AS ABOVE, SO BELOW: Narrative Document

**Summary**

*As Above, So Below* follows the protagonist Ayanda Jama, a university student, as they navigate through the trials of university life. Throughout the game the player controls Ayanda and experiences his battle with anxiety both at school and within his own mind.

**Characters**

*Main Character*

**Ayanda Jama:** The main protagonist of the game and acts as the game’s playable character. A 19-year-old, lower middle-class heterosexual black male He is shy, introverted and has a poor self-esteeem as a result of his troubled relationship with his father. He suffers from an anxiety disorder and struggles to engage with activities within the university and battles manifestations of his disorder within his dreams.

*Secondary Characters/NPCs*

* + - 1. ***Joey Vorster:*** Joey Vorster is one of the few characters that Ayanda consistently interacts with. Joey is an 18-year-old white homosexual male attending the University of the Swartwatersrand. Because of Joey’s sexuality, he was often bullied as a child but now that he is older, he is more confident about himself and his sexuality. Ayanda often seeks advice from Joey and considers Joey a friend.
      2. ***Lana Karrim:*** Lana is one of Ayanda’s group members for one of his courses. She is interesting, fun and seems to have a shared interest with Ayanda however he fears getting to know her because he is afraid of rejection. Ayanda also feels that Lana only interacts with him because her grades depend upon it. Lana often compliments Ayanda on his fashion style but Ayanda cannot process compliments and is often overwhelmed which results in him panicking.
      3. ***Nomzamo:*** Nomzamo is Ayanda’s devoted and staunchly religious mother. Despite suffering from depression herself, Nomzamo often dismisses her son’s anxiety and behaviour as the “work of evil spirits”. This conditioned Ayanda to believe that his fears are actual monsters that manifest in his sleep.

**Three-Act Structure of the Plot: Prototype Single Game Loop**

**Showdown**

Player is introduced to game’s basic mechanics of scrolling through dialogue/ Ayanda enters University and looks for his first lecture

Consequences of dream sequence/combat are introduced through dialogue and specific choices be made available or unavailable

Results of combat/dream sequence are shown

Player is introduced to game’s combat system / Ayanda enters Dreamworld and faces first opponent

**Big Event 1**

Player is introduced to game’s basic mechanics of NPC interaction and choice and stats system / Ayanda must introduce himself to his entire class

**Realization**

**Crisis**

**Catalyst**

ACT THREE

ACT TWO

ACT ONE

**DAY ONE:** *GREAT HALL / LECTURE ROOM/DREAMWORLD*

This level allows the player to get familiar with the game’s mechanics and systems such as interaction with NPCs and choices.  
Goal to completing level: Interact with either Joey or Mrs Engelbrecht

**SCENE 1**

**Location:** Great Hall

**Audio: --**

**Characters:** Ayanda, Joey, Lana

**Player Goal:** Interact with either Joey or Mrs Engelbrecht

**Action:** Upon entering the University in the Great Hall, the player must find the Lecture Room One (LRO). The player can either:

1. Interact with Joey and ask for directions to LRO.
2. Wander around aimlessly searching for LRO.

*Opening scene: Ayanda enters the Great Hall.  
[Enter music descriptions here]*

**Ayanda**

[Internal Dialogue is represented in italics]

*Oh okay, this place is definitely bigger than it looks on the brochure. And there’s way more people than I thought there’d be. But then again, it is a University after all. It’s kinda like they’re cattle being rounded up all in one place and divided by their intellect. Woah. That’s crazy…I should probably stop staring! Hmm…I wonder how mom’s doing. She’s probably worried I got lost at the taxi rank. I should probably call he- JESUS CHRIST! It’s already 7:54? Ugh, my first lecture is at 8am! Dammit, this place is like a maze. Ah shit, what was the name of that room again? L-Lecture Hall? Lecture – place? Ah dammit, I can’t be late! Everyone will stare at me when I walk in! Okay, okay, let me just think.*

***CHOICES:***

1. *ASK SOMEONE FOR DIRECTIONS TO THE LECTURE ROOM* ***[INSERT STAT/BUFF/DEBUFF]***
2. *WANDER THROUGH THE HALLS LOOKING FOR THE LECTURE ROOM YOURSELF* ***[INSERT STAT/BUFF/DEBUFF]***

*Choice 1 result:*

**Ayanda**

*Wait. That guy over there looks like he’s lost too. Shit but I’m sweating. What if he thinks I’m weird or I’m on drugs or something? Woah and he’s dressed well. He looks like those North types. He probably thinks I’m a charity ca- OH SHIT 7:58?? Okay, okay, just be normal and walk up to him, and say…*

H-hey man. Er. Dude. Um. Uh. Sorry, I, uh. Um…

**Joey**

Hmm? Oh, sup man. You good?

**Ayanda**

*Shit he can see I’m nervous. Okay calm down. He’s just a human just like you…*

Um…Yeah, yeah all good! How are-how are you? Uh. Man?

**Joey**

I’m good man, just gonna be hella late for my first class. Should’ve gone to that orientation week, amiright?

**Ayanda**

*Okay cool, I’ll ask him what class he’s going to…*

Oh yeah. Me too. Um. Where’re you going?

**Joey**

Uh, like I said – to my first class

**Ayanda**

*Shit dude, you blew it! Now he thinks you’re an idiot!*

Um. Ha! Yeah, class. Um, but what I meant was whe-

**Joey**

Nah I’m just messing witcha, I’m going to Lecture Room One. That’s where the Digital Arts introductory lecture’s at.

*[Positive audio indicating successful interaction]*

**Ayanda**

*That’s what it was called!*

Oh snap, really? Me too! Uh. First year?

**Joey**

Ah damn yeah! What a co-inky-dink! Hey, wanna head over there together? You sorta looked lost there.

**Ayanda**

*Ah shit he knows…*

Oh yeah! I mean, I’d love to go with you – TO THE LECTURE ROOM! Not, like on a date or anything. ‘Cause I just met you, I mean, you could be a murder or someth – not that you look like a murderer or anything! Just…that…I…uh…

**Joey**

Haha, bro just stop talking and follow me before you dig a deeper hole for yourself.

END OF CHOICE 1

*END OF SCENE 1*

*Choice 2 result: Carries over to SCENE 2*

*Opening scene: Ayanda is 20 minutes late for the lecture. He walks into LRO and everyone stares at him, and Mrs Engelbrecht reprimands him in front of everyone. Specific stats are negatively affected.*

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Ah yes class, here is a perfect example of someone who lacks a critical skill required for this course - time management. Excuse me Sir?

**Ayanda**

Uh…erm…sorry, me?

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Yes. I don’t see anyone else trying to sneak into the room 20 minutes late.

*[Negative audio indicating unsuccessful interaction]*

**Ayanda**

*OH GOD. OH GOD. OH GOD.*

I – uh, I was j-just trying t-to get –

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Get on my nerves? Well you’ve succeeded. Now please, quietly find your way to the back of the room and remain seated.

**Ayanda**

*Stop shaking dammit!*

Oh, o-okay…

*[Ayanda finds his seat at the back of the room next to Joey]*

**Ayanda**

*Oh my god I should’ve just stayed outside! I can just feel them staring, judging. It’s like they’re ready to crucify me. Why didn’t I just skip today?*

END OF CHOICE 2

**SCENE 2**

**Location:** LRO

**Audio: --**

**Characters:** Ayanda, Joey, Engelbrecht, Lana, Ntando

**Player Goal:** Introduce yourself to the class

**Action:** After settling down in the LRO, Ayanda must introduce himself to the class.

1. Tell class about your hobbies, interests and goals.
2. Tell class your name, surname.

*Opening scene: Ayanda is seated next to Joey in LRO.*

*[Enter music descriptions here]*

**Joey**

I did hear that this Engelbrecht lady is quite the stiff.

**Ayanda**

Y-yeah. No kidding.

**Joey**

The name’s Joey by the way. Joey Vorster.

**Ayanda**

Huh? Oh! Hey Joey.

**Joey**

Uh, you got a name attached to that face?

**Ayanda**

Oh shit, sorry, uh Ayanda…Jama. Ayanda Jama is the name of my face. Um, sorry.

**Joey**

Haha, I like you Ayanda Jama. You got a cool swag about you.

**Ayanda**

*Wait what? Was that a compliment? From a dude who looks like he could buy my entire wardrobe? But he doesn’t even know me. Why would he like me because of my swag?*

Haha, uh, thanks man. I, uh…

*Come on, think of a nice compliment*

I like your…uh…hair?

**Joey**

My hair? Woah, thanks I guess. You know, you don’t always have to respond to a compliment with another compliment.

**Ayanda**

*Ah shit, he thinks I’m a suck-up now.*

Oh. Um, I’m sorry…

**Joey**

Dude, you don’t have to apologize for everything.

**Ayanda**

Oh, you’re right, I’m sorry. Ah shit, sorry! Dammit! Um, sorry! Uuugh!

**Joey**

Hahaha! Dude, you’re like a movie.

**Ayanda**

Uh..um…

**Joey**

It’s a compliment.

**Ayanda**

Oh! Uh, thanks!

*I can’t tell if he’s being serious or if he’s just trolling me…*

*[Mrs Engelbrecht continues with the introductory lecture but Ayanda finds the concepts being discussed difficult to understand. Just before the class is dismissed, Mrs Engelbrecht asks the class to stand up and introduce themselves to one another.]*

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Alright class, now that we have all the formalities out of the way. I’d like to do a little social exercise.

**Ayanda**

*Oh God…*

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

For the next four years, you will be working closely with the people in this room as you work towards completing your degree – that is assuming you pass of course.

**Ayanda**

*I should just drop out now…*

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

You Sir…

**Ayanda**

Huh? Me?!

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Yes. *You.* Start the class off. Introduce yourself. But remember – first impressions are everything so really sell it!

**Ayanda**

Uuuuuhhhh….

***CHOICES:***

1. *TELL CLASS OF YOUR HOBBIES, INTERESTS AND GOALS* ***[INSERT STAT/BUFF/DEBUFF]***
2. *TELL CLASS YOUR NAME AND SURNAME* ***[INSERT STAT/BUFF/DEBUFF]***

*CHOICE 1 RESULT: TELL CLASS OF YOUR HOBBIES, INTERESTS AND GOALS*

**Ayanda**

M-my name is, uh, Ayanda. Um…my – my surname is, J-Jama.

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Okay, and?

**Ayanda**

I, uh. I’m here because I want to make really cool, uh, really meaningful games. I’m also really interested in game production and using games to, uh, tell stories and maybe use games as, um, educational tools. Uh, yeah.

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Hmm, how profound!

*[Positive audio indicating successful interaction]*

**Lana**

What kind of games do you play?

*[Choice 1: Resident Evil 5]*

*[Choice 2: Journey]*

***Result of:***

*[Choice 1: Resident Evil 5]*

**Ayanda**

Um…I really liked Resident Evil 5. I really like how they maintained the thematic tastes of the previous, uh, Resident Evils. And the graphic advancements were, uh, really cool.

**Lana**

Oh. Yeah. I really like how they portrayed the African natives as mindless savages whose sole purpose was to be slaughtered by the white, heteronormative male hero right?

**Ayanda**

Yeah! Exact- oh, wait no, what I meant was, uh –

*[Negative audio indicating unsuccessful interaction]*

*[Choice 2: Journey]*

**Ayanda**

Um…I really liked Journey. I really like how they took the player on, well a journey, but it went far deeper than that and explored varying themes and the emotional arc, it’s just, like, intense. I mean, don’t get me started on, uh, the soundtrack.

**Lana**

Ha! I have the entire OST on my laptop actually. It’s spiritual.

**Ayanda**

What? Ha! Me too!

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Alright, alright. We’ll get to the nitty-gritty about games later. Ayanda, what are your goals for the end of this course?

*[Choice 1: To develop my own game production company]*

*[Choice 2: To make my mother proud]*

***Result of:***

*[Choice 1: To develop my own game production company]*

**Ayanda**

Um…I’d probably wanna eventually establish my own, uh, game publishing company? And, I don’t know, maybe provide workshops to youths or something cheesy like that, I don’t know...

**Lana**

That is quite cheesy…

**Ayanda**

*Ah you blew it…*

**Lana**

But just the right amount of cheese to actually be really sweet!

**Ayanda**

*Oh…uh…did that actually go well?*

*[Choice 2 - To make my mother proud] :*

**Ayanda**

Well, my mom always told me to do what it is that I loved, and this is what I love. And she’s worked really hard to get me to where I am today so I wanna do this for myself, but mostly, for her.

**Lana**

That’s so sweet!

**Ayanda**

Haha…er..thank you…

**Ntando**

HAH! GAAAY!

*[Negative audio indicating unsuccessful interaction]*

**Ayanda**

*Hnnnnnnggggg………*

*[CHOICE 2 RESULT: TELL CLASS YOUR NAME AND SURNAME]*

**Ayanda**

M-my name is, uh, Ayanda. Um…my – my surname is, J-Jama.

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Okay, and?

**Ayanda**

Um…that’s just about it actually…

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Oh, come now, there must be something more interesting than a government title?

**Ayanda**

Uh, there really isn’t that much to say…

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

So that’s it? Just another number in the system?

*[Negative audio indicating unsuccessful interaction]*

**Ayanda**

Umm…

*[Choice 1: Look at Joey]*

*[Choice 2: Sit down]*

***Result of:***

*[Choice 1: Look at Joey]*

[Ayanda looks at Joey for support]

**Joey**

Number? Ma’am, this fine young man is not a number – he’s an equation!

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Excuse me?

**Joey**

Common mistake Ma’am, you’re excused. But this gentleman here is more than a number – he’s an equation! He’s complex! He’s layered! He carries many expressions and many more variables! And being such a complex being, he doesn’t reveal all his mysteries! It is up to us to solve the equation that is him!  
  
**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Er…that was…

**Joey**

Brilliant? Poetic?

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Unnecessary…

**Joey**

I still stand by my point! Also – Hi, I’m Joey.

**Ayanda**

*Wow…did Joey just save my ass? That’s really…nice of him*

*[Choice 2: Sit down]*

**Ayanda**

Yeah…I guess so…

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Hmm…Hardly impressive. If you’re going to shape up to a contributing member of this industry, let alone of society, you’ll have to grow a spine Sir.

*[Negative audio indicating unsuccessful interaction]*

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Alright! Enough personal questions for today. We must now address an infinitely bigger assignment. I want you all to pair up in groups and discuss your game plans for the year and for the next four years of your University career. We will use these as an aid to set personal milestones and goals and reflect your progress throughout the year. You will present these ideas as a live presentation.

**Ayanda**

*D-d-did she say, p-p-presentation???*

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

You will pick your partners tomorrow. Choose wisely and good luck!

**Ayanda**

*Ah man, I really didn’t want to have to do this! Oh god now I’m gonna let my partner down. But wait, I wonder who my partner should be.*

*After class, Ayanda returns home, exhausted and goes straight to sleep.*

*END OF SCENE 2*

**SCENE 3**

**Location:** Dreamworld

**Audio: --**

**Characters:** Ayanda and/or Joey or Lana

**Player Goal:** Battle the Nightmare of “Crippling Social Anxiety” ew.

**Action:** Fight against the Nightmare and while balancing Ayanda’s anxieties.

[Left this scene out as it has different varying outcomes, will revisit later]

*END OF SCENE 3*

*Depending on the outcomes of the previous day/night, some stats or choices will not be made available to the player.*

**DAY TWO:** *LECTURE ROOM/DREAMWORLD*

**SCENE 4**

**Location:** LRO

**Audio: --**

**Characters:** Ayanda, Joey and Lana

**Player Goal:** Figure out the concepts being discussed in class

**Action:** Ask Lana or Joey for help.

*Opening scene: Ayanda is in LRO but is struggling to grasp the concepts being discussed. Mrs. Engelbrecht spots Joey struggling and asks him if he understands what is being discussed.*

**Ayanda**

*Hmm…wait, what the hell is discourse? And where the hell does Foucault fit in? Geez-Louis, this is some advanced English right here!*

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Mr. Jama? Is there a problem or is that your natural facial expression?

**Ayanda**

S-sorry ma’am?

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Do you understand what is being discussed Mr. Jama?

**Ayanda**

Uuuuhhh…

*[Choice 1: Ask Mrs. Engelbrecht to explain further]*

*[Choice 2: Pretend to know what’s going on]*

**Result of:**

*[Choice 1: Ask Mrs. Engelbrecht to explain further]*

**Ayanda**

Uh…no ma’am…

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Did you read the three chapters of this section Mr. Jama?

**Ayanda**

Er…I…uh…no…

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Very well. In that case, I’ll leave it up to you to consciously forsake your duties as a student throw away your future. I will not waste time explaining concepts to those who have not made the effort to learn them!

*[Negative audio indicating unsuccessful interaction]*

[END OF CHOICE 1]

**Result of:**

*[Choice 2: Pretend to know what’s going on]*

**Ayanda**

Uh…yeah! Yeah we’re, uh…discussing the, uh..

**Lana**

…Power dynamics and relationships in society that are expressed through language and practices. That’s what you were gonna say, right Ayanda?

**Ayanda**

Uh…yeah! Yeah exactly! Power, uh, dynamism and all that...

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Hmm…Very well then Mr. Jama. It *appears* that you know what you’re talking about.

*[Positive audio indicating unsuccessful interaction]*

**Lana**

It would probably help if you opened the book and actually read it you know?

**Ayanda**

Haha, uh, yeah, that would actually help...

**Lana**

I’ve read ahead already and know a bit about Foucault. I could help with this section if you want.

**Ayanda**

Oh, uh…

*[Choice 1: “Like a date?”]*

*[Choice 2: “No thanks, I work best alone”]*

**Result of:**

*[Choice 1: “Like a date?”]*

**Ayanda**

*Wait, is Lana asking me on a date or is she just being nice? Okay, play it cool…*

…like a private tutor or…

**Lana**

Yeah! We can go over the content over lunch. Like…a date…

**Ayanda**

*Oh…oh shit…don’t blow this!*

Yeah, uh…sure!

*[Positive audio indicating unsuccessful interaction]*

**Lana**

Perfect!

*[END OF CHOICE 1]*

**Result of:**

*[Choice 2: “No thanks, I work best alone”]*

**Ayanda**

Um, no thanks…I’ve just had a lot on my plate lately. I haven’t had the time to really, uh, get into the swing of things here.

**Lana**

Oh dang. You want to talk about it?

**Ayanda**

No! Uh, I mean, nah it’s all good.

*If you tell her how messed things back home are, she’ll probably take pity on me and that’s the last thing I want right now. That and to do this stupid presentation.*

**Lana**

Oh, uh. Sorry. Just wanted to help…

*[Negative audio indicating unsuccessful interaction]*

**Ayanda**

*Great! Now she thinks I’m some loser with a tragic past and unresolved emotional trauma or some shit. Way to go idiot!*

*[END OF CHOICE 2]*

**Mrs Engelbrecht**

Alright class split up and each pick partners for the presentation on Thursday. Pick carefully as you’ll rely heavily on these individuals.

**Ayanda**

Hmm…I wonder who I should pick?

*[Choice 1: Choose Joey – gain speech skill point?]*

*[Choice 2: Choose Lana – gain intelligence skill point?]*

**Result of:**

*[Choice 1: Choose Joey]*

**Ayanda**

*Hmm…Joey really had my back, back there. And he really knows how to wow a crowd.*

**Result of:**

*[Choice 1: Choose Lana]*

**Ayanda**

*Lana really knows her stuff and she seems pretty confident in it too – plus, I could get to know her better…*

*[Gain a skill point dependant on who Ayanda chooses]*

*Writer’s notes:  
I think I’ll end it here as I’m not too sure of the technical capabilities yet nor if any of what I just wrote made any sense. If you need more clarity, which is likely, please let me know and we can work through it together. Thanks 😊*