! Is that...blood?? So many...b-bodies...No, make it stop! I don't want to be here anymore; MAKE IT [[STOP]]!//

:: What do these dreams even mean? [Yorga-Conversation]

{"position":"800,1475","size":"100,100"}

They could mean anything. Or nothing. Different interpretations carry different meanings. It is up to you to decide what they mean. Considering that your dreams come frequently, they must mean [[something.->interpret.]]

:: Who was Aaragos? {"position":"1075,1825","size":"100,100"}

He was the ruler of Lakanaska for a long time.

(text-colour:yellow)[[Lakanaska?]]

(text-colour:yellow)[[Where exactly are these places?->yet]]

:: Who's {"position":"875,3075","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:0,0.8039,0.5,0.8))[[URSULA!!!]]



:: Why do they keep happening to me in the first place?

{"position":"600,1475","size":"100,100"}

I believe that they carry some meaning to you specifically since they happen so frequently. Unfortunately, I do not know what they could possibly mean. That is something for you to [[interpret.]]

:: Why don't we all just calm down, take a deep breath, and move on with our day?

{"position":"450,3600","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:300,0.8039,0.5,0.9))[Why don't //you// stay out of this, [[missy]]?]

:: Why don't you believe in a higher power? {"position":"750,3700","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:120,0.8039,0.5,0.5))[I done told you all I'm gonna tell you about it! Now scram, less I kick you outta here [[myself]]!]

:: YOU!!! {"position":"900,3775","size":"100,100"}

//Get out of my head! Get out of my head! Get out of my head!

Everything hurts! Your voice. The scenery. The sounds. I don't like you!

GET

OUT

OF

MY

[[HEAD]]!//

:: Yorga {"position":"650,375","size":"100,100"}

//Ah, that's right. He told me that yesterday, didn't he? I think I can leave here now.

I keep having these dreams for no particular reason. I ended up in a beach after sitting in a throne room. I should tell Yorga about it...if I can remember by the time I see him.

Oh, well. Time to rise and shine for another [[day!]]//

:: Yorga! {"position":"700,850","size":"100,100"}

And good morning to you, young Isabelle. Did my apprentice sleep well last [[cycle]]?

:: You haven't even considered the possibility? {"position":"750,3575","size":"100,100"}  
(text-colour:(hsl:120,0.8039,0.5,0.5))[I mean maybe once or twice, but that's irrelevant  
now. If you're not gonna buy something, then get out. Time is money after all, and I gots  
to run a business.]

(text-colour:(yellow))[[[Is there a place where I can at least place my flyer?->I  
understand. Where can I place my flyers, then?]]]]

(text-colour:(yellow))[[Why don't you believe in a higher power?]]

:: aagh {"position":"450,4475","size":"100,100"}

//Whoa. She certainly meant business. She doesn't look like she's from around here. I  
mean who would if they were wearing chains around their [[robe]]?//

:: again {"position":"875,2700","size":"100,100"}

//So many trees. So much wildlife. I don't even see a road.

Where am I even supposed to go? It's like one of them cursed mazes or something!

What's that in the distance? It...looks like...ruins. To what [[though]]?//

:: again. {"position":"700,1100","size":"100,100"}

A good [[one?]]

:: alright {"position":"450,4725","size":"100,100"}

//Wooooow, her voice is so soothing. And her aura is very peaceful. It's like sensing a completely different person!//

(text-colour:yellow)[Y-Yes. Thank [[you]].]

:: and- {"position":"750,3075","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:120,0.8039,0.5,0.5))[Stop. Lemme guess: you wanna spread your "influence" by putting some flyers in front of my store. That [[right]]?]

:: at. {"position":"750,2700","size":"100,100"}

//Is that E'laga on the counter? He looks rather...tall. Wait! I forgot! He's a gnome; of course he'd have a stool.

Those are some supplies for alchemy. He has some books next to the table, too. Looks like they're piled up to the brim. I wonder if he uses those as a stool, [[too]].//

:: awake? {"position":"1000,4150","size":"100,100"}

//Is that Xion greeting me? Strange; His voice is harsher than I'd imagine. Deep, [[too.]]//

:: back {"position":"300,4375","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:lime)[Oof! Owww. That hurt. Oh! Hello there, young lady! What's a girl like you doing in a place like [[this?]]]

:: changing? {"position":"875,3350","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(yellow))[Who are you?! Who's [[Ursula?]]]

:: comin' {"position":"575,3975","size":"100,100"}

//Hmm, that board has to be around here somewhere. Ah! It's literally a giant board right in front of the entrance!

There we go! [[Done and Done!->down]]

:: cycle {"position":"700,975","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:yellow)[I did! I did! I had another one of those dreams [[again.]] ]

:: day! {"position":"650,500","size":"100,100"}

//Y'know, I still love waking up to see the stained-glass windows everyday. The patterns on it are so lovely! The monastery itself is rather bland compared to it, but I cannot complain.

Hm, I don't see Yorga around; [[I need to find him.->Isabelle Initiating Yorga Conversation]]//

:: do. {"position":"1000,4575","size":"100,100"}

//Mmm, that sure was yummy! Now who am I to thank for the food?

Oh, wow, this sure is a massive farm. Look at all those crops! Wait, is [[this-]]//

:: done {"position":"750,2325","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:yellow)[You got it! I won't let you [[down]]]!

:: down {"position":"750,2450","size":"100,100"}

//Now, where should I go to?//

[[The Broken Stool]]

[[The Emporium]]

[[O'ska's Farm]]

(if:visits >= 4) [ //[[Oh, wait. Silly me, I think that's all of them!]]// ]

:: fight. {"position":"625,2825","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:300,0.8039,0.5,0.9))[You asshole! You spilled me drink! You's better pay for that, [[Underbite!]]]

:: go! {"position":"625,2700","size":"100,100"}

//Ugh! This place smells awful! It's slightly disorganized, too...Yorga said that Becca's the woman I need to talk to. I'll go to the bar and see if she's there.

Huh? What's going on over there? That dwarf and half-orc look like they're about to

[[fight.]]//

:: happened! {"position":"700,1350","size":"100,100"}

I believe you. I believe you. While your dreams are a mystery, even just knowing that they happened is good progress.

(text-colour:yellow)[[Why do they keep happening to me in the first place?]]

(text-colour:yellow)[[What do these dreams even mean?]]

:: here? {"position":"450,4225","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:30,0.8039,0.5,0.55))[And who the hell're-  
[[oomph]]!]

:: home {"position":"1025,4025","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:orange)[Hey. You [[awake?]]]

:: interpret. {"position":"725,1600","size":"100,100"}

Nonetheless, I did ask you to meet me here yesterday. The Festival of Freedom is in a couple of days, so we made flyers for a tour for our monastery. I need you to go to certain areas in town and place them there.

(text-colour:yellow)[[Flyers. Three places. Got it. I'm off!]]



(text-colour:yellow)[[Where exactly are these places?->yet]]

(text-colour:yellow)[[The Festival of Freedom?]]

:: island {"position":"650,250","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:grey)[Isabelle! Wake up! [[Yorga]] needs you today!]

:: know {"position":"750,3325","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:120,0.8039,0.5,0.5))[Look kid. I've been in this town for quite a while, and every year around this time, someone from your monastery comes by and asks me the same spiel over and over. Ya know what I tell 'em? No. Every time.

See, I ain't the type of guy who prays on a higher being for my answers and guidance. All of that comes from me, myself, and I in my case.]

(text-colour:yellow)[[I understand. Where can I place my flyers, then?]]

(text-colour:yellow)[[Are you questioning our message?]]

:: lady {"position":"750,2950","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(yellow))[Well, I'm with the monastery [[and-]]]

```
:: lass {"position":"225,3725","size":"100,100"}
```

```
(text-colour:yellow)[It's no trouble at all, [[sir]]!]
```

```
:: least. {"position":"1000,5325","size":"100,100"}
```

```
(text-colour:yellow)[Wait, so [[you're]]]
```

```
:: liquor! {"position":"375,3175","size":"100,100"}
```

```
//Uh, oh. They don't seem to be getting along very well...//
```

```
//[[Maybe I should just leave them alone.]]//
```

```
//[[Maybe I should try and help solve their problem.]]//
```

```
:: me. {"position":"1000,4950","size":"100,100"}
```

```
(text-colour:orange)[I was also saving my crops. You were blindly running through my field. Then, you tripped and hit your head on a log over there. You dropped this on your way down.]
```

```
//My flyer! Aw, it's all ripped and stained.//
```

(text-colour:orange)[I take it you're from the monastery in [[town?]]]

:: missy {"position":"425,3725","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:30,0.8039,0.5,0.55))[Yeah! This doesn't involve you in the [[slightest]]!]

:: much! {"position":"1000,5700","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:orange)[It's no trouble. Now, you might want to get back to town. Follow that path down there, and you'll be there in no [[time]].]

:: myself {"position":"750,3825","size":"100,100"}

//Well, that didn't go well. I didn't even get a chance to ask him where else I could place the flyer.

[[Place the flyer on the Emporium's side wall.]]

[[Find another place around town.]]//

:: one? {"position":"700,1225","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:yellow)[I couldn't really tell. I think I was at...a beach? A lot of water surrounded me. I can't fully remember that much. B-But it definitely [[happened!]]]

:: oomph {"position":"425,4350","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:300,0.8039,0.5,0.9))[Hey, man, what's all-

[[aagh]]!

:: out. {"position":"300,4750","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:yellow)[Oh, thank you so much! May Xion watch over [[you.]]]

:: outside. {"position":"1000,4450","size":"100,100"}

//Food? For me? Ah! It's so bright.

How long was I out for? And where even am I? Is this a shack of some kind? Looks really run down. Whoever that voice was wasn't kidding about the food either...some fruit and vegetables. Don't mind if I [[do.]]//

:: over {"position":"325,3725","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:30,0.8039,0.5,0.55))[Grrrrr. Fine! I can't believe [[this]]!]

:: owners {"position":"750,2200","size":"100,100"}

Becca is the bartender and owner of the Broken Stool. E'laga is the owner of the Emporium. O'ska is the owner of his farm just outside of town. Speak with them and then come back to the monastery when you're [[done]].

:: paying {"position":"300,4075","size":"100,100"}

//That surely was a close one. I should talk to Becca before I run into more [[trouble.]]//

:: right {"position":"750,3200","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(yellow))[How'd you [[know]]?]

:: robe {"position":"450,4600","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:cyan)[Are you [[alright]]?]

:: see {"position":"425,3975","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:30,0.8039,0.5,0.55))[Hey, you're right! Let's see if she's got money for the both of [[us]]!]

:: sir {"position":"200,3850","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:30,0.8039,0.5,0.55))[Whatever. At least I'm not the one [[paying]].]

:: slightest {"position":"450,3850","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:300,0.8039,0.5,0.9))[Unless //you// have money to fork over. C'mon, let's [[see]]!]

:: tavern? {"position":"300,4625","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:lime)[Not at all. Go right ahead. You can place it on the swing doors on your way [[out.]]]

:: there {"position":"575,3700","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(yellow))[Thank you so much! May Xion watch over [[you!]]]

:: this {"position":"325,3850","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:300,0.8039,0.5,0.9))[[[Thank you, my fine fanged friend. And thank  
//you// little lady for sticking up for an old sod like your's truly.->paying]]]

:: this- {"position":"1000,4700","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:orange)[Ah, you're finally [[up.]]]

:: this? {"position":"300,4500","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:yellow)[Oh, well my monastery is handing out flyers in preparation for the  
Festival of Freedom. We want to spread our religion's name across town before the  
festival. Would you mind if I placed it outside of the [[tavern?]]]

:: though {"position":"875,2825","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:0,0.8039,0.5,0.8))[[...sula...]]

:: time {"position":"1000,5825","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:yellow)[Thank you so much, O'ska! May Xion watch [[over you->down]]!]

:: time. {"position":"1000,5575","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:yellow)[You'd do that for me?! Oh, thank you so [[much!]]]

:: too {"position":"750,2825","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:(hsl:120,0.8039,0.5,0.5))[Welcome to //my//Emporium! Where all your trinkets, goods, supplies, and the like all gather! What can I do ya for little [[lady]]?]

:: too. {"position":"1000,4325","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:orange)[Food's on the table when you're ready. I'll be [[outside.]]]

:: town? {"position":"1000,5075","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:yellow)[Y-yes. My job today was to place some flyers in some locations.

The Broken Stool. The Emporium. And a farm owned by a man named [[O'ska.]]]

:: trouble. {"position":"300,4250","size":"100,100"}

//Hmm. There's nobody at the bar. Maybe someone's out back?

That sure is a lot of alcohol just sitting there. Certainly a lot of variety.

Lemme ring this bell; maybe someone'll come out [[back]].//



:: up. {"position":"1000,4825","size":"100,100"}

(text-colour:yellow)[Yeah, I am. Were you the one who set that food out for me?]

//He nods. Wow, he sure is big. Looks like he could have been part of the town's guard.//

(text-colour:yellow)[Thank you. For the food and for saving [[me.]]]

:: us {"position":"425,4075","size":"100,100"}

//This isn't good. If they follow through, I won't see Yorga in one piece. Forget the flyers for a second; I gotta-

Wait. Who's that coming over [[here?]]

Is that an elf? Wearing chains??//

:: yet {"position":"750,2050","size":"100,100"}

You're going to go to the Broken Stool next to Town Hall, the Emporium nearby the monastery, and a farm a little ways away from the town limits. You'll need to speak to the [[owners]] of these places for permission to place the flyers in their areas.

```
:: you {"position":"450,4850","size":"100,100"}
```

```
//She smiles and nods at me.//
```

```
(text-colour:cyan)[Good.]
```

```
//And there she goes. Out of the tavern, just like that. What a strange, yet kind [[woman-  
>trouble.]].//
```

```
:: you! {"position":"575,3850","size":"100,100"}
```

```
(text-colour:(hsl:120,0.8039,0.5,0.5))[Yeah, whatever, kid. Hurry along; I got paying  
customers [[comin']].]
```

```
:: you're {"position":"1000,5450","size":"100,100"}
```

```
(text-colour:orange)[The owner of this farm, yes. No use placing a torn flyer around here.  
Though it does fit the place. I'll be sure to mention your monastery to folks that come by  
from time to [[time.]]]
```

:: you. {"position":"300,4875","size":"100,100"}

//Okay, she said place it on the swing doors. Aaaaand there. //[[Done.->down]]