Imagine being off for a long trip. Its hard to imagine everything that you would miss at home while you were gone for a week… for a month… what about a year? Coming back from the said trip, you would have a lot to catch up on if you wanted to know everything that happens.

Katlin Greenbrier experiences about this scenario with a slight twist: there is nobody to help her learn what has happened since she was gone. Coming back at her parent’s house, she is totally lost in the gigantic house that they moved into while she was gone. As she steps onto the porch, a notice was left from her sister. Sam asks for Katlyn not to dig around to find out what happened and apologizes upfront for what she has done. A lot is left unsaid. Katlyn might have thought she was coming back from a trip and now in a more familiar environment but she was all wrong, she was Gone Home.

Best way to describe Gone Home is as an atmospheric, emotional exploration game. The game revolves around answering the question: what happened to my sister. To answer that you will incarnate Katlyn Greenbrier who discovers clues of what she missed as she was out of the country.

While you were gone, your younger sister has kept a notebook in which she writes to you directly. Exploring the house will let you gradually peak inside this notebook and learn about what has happened in her life in your absence.

As you progress into the game, you become strangely attached to the characters that you know only by the means of the everyday left overs all over the house. You will find homework of your sister, favourite movies of your father or your mom’s job assignment. Once you have adapted to the play style, you fully experience the game’s richness, searching in every cupboard and closets in hope of finding a secret letter or a mixtape that you will be able to play in our sister’s bedroom.

It is in the authenticity of the characters that are presented to you that Gone Home will trigger your deepest emotions. Themes like love, partnership, depression and hope are repetitively addressed, slowly tailoring your family and how you feel about them. Every piece of the puzzle also tells a bit about who you are and how you are to your family. During the short three hours playthrough, you will be surprised to see yourself think as if you were Katlyn and really worrying about your family members.

It is true that Gone Home does not inscribe itself amongst the most accessible games of all time. In fact, most people may be reluctant to pay for a game that does not seem to have much for itself; no real gameplay some would say. However it is sure that everyone that once enjoyed storytelling in a videogame will recognize the value of what is in Gone Home after having played it. Atmospherically speaking, the developers set the tone so well that it brings exploration thrilling level.

Technically, the game looks great without leaving you jaw-dropped, which I think is a good thing. There is a kind of homogeneity in the esthetics that make the environment believable. This is to be contrasted with the flashy, shiny, precisely lit environments that we are so used to see in videogames. The item control also lets you pick up the objects and inspect them, fulfilling and stimulating your curiosity as you can almost pick up everything.

The game makes you incarnate a young women, by which you will learn the story of a young girl. It certainly is not the norm to see writers in the video games industry reaching the players, predominantly males, with female models. What is even more interesting is how this choice has been integrated so well with the game. It may show that developers are more and more willing to explore the female genre as roles in their video games and this could certainly be a good thing when you look at what resulted from Gone Home.

It is impressive to see what the game has achieved compared to other available games on the market. It has deprived the player from every imaginable action elements and has let him search around for a story that the waited to be unveiled. This is what I think made the storytelling so successful: the game rewards interest toward the story. The more you poke around the more narrative you get. This has made one of the simplest idea a great success: telling a story dynamically.

Pros: Extremely rich storytelling

Believable environment to explore

Triggers curiosity

Cons: Gameplay may not be suited for everyone

Gone Home goes out of the safe paths, and it is by doing so that developers will expand the plane of people that will be interesting in the cultural/entertaining medium that are video-games. It is for the cautious, the attentive and the sensible. Simple means of interaction will get the player thrilled in unveiling the story that has been set to discover. Storytelling have never been as dynamic and intimate as it is in Gone Home.