

Game Narrative Review

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Gunther Urbano
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Game Title: Lily's Day Off
Platform: Android
Genre: Visual Novel
Release Date: May 19, 2014
Developer: Oniony Studios
Publisher:
Game Writer/Creative Director/Narrative Designer: Evan Pacyna

Overview

A man wakes up in the middle of the street to find that he has no memory of who he is or why he was there. A few steps away is a cute girl in tears who finds herself in a similar situation. Seeing her awakens some memories for you, as she is a famous pop idol. Together, you unlock the mysteries of your lost memories and branch off to 16 different narrative paths.

Characters

- **PLAYER CHARACTER**— The narrative is written from this character's firstperson viewpoint. The answer choices in the game represent his voice. He mysteriously lost almost all his memories. The only memories he has in the beginning of the game are that he likes anime and that Lilypad Lily is a pop idol. This character's personality, age, and relationship to Lilypad Lily vary with each branching path of the game. His appearance is left to the player's imagination.
- **LILYPAD LILY**—A cute girl that is short in stature with orange hair topped with a large purple ribbon who the player character finds crying in the middle of the street. Much like the player character, Lily lost most her memories. Her only memory is that she likes music. She is actually a world-renowned pop idol. Aside from a nameless police officer and a nameless nurse, Lily is the only character who interacts with the Player character throughout the game.

Breakdown

There are 16 different endings in Lily's Day Off, with half of those accessible only after paying one dollar for the full game. A single play through of this game would not take much more than 5 to 10 minutes, but each branching plot point changes the story direction quite drastically. For example, the very first decision tree of the free game decides whether the mysterious player character is friendly or a murderer. The replay value of the game is driven by the intrigue of the contrasting story branch outcomes which span from the grim and unfortunate to the humorous and romantic. One would say that there is a lot of bang for your buck with this game because it has a lot of genre variety.

Since the nature of this game causes you to quickly get through an entire story in a short amount of time, the player is made to go through the same introduction many times until reaching a new flag in the story that has not been visited yet. Thankfully, there is a skip function that allows the player to skip walls of familiar text until a fork in the story is hit. This makes getting all the endings much easier on the player and makes for quicker gratification in getting a new ending.

Another feature to keep the game from getting too stale too quickly for what it is, there is a feature to change Lily's outfit. Since the player is constantly looking through the eyes of the player character, Lily happens to be the only character you see on the screen. Giving Lily a new appearance changes the experience of the story. For example, a new twist to the humor of an ending where Lily becomes a murderer is added when it becomes Lily murdering people in a cute bikini. Sure, the girl is still a murderer, but the impracticality of her outfit is funny, making the experience different from if you were to watch her murderous endings in her regular outfit.

Strongest Element

The strongest element of this game is the player character. This character changes drastically with each iteration of the story. Lily's personality in the game generally remains the same through most of the story paths, so it is really the player character that the audience is most intrigued by each time the game is restarted and a new path is ventured.

Unsuccessful Element

Although, Lily is able to change her appearance into different outfits, there isn't much to say about the visuals of this visual novel. The player only ever sees the same character in the same angle with a handful of expressions. Other games in this genre often give more to look at like a fan-serving graphic. It would make sense to have something like that with a narrative that attempts to endear Lily to the player. This game needed to a bit more

showing than telling as it would often have the player character monologue a comment on Lily's cute appearance rather than persuade us of how cute she is with visuals of her being cute.

Highlight

The nature of the game has the player repeatedly restart the game from the beginning to collect all the endings there are to get. In the true ending, it is revealed that Lily and the Player Character are actually time travelers and that their time machine causes both of them to reset their memories and adopt different lives each time they use it. This twist ending implies that the player's physical act of restarting the game to get a new ending emulates the two characters using the time machine, giving the player a meta-relationship to the characters that I have never seen in another game.

Critical Reception

On the Google Play store, this game has been given 4.4 stars out of 5 from over 2,000 ratings. Android user Sebastian Riddle found with the game being short, "you can get a quick laugh," and gave the game a 5-star rating. Another user named Rafael Santos claimed that "how fast the scenario changes after each choice...confused me a bit," taking a few points off of the score and rated the game with 4 stars.

Lessons

- Lesson 1 A game's narrative does not need to be long to develop a character. In this game, each individual story path only takes up about 5-10 minutes. You are able to gain new insights on the characters on each path, especially the player character.
- Lesson 2 The player's interaction with the story does not have to end with each playthrough, as demonstrated by this game's true ending where each time the new game restarts the characters "travel through time".

Summation

This game offers a good example of how varied a narrative can be when a game throws in impactful answer choices for the players. Each ending is significantly different and may stand on its own as its own story that only takes minutes to reach. The acute branching narrative yields the game high replay value and lends itself casual accessibility.