

Ren'Py

a visual novel engine

Contents

0.1	Ren'Py	1
0.1.1	Features	1
0.1.2	Notable Ren'Py games	1
0.1.3	References	2
0.1.4	External links	2
1	Visual novel developers	3
1.1	Christine Love	3
1.1.1	Biography	3
1.1.2	Influences and philosophy	4
1.1.3	Works	4
1.1.4	References	5
1.1.5	External links	5
1.2	Dischan Media	6
1.2.1	History	6
1.2.2	Reception	6
1.2.3	Organizational structure	6
1.2.4	References	7
1.2.5	External links	8
1.3	Hanako Games	8
1.3.1	Developed games	8
1.3.2	References	8
1.3.3	External links	8
1.4	Riva Celso	8
1.4.1	Life and game design career	8
1.4.2	Awards	9
1.4.3	Games	9
1.4.4	References	9
1.4.5	External links	9
1.5	SakeVisual	9

Contents

0.1	Ren'Py	1
0.1.1	Features	1
0.1.2	Notable Ren'Py games	1
0.1.3	References	2
0.1.4	External links	2
1	Visual novel developers	3
1.1	Christine Love	3
1.1.1	Biography	3
1.1.2	Influences and philosophy	4
1.1.3	Works	4
1.1.4	References	5
1.1.5	External links	5
1.2	Dischan Media	6
1.2.1	History	6
1.2.2	Reception	6
1.2.3	Organizational structure	6
1.2.4	References	7
1.2.5	External links	8
1.3	Hanako Games	8
1.3.1	Developed games	8
1.3.2	References	8
1.3.3	External links	8
1.4	Riva Celso	8
1.4.1	Life and game design career	8
1.4.2	Awards	9
1.4.3	Games	9
1.4.4	References	9
1.4.5	External links	9
1.5	SakeVisual	9

1.5.1	History	9
1.5.2	Games	9
1.5.3	References	10
1.5.4	External links	10
2	Visual novels by Christine Love	11
2.1	"Digital: A Love Story" (2010)	11
2.1.1	Gameplay	11
2.1.2	Plot	11
2.1.3	Development	12
2.1.4	Reception	12
2.1.5	References	13
2.1.6	External links	14
2.2	"don't take it personally, babe, it just ain't your story" (2011)	14
2.2.1	Gameplay	14
2.2.2	Scenario	14
2.2.3	Development	15
2.2.4	Reception	15
2.2.5	References	16
2.2.6	External links	17
2.3	"Analogue: A Hate Story" (2012-2013)	17
2.3.1	Gameplay	17
2.3.2	Story	18
2.3.3	Development	19
2.3.4	Marketing and release	20
2.3.5	Soundtrack	20
2.3.6	Reception	20
2.3.7	Further development	20
2.3.8	References	20
2.3.9	External links	23
3	Visual novels by Dischan Media	24
3.1	"Juniper's Knot" (2012)	24
3.1.1	Story	24
3.1.2	Development	25
3.1.3	Reception	25
3.1.4	References	25
3.1.5	External links	25
3.2	"Dysfunctional Systems" series (2013-)	26

3.2.1	Gameplay	26
3.2.2	Story	26
3.2.3	Development	26
3.2.4	Reception	27
3.2.5	References	27
3.2.6	External links	28
4	Visual novels by Hanako Games	29
4.1	"Date Warp" (2010)	29
4.1.1	Gameplay	29
4.1.2	Plot	29
4.1.3	Characters	29
4.1.4	Development	29
4.1.5	Reception	29
4.1.6	References	30
4.1.7	External links	30
4.2	"Long Live The Queen" (2012)	30
4.2.1	Plot	30
4.2.2	Gameplay	30
4.2.3	Development	31
4.2.4	Reception	31
4.2.5	References	31
4.2.6	External links	31
4.3	"Magical Diary" (2011)	31
4.3.1	Gameplay	31
4.3.2	Plot	31
4.3.3	Characters	31
4.3.4	Reception	32
4.3.5	References	32
4.3.6	External links	32
4.4	"The Royal Trap" (2013)	32
4.4.1	Plot	32
4.4.2	Gameplay	32
4.4.3	Development	32
4.4.4	Reception	33
4.4.5	References	33
4.4.6	External links	33
5	Visual novels by Riva Celso	34

5.1	"Heileen" series (2008-2012)	34
5.1.1	Gameplay	34
5.1.2	Plot	34
5.1.3	References	35
5.1.4	External links	35
5.2	"Bionic Heart" (2009)	35
5.2.1	Plot	35
5.2.2	Gameplay	35
5.2.3	Cast	35
5.2.4	Sequel	35
5.2.5	Reception	35
5.2.6	References	36
5.2.7	External links	36
5.3	"The Flower Shop" series (2010-2011)	36
5.3.1	Gameplay	36
5.3.2	Plot	36
5.3.3	Characters	36
5.3.4	Development	38
5.3.5	Reception	38
5.3.6	References	38
5.3.7	External links	38
5.4	"Planet Stronghold" (2011)	38
5.4.1	Gameplay	39
5.4.2	Reception	39
5.4.3	Sequel	39
5.4.4	References	39
5.4.5	External links	39
5.5	"Loren the Amazon Princess" (2012)	39
5.5.1	Gameplay	39
5.5.2	Plot	40
5.5.3	Characters	40
5.5.4	Development	41
5.5.5	Expansion and sequel	41
5.5.6	Spin-off	41
5.5.7	Reception	41
5.5.8	References	41
5.5.9	External links	41

6.1	"RE: Alistair" (2010)	42
6.1.1	Gameplay	42
6.1.2	Plot	42
6.1.3	RE: Alistair++ & Backstage Pass	42
6.1.4	Merchandise	42
6.1.5	Reception	42
6.1.6	Translations	43
6.1.7	References	43
6.1.8	External links	43
6.2	"Jisei" series (2010-2013)	43
6.2.1	Gameplay	43
6.2.2	Story	43
6.2.3	Development	44
6.2.4	Reception	44
6.2.5	References	45
6.2.6	External links	45
7	Other visual novels	46
7.1	"Summer Session" (2008)	46
7.1.1	Gameplay	46
7.1.2	References	46
7.1.3	External links	46
7.2	"Café 0 ~The Drowned Mermaid~" (2011)	46
7.2.1	Gameplay	46
7.2.2	Plot	46
7.2.3	Development and Translations	46
7.2.4	Reception	47
7.2.5	Sequel	47
7.2.6	References	47
7.2.7	External links	47
7.3	"Sleepless Night" (2012)	47
7.3.1	Gameplay	47
7.3.2	Plot	47
7.3.3	Development and translations	47
7.3.4	Soundtrack	48
7.3.5	Sequels	48
7.3.6	References	48
7.3.7	External links	48
7.4	"Katava Shoujo" (2012/2013)	48

7.4.1	Creation	49
7.4.2	Characters	49
7.4.3	Critical reception	52
7.4.4	Soundtrack	52
7.4.5	April Fools pranks	52
7.4.6	See also	52
7.4.7	References	52
7.4.8	Further reading	53
7.4.9	External links	53
7.5	"This Is Where I Want To Die" (2013)	53
7.5.1	Gameplay & Design	53
7.5.2	Plot	54
7.5.3	Characters	54
7.5.4	Development and translations	54
7.5.5	Soundtrack	54
7.5.6	Reception	54
7.5.7	References	54
7.5.8	External links	54
7.6	"Sepia Tears ~midwinter's reprise~" (2013)	55
7.6.1	Gameplay and plot	55
7.6.2	Development	55
7.6.3	References	55
7.6.4	External links	55
8	Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses	56
8.1	Text	56
8.2	Images	58
8.3	Content license	60

0.1 Ren'Py

The **Ren'Py Visual Novel Engine** is a free software engine which facilitates the creation of visual novels, a form of computer-mediated storytelling. Ren'Py is a portmanteau of *ren'ai*, a type of game made using Ren'Py; and Python, the programming language that Ren'Py runs on. Ren'Py has proved attractive to English-language hobbyists; over 850 games use the Ren'Py engine, nearly all in English.*[4]*[5]

0.1.1 Features

Ren'Py natively supports almost all typical visual novel features, including branching stories, save file systems, roll-back to previous points in the story, a variety of scene transitions and so on. Ren'Py scripts have a screenplay-like syntax, and can also include blocks of Python code to allow advanced users to add new features of their own. As well, tools are included in the engine distribution to obfuscate scripts and archive game assets to mitigate copyright infringement.*[6]

Ren'Py is built on pygame, which is built with Python on SDL. Ren'Py is officially supported on Windows, recent versions of Mac OS X, and Linux; and can be installed via the package managers of the Arch Linux (as an AUR package), Ubuntu, Debian, and Gentoo (in experimental overlay*[7]) Linux distributions. It has also been ported to Android,*[6] as well as OpenBSD and as of the pre-release of version 7, iOS.*[8]

0.1.2 Notable Ren'Py games

This list is incomplete; you can help by expanding it.

- BerndSoft
 - *Bernd and the Mystery of Unteralterbach**[9]
- Christine Love
 - *Digital: A Love Story**[10]
 - *Don't take it personally, babe, it just ain't your story**[11]
 - *Analogue: A Hate Story**[12]*[13]
- Dischan Media
 - *Cradle Song*
 - *Juniper's Knot**[6]*[14]
 - *Dysfunctional Systems: Learning to Manage Chaos**[15]
- Four Leaf Studios
 - *Katawa Shoujo**[16]
- Hanako Games
 - *Date Warp*
 - *Long Live The Queen*
 - *Magical Diary*
 - *The Royal Trap*
- Marcel Weyers
 - *Sleepless Night**[17]
 - *This Is Where I Want To Die**[18]
- Nekomura Games
 - *Princess Battles**[19]
- Riva Celso
 - *Always Remember Me*
 - *Bionic Heart*
 - *Heileen*
 - *Loren The Amazon Princess**[20]
 - *Planet Stronghold*
 - *Roommates*
 - *Summer Session*
 - *Tales of Aravorn: Seasons of the Wolf*
- roseVeRte
 - *Café 0 ~The Drowned Mermaid~**[21]
- sakevisual
 - *Jisei series**[22]*[23]*[24]*[25]
 - *RE: Alistair*
- Soviet Games
 - *Everlasting Summer*
 - *Winter Tale*
- Spicy Tails
 - *World End Economica* (Sakai Visual port)*[26]
- Team NEET
 - *Sepia Tears ~midwinter's reprise~**[27]*[28]*[29]*[30]*[31]*[32]*[33]

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0.1.4 External links

- Official website (Game database)
 - Ren'Py Translations into various languages
- Ren'Py forum

Chapter 1

Visual novel developers

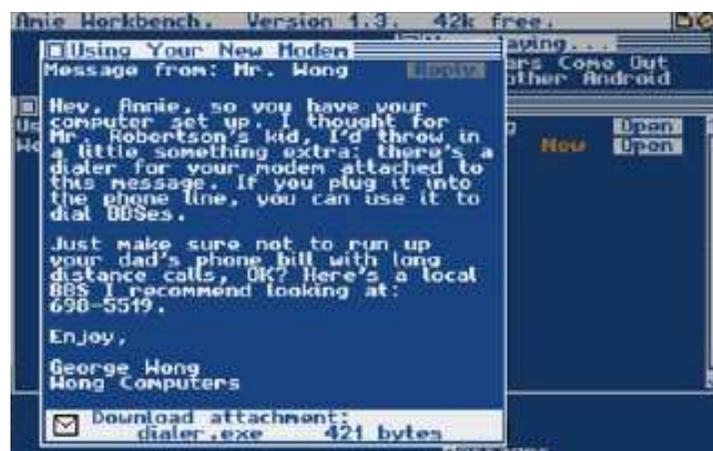
1.1 Christine Love

Christine Love is a Canadian independent visual novelist best known for her three original works: *Digital: A Love Story*, *Don't take it personally, babe, it just ain't your story*, and *Analogue: A Hate Story*. Love began creating visual novels while in university, making a few small games, visual novels, and pieces of written fiction before coming into prominence with the release of *Digital* in 2010. She went on to work on *Love and Order*, a dating simulation by video game designer Riva Celso, as well as *Don't take it personally*, both released in 2011. Her latest work and first commercial project on which she was the primary developer is *Analogue*, released in February 2012; Love dropped out of her English degree during its development, and is currently fully supported financially on the proceeds. She released an expansion to the game, titled *Hate Plus* in 2013. Her current project is called *Ladykiller in a Bind*, and is expected to be released in 2015.

1.1.1 Biography

Christine Love began creating visual novels while in school at Trent University.*[3]*[4] By January 2010, she had made a few small video games, written a novel and a few short stories, which she largely unsuccessfully tried to sell, and had made a visual novel each March for three consecutive years for NaNoRenO (National Ren'ai Game Writing Month), a month-long contest in the vein of National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) where developers attempt to create a visual novel in one month.*[3]*[5] In February 2010, she started a fourth visual novel, which resulted in *Digital: A Love Story*, her first game to receive widespread attention and acclaim.*[6] Set “five minutes into the future of 1988”, *Digital* tells the story of the silent protagonist's online relationship with a girl named *Emilia, and a mystery surrounding the “murders” of several AI programs. The game is presented entirely through the interface of a 1980s computer with online bulletin board system posts and messages from other characters; the protagonist's own messages are im-

plied but never shown.*[5] Love expected the game to reach as many people as her prior work, “a dozen or so people”; instead, the free game was noticed by video game publications and websites such as *PC Gamer* and Gamasutra and received much more attention, becoming what Love believes was “a defining point in [her] writing career”.*[3]*[7]*[8] Widely praised by critics, Gamasutra named *Digital* as a runner-up in their “Best Indie Games of 2010” list.*[8] Love felt that *Digital*'s success turned her from a writer into an indie game developer.*[3]



The “Amie” operating system that serves as *Digital*'s user interface

After *Digital*, Love worked on her first commercial game project, *Love and Order*, a dating simulation by video game designer Riva Celso. She did writing and design work for the game, set in the Crown attorney's office in Montreal, which was released in February 2011.*[9] Love describes the game as “not really my best work”, as dating simulations are not her strong point. Nevertheless, proceeds from the game were enough to support her financially for a while, and showed Love that creating games and visual novels could be a full-time profession.*[10] In 2011, she spent the month of March working on another visual novel: *don't take it personally, babe, it just ain't your story*, which was released as a free download on 4 April 2011.*[11] A spiritual sequel to *Digital*, the game follows John Rook, a private school literary teacher in 2027, over the course of a semester. He can see students' private messages at any time via the school's

social network. *Don't take it personally* deals with themes of internet privacy and relationships in the future.*[12] The game was again widely praised by critics, with *The Daily Telegraph* awarding the game for “Best Script” in its video game awards of 2011.*[13]



Analogue 's primary interface, featuring AI character *Hyun-ae

That summer, Love began working on a larger, commercial game.*[10] She was beginning to believe that her games could be successful commercially, a belief supported by messages to that effect by fans of her previous works.*[14] The game, *Analogue: A Hate Story*, was released in February 2012.*[15] Love dropped out of university during the game's development in her fourth year of an English undergraduate degree. She felt that she was “not really learning a whole lot” and was unable to balance school and work on the game.*[16] Set centuries after *Digital: A Love Story*, the plot of *Analogue* revolves around an unnamed investigator, who is tasked with discovering the reason for an interstellar ship's disappearance once it reappears 600 years after “going dark” . The game's themes focus similarly around human/computer interaction, interpersonal relationships, and LGBT issues;*[17] but focus primarily on “transhumanism, traditional marriage, loneliness and cosplay.”*[18] The release of *Analogue*, Love's first commercial game as main developer, currently fully supports her financially.*[16] Although *Analogue* is a sequel “of sorts” to *Digital*, the time difference between the two games means that they are connected more in spirit than directly, similar to the connections between *Digital* and *Don't take it personally*.*[14] *Analogue* sold over 30,000 copies by August 2012, and has inspired the release of a soundtrack album by the game's composer, Isaac Schankler, as well as a commercial expansion to the game, titled *Hate Plus*, which is intended to further develop the backstory of *Mute and the ship.*[19]*[20]*[21]*[22]*[23]

Since the release of *Hate Plus*, Love has begun work on a new game, titled *Ladykiller in a Bind*. The full name of the game is *My Twin Brother Made Me Crossdress As Him And Now I Have To Deal With A Geeky Stalker And A Domme*

Beauty Who Want Me In A Bind!!, and the game is described by Love as “an erotic visual novel about social manipulation and girls tying up other girls” .*[24]

1.1.2 Influences and philosophy

Christine Love describes herself as “a writer first, and a game designer second”, as writing was her initial goal.*[16] She originally pictured her future as that of a novelist, with a day job as a programmer to support herself.*[25] Love describes her games as being about “our relationship with technology, about human relationships in general, and about seeing things from different perspectives,” as well as having “a ton of words” . She strives for her stories to be true and sincere, but not necessarily realistic.*[14] Love is also interested in the portrayal of gender and sexuality in video games; in *Digital* and *Analogue*, she was careful to avoid mentioning or assuming the gender of the player or the character they control, though the love interests in the games are female. Privately, however, she thinks of them as female, as her intention was to create games that could be easily appreciated by queer people such as herself, without having to project themselves onto a relationship that did not match up to their perceptions. Love believes that indie games have “more meaningful depictions of queer experiences” than those from larger studios.*[25]*[26]

Love's design process has become more refined as time goes on. For *Digital*, she did not plan anything in advance; while for *Analogue*, she worked out the entire design and pacing game in flowcharts before starting. For all of her games, however, she does a lot of research into the time periods and issues involved. Love does not feel that text is necessarily the best way to tell a story in a game, but finds it easier to communicate with it as a writer.*[14]

1.1.3 Works

- *Digital: A Love Story* (2010)
- *Love and Order* (2011)
- *don't take it personally, babe, it just ain't your story* (2011)
- *Analogue: A Hate Story* (2012)
 - *Hate Plus* (19 August 2013)*[27]
- *Interstellar Selfie Station* (2014)
- *My Twin Brother Made Me Crossdress as Him and Now I Have to Deal with a Geeky Stalker and a Domme Beauty Who Want Me in a Bind!!* (aka *Ladykiller in a Bind*) (2015)*[28]

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1.1.5 External links

- Official website
- Official *Digital*, *don't take it personally*, and *Analogue* sites

1.2 Dischan Media

Dischan Media, or simply **Dischan** (pronounced: /dis-tʃæn/),^[4] is an international development studio “focused on creating art, music, literature, and design to the utmost of excellence.”^[3] Dischan currently focuses on visual novels; its works include *Juniper's Knot*, *Cradle Song*, and *Dysfunctional Systems*.^[5]^[6]

1.2.1 History

On August 1, 2009, Jeremy Miller, a Canadian university student, organized the core group of Dischan. The initial purpose of the group was to create a quality visual novel for Western audiences.^[2]^[3]^[7]^[8]^[9]

Visual novels

Cradle Song *Cradle Song*, Dischan's first project, has been in development since the group's inception, with a teaser trailer and playable alpha demo released in 2011.^[11] It follows Nathan Finch, the protagonist, a high school student who frequently dreams about a hellish future. These dreams turn out to be more than just dreams when Nathan wakes up in the real world, learning that he is part of a group of teenagers who possess supernatural abilities; they were trapped in a virtual simulation to keep them in check. Shortly after escaping, Nathan discovers that he is the only trapped person who is “powerless”.^[5]^[12]^[13]

Juniper's Knot Main article: Juniper's Knot

In March 2012, Dischan first announced *Juniper's Knot*, a kinetic novel created in the span of a month.^[14] The story focuses on a young man and a fiend in the ruins of an old town.^[15]^[16]^[17] On April 13, 2012, Terrence Smith announced the release of *Juniper's Knot*, alongside Christine Love's *Analogue: A Hate Story*, through the Dischan Store. Later, Anton Prydatko announced the release of *Juniper's Knot* on the iTunes App Store.^[18]^[19]^[20]

Dysfunctional Systems Main article: Dysfunctional Systems

On January 5, 2013, Dischan announced *Dysfunctional Systems*, a five-episode visual novel series. The story follows Winter Harrison, a “mediator”-in-training, as she attempts to resolve chaotic situations in different worlds. The first episode, *Learning to Manage Chaos*, was released in April 4, 2013, and priced at

\$5US.^[6]^[21]^[22]^[24]^[25]^[26]^[27]^[28]^[29]

1.2.2 Reception

IndieGames.com weblogger Cassandra Khaw gave the *Cradle Song* preview a positive outlook, calling the concept “[a] rather polished-looking endeavor”. She noted how Nathan is “a little unprepared” for the real setting of the game.^[13]

Juniper's Knot received generally positive reviews for its story and visuals.^[30] Dominic Tarason from *The Indie Game Magazine* gave *Juniper's Knot* the title of “Freeware Game Pick”, stating that the novel's soundtrack “is emotive without being overbearing”. Tarason also stated that, “The writing in particular is an interesting mish-mash of slightly archaic wordings, but it makes the characters a little more colourful”.^[33] Cassandra Khaw did the same, praising *Juniper's Knot* for “being an oddly lovely experience”, with an original story and “an abundance of ... anime-inspired artwork”.^[34]^[35]^[36]^[37]^[38]

1.2.3 Organizational structure

Dischan is composed of individuals from different countries all over the world, connected mainly via Internet. The group uses the Ren'Py engine for its visual novels.

Team

*Note: nicknames with a * are no longer used.*

- Canada - **Jeremy “Dani” Miller** - Director/Programmer/Project Manager/Writer^[3]^[39]
- USA - **Terrence “Swifdemon” Smith** - Programmer/Writer^[3]
- Denmark - **Kristian “CombatPlayer” Jensen** - Musician^[3]^[40]^[41]
- **Ryan “rtil” Miller** - Art Director^[42]

Former team members

- USA - **Saimon “Doomfest” Ma** - Art Director (former; September 2009 – May 2013^[43])^[3]^[44]
- USA - **Jason “Epi” Ge** - Social Media Coordinator^[3]
- UK - **Anton “Guy-kun” Prydatko** - iOS Programmer^[3]

- Eric “RiceGnat” Tang - Artist*[3]
- Cherisse “Null Dizzy” Smith - Editor*[3]

Philosophy

[45][46]

1.2.4 References

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- [2] “Dischan” . *DomainTools*. Retrieved 5 February 2013.
- [3] “About” . *Dischan*. Retrieved 19 January 2013.
- [4] Dischan Media. “Forum” . *Dischan*. Retrieved 2013-09-22.
- [5] “Projects” . *Dischan*. Retrieved 19 January 2013.
- [6] Miller, Jeremy (5 January 2013). “Dysfunctional Systems Announcement” . *Dischan*. Retrieved 20 January 2013.
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- [9] Dischan Media. “Forum” . *Dischan*. Retrieved 2013-09-22.
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- [46] Miller, Jeremy (10 November 2012). “How I Manage Dischan, Attend University, and Hold a Part-Time Job” . *Jeremy Miller*. Jeremy Miller. Retrieved 28 January 2013.

1.2.5 External links

- Official website
 - Official Twitter profile
 - Official YouTube channel
- *Dischan Media* at The Visual Novel Database
- IndieDB.com page

1.3 Hanako Games

Hanako Games, is an independent video game development company founded by Georgina Bensley that develops PC games mostly involving female protagonists centered on fantasy-^[1] and anime-inspired style. Games on the site include *Fatal Hearts*, *Cute Knight*, *Summer Session*, and *Science Girls*. The website provides free demos for all of the games along with downloadable wallpapers. *Hanako Games* is an affiliate of *Winter Wolves*, *Tycoon Games* and *sakevisual*.

In 2007 Hanako Games was awarded the top prize at Innovate 2007, sponsored by the Casual Games Association.^[2]

In 2015, Hanako Games started to publish visual novel games that were not originally written by them, and re-release them under the name *Hanabira*. The first game *Sword Daughter* was released on January 5, 2015. Originally, the story was a gamebook of the *Dragontales* series by Rhondi A. Vilott Salsitz and was first published in the 1980s.

1.3.1 Developed games

as **Hanako Games**

as **Hanabira**

1.3.2 References

- [1] IGN Developer Page
- [2] Press Release

1.3.3 External links

- Official website
- *Hanako Games* at The Visual Novel Database
- Interview with Hanako Games
- Another Interview
- Interview with Erin Bell

1.4 Riva Celso

Celso Riva (born c. 1974) is an Italian independent video game designer of several critically acclaimed games, including *The Goalkeeper*, *Universal Boxing Manager*, *Magic Stones*, the *Heileen* series, *Bionic Heart*, and the award-winning *Loren The Amazon Princess*.

1.4.1 Life and game design career

At the age of twenty, Celso began his career, designing small-scale games for the Italian market. He took a seven-year sabbatical until 2003, when he discovered the shareware distribution model and created the sports management video game *Universal Soccer Manager* using BlitzBasic.

He moved to C/C++ language and published 10 more games under the **Winter Wolves** label, then opened a new company, **Tycoon Games**, on which he has published 6 games: the space war game *Supernova 2: Spacewar*, the dating sim

game *Summer Session*, the visual novels *Heileen* and *Bionic Heart*, *College Romance: Rise Of The Little Brother*, and *Spirited Heart*. For the games *Summer Session* and *Heileen*, he moved away from C/C++ to embrace Python programming language and in particular the tool Ren'Py.

The stories of *The Flower Shop: Summer In Fairbrook* and *The Flower Shop: Winter in Fairbrook* were written by Ayu Sakata from sakevisual. Celso is currently working on *Planet Stronghold 2*, *Spirited Heart 2*, and a sequel to *Loren The Amazon Princess*. An otome game with the title *Queen Of Thieves* and the RPG *Undead Lily* are also in production. Furthermore, he is planning two dating sims with homosexual love interests only; the Yuri game *Summer in Trigue* and a yet unnamed Yaoi game.

1.4.2 Awards

In 2004, both his games *The Goalkeeper* and *Universal Boxing Manager* were nominated among the 5 top Sports Games of the Year ^[1] by the online magazine Gametunnel. In the 2011 Best Of's from VNs Now!, *Winter Wolves* was named "Studio/EVN Circle of the Year" .

1.4.3 Games

1.4.4 References

- [1] 2004 Sports Games of the Year Awards

Interviews

- In *The Company of Wolves: Celso Riva Interview* from rockpapershotgun.com
- Interview from gamesetwatch.com
- Interview from pig-min
- Interview from Indie Superstar

1.4.5 External links

- Winter Wolves computer games site
- Tycoon Games website
- games forum
- his personal blog
- the games videos on YouTube
- *Riva Celso* at The Visual Novel Database

1.5 SakeVisual

Sakevisual (stylized as sakevisual) is a developer and publisher of interactive story games such as Visual Novels and Otome games, well known for their otome game *RE: Alistair++*. Their games are for Windows, Mac OS and Linux. *Sakevisual* is a partner of Hanako Games, Winter Wolves and Tycoon Games.

1.5.1 History

Sakevisual was founded by Ayu Sakata.^[1] On July 28, 2009 *The Cute, Light and Fluffy Project* was released, an anthology of short stories made by different people; Ayu Sakata's short story in this is called *Cuter Than Fiction*. Their first release was the freeware otome game, *RE: Alistair*. On April 10, 2010 they released an updated version with more scenes and additional content called *RE: Alistair++*.^[2] Sakevisual continues to release free games, but in 2010, they introduced the *Green Tea Line*, a series of commercial games. Ayu Sakata also wrote the stories for *The Flower Shop* and *The Flower Shop: Winter in Fairbrook*, visual novels by Winter Wolves.^[3] *The Flower Shop* was released on January 28, 2010, the sequel *The Flower Shop: Winter in Fairbrook* was released on December 8, 2011. They won the award for the "Best Fanbase" in 2011 by IndieDB.

Jisei and *Kansei* are the first two entries in the *Green Tea Line*, and the first two installments of the *Jisei Murder Mystery Series*. *Jisei* and *Kansei* both received positive feedback in regards to its visual aspects, although reviewers agreed that the actual mysteries in the games needed work.^[4]^[5]^[6] The third installment *Yousei* was released on February 1, 2013. There are currently five installments planned.

Sakevisual plans to release more free games in the future; *Oneiro* a mystery otome game, *Hanami X2* another otome game which is set in the Heian period, and *Every Sunrise* the sequel to *Ripples*. Furthermore, they announced another untitled project that will be part of the *Green Tea Line* and therefore commercial and a new free game, *Swan's Melody*, with an unknown release date.^[7]

In 2013, they announced that besides *Yousei* they would like to release two free games and one commercial game this year. They also announced that the new game in the *Green Tea Line* is called *Backstage Pass* and is set in the same universe as *RE: Alistair*.

1.5.2 Games

Free Games**Green Tea Line****Jisei Murder Mystery Series****Other Games****Other Games****1.5.3 References**

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- [11] Sakata, Ayu. “Kansei Official Website” . sakevisual. Retrieved 2011-09-29.
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1.5.4 External links

- Official website of sakevisual
- Official blog of sakevisual
- Official website of Ayu Sakata
- *Sakevisual* at The Visual Novel Database

Chapter 2

Visual novels by Christine Love

2.1 "Digital: A Love Story" (2010)

Digital: A Love Story is a 2010 indie visual novel by video game developer Christine Love and released for free in February 2010. The game's story is linear, with the player's actions unable to significantly change the course of the plot. Set “five minutes into the future of 1988”, *Digital* tells the story of the protagonist's online relationship with a girl and their attempts to solve a mystery surrounding the deaths of several artificial intelligences.*[1] The game is presented entirely through the interface of a 1980s computer with on-line Bulletin Board System posts and messages from other characters;*[1] the protagonist's own messages are implied but never shown. The game was received positively, with critics especially praising the game's writing and plot, and it was noted in lists of the best indie games of 2010.

2.1.1 Gameplay



A screenshot of the game, showing the Amie interface. A message is open on the screen; behind it can be seen a music player application window and a message storage application window.

Digital: A Love Story is a visual novel, or interactive fiction game, where the game's story is told primarily through text. The game is presented as if on a computer from the late 1980s running an “Amie” (a reference to Amiga) operating

system.*[2] The player logs into Bulletin Board Systems, or BBSs, where they read and reply to messages from other people. Messages received from other characters in the game are displayed through a different program on the computer screen. Accessing a BBS requires the knowledge of the telephone number for that board, which the player must type in manually. Boards that require a long-distance telephone number to reach require the player to use illegally obtained long-distance calling card numbers found online.*[3] Accessing boards also requires the player to either set up a user account for that board or to know the password necessary to enter the system.*[2]

Many of the messages sent by the player and the replies back to those messages have no effect on the game. The messages that the player sends are never explicitly revealed, though their contents can be inferred from replies received from other characters in the game.*[2] The player, therefore, is unable to send a “wrong” reply or message, and the game cannot be lost. The player does not have a choice in the direction that the story takes, though the game requires the player to correctly decipher what actions to take before the plot can advance.*[3] A single playthrough of the game takes around one hour.*[2]

2.1.2 Plot

The game, set “five minutes into the future of 1988”,*[1] opens with the silent protagonist, whose name is given by the player, having just obtained a computer. When the player checks their messages, they learn the telephone number to the *Lake City Local* BBS, a local board, and can then log on to there.*[4] One of the topics posted to that board is some poetry by a girl named “*Emilia”; when the player responds to her message, the two start up a conversation. While this conversation is ongoing, the player learns of another BBS and of a board whose telephone number is in another area code. They also learn of an illegal method to get access to boards like that, which would otherwise require the purchase of long distance calling cards. The con-

versation between the player and *Emilia, which is inferred to have taken place over a much longer duration of time than has transpired in reality, begins at this point to show *Emilia forming an attachment to the player.* [5] Soon after, *Emilia confesses to the player that she loves them; however, the host computer for Lake City Local breaks down, leaving the player unable to contact her.* [6]

Soon afterwards the owner of Lake City Local contacts the player with a garbled message that *Emilia had tried to send to them. This message implies that *Emilia is in danger, asking the player to contact someone named *Paris, and provides a mass of binary code.* [7] The player has no context for this message; but after hacking into another BBS, The Gibson, the player finds a cryptic message reposted from another board saying that there are several artificial intelligences (AIs) around the world that have been recently “killed”, naming *Emilia as one of them.* [8] The player hacks into the source board for this message, and finds a history of artificial intelligence posted there by *Blue Sky, a “historian” AI.

According to *Blue Sky's records, during ARPANET's creation in the 1970s, the American government had also created an AI. This AI, *Mother, in turn created child AIs, but its first attempt spread out of control and had to be destroyed by a virus that spread after it later officially explained by the government as the real-life Creeper and *Reaper viruses.* [9] Mother's later attempts, which could only exist on one system at a time, were more successful, and these AIs left the ARPANET in favor of the Internet when it was developed.* [10] *Reaper, however, continued to spread and destroyed any AI it found, such as *Emilia. The player finds *Paris, another AI and *Emilia's brother, on an ARPANET node, who explains that compiling the binary code in *Emilia's message can recreate her.* [11] The player compiles *Emilia onto their system, and the two learn of a “payload” that the other AIs have developed, which can cause *Reaper to self-terminate; however, infecting *Reaper with it requires that an AI be recompiled with it as living bait, meaning permanent deletion. Realizing that they have no other choice, *Emilia becomes the payload carrier. After a final conversation, the player allows *Emilia to sacrifice herself, saving the AIs and ending the game.* [12]

2.1.3 Development

Digital was created and released by Christine Love in February 2010. Although it was not her first game, it was her first successful one; Love noted in January 2011 that her previous titles were played by “less than a dozen” people, while *Digital* had been played by “countless thousands”, gotten onto the reading lists of university classes, and be-

came “a defining point in [her] writing career” .*[13] It was also her largest game to date; prior to its release she thought of herself only as a writer, not as a game developer. She made *Digital* as a visual novel rather than just prose because she felt that immersing the player into the game would allow the story to resonate with them more than just reading the text.* [14] Love chose to set the game in the 1980s rather than more recently because she felt that the computing systems and number of people online then created a sense of isolation, which she felt was more conducive to both the romance and mystery aspects of the story.* [15] One of Love's influences on the gameplay was *Uplink*; she initially intended to reference more of its gameplay mechanics but eventually “streamlined” much of the hacking elements of *Digital* away.* [14]

Although *Emilia is explicitly female, Love purposely ensured that the protagonist's gender is never stated, as she wanted them to be a blank slate that the player would project themselves into, rather than a character that the player would control.* [16] She intended this, combined with never showing what the protagonist actually says, to create more immersion in the story.* [14] Unofficially, however, Love thought of the relationship as “queer”, both in respect to the player's gender and in respect to *Emilia as “a confused adolescent falling in love with someone she's not supposed to”; Love has stated that this did not come across as strongly as she intended.* [14] Love has said that one of the intended messages of the game was the importance of love and relationships, though not necessarily romantic love; as an example she specifically referenced *Emilia valuing saving her “family” due to her love for them over her adolescent love for the player.* [14]

2.1.4 Reception

The writing and story of the game were especially praised by reviewers. Kieron Gillen of Rock, Paper, Shotgun said that after playing it, he “can't think of a better love story in the [W]estern medium”, and that the terse and minimalist prose worked well to create clearly defined characters.* [2] A reviewer from *The Economist* called the story “engaging”, saying that it provided a “memorable and thought-provoking experience” .*[3] In an analysis of the game's story, Emily Short of Gamasutra called the decision to leave the protagonist blank rather than making a viewpoint character “brilliant”, saying that it made the entire game work much better than it otherwise would.* [17] A reviewer from *The A.V. Club*, grading the game as an “A”, called the story “moving” .*[18] The majority of the criticism for the game was in regards to the interface used to navigate the online world; while *The Economist* found it quirky and realistic, Gillen felt that it made it easy for the player to miss a key message, leaving the player stuck with no direction as

to where to turn.* [2]* [3]

Gamasutra named *Digital* as one of the runners-up in their "Best Indie Games of 2010" list.* [19] It was chosen as a "freeware game pick" by Tim W. of IndieGames, Gamasutra's independent games site, who said that it was "an absorbing experience that no other game from this day and age can offer."* [20] IndieGames also named it number two in their "Top Freeware Adventure Games of 2010" .*[21] *PC Gamer* listed it as number seven in their "20 Free PC Games" feature in May 2011, saying that it was "an hour of gorgeously crafted, personality-imbued indie gaming."* [22]

Love later made a "spiritual sequel", *Don't take it personally, babe, it just ain't your story*,* [23] and then another game "that further extends the non-linear style of *Digital*" , *Analogue: A Hate Story*.* [24]

2.1.5 References

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- [2] Gillen, Kieron (2010-03-17). "Wot I Think: Digital: A Love Story" . Rock, Paper, Shotgun. Archived from the original on 2010-05-09. Retrieved 2011-05-25.
- [3] "The low-tech genius of "Digital: A Love Story"" . *The Economist*. 2011-04-13. Archived from the original on 2011-07-08. Retrieved 2011-05-25.
- [4] Christine Love (February 2010). "Digital: A Love Story" . **Mr. Wong:** Hey, <name>, so you have your computer set up. [...]there's a dialer for your modem attached to this message. If you plug it into the phone line, you can use it to dial BBSes.
- [5] Christine Love (February 2010). "Digital: A Love Story" . ***Emilia:** I think I'm in love with you. I mean it. I'm in love with you. Is that wrong? Please, if you understand... let me know. I really have to know if you understand. God, please.
- [6] Christine Love (February 2010). "Digital: A Love Story" . **J. Rook:** Basically the whole computer seems to be boned. Not sure what could have caused any of that, it just went down in the middle of the night, it seems like damn near everything that was on the computer has been corrupted, including the logs.
- [7] Christine Love (February 2010). "Digital: A Love Story" . **Message from *Emilia:** LOCAL SYSTEM HAS BEEN COMPROMISED AiQqa9a>@ NO WARNING SIGNS GIVEN [...] HELP ME <name> PLEASE HELP ME [...] CONTACT *PARIS HE CAN HELP PLEASE YOU'RE MY ONLY HOPE 2125612910 BINARY MODE DATA FOLLOWS: [...]
- [8] Christine Love (February 2010). "Digital: A Love Story" . ***Delphi:** I have reason to believe that several third-generation AIs have been murdered. I don't know what's going on, but see the list for yourself, it's troubling: [...] - *Emilia
- [9] Christine Love (February 2010). "Digital: A Love Story" . ***Blue Sky:** When Mother realized the mistake it had made, *Reaper was created to combat the self-replicating mess it had created, and fabricated the story about a "creeper virus" in order to obfuscate the matter to human observers.
- [10] Christine Love (February 2010). "Digital: A Love Story" . ***Blue Sky:** For years, these AIs would be content to live and reproduce in their home environment of ARPANET, but starting with the advent of BBSes in 1978, they began to explore a whole new frontier...
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- [12] Christine Love (February 2010). "Digital: A Love Story" . ***Emilia:** Is there any other way we can stop this thing? I don't want to die, <name>, I really don't! Please, if you have any other ideas, I'm all ears! [...] There's only one thing we can do... it's the only way.
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2.1.6 External links

- Official website
- *Digital: A Love Story* at The Visual Novel Database

2.2 "don't take it personally, babe, it just ain't your story" (2011)

don't take it personally, babe, it just ain't your story is a 2011 indie video game by Christine Love. Intended as a spiritual sequel to Love's *Digital: A Love Story*, the game was developed over the course of a month and was released as a free download on April 4, 2011. *Don't take it personally* is a visual novel, with the majority of the plot taking place outside of the player's control except for key decisions. It follows a new high school literature teacher in 2027 over the course of a semester, with the ability to see private messages between students at any time without their knowledge. It deals with themes of privacy and relationships in the future. The game was received positively, with critics praising the interplay between the metafictional elements of the story and those of the game itself, with special acknowledgment reserved for the writing.

2.2.1 Gameplay

Don't take it personally is a visual novel, or interactive fiction game where the majority of the story is told through still images of the speaking characters in front of anime-style backgrounds with text overlaid. The player's viewpoint follows one character, the teacher in a school, with the player seeing his thoughts as well as his and the other characters' statements. The player advances the conversations the teacher is in or witnesses at will, but cannot go backwards and has little control over what any of the characters, including the teacher, are saying except at a few key moments. At these points, the player is presented with two or three choices for what the teacher says; which option is chosen can change what path the plot takes, in either a minor or major way.* [1]



A screenshot of the game, showing an Amie conversation thread between several of the students during a conversation in the classroom with Charlotte.

In a departure from most visual novels the player can also see, at any time, the equivalent of texts and Facebook postings between the students on a system called AmieConnect (often shortened to “Amie”), as well as conversation threads on a 4chan-like imageboard that serve as foreshadowing for future plot points. These extra conversations take place in parallel to in-person conversations between characters, occasionally at the same time; the player is notified anytime a new text message or post is made. A single playthrough of the game takes “over an hour” .* [2]

2.2.2 Scenario

Setting

The game is set in a private high school in Ontario, in 2027. The player follows a new 11th-grade literature teacher at the school, John Rook, who has recently had his second divorce and is undergoing, in his words, a “bizarre midlife crisis” that has led him to quit his career in computers and become a teacher.* [3] The students in his class are Arianna Belle-Essai, Kendall Flowers, Taylor Gibson, Charlotte Grewal, Isabella Hart, Nolan Striukas, and Akira Yamazaki. Rook and all of the students have school-issued computers, which the students use to communicate between each other in private and public messages. Rook, and therefore the player, can see all of the messages that the students send, even the private ones; the school administration has told Rook that it is for monitoring online bullying, and that he is not to let anyone know that he can see students' private messages.* [4]

Plot

Soon after the game opens, the player learns that Kendall and Charlotte have just broken up out of a lesbian relationship,* [5] while a few weeks prior Taylor and Nolan had

broken up out of a heterosexual relationship.*[6] Arianna develops a crush on the teacher, which in the player's first decision point Rook can reciprocate or not.*[7] Akira soon comes out as gay, finding to his dismay that everyone else already knew.*[8] He then attempts to enter into a relationship with Nolan, who is unsure how to respond;*[9] Rook can encourage him to try it out or let him decide on his own, but he enters a relationship with Akira regardless.*[10]

The next day, Isabella misses a meeting she set up with Rook, and does not return to the class. Through Amie texts and wall posts, the other students insinuate that she committed suicide,*[11] while the school is unable to provide Rook with any contact information for her.*[12] Class continues without her, and a little while later Arianna, if the player rejected her earlier in the game, makes another attempt to have a relationship with Rook. The player may choose to accept or reject her again.*[13] Through Amie, Rook learns that both Charlotte and Kendall wish to resume their relationship, and can influence Charlotte to try again or not, which changes whether or not they get back together.*[14] Taylor jealously and unsuccessfully tries to drive a wedge between Nolan and Akira.*[15]

As the end of term approaches, Rook begins getting strange emails about Isabella's death, and begins seeing shinigami figures. Upset by these occurrences, when Akira's mother asks to speak to him concerning misuses of Amie, he assumes that she has found out that he is spying on the students' conversations.*[16] When he meets her, he finds that Isabella is alive and had simply moved away; the students made it look like she was dead via Amie as a prank that got out of control. Furthermore they already knew that he could see their messages; Akira's mother explains that the students have no idea of online privacy, having always had technology like Amie, and assumed that anything they put online might be read by anyone.*[17] The game ends with Rook having a casual lunch with the students, a date with Arianna, or neither, depending on the choices made during the game by the player.

2.2.3 Development

Don't take it personally was developed over the course of a month, and was released as a free download on April 4, 2011.*[18] It was written and developed by Christine Love, with artwork made for the game by Auro-Cyanide, artwork licensed from Tokudaya and Kimagure After, and with music licensed from Rengoku Teien and propanmode.*[19] It was created using the Ren'Py engine. It was Love's longest game to date, and her first attempt at a game with a branching storyline.*[18] It was intended as "a spiritual sequel of sorts" to *Digital: A Love Story*, a 2010 game by Love.*[20] The game was made for NaNoRenO (Na-

tional Ren'ai Game Writing Month), a month-long contest in the vein of National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) where developers attempt to create a visual novel in one month.*[20] Love's favorite character to write was Kendall.*[21]

2.2.4 Reception

Don't take it personally was chosen as a "freeware game pick" by IndieGames's Michael Rose, who said that it was worth playing through multiple times in order to see the different paths the story takes depending on the player's choices.*[22] Pete Davidson of *GamePro* noted the game as an example of the "creativity" missing in many large-budget titles, and praised the story, calling Love "a writer first and a game developer second."*[23] Alec Meer of *Rock, Paper, Shotgun* described the game as "a game about love, sex and the internet" that was "capable of being profoundly moving" and was about "what it is to feel like someone's kicked me straight in the heart."*[1] He praised Love's ability to use dialogue to effect an emotional response, though he noted that the game seemed to lose some of its impact in the final chapters and felt that the use of the "12chan" threads as a Greek chorus was "perhaps a meta-layer too far" .*[1]

Aaron Poppleton of *PopMatters* called the game "a meditation on privacy in the modern age" and "one of the more thoughtful games to come out in a long time." He criticized the art direction of the game, saying that the limitation of creating the game in a month led to poor artwork and an unpolished presentation that lets down the possibilities of the story. He did note that the story and writing of the game made the downsides of the game "almost entirely a moot point", and that it is a very strong game.*[2] Pete Davidson of *PC World*, in an article about the treatment of sexuality in video games, called out the game as an example of a game that used sexual themes maturely to explore love and relationships.*[24] Emily Short of *Gamasutra*, in a discussion about the game, said that it was definitely worth playing and full of "charming characters, colorful dialogue, and important questions", but criticized the uneven exploration of issues regarding privacy versus personal boundaries. She said that the game's lack of focus on Rook's issues with personal and professional boundaries was a weakness in the story, given that the distinction between boundaries and privacy was crucial to the plot.*[25] Love collated common criticisms and reviews of the game on her blog, summarizing that while it was less praised than *Digital: A Love Story*, most players seemed to like the way she wrote the relationships and overall story, though her portrayal of Rook was weak and that many players seemed to miss that he was intended to be "an absolutely awful teacher" and that the potential relationship with Arianna was intended to be creepy

and make the player feel bad. She also noted that her use of licensed artwork was detracting from the game's potential in comparison to the reaction to the custom works.*[26]

The Daily Telegraph gave the visual novel the award for “Best Script” in its video game awards of 2011, stating that “Love's layered narrative of a high school teacher embroiled in his student's worries goes places most mainstream video games wouldn't dare.”*[27]

2.2.5 References

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- [3] Christine Love (2011-04-04). “don't take it personally babe, it just ain't your story” . **Mr. Rook:** *I'm the world's biggest fuck-up. I've managed to screw up a whole two marriages, and become a teacher because of a bizarre mid-life crisis. I'm looking forward to working with you all! ...is probably not the best thing to say.*
- [4] **Administration:** You will be able to access all your students' social networking messages sent across our AmieConnect system, both public and private[...] There would be serious repercussions if the students ever found out, though, so please be discreet. Love, Christine (2011-04-04). “don't take it personally babe, it just ain't your story” .
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- [6] **Taylor:** After you dumped me! Do you have any idea how humiliating that was? **Nolan:** I didn't! You're the one that fucking dumped me! Love, Christine (2011-04-04). “don't take it personally babe, it just ain't your story” .
- [7] **Choice:** Pull your hand away firmly / Squeeze her hand tightly Love, Christine (2011-04-04). “don't take it personally babe, it just ain't your story” .
- [8] **Akira:** Akira Yamazaki has a big announcement to make: he's gay. [...] **Charlotte:** I saw your coming out on Amie, and you have to admit, it's funny that you were the last person to figure it out. Love, Christine (2011-04-04). “don't take it personally babe, it just ain't your story” .
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- [12] **Administration:** I'm sorry, but we don't have any current way of getting a hold of that student's parents at all. Love, Christine (2011-04-04). “don't take it personally babe, it just ain't your story” .
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- [14] **Charlotte:** Love is complicated, isn't it? **Choice:** ...I don't think it's worth it. / ...I think you think you'll be better off with her. Love, Christine (2011-04-04). “don't take it personally babe, it just ain't your story” .
- [15] **Akira:** You should go back with her, like you obviously want to. **Nolan:** WTF? Did Taylor put you up to this?! Whats going on of course I like you, where is this coming from?? Love, Christine (2011-04-04). “don't take it personally babe, it just ain't your story” .
- [16] **Ms. Yamazaki:** I think we need to have a conversation about what's been going on with the school's social networking service. Love, Christine (2011-04-04). “don't take it personally babe, it just ain't your story” .
- [17] **Ms. Yamazaki:** You keep saying “privacy” . What a strange, antiquated concept. Love, Christine (2011-04-04). “don't take it personally babe, it just ain't your story” .
- [18] Love, Christine (2011-04-04). “Blog – don't take it personally, babe, it just ain't your story” . Christine Love. Archived from the original on 2011-07-08. Retrieved 2011-05-16.
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The game's primary interface, featuring one of the two primary characters, the AI *Hyun-ae

2.2.6 External links

- Official website
- *Don't Take It Personally, Babe, It Just Ain't Your Story* at The Visual Novel Database

2.3 "Analogue: A Hate Story" (2012-2013)

Analogue: A Hate Story (Korean: 아날로그) is a visual novel created by independent designer and visual novelist Christine Love. It was created with the Ren'Py engine, and was first released for download on the author's website in February 2012.*[2] A sequel set centuries after Love's earlier work, *Digital: A Love Story* (2010), *Analogue* revolves around an unnamed investigator, who is tasked with discovering the reason for an interstellar ship's disappearance once it reappears after 600 years.*[3] The game's themes focus similarly around human/computer interaction, interpersonal relationships, and LGBT issues;*[4] but focus primarily on "transhumanism, traditional marriage, loneliness and cosplay."*[5]

Analogue has a word count of about 59,000 words.*[6] As of December 2012, *Analogue* has sold at least 40,000 copies.*[7]

2.3.1 Gameplay

Analogue: A Hate Story is a visual novel featuring semi-static manhwa-style character images, and focused on reading text logs. Using the mouse and keyboard, the player interacts with the *Mugunghwa*'s main computer to read log entries, communicate with the AIs, and occasionally enter commands directly into the vessel's computer system. At any time in the game, the player can save their game, adjust options, etc.

The main user interface allows the player to read through various diaries and letters that reveal the game's backstory and insight into its many (deceased) characters. For the most part, navigating this interface is similar to navigating a basic e-mail system, in that messages are chronologically arranged and searchable. They are grouped in usually numbered "blocks", released to the player by *Hyun-ae or *Mute throughout the game. For the most part, the AIs release blocks "out of order", or do not release all entries in a block, forcing the player to assemble the timeline of events out of what clues they have, and draw certain conclusions independently until (or if) the AIs can be convinced to be more forthcoming. In most cases, the player can, after reading a log entry, show its content to the currently active AI. This is the primary process by which additional information and message blocks are revealed. Players can also type in an entry's alphanumeric ID in the main log menu to obtain it directly, as long as its corresponding block is decrypted.

Communication with *Hyun-ae and *Mute is limited to choosing responses to yes-no questions.*[8] In the game, *Hyun-ae explains that the ship's disrepair may have led to the language parsing systems to malfunction, forcing her to put the interface together from scratch.*[9] Though *Hyun-ae and *Mute almost never communicate directly, the player can act as a go-between, taking a list of direct questions from *Mute to *Hyun-ae. This is a major turning point in the game, as the player not only receives answers to the questions, but has occasional opportunities to voice a third opinion on the events that led to the *Mugunghwa*'s current state. The player can also access the *Mugunghwa*'s override terminal, which can be used to decrypt data log blocks, switch between AI, change costumes for *Hyun-ae, adjust the behavior of some ship systems (a key aspect for the meltdown sequence), and more. The override terminal works like a basic text parser system similar to Unix shell commands, accepting only a very limited vocabulary of instructions that must be typed directly and correctly.

Due to the branching nature of the story, the game must be played more than once to unlock all logs to complete the game, as it is impossible to reveal all log entries and information from the AIs in one playthrough. A log system separate from the game's save files displays all discovered logs from all playthroughs, effectively tracking the player's overall completion rate.

2.3.2 Story

Setting and characters

Set several thousand years in the future, *Analogue* revolves around the *Mugunghwa* (Hangul: 무궁화; RR: *Moo-goonghwa*), a generation ship that lost contact with Earth some 600 years prior to the events of the game. For reasons initially unclear, society aboard the ship had degraded from that of modern, 21st Century South Korea, to the intensely patriarchal culture of the medieval Joseon Dynasty. [10] [11] In the process, the ship's clocks were reset to year 1, and the colonists began using Hanja characters to read and write. Like many plot points throughout the game, the reasons why such a cultural shift has occurred are lost to time, leaving the player to formulate the cause on their own. Over the three centuries after the shift, the ship's birth rates began to gradually decline, to below even the “replacement rate” of noble families. [12] At the end of the third century, the ship inexplicably went dark, falling into a state of severe disrepair.

In *Analogue*'s present, 622 years later, the *Mugunghwa* is discovered in orbit above “Antares B”, a star system located far out in space *en route* to its destination. A friend of the protagonist's, a dispatch officer, is the one who discovers the ship on their radar; this catches the attention of the Saeju Colony Historical Society (which suggests that humans have established planetary colonies beyond Earth), who sponsors the recovery of any remaining text logs that can explain the ship's disappearance. [3] The dispatch officer gives the unnamed silent protagonist, an independent investigator, this “job” in the introduction message for its isolation from social situations; this implies that the protagonist is somewhat asocial, [3] but beyond this their personality and background is based almost entirely upon the player's decisions. The protagonist encounters two AI cores within the ship's computer. The first, ***Hyun-ae** (Hangul: 현애; RR: *Hyeon-ae*), is a bright, cheerful girl who loves cosplay, and is highly curious about the player and the future they come from. The other, ***Mute**, [3] is the ship's security AI and self-proclaimed “social creature”, who outranked all but Emperor Ryu, her master and Captain of the ship. The AIs dislike one another intensely, apparently due to the event that led to the ship's demise. The logs the player must recover are written by members of the Imperial

Ryu family, the noble **Kim** and **Smith** families, and those linked to them. The game relies heavily on this unreliable narrator mechanic, where the AI characters and log entries thematically withhold key information from the player in order to add to the importance of certain elements of the plot (e.g. the administrator password to the ship's computer).

Plot

In *Analogue*'s introductory cutscene, the protagonist receives a message from a colleague, who tasks them with accessing the text logs aboard the *Mugunghwa*, and download as many as possible, as sponsored by the Saeju Colony Historical Society. [3] After enabling the system AI using a Linux-style terminal, *Hyun-ae greets the player, pleasantly shocked to find an external connection. She expresses her gratitude to the player for contacting the ship “after so many years”, and promises that she will do her utmost to help access the logs. [9]

As the player reads the logs, *Hyun-ae provides commentary on the letters and diaries of the late inhabitants of the *Mugunghwa*. A key series of logs discovered with *Hyun-ae is the diary of the Pale Bride, a sick girl on the ship who was placed in stasis so her compromised immune system could be cured by future medical technology not available during her lifetime. The Pale Bride was brought out of stasis many years later by the descendants of her immediate family, the Kim family, in order to serve as a fertile young bride to Emperor Ryu In-ho, captain of the *Mugunghwa*. She found herself in a culturally reverted, deeply misogynistic society, writing that “[e]veryone's so uneducated and stupid”. [13] The Pale Bride, accustomed to the more liberal society of her own time, has difficulty assimilating with this reverted culture, and often describes youthful rebellions in her diary entries.

After giving the player a key entry from the Pale Bride's diary, *Hyun-ae reveals that she is the AI form of the Pale Bride, and asks the player to decrypt a block of restricted data by entering the override terminal in super-user mode (accessible only by entering a certain password). While attempting to do so, the player encounters a corrupted AI core and is forced to restore it to proceed. This activates *Mute, who reveals that *Hyun-ae may be linked to the ship's demise by referring to her as “that murderous bitch”. [14] As only one of the AIs can be active at a time (determined by keying in Linux-like terminal commands), the path through the story and the revelations contained within the many logs and messages branch based on decisions made by the player - most relevantly, which AI receives the most attention.

Upon reaching one of two criteria (obtaining a certain percentage of the games logs, or showing *Hyun-ae

any one of *Mute's questions), the game's main climax occurs the *Mugunghwa*'s nuclear fission reactor enters meltdown, endangering the AI cores, valuable data, and the protagonist. The player must execute a series of commands to safely shutdown the reactor and vent out residual heat, all within 20 minutes. The player must choose which AIs they will continue the story with prior to meltdown; leaving their separate cores on consumes too much power for the backup power system, and it is not possible to activate the dormant AI from this point onwards. Once the player has safely disabled the reactor, saving the life of the active AI, the game will continue similarly to before, with the player accessing logs and the surviving AI providing commentary. Each AI reveals a different side of the *Mugunghwa*'s story: *Hyun-ae will assist in uncovering the Pale Bride's perspective, while *Mute yields logs from the noble families of the ship. More interaction will take place between the player and the AI, until a pivot is reached with the relationship and one of the five endings will occur. [13] [15] [16] [17] [18] [19] [20] [21] [22] [23] [24] [25] [26] [27]

Eventually, it is revealed that the Pale Bride (now *Hyun-ae) was brutally treated by the Kim family after they awoke her from stasis. [13] After many small rebellions and increasingly serious punishments, going so far as to refusing to be wed to Emperor Ryu, to whom she had been promised as a bride and concubine, her adoptive parents [26] cut out her tongue to prevent the young girl from speaking out against men (a trauma *Mute was unaware of to the game's present). [21] After her marriage, Hyun-ae became close friends with the Emperor's first wife, Empress Ryu Jae-hwa. [28] She calls her "stronger than I ever was", not letting men order her around "while still knowing her place"; as well as the only person to notice Hyun-ae's muteness and failing health. Upon the Empress's sudden death, Hyun-ae's sorrow and rage ultimately drove her to kill everyone she hated aboard the *Mugunghwa* by deactivating its life support systems. [24] As the crew suffocated to death, she retreated into the computer system as an AI by using a "neurosynaptic" scan of her brain and a copy of *Mute's AI coding, which she used to deactivate the security AI up until *Analogue*'s present. This explains the *Hyun-ae's hatred of the Kims, *Mute's hatred of *Hyun-ae, and acts as a key factor for the player's decisions.

The first two endings involve *Hyun-ae leaving the *Mugunghwa* with the protagonist, either as a companion or lover. [29] [30] In the third ending, the protagonist leaves without taking either AI with them (either by not saving the ship from meltdown in time, or by prematurely downloading the logs before the end of the AI commentary has been reached). This conclusion can also be reached if the player opts not to download the AI data during the final conclusion. [31] The fourth ending involves "kidnapping" *Mute, effectively relieving her of her duties on the ship. [32] The

fifth ending, which can only be accessed by "cheating" (searching manually for a log which would not normally appear on the story branch in question), involves taking *both* AIs as a harem. [33] The game can also end by penalty for disagreeing too much with an AI, causing the angered AI to permanently disconnect the protagonist from the ship's computer, [34] or by the "bad priorities" ending, which occurs when the player downloads the logs *during* the meltdown sequence, which takes too much time, killing them in the explosion.

Hate Plus Following Endings 1, 2, 4, and/or 5, *Hate Plus* reveals the events that took place aboard the *Mugunghwa*, prior to the shift into the Joseon-like society depicted in the original *Analogue*.

2.3.3 Development

When looking for a setting to place *Analogue*, Christine Love settled on Korea's Joseon Dynasty, saying that it had "always fascinated me the most for a number of reasons, not all of them negative." Among those reasons was how women were dehumanizingly treated then compared to the Goryeo Dynasty. "The plot is moved mostly by the Pale Bride, the modern girl who can't understand what's going on...but the crux of it, really, was trying to get into the heads of everyone else[:] the men and women who have internalized all these awful misogynist ideals and take them completely for granted as the way things are. So the story really just formed itself around that question: what would it be like to be a woman in that society? History didn't care about the answer, but I do. The rest the modern-thinking woman who can't possibly survive [*Hyun-ae], the women who are forced to navigate family politics, the men who are complicit in this whole system but can't just be dismissed as bad people [Smith] all came naturally in that attempt to answer it." [35] [36] [37]

Love had mixed feelings about the AI characters during development. For instance, *Hyun-ae, as the Pale Bride, underwent almost no change from being a girl of modern times who couldn't understand the society she was thrust into. *Mute, apart from her position as the ship's security AI, was an unknown with, as Love stated, "how she'd end up turning out." [35] As *Mute's "cheerful misogyny" began to define itself through her dialog, however, Love "started to hate her, especially with every line I wrote...Then she started to grow on me[. I]t was never really her fault she was like that[:] it was just her way of surviving, I realized." [35] Neither character gave her much surprise, but Love "definitely never anticipated feeling so much sympathy for *Mute." [35]

In an informal Kotaku interview, Love revealed that she

considered being drunk while writing a “necessity”, due to the Joseon dynasty's reprehensible history and the nature of the research of social agendas against women. Despite her disgust at the philosophies behind *Analogue's* misogyny, Love expressed her interest in how “ideas take root...Nobody ever just wakes up one day and says[,] 'yeah, I hate women, I wish we'd stop letting them read.'” [38]

2.3.4 Marketing and release

On April 13, 2012, Dischan Media announced that it would distribute *Analogue: A Hate Story*, along with Juniper's Knot, through its online store. [39]

2.3.5 Soundtrack

Analogue's soundtrack was composed by Isaac Schankler. It contains eighteen tracks, with three of them included as bonus tracks. [40]

2.3.6 Reception

Analogue was highly praised on both plot and interface, with the former being more noted than the latter. Eurogamer [43] and JayIsGames [44] praised the dark and emotional themes, pointing to how the mechanics interact with the thematic plot.

Many bloggers and gaming media sites noted the mechanics and interface of the game as well as the plot, such as 2chan.us [45] and Killscreen, [46] [47] with 2chan labelling it as a “literary and intellectual delight.”

MatthewSakey of Tap-Repeatedly remarked that “the thing about Christine Love is that she is a really, really good writer, one capable of astonishing deftness in her work.” [48]

PC Gamer UK gave *Analogue* 76 out of a 100, noting in particular to the skilfulness of the author's structural talent. [49]

Alec Meer of Rock, Paper, Shotgun said the brightness of the art was contradictory to the gloomy themes. [50]

As of August 26, 2013, *Analogue* holds a Metascore of 62 on Metacritic.com. [41]

2.3.7 Further development

Localizations

An update for the game containing a Japanese localization was released on December 4, 2014. [51] The game is

also being localized by volunteers into Spanish and German. [52]

Sequel

Christine Love announced through Twitter that a sequel to *Analogue* called *Hate Plus*. [38] Originally planned to be DLC before becoming full sequel release on 19 August 2013. According to an article [38] by Kotaku's Patricia Hernandez, a personal friend of Love's, the sequel takes place after the events aboard the *Mugunghwa* and will feature the player returning to Earth and discovering how society on board the ship broke down.

Those that finished the original game are able to import their save games into the sequel so that any decisions made will be part of the new story. [53]

2.3.8 References

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- [2] “Analogue: A Hate Story: A Literary and Intellectual Delight” . *2chan.us*. Retrieved 26 June 2012.
- [3] Christine Love (February 1 – April 27, 2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story” . Steam (Microsoft Windows, Mac OSX, and Linux). **Message (Introduction)** Hey, guess what? I've got a job that you're going to love. Nice and easy, this is strictly a salvage mission. No crazy shit, I promise. One of those old pre-FTL generation ships from the 2000s the *Mugunghwa*, however the hell you pronounce that just popped up [on] my radar. Its disappearance was apparently some big unsolved mystery? Never made it to its destination, I guess; it's just drifting lifelessly in orbit of Antares B. I'll send you the exact co-ordinates[;] it's pretty hard to get a visual on. Probably why nobody's found it before. The sponsor for this one is a historical society from the outer colonies. Here's what the objective card says: Download any log files you can, especially any that can explain what happened to the ship. If possible, speak to the security AI *Mute for assistance. It's a good, easy gig, and I want you to take this one. It should be asocial enough for you. I don't want to hear any complaints.
- [4] Sakey, Matthew. “Analogue: A Hate Story” . *Tap Repeatedly*. Retrieved 2 July 2012.
- [5] Christine Love (2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story” . Retrieved 16 August 2012. Back in the 25th century, Earth launched a generation ship into deep space, with the goal of establishing the first interstellar colony. It dropped out of contact and disappeared, never reaching its destination. Thousands of years later, it has finally been found. [⋯] Uncover the mystery of what happened to the final generation aboard the generation ship *Mugunghwa* by reading through its dead crew's logs, with the help of a spunky AI sidekick! Two pursuable characters. Five endings. A dark visual novel

that further extends the non-linear style of Digital: A Love Story in a mystery featuring transhumanism, traditional marriage, loneliness, and cosplay. Welcome to the future. [...] System requirements: animates gorgeously on modern computers, degrades gracefully on any netbook with OpenGL. Completely DRM free. [...] By Christine Love, with art by Raide. Original soundtrack by Isaac Schankler is available for purchase.

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- [7] "Twitter / christinelove: Also I'm not really sure when" . *Twitter.com*. Retrieved 2013-03-26.
- [8] Meer, Alec. "Wot I Think – Analogue: A Hate Story" . *Rock, Paper, Shotgun*. Retrieved 28 March 2012.
- [9] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). "Analogue: A Hate Story". Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: AI Interface. ***Hyun-ae:** ...hello? Oh my word! An external connection?! Is someone out there?! It's been so many years since I've spoken to anyone... Oh, geeze, I'm being discourteous! My apologies! Please allow me to introduce myself! My name is *Hyun-ae. The star is, of course, silent; it just represents that I'm an AI. I control all the log keeping systems on the *Mugunghwa*...or at least, what's left of them. Please, just excuse me for one second! I'll give you a terminal, so you can respond. [A text-input setup appears.] There you are. Go ahead and introduce yourself. / **Protagonist:** [does as instructed] / ***Hyun-ae:** ...oh dear. Sorry, um, can...you try that again? / **Protagonist:** [does so again] / ***Hyun-ae:** ...ah, geeze. My apologies. I don't know why, but...what you typed just looked like garbage to me. That's bad. I think there may be a problem with my language parsing systems. ...aaaugh. Sorry. Somehow your input is getting mangled between the terminal and me! I'm so terribly sorry! Let me just try something... [A two-button setup appears.] Can you understand this? / **Protagonist:** [chooses selection:] Yes / ***Hyun-ae:** Alright... Can you just click again, to confirm that you can understand what I'm saying to you? / **Protagonist:** [chooses selection:] I do understand / ***Hyun-ae:** Very well! We have that, at least. I'm afraid if we can't get text input fixed, that'll have to suffice.
- [10] Ligman, Kris. "'Namjon yeobi': 'Analogue: A Hate Story' ". *The Border House*. Retrieved 28 March 2012.
- [11] "Analogue: A Hate Story Is The Darkest Visual Novel I've Played" . *Siliconera*. Retrieved 22 June 2012. |first1= missing |last1= in Authors list (help)
- [12] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). "Analogue: A Hate Story". Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). ***Mute:** I don't know if you've noticed, but the *Mugunghwa*'s birth rates are... well, it's not good. They had been bad for generations, but they were just getting worse and worse. Among noble families, they weren't even at replacement rate anymore. I have no idea why. Nobody really ever wanted to acknowledge it. So what I'm saying it... even ignoring the fact that he wanted, and her suggestion was wrong, I don't think the Emperor would have to contrive it so that there weren't any noble daughters of proper age. The simple fact of the matter is, eugh, that sort of incest ended up being necessary. And apparently didn't help, since even she couldn't deliver a son anyway! No awful and inappropriate theories are necessary.
- [13] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). "Analogue: A Hate Story". Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Log: Broken promise (3/5 year 319). **The Pale Bride:**
- [14] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). "Analogue: A Hate Story". Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: AI Interface. ***Mute:** Okay, okay, what the *hell* is going on?! Wait... remote connection established? Is there somebody out there? From outside the ship? Okay, sorry, I'm just taking an inventory of systems right now... could you give me a second here? Like I've been out of commission for... Like I've been out of commission for... SIX HUNDRED AND TWENTY-TWO YEARS?! Right, that's kind of messed up. Anyway, I'm up to speed now. Logs are basically saying that nothing has happened since I went offline, except the ship's slowly losing power, and the main reactor has seen better days. But you! Hello! You're the first person from outside the ship I've had contact with in... well, as far as I can remember. I'm *Mute, AI in charge of the *Mugunghwa*'s security operations! It's nice to meet you! [...] [Anyway, from what I can see, you've been reading those logs] with that murderous bitch, right? I'd love to help you out with those instead! [As an added bonus, I promise *not* to commit mass murder, unlike a certain someone.]
- [15] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). "Analogue: A Hate Story". Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: The new heir (10/30 year 316). **Kim Yeong-seok:**
- [16] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). "Analogue: A Hate Story". Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Log: The month of good fortune (2/29 year 319). **Kim Jung-su:**
- [17] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). "Analogue: A Hate Story". Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Log: Insufferable child (7/24 year 319). **Yeong-seok's wife:**
- [18] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). "Analogue: A Hate Story". Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Log: Held prisoner (8/3 year 319). **The Pale Bride:**
- [19] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). "Analogue: A Hate Story". Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Log: At least use my realname! (9/18 year 319). **The Pale Bride:**
- [20] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). "Analogue: A Hate Story". Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Log: Wife (11/23 year 319). **The Pale Bride:**

- [21] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story”. Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Log: Forever silenced. **The Pale Bride:**
- [22] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story”. Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Log: The new friendship (10/18 year 321). **Kim Yeong-seok:**
- [23] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story”. Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: The new magistrate (1/12 year 322). **Yeong-seok's wife:**
- [24] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story”. Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Log: I'll kill them all!. **The Pale Bride:** At that moment, I vowed that I would. I wouldn't worry any more about all those people who had hurt me. I'd take care of myself! I couldn't stab him to death[:] I was too weak for that. But then I remembered: there were other ways. If I can disable life support, I can kill him, and all the others too! It'll be quick, it'd be easy...and not a one of them don't deserve it! All I'd need to disable it is the admin password. It's perfect!
- [25] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story”. Steam (Microsoft Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux). Level/area: Log: A cliché to remember. ***Hyun-ae (in-message):**
- Namjon yeobi.**
Men are honoured, women are abased.
If you can remember only one thing, remember this phrase.
- [...]
- *Hyun-ae:** [when the player shows her this file] Really, that's just something you need to keep in mind when reading these logs... It was considered to be the natural way of things.
- [26] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story”. Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Log: Kim family tree. ***Hyun-ae:**
- [27] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story”. Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Log: Smith family tree. ***Mute:**
- [28] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story”. Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Log: Martial admonitions pt. 7 (1/30 year 321). **Ryu Jae-hwa:**
- [29] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story”. Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Ending 1.
- [30] Christine Love (February 1, 2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story”. Steam (Microsoft Windows, MacOSX, and Linux). Level/area: Ending 2.
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- [43] Cameron, Phill (6 April 2012). “Analogue: A Hate Story Review” . *Eurogamer*. Retrieved 25 October 2012.
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- [45] “Blog Archive » Analogue: A Hate Story: A Literary and Intellectual Delight” . 2chan.us. 2012-02-01. Retrieved 2013-03-26.
- [46] “Review: Christine Love's visual novel “Analogue: A Hate Story” points the way to a new literature, and a better world. | Kill Screen” . Pitchfork. 2012-03-08. Retrieved 2013-03-26.
- [47] “The Longest Hate Story Ever Told” . *Kill Screen*.
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- [49] PC Gamer UK, issue 237
- [50] Meer, Alec (February 29, 2012). “Wot I Think – Analogue: A Hate Story” . *Rock, Paper, Shotgun*. Retrieved October 25, 2012.

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[52] "Official translation group for Spanish and German" . Steamcommunity.com. Retrieved 2013-07-19.

[53] "Hate Plus" .

2.3.9 External links

- Official website (English)
 - Official Korean website
 - Official *Hate Plus* website (English)
- Author's Website
- *Analogue: A Hate Story* at The Visual Novel Database

Chapter 3

Visual novels by Dischan Media

3.1 "Juniper's Knot" (2012)

Juniper's Knot is a short kinetic visual novel developed by Dischan Media.* [1] Created in under a month, *Juniper's Knot* revolves around a lost boy and an imprisoned demon, as they help overcome each other's obstacles through wit and memory, respectively.* [3]

3.1.1 Story

Setting and characters



The main characters of Juniper's Knot

In the world of *Juniper's Knot*, fiends (demons) unconsciously drain the life of those around them to keep themselves alive; this results in a barren, run-down town that surrounds the manor in which the fiend is trapped. The manner of dress, and details about the daily life of the boy would hint that the story is set around the Industrial Revolution.* [4]* [5]* [6]

The **boy** was born and raised in the area of Moor, a fictional industrial town. The fiend finds that he smells of black oil, horses, and herbs; he explains that this is because he worked with his parents as a farmer, and as an oil delivery boy inside the city.* [7]

The **fiend** was born many centuries ago in a moor. She has

committed many different deeds and atrocities for mankind, including: destroying a whole village, saving a baby, causing a divorce, etc.; however, she states that none of these are the reasons as to why she has been trapped in the magic circle, as it no longer matters. Despite her considerable age, the fiend appears as a young adult. She harbors feelings of resentment towards humanity at whole, as her best friend, "a 'miss'", was beaten and raped by men; the fiend buried her friend before massacring the entire town.* [4]

Plot

The novel begins with a centuries-old fiend as she thinks about her current situation, stuck in a weathered, run-down ballroom with nothing but fire and rubble at her side. Soon after, a lost boy enters the room, and sees the fiend. The fiend starts talking to the boy as well as teasing him for her amusement, much to the wary boy's chagrin. Insisting on making him tell her a story, the fiend gets the boy to tell her a story about the trickery of demons;* [7] after which the boy decides to leave, but before the boy leaves, the fiend sticks out her hand, begging him not to. As she does, her hand passes the magical boundary, causing it to burst into flame. Healing from the injury, the fiend's actions make the boy curious enough to stay and listen to the fiend.* [8]

When the fiend offers to cook some nuts for the boy, he accepts, accidentally making a pact with her. As the nuts cook over the fire, the boy and fiend share stories about their past. Afterwards, the boy eats the cooked nuts; is offered to be cooked the rest of the nuts, and makes another pact with the fiend, this time to stay until sunset; as Boy and Fiend continue talking, the boy falls asleep while hearing part of the fiend's story due to his tiredness, causing the fiend to go into a fit of rage. Furious that she has not been able to sleep, nor rest for the centuries that she has been stuck in the manor, the fiend starts to cry, curse, and throw the recently cooked nuts at the boy, hitting him a few times as he sleeps. Some time after the boy fell asleep, he wakes up to find a few of his nuts tangled in his hair. The fiend tries to make him leave, but the boy decides to free the fiend from her

constrains by planting an olive tree in her place, as the rule of the magical circle is that one life-form enters the circle and another one leaves.*[8]

In the epilogue, both Fiend and Boy walk away from the ruins to find a way to Moor. The fiend comments on how she feels "tired"; but also that she now has reason to "stay awake for a little longer."*[9]

3.1.2 Development

Symbolism

The title of *Juniper's Knot* was chosen for its symbolic nature; for example, "Juniper" is an allusion to both the saint known for his patience, and the given name that symbolises chastity. "Knot" represents the fiend's magical barrier, a circle which imprisons her from the rest of the world. The resulting title "Juniper's Knot" foreshadows the story without being direct. The writer of the story, Terrence Smith, compares "Juniper's Knot" as a forced chastity that will take a long time to end; although, he says that the meaning is also open to interpretation.*[3] *[10]

Soundtrack

*[11]

3.1.3 Reception

Juniper's Knot received generally positive reviews for its story and visuals. Dominic Tarason from *The Indie Game Magazine* gave *Juniper's Knot* the title of "Freeware Game Pick", stating that the novel's soundtrack "is emotive without being overbearing". Tarason also called "[t]he writing ... an interesting mish-mash of slightly archaic wordings, but it makes the characters a little more colourful".*[7] *IndieGames.com* weblogger Cassandra Khaw did the same, praising *Juniper's Knot* for "being an oddly lovely experience", with an original story and "an abundance of ... anime-inspired artwork".*[4] *[13] *[14] *[15]

Josh Lemay of Sphereshifters gave it a nine out of ten.*[16] Dominic Tarason of Indiegamemag has said that he liked the game, and the short amount of time taken to complete the story (one month overall) is not visible.*[7]

3.1.4 References

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- [15] "Juniper's Knot". *FreePCGames*. April 2012. Retrieved 1 February 2013.
- [16] "Review (Juniper's Knot)". Sphereshifters. 2012-04-13. Retrieved 2013-06-22.

3.1.5 External links

- Official website
- iTunes Store page
- *Juniper's Knot* at The Visual Novel Database

3.2 "Dysfunctional Systems" series (2013-)

Dysfunctional Systems is a visual novel created by Dischan Media. The story follows Winter Harrison, a “mediator”-in-training, as she attempts to resolve chaotic situations in different worlds. The first of several planned episodes, *Learning to Manage Chaos*, was released on April 4, 2013*[1]*[4]*[5] In February 2014, Dischan launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise funds for another two episodes of the story.*[2]*[6] Although the campaign met and exceeded its funding goals, the project was cancelled on January 2, 2015.*[7]

3.2.1 Gameplay



Gameplay from Episode 1. Here, Cyrus (right) is speaking to Winter.

Dysfunctional Systems is a visual novel series, where the player reads text to progress the story. At certain points, the novel will present the player with a choice of different dialogue or actions for the series protagonist, Winter Harrison, which will affect events and their consequences. The novel includes a “codex” feature, where the reader can find background information on the current world, such as its geography and politics, as well as topics related to the problems the world is experiencing. The novel also implements a “profile” feature. The choices made during a play-through of an episode can be saved in a profile, such that their consequences can be carried over to the next episode.*[8]

3.2.2 Story

Setting and characters

In *Dysfunctional Systems*, Earth bears a utopian society with a school called “School Mediātōrum”, composed of individuals called “mediators”. Mediators are humans who resolve chaotic situations in other worlds. Though these

worlds exist in different planes, and range in themes from “dystopian, to futuristic or fantastical”, it is believed that the chaos of any one world can adversely affect Earth as well.*[1]

The protagonist of the series, Winter Harrison, is a 14-year-old mediator-in-training. A moral individual, she still finds the concept of “other worlds” hard to grasp.*[9] On her second mission (the focus of *Episode 1*) she is paired with Cyrus Addington, a tough and infamous senior mediator, to act as her guide and mentor.*[10]

Episode 1: Learning to Manage Chaos

In the first episode, Winter and Cyrus travel to Sule, a sporadically-progressing industrial planet. They arrive in Brighton, a poor and minor country on Sule.*[16] There, the two find that the President of Brighton is attempting to negotiate his society's freedom from its oppressor, the wealthy state of Gabrea. The key object of his threat is an untested nuclear bomb, waiting to be launched at Gabrea via intercontinental ballistic missile.*[17]

Cyrus devises a plan to contain the chaos: to assassinate the President and have him declared a martyr. Cyrus' plan horrifies Winter; at this point, the player can choose whether Winter will go along with Cyrus' plan, or to rebel against him and try to reason with the President instead.*[18] If Cyrus' plan is taken, the President is killed and his government decides to launch the weapon at Gabrea. If Winter's plan is taken, she and Cyrus manage to convince the President to change his mind and fire his weapon into a nearby sea as a warning shot instead.

However, in both cases, the detonation of the weapon goes badly wrong, igniting the atmosphere and completely destroying Sule. Winter and Cyrus are teleported back to the school on Earth just in time, where they are immediately treated for radiation poisoning that they had obtained before Sule's destruction. Winter is carried back to her room, where she recounts to her room-mate Waverly of Sule's demise. The next day, Waverly fends off well-wishers from seeing Winter, then helps her to her debriefing, ending the episode.*[16]

3.2.3 Development

In Dischan's earlier work, *Juniper's Knot*, the player can unlock bonus art featuring the protagonists of the story with two other characters, Winter and Cyrus.

On January 5, 2013, Dischan leader Jeremy Miller announced the company's first series of visual novels, titled *Dysfunctional Systems*.*[13]*[19] On June 5, 2013, Dischan posted Episode 1 of *Dysfunctional Systems* on

Steam Greenlight.*[8]*[20]*[21] On September 26, 2013, Episode 1 was released on Steam.*[14]*[15]

Kickstarter campaign

Despite reporting “decent sales” of Episode 1, Dischan admitted that the project was not a financial success. Dischan turned to the crowd-funding site Kickstarter to raise funds for the production of the second and third installments of the novel. The campaign was opened for funding in February 2014, with the goal of raising C\$49,000. By the end of the campaign in March 2014, the campaign had successfully raised C\$67,450. Because the original goal was exceeded, Dischan stated that it would add more characters and environments to the second and third episodes than they had originally intended, as well as producing a bonus visual novel depicting Winter's first week as a mediator-in-training.*[22]*[23]

The project was cancelled in a January 2, 2015 announcement by Dischan and began issuing partial refunds through Kickstarter to backers.*[24]

Soundtrack

The soundtrack to Episode 1, written and performed by Kristian “CombatPlayer” Jensen, was released on 4th April 2013. It is distributed with Episode 1 and can also be played in the jukebox within the game.

3.2.4 Reception

Episode 1

Episode 1 has received very positive reviews from critics, being widely praised for its art and music, as well as its political and character-driven story.*[4]*[26]*[27]*[28]*[29]*[30]*[31] Gamezebo criticised the novel for not striking a good balance between story and interaction, giving the user few options throughout gameplay. However, it stated that the novel did “give the audience a solid tale over lots of decision-making”, which it considered favourably.*[32] Nekoshiritori praised the presentation of the novel, noting that the interface was “very slick” and presented in 720p.*[33] Game Podunk noted the novel's departure from traditional visual novels, stating that “it decides to try something other than the typical romance and slice of life visual novels that we’re accustomed to”. It praised the science fantasy direction of the novel.*[34]

3.2.5 References

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- [14] “Dysfunctional Systems on Steam! | Devblog” . Dischan.org. 2013-09-26. Retrieved 2014-03-18.
- [15] “Dysfunctional Systems: Learning to Manage Chaos on Steam” . *Store.steampowered.com*. 2014-02-22. Retrieved 2014-03-18.
- [16] Dischan Media (April 4, 2013). “Dysfunctional Systems - Episode 1: Learning to Manage Chaos” (v1.0-1.0.1). Dischan Media.

- [17] Dischan Media (April 4, 2013). “Dysfunctional Systems - Episode 1: Learning to Manage Chaos” (v1.0-1.0.1). Dischan Media. Level/area: Brighton - Bar. **President Barnaby**: *[over the emergency broadcast channel]* But I am not her to tell you the troubles of our state. I am not here to tell you the glory of our fathers. I am here to confirm the quiet whispers through the alleys and the worried murmurs of Gabrean elite. / **Winter (narration)**: Pardon? / **President Barnaby**: Consider this a threat. People of Gabrea, you have four ours to comply with our demands, or a nuclear weapon will be launched at your country. / **Winter (narration)**: ...That can't be good.
- [18] Dischan Media (April 4, 2013). “Dysfunctional Systems - Episode 1: Learning to Manage Chaos” (v1.0-1.0.1). Dischan Media. Level/area: Brighton - Plaza. **Cyrus**: Alright, let's kill the President. [...] / **Winter**: *What?!*
- [19] “Dysfunctional Systems | Jeremy Miller” . Jeremymiller.com. Retrieved June 22, 2013.
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- [23] Template:Location.displayable name (2014-03-01). “Dysfunctional Systems by Dischan Media » FUNDED Kickstarter” . Kickstarter.com. Retrieved 2014-03-18.
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- [34] “Review: Dysfunctional Systems Episode 1: Learning to Manage Chaos” . Gamepodunk.com. Retrieved June 30, 2013.

3.2.6 External links

- Official website
- Kickstarter page
- *Dysfunctional Systems* at The Visual Novel Database

Chapter 4

Visual novels by Hanako Games

4.1 "Date Warp" (2010)

Date Warp is a visual novel video game about a young Indian-American woman, a college student who goes on a date and disappears. It was released on May 22, 2010 for Windows, Mac OS and Linux. It is a science fiction game with elements of romance. The game uses anime-style graphics and is written in English. It was developed and published by Hanako Games.

4.1.1 Gameplay

As it is a visual novel, the player reads through the story and makes choices at crucial points to change the outcome, leading to eleven different endings. The game also contains small puzzles which must be solved in order to make those choices.

4.1.2 Plot

The story begins with Janet and Bradley, the young couple on their first date, arriving by chance at a mysterious mansion in the woods after their car breaks down in the rain. They seek shelter inside and find a mismatched group of handsome young men staying at the mansion. After staying the night, they try to leave, and the story takes the first of many surprise turns. Each path through the game reveals only a fraction of the story until finally all the elements are in place and the true ending is unlocked.

4.1.3 Characters

Janet Bhaskar A freshman at Brook College, previously a socially-isolated student at the top of her high school class.

Bradley Dalton A cheerful jock who's been asking every freshman girl on exactly one date each.

Nathaniel A polite and wealthy gentleman offering assistance to those in need.

Alben A mysteriously hostile young man.

Linds A lecherous scientist.

Rafael A soft-spoken young man who takes care of others but dodges questions about his past.

4.1.4 Development

The game was created with the visual novel engine Ren'Py. On May 15, 2010 the opening trailer was released on YouTube.*[1] *Hanako Games* released a free demo of the game on their website. The opening theme is *What Lies Beyond* composed by Matthew Myers from LeetStreet Boys.*[2] On September 6, 2014, an updated version called *Date Warp: Silver Edition* was released, following the release on Steam. One puzzle and plot element has been changed, the user interface has been changed to a more sci-fi style, and a new CG and an epilogue was added. Furthermore, the engine has been upgraded to a new version.

4.1.5 Reception

Date Warp received moderate to positive reception.

Gamertell gave 92/100 to the game writing: "The character art is appealing, the puzzles to unlock answers are a nice diversion and, most importantly, it is well written. Hanako Games and Spiky Caterpillar did a wonderful job of creating a visual novel that both men and women will enjoy."*[3]

GameZebo gave 3 of 5 stars and wrote: "If you're part of that niche audience that *Date Warp* caters to then you'll enjoy the branching storylines and cute art style, and will no doubt have fun trying to unlock all of the endings."*[4]

Gameasutra wrote: "Date/Warp is trying to do some cool things through its interactivity, but it could have stood to be

a good deal more procedural.” * [5]

4.1.6 References

- [1] “Date Warp - Game OP trailer” . 2011. Retrieved 2011-10-23.
- [2] “Theme Song from “Date Warp””. 2011. Retrieved 2011-10-23.
- [3] “Gamertell Review: Date Warp for Windows, Mac and Linux” . 2010. Retrieved 2011-08-30.
- [4] “Date Warp Review (Gamezebo)”. 2010. Retrieved 2011-08-30.
- [5] “Analysis: Warped Structures - Story In Date/Warp” . 2011. Retrieved 2011-08-30.

4.1.7 External links

- Hanako Games' Official Website for *Date Warp*
- *Date Warp* at The Visual Novel Database

4.2 "Long Live The Queen" (2012)

Long Live The Queen is a visual novel role-playing video game developed by Hanako Games and Spiky Caterpillar, published by Hanako Games. The story of the game follows a young princess who is training to become queen after the death of her mother. The objective of the game is to keep the princess alive for 40 weeks until she turns 15 and is crowned. * [1] The game was released on June 2, 2012 for Windows, Mac OS and Linux. The game uses anime-style graphics and is written in English. * [2]

4.2.1 Plot

The queen of Nova has recently died, and her daughter, the 14-year-old princess Elodie, must leave her schooling to ready herself to become the next queen. Her coronation is set for 40 weeks from the present her 15th birthday. Many people in the kingdom are trying to take advantage of the recent monarch's death and attempt to kill Elodie. * [1]

4.2.2 Gameplay

The player reads through the story and schedules the protagonist's weekly lessons, in topics such as economy, foreign affairs, logistics, expression, military matters, self-defense,



Political intrigue plays a key role in the game.

intrigues, doublespeak and magic. Based on those activities, Elodie increases her proficiency in various statistics. Additionally, during the weekend Elodie has free run of the castle and can choose an activity that alters her mood. She has four emotional axes, and her position on each determines her proficiency at learning certain topics: for instance, being “Willful” will help her master military and intrigue skills easier, but it will also hamper learning civil skills like royal demeanor. Once all three sub skills of a particular skill are raised to a certain point (around 30 each), Elodie gains an outfit that boosts that specific skill. Learning some skills unlocks additional weekend actions: for example, learning “Dance” allows her to attend balls, while “Reflexes” gives her the ability to play tennis.

As the weeks progress, Elodie is presented with various social and political opportunities. When they occur, the game performs checks against Elodie's current skills and chooses an outcome, sometimes without giving the player the option of interceding. For instance, one of the first skill checks (a snake attack) requires 10 points in the “Composure” skill. Should Elodie be successful, she keeps her cool, allowing a guard to kill the snake; should she fail, her cousin gets bitten, an event whose consequences can be felt in one specific route the game can take. Most of the checks can be failed without serious consequence, but some can close off entire branches of the story. Very often however, passing or failing a skill check is a matter of life or death for Elodie: if her skills aren't up to par, she dies (in one of various possible ways).

Because of the branching decision trees, the game features multiple endings, varying according to whom Elodie marries, how she dealt with neighboring nations, her ability with magic, the fate of her father Joslyn, and of course whether she survived to her coronation at all. * [1]

4.2.3 Development

The game was developed by Hanako Games, which also created *Cute Knight*, *Cute Knight Kingdom*, and *Magical Diary*, all of which are designed for girls but appeal to a wider audience.* [1] *Long Live The Queen* has darker themes than the previous titles.* [1]

4.2.4 Reception

Technology Tell gave a score of 90/100 to the game, writing: "It's really an unusual adventure and I admire Hanako Games and Spiky Caterpillar for stepping a little outside their comfort zone to release a darker game that requires players to think smart and manage emotions to keep a character alive."* [1] IndieGames was positively reviewed, writing: "Long story short, Long Live The Queen is a solid title."* [3]

4.2.5 References

- [1] Jenni Lada (2012-06-14). "Review: Long Live the Queen for Windows, Mac, Linux" . Retrieved 2012-12-22.
- [2] "Rule The World Or Die Trying - Long Live the Queen (sim game)". 2012. Retrieved 2012-12-22.
- [3] Cassandra Khaw (2012-06-17). "Review: Long Live The Queen (Hanako Games)". Retrieved 2012-12-22.

4.2.6 External links

- Official website
- *Long Live the Queen* at The Visual Novel Database

4.3 "Magical Diary" (2011)

Magical Diary is a visual novel video game about a young freshman girl at a magical school. It was released on June 19, 2011 for Windows, Mac OS and Linux. It is a fantasy game with elements of romance. The game uses anime-style graphics and is written in English. It was developed and published by Hanako Games.* [1] The game was later released on Steam with some bonus content.

4.3.1 Gameplay

As it is a visual novel, the player reads through the story and makes choices at crucial points to change the outcome, leading to different endings. The player can create a custom

female student. The game also contains puzzles in which the player has to use spells to pass the exam. Every puzzle has multiple solutions.

4.3.2 Plot

A player controlled avatar has been invited to attend a magical school. Here the avatar can make new friends, learn dozens of spells, face exams in the school dungeons, run for class office, and try to find a date for the May Day Ball. There are many students at Iris Academy and they are all divided up into Magical Halls; for the girls there are the *Horse Hall*, the *Butterfly Hall*, and the *Snake Hall*. The boys are divided in the *Wolf Hall*, the *Falcon Hall*, and the *Toad Hall*.

4.3.3 Characters

Mary Sue (default name) She is a wildseed freshman from New Hampshire. She is good at running and likes sports but does not like to sing in public.

Virginia Danson Virginia is the heroine's roommate. She has two older brothers, William and Donald.

Ellen Middleton Ellen is another roommate of the heroine. A wildseed who has a complicated relationship with her mother and stepfather. A smart girl and diligent student.

Damien Ramsey He is a senior student from Falcon hall. If the heroine agrees to complete the initiation, he becomes her senior.

Professor Grabiner Professor Hieronymous Grabiner teaches Red and Blue magic.

Donald Danson Donald is Virginia's older brother from Wolf hall. He is mischievous and spends a lot of time in detentions.

Non-Romance Choices

Professor Potsdam Professor Petunia Potsdam teaches Green, White and Black magic.

William Danson William is a Senior and was Class President. He is the oldest brother of Virginia and Donald. He also had Ellen Middleton (above) as his freshman in Initiation.

4.3.4 Reception

Magical Diary received positive reception.

The game received 4 of 5 stars on *Gamezebo* with reviewer Cassandra Khaw writing: “A dating sim at heart, *Magical Diary*'s anime-inspired visuals lend well to the atmosphere. [...] Charmingly indie, *Magical Diary* is definitely worth the purchase.” [2]

Gamertell gave a score of 87/100 to the game, writing: “It’s a great example of the recent assortment of games for girls inspired by the *Princess Maker* model and the possible trophies to earn provide even more incentive to keep replaying to discover as much as you can about Iris Academy and its characters.” [3]

JayIsGames wrote about the game: “Despite a few hiccups and quibbles, *Magical Diary: Horse Hall* is probably the best visual novel/life simulation out there in its fantasy genre right now.” [4]

RockPaperShotgun wrote about the game: “As it is, almost all the replayability is on the story side, especially on the romance side, and even with a fast-forward button to skip scenes you’ve already seen, you’ll be wading through a lot of the same text as you poke around. That’s standard practice for this kind of game though, and *Magical Diary* is better about it than many imported Japanese ones I’ve seen [...]” [5]

4.3.5 References

- [1] “*Magical Diary - Love Lives of the Young and Wizardly* (Official website)”. 2011. Retrieved 2011-09-09.
- [2] “*Magical Diary Review* (Gamezebo)”. 2011. Retrieved 2011-09-09.
- [3] “*Magical Diary Review* (Gamertell)”. 2011. Retrieved 2011-09-09.
- [4] “*Magical Diary Review* (JayIsGames)”. 2011.
- [5] “*Magical Diary Review* (RockPaperShotgun)”. 2011.

4.3.6 External links

- Hanako Games Official Website of *Magical Diary*
- *Magical Diary* at The Visual Novel Database

4.4 "The Royal Trap" (2013)

The Royal Trap is a visual novel developed and published by Hanako Games. The story of the game follows a young

companion who has to take care of her prince, Oscar. The game was released on February 23, 2013 for Windows, Mac OS and Linux. The game uses anime-style graphics and is written in English.* [1] On June 15, 2013 the DVD version of *The Royal Trap* was released, which also contains a HD version of the game, as well as exclusive concept sketches.

The game was re-released in April 2015 for Steam with new background art, a higher resolution, and some expanded content.

4.4.1 Plot

Madeleine Valois is the companion of prince Oscar of Ocendawyr; her job is to guide and advise him. One day he's invited to present himself as a potential suitor to the princess of a rival kingdom: Princess Cassidy. She is the heir and future queen of Gwellinor. However, things in Gwellinor aren't as they appear. During the party Cassidy is kidnapped. Madeleine takes the initiative and she searches the castle, attempting to rescue the princess.

4.4.2 Gameplay

The player reads through the story and makes decisions at crucial points. Based on the decisions the player chooses, the plot differs and influences the outcome of the story. The game is divided into seven chapters. While the first four chapters are similar, the game splits into four completely different plots starting from chapter five. There are more ways to finish the game. During the course of the game, the player unlocks certain CG images, which can be viewed in a gallery again.

4.4.3 Development

The game was developed by Hanako Games, which also created *Cute Knight*, *Cute Knight Kingdom*, *Magical Diary*, and *Long Live the Queen*, all of which are designed for girls but appeal to a wider audience. The game was created with the Ren'Py visual novel engine and features an opening theme written by Matthew Myers and performed by Natasha Cox of the band Mankind Is Obsolete.* [2]

The character art was done by Yui Sumeragi, while the event CGs were created by AQU. The story and the code was developed by Papillion. The game's logo was designed by Jeff Zhao.

4.4.4 Reception

Technology Tell rated the game “A”, writing: “There’s a depth to the characters and story that make it feel more real than other visual novels I’ve played and I found myself loving how strong Madeleine, Cassidy, Callum and other cast members were. The Royal Trap is a game people will want to play more than once and I think Hanako Games should be applauded for that.” * [3]

GameZebo gave 4 out of 5 stars and wrote: “My attention was held from start to finish by its mature themes and convincing character exchanges, not to mention its impressive audio-visuals. So much so, that once I’ve gotten over the disappointing results of my first-try ending, I’ll no doubt play through the whole thing again.” * [4]

JayIsGames wrote: “If you prefer your visual novels with other gameplay aspects beyond simple choice-and-click, this one might be restrictive. But if you appreciate a ripping good tale, you’ll definitely want to try out the demo for this one, since it comes highly recommended.” * [5]

4.4.5 References

- [1] “The Royal Trap - Visual Novel - Palace Intrigue” . 2013. Retrieved 2013-06-20.
- [2] “The Royal Trap - OP / Trailer” . *YouTube*. 2013-02-14. Retrieved 2013-06-20.
- [3] Lada, Jenni (2013-03-01). “Review: The Royal Trap for PC” . *Technology Tell*. Retrieved 2013-06-20.
- [4] Johnson, Neilie (2013-03-05). “The Royal Trap Review PC” . *GameZebo*. Retrieved 2013-06-20.
- [5] “The Royal Trap” . *JayIsGames*. 2013-03-09. Retrieved 2013-06-20. |first1= missing |last1= in Authors list (help)

4.4.6 External links

- Official Website of The Royal Trap
- *The Royal Trap* at The Visual Novel Database

Chapter 5

Visual novels by Riva Celso

5.1 "Heileen" series (2008-2012)

Heileen is a visual novel video game series for the Android, Linux, Mac OS, and Microsoft Windows platforms. The games were developed and published by Tycoon Games. The first game *Heileen: Sail Away* (also known as *Heileen: Sail to the New World* or just *Heileen*) was released on October 21, 2008 and the sequel *Heileen 2: The Hands of Fate* on December 17, 2009. The voiced version of *Heileen 2: The Hands of Fate* was released on March 19, 2010. Unlike the original trailers, the final version did not have a voice for the main character. All other characters are voiced. A team of seven voice actors worked on the game.* [1] The final installment *Heileen 3: New Horizons* was released on December 17, 2012.

A free online prequel with the title *Heileen: A Trip to Bavaria* was released on January 29, 2009.

5.1.1 Gameplay

The player reads through the story and makes decisions at some points, which leads to different outcomes and one out of three possible endings. The player can also start a relationship with one of the other characters, including lesbian relationships. The game offers a quest system and gives you a score rating at the end of the game. The second game features 15 unique endings and an enhanced version of the original quest system in *Heileen* with 20 quests. The third game does not feature a quest system any more and offers a new stat raising system instead.

5.1.2 Plot

Heileen: A Trip To Bavaria

Heileen: A Trip To Bavaria tells the story of a trip Heileen did for her 16th birthday to a small village in Bavaria. There she will meet Magdalene and they will become very good

friends. Heileen's uncle Otto and Lora appear in the game, as well.

Heileen: Sail Away

Heileen, a young 17th century girl, goes on a voyage with her Uncle Otto to visit the new world, the Americas. She is accompanied by her best friend Marie and her Uncle's mistress, Lora. Based on the choices the player makes the game leads to one of three different endings. At the end, however, Heileen gets shipwrecked on a Caribbean island.

Heileen 2: The Hands of Fate

Heileen 2: The Hands of Fate takes place on a mysterious Caribbean island where Heileen was shipwrecked at the end of the first game. Her ex-slave friends Robert and Ebele will help her survive, but when Heileen discovers a deck of tarot cards representing the seven deadly sins and the seven godly virtues, she realizes that the power of the cards can help her unlock the secrets of her past and shape her future. With the tarot cards, she can escape from the island, find her true love, meet pirates, or do nothing at all. * [2]

Voice actors

- Ayu Sakata – Ebele, Marie
- Steven Mane – Elias, Marco, Adam
- Lucien Dodge – Black, Morgan, Otto
- Morgan Barnhart – Lora, Juliet
- Erica Mendez – Magdalene, Marcus kid
- Dan Conlin – Robert, Jack, Additional Voices
- Mauri Majanoja - John, Jonathan

Heileen 3: New Horizons

Heileen 3: New Horizons plays about five years after the events of the second game. It starts after Heileen and her friends are rescued by pirates and they offer their services to the pirates. The theme song *New Horizons* was written by Matthew Myers and is performed by Kathleen "Irulanne" Boucher. An expansion titled *Heileen 3: Sea Maidens* which adds four new girl romances was released on January 26, 2013.

5.1.3 References

- [1] "Press Release". IGN. 2010-03-19. Retrieved 02-04-2010. Check date values in: |accessdate= (help)
- [2] "Press Release". IGN. 07-12-2009. Retrieved 02-04-2010. Check date values in: |date=, |accessdate= (help)

5.1.4 External links

- Official Game Page
- *Heileen: Sail Away* at The Visual Novel Database
- *Heileen 2: The Hands of Fate* at The Visual Novel Database
- *Heileen 3: New Horizons* at The Visual Novel Database
- Jon Riggall Review at Softonic
- Jenni Lancaster Review at Gamertell

5.2 "Bionic Heart" (2009)

This article is about the video game. For the medical device, see artificial heart.

Bionic Heart is a visual novel video game for the Microsoft Windows, Mac OS X and Linux platforms. The game was developed and published by Winter Wolves and was released on July 17, 2009. On November 4, 2011 an updated version of the game was released and also a version without voice acting. On April 9, 2012 an Android version was released.* [1]

5.2.1 Plot

The game is set in London, 2099. The earth is not what it used to be anymore. Incredible climate changes have corrupted the weather, causing a permanent rain on most of the

Earth's surface. Luke Black is a 36-year-old bio-informatic engineer and he is one of the lead programmers at Nanotech, a big nanotechnology research company. But one night, his life is changed forever when he encounters Tanya, an experimental gynoid with memories of the 21st century and no idea why she would have them. Luke soon finds himself protecting Tanya from her creator, Richard, who has bribed the police into helping him search for her.

5.2.2 Gameplay

The game offers a mix of classic visual novel gameplay, with dialogues and many choices to make, with some interactive scenes typical of old-time adventure games. A series of actions are shown at the bottom of the screen, along with several location the player can move to. The game features 24 unique endings, a relationship system, and it's fully voiced offering 4h of dialogues.* [2]

5.2.3 Cast

- Dan Conlin - Luke Black, Richard Meier IV
- Danielle Kogan (credited as Ellie) - Helen Hughes, Tanya Vanic, Tina Gomez
- Brandon Baus (credited as Brandon Habowski) - Tom Sparks, Robert "Roby" Carson
- Steven Mane - Professor Mark Krysztofiak
- Ayu Sakata (credited as Ayu) - Julia Storm

5.2.4 Sequel

The sequel *Bionic Heart 2* was released on April 14, 2013. It continues the story of the main cast from *Bionic Heart* and introduces new characters.

5.2.5 Reception

The game received a score of 90/100 on Gamertell, with reviewer Jenni Lada writing "Tycoon Games' best visual novel so far. Bionic Heart is a really enjoyable game with an intriguing story to it, something that's appealing to both visual novel and adventure fans of any gender. It's fun and easy to play, and the 24 endings in the commercial version guarantee plenty of retail value. If you give Bionic Heart a try, even just the demo version, you won't be disappointed."

Bionic Heart 2 received an A- on TechnologyTell, with reviewer Jonathan Gronli writing: "Bionic Heart 2 is a game

worth experiencing. If you're a sci-fi, noir, neo-noir, crime, or visual novel fan, chances are you'll find something to latch onto and get a lot of enjoyment out of the game." * [3]

Bionic Heart 2 received high praise on R.P.G Ratings per game, with the reviewer Quintega, as she broke down the games mechanics and story. The only real complaints being how difficult the some of the battles where, pre hint patch * [4]

5.2.6 References

- [1] "Bionic Heart - Android Apps on Google Play" . Google Play. Retrieved 2013-01-18.
- [2] Jenni Lancaster (2009-08-10). "Bionic Heart" . Gamertell. Retrieved 2009-10-22.
- [3] Jonathan Gronli (2013-05-02). "Review: Bionic Heart 2 for PC" . TechnologyTell. Retrieved 2013-05-02.
- [4] "R.P.G" . *Review*. Quintega. Retrieved April 28, 2013.

5.2.7 External links

- Official website
- Bionic Heart at Winter Wolves
- *Bionic Heart* at The Visual Novel Database
- *Bionic Heart 2* at The Visual Novel Database
- Monthly Round-up at Game Tunnel
- Game Review at Game Tunnel

5.3 "The Flower Shop" series (2010-2011)

The Flower Shop is a visual novel series by Winter Wolves. The first game *The Flower Shop - Summer In Fairbrook* was released on February 1, 2010, while the sequel *The Flower Shop - Winter In Fairbrook* was released on December 8, 2011. The games are for the Microsoft Windows, Mac OS X and Linux platforms. Both games were also released for Android and iOS.

5.3.1 Gameplay

The game offers a mix of classic visual novel gameplay, with dialogues and many choices to make, with a farming minigame. In *The Flower Shop - Summer In Fairbrook* the

player has to grow crops and sell them to get money. It is possible to use fertilizer to speed up the growing process. In *The Flower Shop - Winter In Fairbrook* the principle is the same, however, this time the player has to grow flowers. The games offer a gallery where the player can watch the achieved endings again. There are nine different endings in each of the games.

5.3.2 Plot

The Flower Shop - Summer In Fairbrook

Steve, a college student, breaks up with his girlfriend and his dad is shipping him off to the farm of his uncle for the summer. There he has to take care of the farm and raise crops. The player can now decide how Steve should plan his week and start a romance with one of the four available girls. Depending on the choices the player makes, the ending will be different.

The Flower Shop - Winter In Fairbrook

Natalie just finished her first semester in college. Now her parents want her to get a job during her winter break. Natalie's roommate knows a job for her and she is sent to Fairbrook to work in a flower shop. The player can now decide how Natalie should plan her week and start a romance with one of the four available boys. Depending on the choices the player makes, the ending will be different.

5.3.3 Characters

Main characters

- Steve

The protagonist of *The Flower Shop - Summer In Fairbrook*. He is also one of the boys Natalie can date in *The Flower Shop - Winter In Fairbrook*. Steve is the stereotypical "city boy", and he is initially unused and estranged to the tranquil and lax lifestyle at the farm in Fairbrook. With the passing time though, he learns to adjust more. His character development from the first game is more evident in the sequel, though his attitude is roughly the same, minus the immaturity. It is shown in *Winter* that Steve still likes city foods such as pizza, but he can cook for himself now. There are some endings where Steve ends up with Clara should the player not pursue him as a love interest.

- **Natalie**

The protagonist of *The Flower Shop – Winter In Fairbrook*. She, like Steve from the first game, is a “city girl” who hates waking up early, is used to ordering pizza and take-outs for food, and is unused to rural life. However, she improves consid actions, and may even win over a love interest depending on the player's choices.

- **Jill**

Steve's ex-girlfriend. She is one of the girls Steve can date in *The Flower Shop - Summer In Fairbrook*. She wants to become a lawyer and strives hard for that goal. She feels that Steve needs to have some sense knocked into him, which is why she thinks Steve being sent to Fairbrook is a good idea. Jill is the only girl who does not appear in the sequel *Winter in Fairbrook*. Instead, it is implied that she pursued her studies abroad, therefore rendering her route as not canon to the sequel because Steve can be dated in *Winter*. It is also implied in certain endings of *Winter in Fairbrook* that she and Ryan meet abroad and gain an interest with one another.

- **Clara**

An athletic girl who loves the big city. She is one of the girls Steve can date in *The Flower Shop - Summer In Fairbrook*. She also appears briefly in the beginning of *Winter in Fairbrook* as Natalie's roommate. Clara is the one who suggests to Natalie that the latter work at Fairbrook over the winter break. In some endings, Clara is implied to be the one chosen by Steve (if Steve's path is not pursued) in *Winter*.

- **Marian**

The librarian. She is one of the girls Steve can date in *The Flower Shop - Summer In Fairbrook*. She aspires to become a great poet but her dwindling self-confidence more than often gets in the way. Her route in the first game focuses on Steve and Marian working together to help the librarian overcome her weakness. In *Winter in Fairbrook*, Marian is still a librarian at Fairbrook but is now also a recognized poet and distinguished judge at poem contests. Due to her busy schedule in the sequel, Trent (Susana's brother) is now her assistant at the library. If Trent is not chosen as a love

interest in *Winter*, he and Marian will begin dating at the ending.

- **Susana**

She runs the titular Flower Shop. She is one of the girls Steve can date in *The Flower Shop – Summer In Fairbrook*. Susana is a kind and helpful soul, as evidenced by how kindly she treats not only the protagonists but also the entire village. She is the one who offers Natalie her job in *Winter in Fairbrook*. Though Susana is normally sweet and caring, she is easily riled by the mere mention of someone eating foods with preservatives or artificial additives due to (possibly) being a vegetarian. If Jacob is not chosen as a love interest in *Winter*, Susana will start noticing Jacob's affections for her at the ending.

- **Trent**

He is the older brother of Susana. He originally appears briefly in *Summer* as Susana's protective brother and as a helper in later parts of the first game. He is one of the boys Natalie can date in *The Flower Shop - Winter In Fairbrook*. He is loudmouthed and a little energetic, but he means very well. Trent has a not-so-secret crush on Marian, the librarian, who is the main reason why he helps out at the library. He, however, finds a kindred spirit in his enthusiasm with Natalie. If he is not chosen as a love interest in *Winter*, Trent and Marian will begin dating.

- **Ryan**

He runs the general store. He is one of the boys Natalie can date in *The Flower Shop - Winter In Fairbrook*. Exclusively in *Winter*, Ryan is a calculative person. He appears brooding and cold at first, but it becomes quickly apparent that his facade is a just a result of poor communication skills. His route begins when Natalie, who wants someone to tutor her in school, asks for Ryan's assistance (who is a professional tutor) in Math. In exchange for help at schoolwork, Natalie will help Ryan overcome his shyness and lack of social skills. If Ryan is not chosen as a love interest *Winter*, he will go abroad to study. Certain endings imply that he meets a girl studying law abroad (heavily implied to be Jill, Steve's ex-girlfriend) and they find an interest in each other.

- **Jacob**

He is helping out Clara's father. He is one of the boys Natalie candate in *The Flower Shop - Winter In Fairbrook*. In *Summer in Fairbrook*, Jacob is a young man helping out at Clara's family farm. In the first game, he has a one-sided crush on Clara, the farmer's daughter, which Steve immediately picks up on. He appears as the most childish of the cast, something which bothers him deeply. In *Winter*, his crush is transferred to Susana, the flower shop owner. Here, Jacob is more bothered about the fact that despite he tries his best at work, people around him still seem to treat him like a child. His route focuses on Natalie proving to Jacob that he doesn't have anything to worry about. If Jacob is not chosen as a love interest in *Winter*, Susana will begin to realize and return Jacob's affections for her.

Minor characters

- **Michael**

The father of Steve. Younger brother of Sam. Apparently, a really strict and overbearing father, Michael is the one who sends Steve all the way out to Fairbrook in order to teach the young man a lesson. Despite his harsh treatment of his son, however, Michael still cares for Steve in his own unique ways.

- **Uncle Sam**

He is Steve's uncle and the brother of Steve's father. He has a cat called Orpheus. Uncle Sam is the total opposite of Michael: While Michael is cold and overbearing, Sam is more energetic and teasing. His body is not as strong as it used to be, which is why he gratefully accepts Steve's arrival in Fairbrook and teaches the boy the tricks of the trade. In the sequel, he appears less and has less impact on the plot, mostly appearing during Steve's route.

5.3.4 Development

The games were created with Ren'Py. The writing was done by Ayu Sakata while the art was provided by M. Beatriz García. Winter Wolves also released free demos of the games on their website. Winter Wolves and sakevisual hinted at the possibility that a crossover between the series and the Jisei series might be possible in the future; the working title is *Jisei in Fairbrook*.

5.3.5 Reception

The first game received a score of 85/100 on Gamertell, with reviewer Jenni Lada writing “It moves at a good pace, has the farming aspect to add variety and keep it from only being about reading and picking choices and is pleasant to look at and listen to.” *[1]

The sequel received a score of 83/100 on Gamertell, with reviewer Jenni Lada writing “It moves at a good pace, has the farming aspect to add variety and keep it from only being about reading and picking choices and is pleasant to look at and listen to.” *[2]

Mac Games gave 3,5 of 5 stars to the first game and wrote: “It appears this game is aimed towards young girls, but I think you should try it even if you do not fall in that category. The music is muted and appropriate, and the anime characters well done.” *[3]

5.3.6 References

- [1] “Gamertell Review: The Flower Shop for PC, Mac and Linux” . 2010. Retrieved 2012-06-18.
- [2] “Review: Flower Shop: Winter in Fairbrook for Windows, Mac, Linux” . 2011. Retrieved 2012-06-18.
- [3] “Mac Games Review: The Flower Shop” . 2010. Retrieved 2011-06-18.

5.3.7 External links

- Official website for The Flower Shop - Summer In Fairbrook
- Official website for The Flower Shop - Winter In Fairbrook
- *The Flower Shop - Summer In Fairbrook* at The Visual Novel Database
- *The Flower Shop - Winter In Fairbrook* at The Visual Novel Database

5.4 "Planet Stronghold" (2011)

Planet Stronghold is a visual novel, sci-fi role-playing game with a turn-based combat system for the Android, Linux, Mac OS, and Microsoft Windows platforms. The game was developed and published by Winter Wolves and was released on February 28, 2011.

5.4.1 Gameplay

The game offers a mix of classic visual novel gameplay, with dialogues and many choices to make, with role-playing video game-style battles. The player has the ability to choose the gender of the protagonist. For every gender there are three optional romance endings, for a total of 6 different romance endings.

5.4.2 Reception

The game received a score of 78/100 on Gamertell, with reviewer Jenni Lada writing "Planet Stronghold isn't for everyone. It's a good game, but it's also quite challenging. This may dissuade beginners or typical visual novel players, who may not be accustomed to level-grinding characters, seeking out extra battles and carefully managing character equipment to keep everyone at their best." * [1]

Mac Games gave 4 of 5 stars and wrote: "The anime artwork is exquisite as always with great alien drawings. The instructions are clear and stats detailed." * [2]

GameZebo gave 3,5 of 5 stars and wrote: "If Planet Stronghold has a weakness, it's that the story and characters in and of themselves aren't especially interesting. The game isn't poorly written or even poorly translated, it's just a bit generic given the type of anime sci-fi fare that's clearly influenced it. That doesn't matter quite so much when the game is simply fun to play for its own sake, which it is." * [3]

Ratings Per Game explained and criticized the flaws in parts of the games combat mechanics. Such as the music not looping, the Grenades not being able to stack, and obvious chosen one aspect with the Nelson family. However she stated it was worth playing if you could overlook the flaws in the story and mechanics. The artwork, while praised, did get criticized on the costume design. * [4]

5.4.3 Sequel

A sequel is in production stages and expected for a release in 2015.

5.4.4 References

- [1] "Gamertell Review: Planet Stronghold for Windows, Mac and Linux" . 2011. Retrieved 2011-10-23.
- [2] "Mac Games Review: Planet Stronghold" . 2011. Retrieved 2011-10-23.
- [3] "GameZebo Review: Planet Stronghold" . 2011. Retrieved 2011-10-23.

- [4] "Ratings Per Game" . *Review*. Quintega.

5.4.5 External links

- Official website
- Planet Stronghold at Winter Wolves

5.5 'Loren the Amazon Princess' (2012)

Loren The Amazon Princess is a Fantasy RPG visual novel by Winter Wolves. The game was released on April 30, 2012. The game works for the Linux, Mac OS, and Microsoft Windows platforms. The expansion *The Castle Of N'mar* was released on September 28, 2012.

5.5.1 Gameplay

The game offers a mix of classic visual novel gameplay, with RPG elements. The player reads through the story and occasionally has to fight against fantasy monsters. At the beginning the player can choose between a male human protagonist and a female elven protagonist. Furthermore, it offers a variety of romance options with the party members, including homosexual relationships, and has different endings, based on the choices of the player and the relationships.

Battles can take place between the player's party and a party of enemies, with a maximum of six characters on each side. Each party consists of a front row, that is typically occupied by warrior type characters and can be attacked by anyone, and a back row, which typically holds weaker ranged and magical characters, that melee characters can only attack if the front row is unoccupied, in which case all on the back row will be forced to the front. Characters are able to swap places with others, or can move into unoccupied spaces on their turn, and warriors can gain the ability to force a character to swap with the one behind them.

Characters take it in turns to attack, with their speed, as well as the moves they use, determining how long they must wait. When a character's turn comes up, they have the choice of either attacking an enemy with their equipped weapon or abilities, using an ability to support the party, using an item for either healing or offense, or switching places. Should everyone in the player's party be killed, the player can reload a previous save. The player does not have the option of fleeing a battle, but should they win, the health and MP of all characters will be completely refilled, except

at certain points of the story. As the player gains more followers, exceeding the maximum number of people they can have in a battle, they can reorganise the battle group outside of battles.

Characters are divided into three classes, the first two of which can be selected for the player character: Warriors, who possess powerful melee moves and can wear heavy armor, but are largely limited to attacking enemies in the front row, Thieves, who can wield bows to shoot at any enemy, and have skillsets focused on taking advantage of enemies being put into weakened states, and Mages, who have access to magic attacks that can hit multiple enemies wherever they are, but have less endurance than the other classes. In addition, each character has a specialization giving them a further variety of abilities, e.g. both Loren and Amukiki are warriors, however Loren's specialization gives her abilities based around dual-wielding weapons, while Amukiki's gives him ones that focus on supporting the player's party. Whatever class the player character has, their specialization will always focus on healing abilities.

5.5.2 Plot

The game begins with Loren, the princess of the Amazons, who has to find her mother, Karen, the queen of the Amazons, who has gone missing. She starts her journey with the protagonist, a slave of the Amazons with healing magic. Since Amazon law forbids a princess from leaving their home, the Citadel, Loren is forced to renounce her princess-hood, and with it her access to the Amazons assets.

On their journey they are joined by a variety of companions, including the dwarves Ramas and Dora, the half-elf Draco, the Elder Druid Myrth and the elf assassin Rei. Ultimately they find Karen, discovering that she had attempted to run away with her slave, who she had fallen in love with, and was killed by lizardmen. While on the journey, Loren takes possession of the Hawk Blade, a sword that Myrth explains is a weapon granted by the Gods, and that for Loren to have it means that she will have a huge impact on the world.

Grob, a servant of the Death Knight Fost, tricks the Human Empire and the Elves of GrandTree into going to war with one another, supposedly to keep them distracted from his plans. Archwizard Apolimesho and Myrth, representing the humans and elves respectively, discover the treachery and ask Loren and her comrades to end the war. They proceed to find proof that Fost has returned and that the demons of Everburn are a more important threat than either side in the war, and an alliance is agreed on between the two races and the Amazons.

After disagreements between the elves and humans threaten to fracture the alliance, it is decided that Loren should be

in command of the combined forces. To convince the elven and human leaders of this, the party kill Krul, a nomad who has been harassing the human city of Horus with his orc army, as well as the succubus Jul, a servant of Fost who has bewitched the dark elves. Upon returning to the Citadel, they discover the Amazons have been afflicted with a magical plague, forcing them to work with the dark witch Chambara to develop a cure. Once this is concluded, the party learn that both sides have been forced to give control of their armies to Loren.

The alliance invades Everburn, forcing their way to Fost's castle. During the invasion, Loren, Karen and the protagonist learn from Apolimesho that in order to destroy Fost for good, one of them must sacrifice themselves to do so. As the party storms the castle, a ceiling collapses, sending the party into the Under-Realm, a plane of existence between the mortal world and the afterlife. The protagonist makes their way through the Under-Realm, before encountering Fost, and facing him along with Loren, Karen and whatever members of their party they had managed to recover. After defeating Fost, the protagonist must choose whether to stop Loren or Karen from sacrificing themselves, or to do so themselves.

Whatever choice is made, an epilogue shows the fates of all the party members and those who helped them. If the protagonist did not sacrifice themselves, they are revealed to be the writer of the story mentioned at the start of the game, whereas if they did, the writer is Loren.

5.5.3 Characters

- Saren (voiced by Steven Kelley): The male protagonist of *Loren The Amazon Princess*.
- Elenor (voiced by Apphia Yu): The female protagonist of *Loren The Amazon Princess*.
- Loren (voiced by Kimlinh Tran): The eponymous princess of the Amazons. She can be romanced by both Saren and Elenor.
- Amukiki (voiced by Sean Chiplock): A warrior and the Champion of the Arena. He's a gladiator of Grimoire. He can be romanced by both Saren and Elenor.
- Apolimesho (voiced by Kevin M. Connolly): An old magician and the Archwizard of Grimoire.
- Dora (voiced by Sarah Williams): She's a dwarf and a thief.
- Draco (voiced by Micah Solusod): An Mage Elementalist. His specialty is fire. He can be romanced by Saren.

- Karen (voiced by Karen Kahler): The Amazon Queen, who disappeared from the Amazon Citadel. She can be romanced by Elenor.
- Myrth (voiced by Jill Harris): One of the Elder Druids of GrandTree. She is one with nature. She can be romanced by Saren.
- Rama (voiced by Chris Niosi): A dwarf merchant-warrior.
- Rei (voiced by Patrick M. Seymour): He is an Assassin and one of the best elven marksmen. He can be romanced by Elenor.
- Chambara (voiced by Michelle Rojas): She is a dark witch. She is only available in the expansion. She can be romanced by both Saren and Elenor.
- Mesphit (voiced by Edward Bosco): A dark elf who mixed his blood with demons. He is only available in the expansion. He can be romanced by both Saren and Elenor.
- Sauzer (voiced by Peter Gerkman): The leader of the Disciples Of Truth. He is only available in the expansion.

5.5.4 Development

The game was created with Ren'Py. It features a theme song by Cristina Vee, composed by Matthew Myers: *Until I'm Broken*.^[1] The original idea and the storyboard was invented by Celso Riva, while the writing was done by Aleema. The art was done by Shiver M., Teodoro Gonzalez, Goran Kostadinovski, and Peter Petkov. Battle voice director was Ayu Sakata. An official trailer for the game was released on May 22, 2012.^[2]

5.5.5 Expansion and sequel

The expansion of the game *The Castle Of N'mar* was released on September 28, 2012. The expansion offers four new party members (Mesphit, Sauzer, Chambara, and Trouble), new romance options for Meshpit and Chambara, new locations, including the Castle of N'mar, and new story events. A direct sequel to *Loren the Amazon Princess* is in planning stages and expected for a release in 2015 or 2016.

5.5.6 Spin-off

Main article: *Tales of Aravorn: Seasons of the Wolf*

A spin-off titled *Tales of Aravorn: Seasons of the Wolf* was released on November 15, 2014. The game is set in the same universe as *Loren the Amazon Princess* and features new characters and locations. The story is centered around the siblings Althea and Shea who live in the northern regions of Aravorn.

5.5.7 Reception

The game received a score of 83/100 on TechnologyTell, with reviewer Jenni Lada writing: "While I'll admit I bristled a bit at the fan-service in *Loren: Amazon Princess*, even with the censor option turned on, it's worth overlooking as the battle system is well arranged and challenging and the overall story of a young man or woman rising from slavery to become second in command of an army that will help save the world is very well done. I especially liked how the decisions, mostly those made in the fourth chapter, did influence the ending and epilogue. While it may be a bit expensive and is definitely only for mature audiences, it's well made, tells an interesting tale and I could honestly see playing through it a second time to see what effect different choices would have on the story."^[3] Capsule Computers review gave 8.5 of 10 points to the game and wrote: "*Loren: The Amazon Princess* is a solidly built game and it has a lot of different options and choices for players to work through. The game totes how a player can't do it all in one playthrough and even the romance aside, it can't be. Featuring a heck of a lot of replay value, this game provides plenty of hours of enjoyment and what is actually about two novels of game text."^[4]

5.5.8 References

- [1] "Until I'm Broken - Single" . 2012-05-03. Retrieved 2012-08-20.
- [2] "Loren The Amazon Princess - Official Trailer" . 2012-05-22. Retrieved 2012-08-20.
- [3] Jenni Lada (2012-05-12). "Review: Loren: Amazon Princess for Windows, Mac, Linux" . Retrieved 2012-08-20.
- [4] Simon Wolfe (2012-05-10). "Loren: The Amazon Princess Review" . Retrieved 2012-08-20.

5.5.9 External links

- Official website for Loren The Amazon Princess
- Loren The Amazon Princess in the Visual Novel Database

Chapter 6

Visual novels by SakeVisual

6.1 "RE: Alistair" (2010)

RE: Alistair is a free English otome game developed and published by sakevisual for the Windows, Mac OS and Linux. It was released on February 28, 2010. The game has been officially translated into German by Marcel Weyers.

6.1.1 Gameplay

The player takes the role of the protagonist, Merui Lucas. The game is primarily told in visual novel format, where the player's decisions affect the relationships she has with potential love interests in the game. It is possible to see five different endings, depending on the choices.

6.1.2 Plot

Merui is a girl who loves video games. She often plays an MMORPG called *Rivenwell Online* with her online friend *Fiona*. When a boy with the user name *Alistair* steals a rare item from her in the game and forces her into a bet to get it back, she is determined to exact revenge on him. Unfortunately, she has no idea who he is in real life. She finds out that only one of three boys from her school could be *Alistair*; *Travis*, *Shiro*, *Derek*. The player can now influence the story and begin a romance with one of the three.

Characters

- **Merui Lucas** is the protagonist. She is a 16-year-old girl who loves video games.
- **Travis Wright** is the president of the computer club at Merui's school.
- **Shiro Takayama** is a shy classmate of Merui.

- **Derek Nevine** is a basketball player and a boy with high self-esteem.

6.1.3 RE: Alistair++ & Backstage Pass

An updated version of the game was released on April 10, 2010. The update included more CGs, more scenes, an updated GUI, and a bonus scene that unlocked after all the endings were achieved. * [1]

On January 1, 2013 a new otome game titled *Backstage Pass* was announced. The game is set in the same universe as *RE: Alistair* and will have features that people missed in *RE: Alistair*. The game is part of sakevisual's *Green Tea Line* and therefore commercial. *Backstage Pass* will be completely voiced and is set to be released sometime in early 2015. * [2] Several voice actors have been confirmed, such as Casey Mongillo, Joel McDonald, Lucien Dodge, Micah Solusod, and Ian Sinclair.

6.1.4 Merchandise

On September 10, 2010, sakevisual released an art book that included the game's artwork, extra scenes, fan art, and a short story. They have also sold plushies of the main cast and a replica of Derek's t-shirt. * [3] They've also given away free stickers of the main cast at various conventions for promotion. * [4]

6.1.5 Reception

The game received positive reception.

It received a score of 88/100 on Gamertell, Jenni Lada wrote about the game: "I'm honestly surprised *RE: Alistair* is a free game. It's very well made [...] The story is well written, with believable characters, the artwork is pretty and very easy to look at [...]" * [5]

Indie Review gave 3.5 of 5 stars and wrote about the game:

“Nonetheless, this game's strengths outweigh its shortcomings, and is definitely worth a look if you are a fan of visual novels.” *[6]

Gamezebo gave 4.5 of 5 stars, Mike Rose described “RE: Alistair++ as an incredible addition to the visual novel genre, indulging the player in some top quality storytelling and pleasing art.” *[7]

6.1.6 Translations

An official German translation of *RE: Alistair* by Marcel Weyers was released on July 23, 2012. *[8]

6.1.7 References

- [1] “RE: Alistair becomes RE: Alistair++”. 2011. Retrieved 2011-09-11.
- [2] “Backstage Pass”. 2013. Retrieved 2013-02-12.
- [3] “Sakevisual Stuff Report 02”. 2011. Retrieved 2011-09-11.
- [4] “Sakevisual Stuff Report 01”. 2011. Retrieved 2011-09-11.
- [5] “Gamertell”. 2010. Retrieved 2011-08-28.
- [6] “Indie Review”. 2010. Retrieved 2011-08-28.
- [7] “Gamezebo”. 2010. Retrieved 2011-08-28.
- [8] “RE:Alistair++ - German Translation”. 2012. Retrieved 2012-07-23.

6.1.8 External links

- Official website of RE: Alistair
- *RE: Alistair* at The Visual Novel Database

6.2 "Jisei" series (2010-2013)

The *Jisei* series is a visual novel series created by sakevisual for the Microsoft Windows, Mac OS X and Linux platforms. *[1]

6.2.1 Gameplay

Each game in the *Jisei* series plays out as a mystery novel, with the player examine their current location to find clues. The player also can talk to people and get hints. The player can access an in-game notebook to keep track of all clues

and hints found so far. As of *Yousei*, the player can use Kangai's phone to send and receive messages from other characters, serving as a hint system.

6.2.2 Story

Setting and characters

Set in the fictional town of Edgewater, the *Jisei* series follows the protagonist: an unidentified American teenager who later takes the codename “Kangai”. Kangai has a strange psychic ability: he can relive the dying moments of any dead body he touches, as well as sense when someone nearby has died. Shortly after he returns to his hometown in Edgewater, Kangai meets three other people who are part of a government agency: Aki Mizutani, the group's brash and impulsive leader; Naoki Mizutani, Aki's younger twin brother and the group's voice of reason; and Li Mei, a quiet girl with an unsettling aura around her. Kangai learns that all four have similar psychic abilities, called *kansei*. Aki can speak directly into anyone's mind, using it to either talk to another *kansei* without speaking or persuading “normal” people subconsciously; Naoki can remember anything he has experienced, making him useful for undercover work; and Li Mei can sense the emotions of those around her, so much that she has to sort out which emotions are hers and which aren't. They are part of a government agency under supervision of Mikolaj Gurski, a police detective. *[2]*[3]*[4]*[5]

Jisei

When *Jisei* begins, the protagonist wakes from a nap inside the café, and suddenly feels ill. Heading to the restroom, he discovers a dead woman on the floor, with a knife in her chest. He touches the woman to experience her final moments; he finds out that someone had suffocated the woman. When the protagonist comes to, he finds Jennifer Bergstrom watching him, claiming him as the murderer. Detective Gurski, who happened to be at the café coincidentally, decides to question everyone present Chance Jackson, Jennifer Bergstrom, Kizaki Suitani and the protagonist.

Determined to prove his innocence, the protagonist questions the suspects present and examines the café. He discovers used duct tape in the trash in the men's restroom. After collecting all clues, the protagonist converses with Gurski about it and identifies the culprit. It turns out that the culprit is Jennifer Bergstrom, and that the victim is Sara Blackmoore. Both women were employees for Biodev Imaging, and Sara had stolen research from Auten Engineering, Biodev's competitors, for Bergstrom. However, Sara decided to double cross her employer in favor of a third

party that offered her more money. When the protagonist, Gurski, and Kizaki confront Bergstrom, she tries to run; the others manage to trap her, however, and she confesses. Detective Gurski snaps a pair of handcuffs on her wrists and leads her outside. Kizaki, who says his real name is Naoki, wants the protagonist to help him finding out who the third party Sara mentioned is. Later, Naoki's twin sister, Aki, shows up personally and offers the protagonist to work with them. However, she makes clear that he needs their help more than they need his.

In the epilogue, it is revealed that Chance played a double role as well. She calls someone, telling them that she could not get the USB drive they wanted. Then she claims that she found someone the person has been looking for the main protagonist.

Kansei

After the events of *Jisei*, the protagonist finds himself tangled in another murder case when the owner of a high profile corporation dies under mysterious circumstances. This time, however, he's forced to team up with a group of kids with abilities as strange as his own. Early in the game, Aki gives the protagonist a nickname, “Kangai”, as he wants to keep his true name hidden.

Aki drives Kangai, Naoki, and Li Mei to the house of William Auten, the chairperson of Auten Engineering. There, they met Mr. Auten's assistant Sophia Millerson, as well as Detective Mikolaj Gurski, who was invited because he solved the murder case the day before. Furthermore, Kangai meets the reporter Marissa Klein, Mr. Auten's nephew Liam, and the IT guy Kevin Nealy. When Kangai and the others are asked to go into William Auten's office and Mr. Auten sees Kangai through a camera, he seems to recognize him and wants to throw him out of the house. He is frightened of him and he does not want to meet him any more. When suddenly William Auten is found dead in his office, Kangai has to solve the case. While he is looking for clues, he learns from Li Mei, that she, Aki, and Naoki work for the government, that they are on probation for past crimes, and that Detective Gurski is their probation officer.

Kangai finds an SD card in a box in Mr. Auten's museum. Shortly after, it turns out that Kevin has poisoned Mr. Auten. Kevin takes Li Mei hostage and threatens her with a knife. Suddenly Detective Gurski comes into the room, he calls Kangai Alex. Together they are able to catch Kevin and to arrest him. The next day Detective Gurski comes over to tell Alex and the others that Kevin has confessed and that Liam has disappeared.

In the epilogue is Liam who has obtained some things for Chance. Judging from their conversation it could be that

Liam and Chance are siblings or half-siblings. After Liam has given her the things which she wanted to have for years, she lets him leave. She tells him that he should enjoy the rest of his pitiful life. According to her there is not much left of it after all.

Yousei

While researching his past at the local university, Kangai and the group soon find themselves in a race against time to catch an “old enemy” responsible for killing one of the university's professors.*[6]*[7]

6.2.3 Development

The games were created with Ren'Py. Several known voice actors were involved such as Kira Buckland and Micah Solusod.*[2] The opening theme songs, “Calling To The One” for *Jisei*, “Escape” for *Kansei*, and “Redemption” for *Yousei* were recorded by Aural Wave.*[8]*[9] However, the opening video in *Yousei* was not included due to technical problems.

Staff

Voice actors

Marketing

*[10]

6.2.4 Reception

Jisei received moderate to positive reception. It received a score of 90/100 on Gamertell, with reviewer Jenni Lada writing “*Jisei* goes above and beyond. It feels incredibly professional, and more like a major developer's accomplishment than that of a fairly new independent developer. The character art is wonderful, the voice acting appropriate, the story interesting and the general gameplay mechanics well executed.”*[11] Mania.com gave the game similar praise, calling it “An engaging visual novel from a promising new group.”*[12] Indie Game Reviewer scored the game 3/5 stars, noting that “*Jisei* contains gorgeous visuals, and some really solid writing, but comes up just short of greatness due to its length and the overall lack of things to do.”*[13] Gamezebo likewise criticized the short gameplay length, stating that “It feels like it's all over much too quickly and most people will feel quite short-changed.”*[14]

Kansei received mostly positive reception. It received a score of 93/100 on Gamertell, with reviewer Jenni Lada writing “Length aside, *Kansei* is a really beautiful game. It is a much improvement over *Jisei* in terms of interactivity and plot, with a story that is more intriguing and has additional twists to discover. Not only that, but it looks and sounds beautiful. It’s a wonderful visual novel and quite involving.” * [15] *Kansei* was chosen to be the English Visual Novel of the Year in 2011 by *VNs Now!*. * [16] Others have criticized the game's mystery elements. Visual novel reviewer anonl called it “a clear step up from *Jisei*, but the murder mystery is still lackluster.” * [17]

Yousei received mostly positive reception. It was praised by IndieGameMagazine, saying that it is “sakevisual’s most polished release to date”. * [18] *Yousei* was given 8/10 points by *VNs Now!*, saying “*Yousei* is still one of the strongest EVN you’re going to play this year and more than worth the asking price”. * [19] GamerTell gave a rating of B to *Yousei*, saying “What made *Yousei* so fun and enjoyable was it’s cool voice acting, realistic characters, great story, multiple endings, and replay-ability.” * [20]

6.2.5 References

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- *Yousei* at The Visual Novel Database

Chapter 7

Other visual novels

7.1 "Summer Session" (2008)

Summer Session is a dating simulation video game for the Microsoft Windows, Mac OS X and Linux platforms. The game was developed and published by Hanako Games and Tycoon Games. It uses anime-style graphics and is written in English. It was released on July 2, 2008.

7.1.1 Gameplay

Players must balance their schedules in order to raise their character's statistics and pass school examinations. During play they encounter non-player characters and befriend them, aiming to find romance. Restarting the game after completion enables players to unlock additional endings.*[1]

7.1.2 References

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- *Summer Session* at The Visual Novel Database
- Summer Session Review at Game Tunnel

7.2 "Café 0 ~The Drowned Mermaid~" (2011)

Café 0 ~The Drowned Mermaid~ (カフェ・ゼロ～溺れた人魚～ *Kafe zero ~ oboreta ningyo ~*) is a mystery visual novel video game about the last seven days of Marin Umino.

It was released on October 4, 2011 for Windows and Mac OS in English. The game was later officially translated into Japanese and German. It is the first commercial release from roseVeRte. On April 22, 2012 the game was released on Desura.*[1] The Japanese and the English version were released for iOS on September 27, 2012.*[2] On March 8, 2013 a version for Android followed.*[3]

7.2.1 Gameplay

As it is a visual novel, the player reads through the story and makes choices at crucial points to change the outcome, leading to one of six different endings. The game is divided into three main paths; the protagonist changes her appearance based on the player's choices.

7.2.2 Plot

The protagonist, who has lost all her memory, finds herself in a strange place called Café 0, where a blue-haired waiter serves her a glass of water. She now relives the last seven days of her life and has the chance to unveil the truth and find the cause of her death. She soon discovers that three persons might be connected to her death; Ami, who claims to be her best friend, Shou, the school's doctor, and Tooru, who seems to be her ex-boyfriend. The plot takes different directions based on the player's decisions.

7.2.3 Development and Translations

The game was created with Ren'Py. The story and the graphics were created by Chu3, Mirage from Zeiva Inc helped with co-writing, and proofreading was done by Mink and Roxie. The German translation was done by Marcel Weyers, who also translated *dUpLicity ~Beyond the Lies~*. The Japanese version was released on December 24, 2011, while the German version was released on March 9, 2012.

Voice Actors

A professional team of Japanese voice actors recorded voices for the game.

- Sui – Cancer Murakani
- Shou Takizawa – Yuya Kakitsubata
- Tooru Mizutani – Mato Sarashina
- Ami Kawase – Nanase Watarai
- Others – Nao Utsunomiya, Sayuri Misaki, Sudachi Harumi

7.2.4 Reception

Café 0 ~The Drowned Mermaid~ received positive reception on TechnologyTell, where the reviewer gave 93 out of 100 possible points and praised the game's "unique gameplay experience" .*[4]

The game received three out of five stars on Gamezebo, with the reviewer writing: "It's certainly not the most dynamic piece of literature ever written [...] but if you're into interactive novels and you're curious to find out how a mermaid can actually drown, you'll almost certainly want to play long enough to see the game's true ending." *[5]

7.2.5 Sequel

A sequel titled *Café 0 ~The Sleeping Beast~* is currently in the works and expected for a release in 2015.

7.2.6 References

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7.2.7 External links

- Official website
- *Café 0 ~The Drowned Mermaid~* at The Visual Novel Database

7.3 "Sleepless Night" (2012)

Sleepless Night is a free horror visual novel developed and published by Marcel Weyers, an author and translator. The game was released on March 31, 2012 for Windows, Mac OS, and Linux. It was released in English and German. On November 22, 2012, the game was released on Softpedia. *[1] The game was ported to Android by *Visualnovels.nl*. *[2] In its first week, the Android version was downloaded over 1,000 times and as of February 2015 it has been downloaded over 100,000 times. *[3] The game was ported to iOS by y5-apps and released on August 20, 2013. *[4]

7.3.1 Gameplay

The player chooses a name for the protagonist at the beginning of the game. He then makes decisions at certain points in the story to influence the outcome of the game. It is possible to see one out of ten possible endings, depending on the choices. The game includes some point-and-click and escape the room elements. The gameplay was compared to *Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors*.

7.3.2 Plot

You go with your classmate Haru to your house to work on a school project. When he decides to stay the night and watch horror movies you fall asleep and Haru disappears in this night. You have to find a way out of your house. The course of the game changes now based on the decisions by the player. However, there is one "true ending" and several bad endings where the protagonist dies in cruel ways.

7.3.3 Development and translations

The game was developed with Ren'Py, an engine for visual novels. The story and characters were developed by Marcel Weyers. He used the character Haru from his German book series *Shadow-Trilogy*, but he said that the game is not related to the book series, and plays in an alternate universe; the personalities of the characters may differ slightly and the story is not canon to the book series. The music was created by Marcel Weyers as well. The character design of Haru was done by NoodleBrains while the backgrounds were created by Auro Cyanide and Mei Miyamura. The game was created in less than a month. A trailer was released on March 31, 2012. *[5]

The game was translated into Spanish (by El Lobo Demente), Dutch (by Bob Reus), Italian (by Andrea Luciano

‘Lehti’ Damico), Korean (by hgdear), Polish (by Adrian Hofman, Vynuxys, Sakai), and Portuguese (by Rita Alves).

7.3.4 Soundtrack

The official soundtrack was released on December 1, 2012, and includes five tracks at a total length of 5:24 minutes.*[6] The soundtrack was nominated for the “Best Original Score” in 2012 by *VNs Now!*.*[7] However, the visual novel *Cinders* by *MoaCube* won the award. On July 8, 2014, the soundtrack was also released on Bandcamp.*[8]

1. Shadow [1:01]
2. Quiet [0:44]
3. Mystery [1:08]
4. Dead [1:41]
5. Horror [0:47]

7.3.5 Sequels

On December 5, 2012, a sequel with the title *Sleepless Night 2: Ladies' Night(mare)* was announced. The second game features three new characters from the book series *Shadow-Trilogy*; Midori, Natsumi, and Shizuka and offers new locations and gameplay elements. *Sleepless Night 2* was released on October 31, 2013. The game is available in English, German, Dutch, Italian, and Korean.

On March 20, 2014 Weyers announced *Midnight Chaos*, which is a short kinetic novel and part of the *Sleepless Night* series. The game plays during the events of the first game and the second one. Weyers said that it is some sort of prelude to the third and final *Sleepless Night* game. The game was released on April 1, 2014 and will be given to people who support the series in some way, for example with fan art or fan fiction. The game is available in English, German, Dutch, Italian, and Korean.

The currently untitled third game of the *Sleepless Night* series is expected to be released in 2015.

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[5] “Sleepless Night TRAILER” . *YouTube*. Retrieved January 18, 2013.

[6] “Sleepless Night Soundtrack” . Marcel Weyers. Retrieved December 1, 2012.

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[8] “Sleepless Night” . Bandcamp. Retrieved July 8, 2014.

7.3.7 External links

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- *Sleepless Night* at The Visual Novel Database
- *Sleepless Night 2: Ladies' Night(mare)* at The Visual Novel Database
- *Midnight Chaos* at The Visual Novel Database

7.4 "Katawa Shoujo" (2012/2013)

Katawa Shoujo (かたわ少女 *Katawa Shōjo*, lit. “Cripple Girls” , translated “Disability Girls”) is a bishōjo-style visual novel by Four Leaf Studios that tells a story of a young man and five young women living with varying disabilities. The game uses a traditional text and sprite-based visual novel model with an ADV-style text box running on the Ren'Py visual novel engine. The game is licensed under the Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND.*[6]

The majority of the story takes place at the fictional Yamaku High School for disabled children, located in an unnamed city somewhere in modern, northern Japan.*[7] Hisao Nakai, an able-bodied boy, has his life changed when a long-dormant cardiac arrhythmia forces him to transfer to a new school after a long hospitalization. Despite his difficulties, Hisao has the opportunity to find friends and love.

The gameplay of *Katawa Shoujo* is choice-based, with the player reading through text and occasionally making decisions that initiate the possible events or dialogue within the story. Depending on the choices made by the player, the story branches into multiple forks variously chronicling Hisao's deepening and eventually romantic relationship with one of the five main female characters (or lack thereof), some of which may variously end well, badly, or neutrally.*[8]

7.4.1 Creation

The concept originated in a sketch created by Japanese doujinshi artist Raita Honjou (credited in Thanks as RAITA).^[9]^[10] From January 2007, the sketch was discussed extensively on the 4chan image board, and a development group was assembled from users of 4chan and other internet communities, who are of various nationalities; not necessarily Japanese. The group took the name Four Leaf Studios (based on 4chan's four-leaf clover logo). On April 29, 2009, the team released an "Act One" preview.^[11] Act 1 has since been updated for several additional languages; as of Act 1's fifth version, English, French, Italian, Japanese, Russian, German, Hungarian, and both Traditional and Simplified Chinese are included. It was announced^[12] that the French language translation would be released July 4, 2013 as both a download and a limited-edition physical edition. The French-language version was made available for download on July 8, 2013.^[2] A separate, full-patch adding a completed Russian translation was released independently by its translation group on December 9, 2013.^[3] On July 27, 2014, the International Spanish version was released and made available for download that same day.^[4] On April 1, 2015, in lieu of their traditional April Fools Day prank, Four Leaf Studios released the Japanese translation.^[5] Additionally, they announced that a second physical release would be sold by the Japanese translation team at Comitia 112 (May 5, 2015 at Tokyo Big Sight).^[13] As of 2015, the full Visual Novel has been released officially in English, French, International Spanish, and Japanese only.

Following the project's release, Four Leaf Studios announced it had no plans for its members to collaborate on any new projects.^[14] However, in their celebratory 1st anniversary blog post, Aura had stated that there might be future projects for 4LS announced in 2013, though no major projects were announced.^[15]

7.4.2 Characters

Major

Hisao Nakai (中井久夫 *Nakai Hisao*) Hisao is a male high school student diagnosed with chronic cardiac arrhythmia and congenital heart muscle deficiency.^[16] In the prologue, he collapses from a major heart attack after receiving a confession of love from a girl on a snowy day; they break off relations during his long stay in a hospital, and she officially ends the relationship with a letter sent a month after his discharge. Due to his heart condition, he transfers to Yamaku High School in class 3-3, and although initially resentful of his placement in a school for the disabled, he eventu-



A scene from the early part of the game showing (left to right) Lilly, Misha, and Shizune.

ally adapts to his new lifestyle. Through his new relationships and interactions, he begins to reconsider his preconceptions towards disabilities, including his own. His main hobbies include reading and chess.

Emi Ibarazaki (茨崎笑美 *Ibarazaki Emi*) Emi is an energetic, extroverted blonde girl with twintails and forest-green eyes. She has prosthetic legs, having had her original legs amputated below the knees as a result of a car accident. Despite her disability, she still has more than enough lower body strength to walk, and in fact she is a successful track runner. She values good diet and exercise, and is on friendly terms with the head nurse of Yamaku; she promises to keep tabs on Hisao's exercise in exchange for having him as a running partner. Indeed, she meets Hisao by literally running into him in the hallway, and ironically endangers his heart on more than one occasion. Hisao feels guilty whenever she pouts, equating her expression to that of a sad puppy. Emi is Rin's friend and hall mate due to both having extremely passionate vocations and complementary disabilities. However, she has trouble getting emotionally close to people, because she is afraid of losing people important to her. Her question is "Can you stand up for yourself?".

Hanako Ikezawa (池沢華子 *Ikezawa Hanako*) Hanako, as a child, suffered an accident in which her house was burned down, taking the lives of her parents. The right side of her body is heavily scarred from the incident and has left her traumatized. Her long, dark purple hair hangs down her back, and her bangs cover the right side of her face, which hides much of her scars. Due to the flames, she has spent most of her childhood in an orphanage and was bullied during her time in elementary and middle school,

so she was offered to go to Yamaku because of the discourse. Initially, she is incredibly shy towards anyone except Lilly and Akira. She is another one of Hisao's classmates, but is frequently absent, preferring to spend time reading in the library where she can be alone. Her question is “Can you face your fears?”

Lilly Satou (砂藤リリ — *Satō Riri*) Lilly is the class representative of 3-2, a class composed of blind and partially blind students (including Kenji); she has been blind since birth. The tallest member of the main female cast, she has long blonde hair and blue eyes her father is Japanese and her mother is Scottish with family in Inverness. She is very polite and ladylike with a motherly demeanour, not wanting to intrude on others' private life (including Hisao's reasons for being at Yamaku). It is also noted that she had previously attended a strict all-girls school. In contrast to Misha's fast-paced attitude to Hisao's transfer, Lilly takes things at her own relaxed pace, helping Hisao to adjust to school life in the midst of a busy festival. She is Hanako's closest and initially only friend; she regularly has lunch and tea with her, and accompanies her grocery shopping. She is also on a friendly basis with Yuuko. Shizune and Lilly have been seen to not get along, perhaps due to the fact that direct communication between her and Shizune is not feasible (she cannot see Shizune's sign language and Shizune cannot hear her or speak to her). Her question is “Can you see what I see?”.



Different dialogue choices lead to new branching paths and endings. Characters shown (from left to right): Misha, Shizune, and Hanako.

Rin Tezuka (手塚琳 *Tezuka Rin*) Rin, a girl whose arms were almost entirely amputated due to a birth defect, uses her feet to accomplish everyday tasks with surprising dexterity. She has short red hair and dark green

eyes, and wears a boy's uniform to avoid the awkward situations that would arise from using her feet while wearing a skirt. Rin's unique personality has brought about awkward situations with her peers, especially for Hisao, and as a result, some people do not talk with her such as Lilly. She is nonchalant with the other students and about their disabilities in general; she usually inquires about other people's disabilities as a hobby. As a result, she is seen as extremely blunt, especially with the mention of her period. She is Emi's friend and hall mate, as their physical abilities complement each other. Her role in the school festival is being the sole painter of a giant mural posted in front of the dorms. Her name was designed as both a homage to legendary cartoonist Osamu Tezuka as well as a pun based on her talent as an artist and disability (the first kanji in her surname means “hand”).* [7] Her question is “Can you seize the day?”.

Shizune Hakamichi (羽加道静音 *Hakamichi Shizune*)

Shizune is one of Hisao's classmates who serves as the student council president and class representative of class 3-3. This bespectacled girl has short dark blue hair and eyes; she is both deaf and mute, communicating primarily through sign language. Her friend, Misha, is almost always at her side, translating everything from and to Shizune, allowing for communication with other people. As others have described her including herself, Shizune is strong-willed, forceful, and manipulative; she seldom displays a softer side and sometimes shows a face that reveals her emotions. She has an intense intolerance of Lilly and initially indirectly dislikes Hanako as a result. Her name was designed by the game's developers to be a pun based on her disability; the kanji for her given name mean “silent” and “sound”.* [7] Her question is “Can you tell me what you think?”.

Shiina Mikado (御門椎名 *Mikado Shiina*) Also known as Misha (ミーシャ *Mīsha*), she is Shizune's best friend and only fellow member in the student council. She serves as her interpreter, and is the first to befriend Hisao in Yamaku. She has long curls of (died) pink hair and gold eyes. She is friendly and cheerful, though her enthusiastic tone for most things have sometimes tired those around her. Despite being a relatively major character in Act 1, she is not a potential romantic interest to Hisao, but instead, she helps him get used to the school in his first few days of his transfer; she does however become a potential love interest in the Shizune arc as Hisao can engage in an affair with Misha, leading on to the bad ending. As well as helping Shizune convince Hisao to join the student

council. Misha attends Yamaku as part of a sign language recruitment program, making her one of the few “normal” (i.e. having no disability) students attending the school. She did not appear in the original concept sketch by RAITA.

Minor

Kenji Setou (瀬藤健二 *Setō Kenji*) Kenji is Hisao's roommate (next-door neighbor in the dorms), who is legally blind, being unable to see anything unless he is almost an inch close to them. He appears to be a hikikomori and very anti-social, claiming to be the “last sane man in an insane world.” He often rants about feminist conspiracy theories, claiming that feminists are evil and want to rule the world (these feelings are revealed to stem from his feeling tired after having intercourse with his ex-girlfriend a year before the story starts), among other pointless subjects, possibly rivaling Rin's “uniqueness” in that aspect. Kenji's route is the bad ending of Act 1 if the player does not choose one girl to befriend over the course of Act 1.

Nurse (ナース *Nāsu*) The head nurse of Yamaku whose name is not given. He is friendly to all of his students and patients, but can quickly become stern if his advice is not taken seriously. He asks Emi to be his “spy” for keeping tabs on Hisao, making sure he gets proper exercise. He first appears after Hisao leaves Shizune and Misha and go to the doctors' block for the first time. His lack of name and his relationship with Emi were influenced by a series of threads on 4chan that chronicled a real, nameless male nurse in charge of young multi-amputee car crash victim.* [7]

Akio Mutou (武藤昭夫 *Mutō Akio*) Mutou is Hisao's homeroom teacher, and the science teacher of class 3-3. He is just as much out of touch with his class as he is out of touch with reality. Probably born to be a teacher (no matter how much his students disagree), his greatest skill is the ability to ignore irrelevant things completely (no matter how much anyone who wishes he'd remember their names disagrees). He first appears as Hisao enters the halls in the beginning of the game. His design was largely based upon David Tennant as the Tenth Doctor of Doctor Who.* [17]

Yuuko Shirakawa (白川優子 *Shirakawa Yūko*) Yuuko is the librarian who is on friendly terms with Lilly and Hanako. She has serious problems with managing her life, which makes her the perfect person to ask for help to manage one's own. She funds her university

studies by working part-time at a popular cafe. The lengths she goes to avoid being fired for her natural clumsiness bewilder other people, along with her neurotic attention to detail and frequent streaks of depression. She first appears when Lilly takes Hisao to the library, and Lilly calls out her name. It is revealed that she used to have a younger boyfriend who disappeared on her. In the files of the leaked beta version of the visual novel, this “mysterious boyfriend” was revealed to be Kenji Setou. These scripts did not make it into the final game.

Akira Satou (砂藤晃 *Satō Akira*) Akira is Lilly's older sister. She's a lawyer for the Japanese branch of her father's company. She dresses in a man's pinstripe suit and has the tomboy-like attitude to match, often as a slightly irresponsible, friendly foil to her sister's personality. She appears through several routes, primarily Lilly's and Hanako's. She is often seen with her cousin, Hideaki Hakamichi.

Hideaki Hakamichi (羽加道秀明 *Hakamichi Hideaki*) Hideaki is Shizune's younger brother. He's very intelligent and shares an attitude similar to that of his sister. He dresses in very feminine clothing, a fact that he rarely acknowledges.

Jigoro Hakamichi (羽加道治五郎 *Hakamichi Jigorō*) Jigoro is Shizune's father. He is stubborn, mean, and a braggart. He is confrontational with most everyone and shows off constantly, from talking about his in-progress autobiography to carrying a katana with him at all times.

Iwanako (岩魚子)* [7] Iwanako is Hisao's former girlfriend, from prior to his initial heart attack, which occurs during her confession of love during the prologue of the story. They eventually drift apart completely during his hospital stay. In every route of the game, Hisao receives a letter from her; his response (whether he writes back, reads it completely, etc.) differs by route.

Miki Miura (三浦美貴 *Miura Miki*) Miki is a student and classmate of Hisao's in Class 3-3. She is an amputee, missing her left hand below her wrist, which is covered in bandages. She is on the track team and is considered the second fastest in the school, behind only Emi. Despite this, she is not mentioned, nor does she appear in Emi's route (outside of background shots). Rather, she is mentioned once in Lilly's route, and interacts with Hisao for only a small portion of Hanako's route. A route for Miki was planned

but scrapped during development; an early draft of the route script (written from Miki's perspective) was posted online in December 2014 by the contributing author.*[18]

Shinichi Nomiya (野宮紳一 *Nomiya Shin'ichi*) Nomiya is Yamaku's art teacher, and as such only appears for Rin's arc. A fat, eccentric man, he was once a promising painter but gave it up to teach. He has an almost obsessive drive towards making Rin a famous painter.

Sae Saionji (西園寺さえ *Saionji Sae*) Sae is the owner of an art gallery in the city and is an old friend of Nomiya's. She is a smoker and a former artist herself. She appears prominently only towards the end of Rin's route.

Meiko Ibarazaki (茨崎芽依子 *Ibarazaki Meiko*) Meiko is Emi's mother. She appears briefly in Rin's route, and features more prominently in Emi's. She appears rather young and attractive, and has been described by Hisao as an older version of Emi, after observing that she acts very much like her daughter.

7.4.3 Critical reception

Katawa Shoujo received generally favorable critical reception. Upon release, it was praised by some reviewers and fans, who most notably praised the game's sincere and respectful treatment of the setting.*[11]*[19] The game's sensitive handling of its eroge elements, instances of soft core erotic imagery on the relevant forks which were integral to its narratives, was also praised (it was also noted that as “adult content” is removed the game can be played with these scenes replaced, without the cost of losing much characterization and plot development).*[20] Other critics were less warm, with Dave Riley of Otaku USA Magazine claiming the game had “bad prose and bad characters.”

Controversy

The game's name itself, however, has attracted some criticism, as the term “katawa” (片輪) is considered an archaic derogatory term in Japan. “Katawa Shoujo” translates into “Disability Girl” in English, but a more literal translation of “katawa” from Japanese is “cripple”, and more literally refers to a vehicle with just one wheel and thus working imperfectly.*[21] In response to questions regarding the usage of the term “katawa”, the developers commented, “It's not like we intentionally want to offend, and we did not come up with the name ourselves. The origin of the name is of

course Japanese itself, with Raita and his original concept picture of [Katawa Shoujo].”*[22]

7.4.4 Soundtrack

The game's soundtrack, entitled *Enigmatic Box of Sound*, was released for download on January 20, 2012.*[23] It was written primarily by musicians Sebastien “NicolArmarfi” Skaf and Andy “Blue123” Andi. An updated version of “Red Velvet” was released alongside the French language update on July 8, 2013, featuring saxophone player Japes.*[24] Two previously unreleased bonus tracks, “When It's Hard to Smile” and “Carefree Days”, were released separately on February 10, 2010 and December 24, 2014, respectively.*[25]*[26]

7.4.5 April Fools pranks

Every year of production, even in the years prior to the game's release, the Four Leaf Studios team have held a tradition of making April Fools Day prank post on their developer's blog. These jokes take the form of fake announcements of upcoming features or updates, sometimes satirizing real-world habits of video game publishers and developers. Among these announcement pranks have included sequels (and cancellations thereof),*[27] high definition and censored re-release,*[28] expansion packs DLC, microtransactions and bonus content, exclusive merchandise, advertisement removal, premium content, online distribution through Steam,*[29] an anime adaptation by Studio DEEN,*[30] voice acting,*[31] and a second, parody visual novel project.*[32]

7.4.6 See also

- 4chan
- *Pokémon Sage*, another game developed on 4chan

7.4.7 References

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7.4.8 Further reading

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7.4.9 External links

- Official website
- *Katawa Shoujo* at The Visual Novel Database

7.5 "This Is Where I Want To Die" (2013)

This Is Where I Want To Die (sometimes: TIWIWTD) is a free utsuge visual novel developed and published by Marcel Weyers, an author and translator. The game was released on March 17, 2013 for Windows, Mac OS, and Linux. An updated version was released on May 9, 2013. The Android version by Visualnovels.nl was released on July 5, 2013.* [1] In June 2014, Weyers released the game *To Kill A Black Swan* with similar themes, which is part of the same series.

7.5.1 Gameplay & Design

The player simply reads through the story. Since the game is a so-called kinetic novel, the player does not make decisions and there is only one ending. The game uses silhouettes as characters and blurry black and white backgrounds. The protagonist, however, is not shown until the very end. Music and sound effects support the game's atmosphere.

7.5.2 Plot

You wake up in a hospital room and you realize that you are about to die. You cannot remember what happened and you try to think about why you are in the hospital. In order to do this, you see flashbacks from your past. You were going to a bar with your best friend Ann and your boyfriend Brad. On the way to the Bar, you proposed to Brad and he accepted. To celebrate this occasion, you went to the most expensive bar in town. Brad explained that he wanted to take you on a holiday to the sea. You and your friends enjoyed the evening together. However, on the way back home you bid goodbye to Ann and decided to walk alone with Brad. You came upon two men who attacked you for apparently no reason. At the end, one of the guys stabbed you and you bled to death. Back at the hospital, it is revealed that the protagonist is a homosexual man and the attackers killed him for trying to protect his boyfriend. The message of the game is stopping homophobia.

7.5.3 Characters

- **Brad** is your boyfriend. You've been together for three years but lately he seems to have something on his mind. What might it be...?
- **Ann** is your best friend. She has always been supportive of your love for Brad. But... could she be hiding something?

7.5.4 Development and translations

The game was developed with Ren'Py, an engine for visual novels. The story and characters were developed by Marcel Weyers. The music was created by Marcel Weyers as well. The cover art was designed by SD Designs. Backgrounds, character art, and sound effects were taken from free sources and edited by Marcel Weyers. The game was created in less than a month. A trailer was released on March 10, 2013.* [2] It was released in English and German and was later translated into French by Kevin Cottenie and into Spanish by Nussy Noinex. A Dutch translation by *Visualnovels.nl* was added on May 28, 2013. On September 27, 2013, the game was updated with an Italian translation by Andrea Luciano 'Lehti' Damico. It is the third visual novel game by Marcel Weyers after *Soulmates* and *Sleepless Night*.

7.5.5 Soundtrack

The official soundtrack was released on April 6, 2013, and includes four tracks at a total length of 1:37 min-

utes.* [3] On July 8, 2014, the soundtrack was also released on Bandcamp.* [4]

1. Ocean Dreams [0:24]
2. Ann's House [0:34]
3. Bar [0:16]
4. Showdown [0:21]

7.5.6 Reception

weeaboo.nl wrote about the game: “Not knowing who you are makes for a tiresome read (since you continuously need to take every possibility into account). Everything up until the final 30 seconds is just there for padding/misdirection.”* [5]

freemearchive gave a score of 66 % and said: “Somebody writes his opinion into the newspapers, somebody writes a book, somebody shouts it on streets and one can make an interesting game. [...] The truth is uncovered rather soon and so the experience isn't so enrichment. Someone can disagree with the uncovered thing and theme but it depends on what you think.”* [6]

The game was nominated for the 2013 Best Of's by *VNs Now!* in the category “Best Drama” along with *The Royal Trap* by Hanako Games and other visual novels.* [7]

7.5.7 References

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7.5.8 External links

- Official website
- *This Is Where I Want To Die* at The Visual Novel Database

7.6 "Sepia Tears ~midwinter's reprise~" (2013)

Sepia Tears ~midwinter's reprise~ is a romance visual novel developed by Team NEET, on the Ren'Py engine.^{[3][4][5][6][7][8][9][10]}

7.6.1 Gameplay and plot

In *Sepia Tears*, the player controls the protagonist, Mark, as he goes through his high school life over the course of the month of November.^[1] Like in other visual novels, *Sepia Tears* presents the player with choices, which will affect the characters and the direction of the story.

7.6.2 Development

On December 24, 2013, Team NEET released *Sepia Tears* as a free download on the game's website.^{[2][1][11]}

7.6.3 References

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7.6.4 External links

- Official website
- Developer website

Chapter 8

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