Game Bible

**Themes/Lore Breakdown:**

Overall themes are about humanities need for connectedness; humans being social creatures that can only thrive with cooperation and support from other humans. Themes about repetition in life as well as the characters relive the same day over and over, getting stuck in our ways and living out the same life day in and day out becoming more jaded and less connected, less thoughtful and more reactive. As well as this, themes of characters becoming more closed off after traumatizing events, or mistakes they’re ashamed of, which snowballs into them feeling as though they need to wear figurative masks because they’re afraid of people seeing the true them after these events. Themes of learning to accept shortcomings and unfortunate happenings.

In terms of lore, generally it should not be made explicit to the player, but the world/lore/plot should be built mainly through environmental storytelling and vague allusions from conversations. There may be instances when things need clarification for puzzle purposes, so the player can deduce what they’re doing and why, but we want to keep it light or somewhat abstract as much as possible.

The intention behind the lore would seem to be that this is some form of afterlife, but far from a pretty picture of one. When people die and are either unable to accept it, or undeserving of a better afterlife, they end up in this limbo. When they first arrive, they have some sense about them, much as the protagonist does when they arrive now. The world here is a sort of living creature, that seems to feed off the people it houses. It seems to want to keep them here, entrancing them in a near perfect world in the image of their town before the tragedy. Over time, if they can’t solve their own or other’s issues, they fall into the comfort of familiarity this world provides and lose themselves to the repetition of it until they no longer realize they’re living the same day for eternity, becoming a husk of their former selves with little capacity for independent or out of the box thought. It shrouds them from seeing truths, and clouds their past traumas and mistakes from them so that they live in a sort of false comfort, never actually addressing their ills or their fate. They forget their lives, forget their intricacies, and become “smoothed over” versions of their former selves, free of any blemishes, but lacking any depth they once had because of their imperfections. By doing this, the world keeps them in it so it can continue to feed off them.

When the world itself rests, this brings about the nightfall, where the spirits are granted a brief reprieve from the spellbound world they’re attached to. In these times, the villagers become more themselves, but a ruined and hopeless version of themselves, able to see how they continually fall to the worlds spell every cycle, now powerless to do anything about it. These shades of their former selves will be useful windows into who the villagers once were, and what their true thoughts/fears are.

When a character confronts their mistakes/traumas and can come to terms with them, the worlds grip on them weakens and this allows them to escape and move onto whatever destination comes next for them.

**Plot Breakdown:**

Jordan (Protagonist name chosen to be gender-neutral at this point, but may be reworked if we assign gender for some purpose later – for my purposes, I’ll refer to Jordan as a female throughout this) awakens in a scorched, ruined town surrounded by rubble. They feel a flash of heat and pain through their body upon awakening. A haze of smoke and fog cloud the air. Some fires still burn lightly in the area, the only remaining source of light here other than the faint moon above. Jordan feels familiar here, yet disconnected from it.

A familiar voice calls out through the gloom to Jordan, though Jordan can’t tell where it’s coming from or who it is.

“You’ve ended up back here as well… Hadn’t expected to see you again. Seems the fates festivities come through other’s miseries.”

[Dialogue Choice 1] – Who are you?

“Best start thinking in terms of character instead of labels, or you’ll end up like everyone else here. This place is a closed book that’d like nothing more than for you to get lost staring at it’s cover. Do whatever you can to ward off that fate; the surface isn’t as charming as it’d like you to think. It’s coming back again. Try not to lose yourself to it.”

[Dialogue Choice 2] – Where am I?

“You can already feel it. But hang on to that little piece of you that says something about it is crooked. Something foul. This place is a closed book that’d like nothing more than for you to get lost staring at it’s cover. Do whatever you can to ward off that fate; the surface isn’t as charming as it’d like you to think. It’s coming back again. Try not to lose yourself to it.”

In a flash, the world around Jordan has transformed. From the destroyed town, to a picturesque, beautiful town center. Flowers, greenery, trees, healthy fields with vegetation and more surround Jordan here. Birds chirp, a babbling brook can be heard, and an inviting fire blazes in the town firepit. People are out and about in their yards, running their shops and smiling all the while. Regardless, something about this place feels hollow. The smiles are a bit too wide; the birds a bit too aggressive; the brook a bit too loud, and the air from the fire almost cool to the touch…. The searing pain Jordan felt when they first woke up has been replaced with a comforting, though disconcerting numbness.

The camera pans to a building that seems to call out for Jordan to go to it. If the player goes there, they will find an armoury, empty of body but filled with various armors big and small. A muddied piece of armor sits on a workbench, with a rag next to it. Jordan senses it begging to be polished. Looking at the armor, she feels a longing, like the feeling one gets when they wake early after a restless sleep; knowing the day is here, but wanting so desperately to shrug off the duties it brings, and close one’s eyes to fall back into the forgiveness of a much-needed slumber. As she grows closer to it, the words of the familiar voice ring out in her head: “*Try not to lose yourself to it*.” Jolting back, she feels she should leave this place, before the lure of it all becomes too much.

**Character Breakdown:**

Jordan (protagonist) – Has just come to this world for the first time. Can’t remember who they were, or where they are, or what their name is. Sort of a blank slate for the player at the start, though some backstory will be implied throughout. Faced with an overbearing and gruff father determined to pass the family shop on, Jordan felt at odds most of their life with their father. Her mother either passed away or left when Jordan was very young. She can’t know for sure, as her father has refused to ever talk of her.

Familiar voice – either will be implied to be, or revealed to be Jordan’s father. The father was the town armourer, and the armourer’s shop that calls out to Jordan belonged to him. A man with a tough way about him, with barely a thought about what this fabled thing called a “feeling” may be, armor has been his life calling as a means of keeping your insides where they ought to be.

Blacksmith –

Stonemason –

Baker –

Winemaker – believes that the answer to most of life’s problems can be found at the bottom of a bottle, at least temporarily, but as long as you have another bottle ready to go, then you have an infinite number of solutions. In her life, her son left because he couldn’t bare to watch his mother drink her life away. Feeling as though she would always have more time to fix things, she will need to come to terms with not only the drinking, but the fact that she has passed away unexpectedly without being able to reconcile with her son.

Farmer – Always getting knocked down and pushed around. Wind, horses, the merchants cart, ext. As a peasant, the Farmer has always felt at the mercy of the whims of others far more powerful than him. In his youth he was called upon by the King to serve as a man-at-arms for many wars. Blight and tithes took his crops. Sickness took a daughter. A war took a son. In the day time he is jovial and unbothered by his misfortune and “clumsiness”, and speaks about the royalty and clergy with reverence. At night he becomes scared at times or panicked and violent in others. Redemption: Prove to him that he is a serf to no one anymore?

Locksmith –

Merchant –

Outsider – the final NPC that can’t be helped until everyone else has been.

**Puzzle Breakdown:**

*Mainly, the player will discover bits of information through environmental interaction (i.e.; the player explores the household of the blacksmith, finds that the smith’s house has an unused child’s bedroom, which then unlocks a new dialogue option), interaction with the NPC’s either during day or night (basic dialogue options, and unlocked dialogue options as above, which can then entail new information and more unlocked dialogue options; the player may also unlock information for the smith by talking to another NPC like the NPC’s friend/wife/husband/etc), or by possessing the NPC’s key item.*

*Key items may be hidden throughout the world, though should have some barriers to obtaining them. This may mean the player obtains the key item for one NPC by helping a different NPC, or completing some form of puzzle, or finding a secret area (such as interacting with a box and realizing there’s a staircase to a basement hidden beneath the box). Key items may or may not expressly showcase which NPC they’re related to – in most cases, it would be preferable for the player to have to piece information together and have their “eureka” or breakthrough moment when they figure out which item goes to who and why that item applies to that character.*

*In order to finish the NPC’s campaign, the player must learn the backstories, identify and possess the key item for that NPC, and use their knowledge of the NPC and their backstory to guide their final interaction towards a conclusion that breaks the illusion for the NPC so that they see the reality of their situation and are able to move on.*

*Ideally, the player gets to feel like a sort of detective unraveling mysteries in a very mysterious world that’s not eager to reveal itself. I’d like to implement a “clues” system if we can, where players pick up clues as noted above (environmental/NPC interaction/possessing items), and then the player can choose those clues in dialogues to further conversation. Some clues may be red herrings. All obtained clues would be available to the player to choose from in a list when confronting an NPC with dialogue/questioning, as this means the player really must work out in their mind the puzzle from start to finish in their heads. We don’t want to have the game simply lead them down the correct path by prompting them with the correct answers in dialogue choices, as then there’s no payoff for the player, and they don’t get to feel like they’ve actually solved anything.*

**Possible ideas to flesh out gameplay/mechanics if needed:**

Clues system – as noted under puzzle breakdown, ideally we have a sort of journal that logs all the clues the player gets by exploring/conversing. These clues can be applied in conversations to try and overturn beliefs/lies that the villagers have convinced themselves of/been convinced of by the world around them. Breaking these beliefs will shake the character, offering up new dialogue choices and more clues for the player to piece together the characters background.

Timed dialogue system – we can create a dialogue system with multiple dialogue choices, as well as beef it up with other things to make it interesting and add stakes to conversations, forcing players to be more active and involved in the process. Since the world the player is in is designed to be superficial and barre the villagers/player from authentically connecting to one another, the player should feel tested in the same way. Thus, a system with quick flowing dialogue, where the player has only a few seconds to respond could be put in place (to be used outside of the times where the player is reconstructing background events to solve a backstory). If a dialogue option is not selected, the player remains silent, which is in itself a choice that may be equally valid in some places, and not in others. Say for instance, the player begins a breakthrough with an NPC, and the NPC begins revealing new information. The player has more dialogue choices to make to keep the flow of information going. The player should have been able to figure out by this point that the NPC had a daughter at one point, and can leverage that knowledge in the conversation. The dialogue options the player can choose may have one reference to a daughter, and one to a son. If the player was paying attention and invested in the characters story, they can snap quickly onto the relevant daughter dialogue option, but if they weren’t and they choose son, the NPC will feel misled and go back into neutral mode. Alternatively, if the player says nothing, the NPC may offer up another piece of dialogue to continue the conversation, and perhaps the player can suss out other information from there, but will be missing the piece they’d have gotten if they selected the correct dialogue option there.

Partner of some sort – this could be a useful mechanic to allow the player to bounce ideas off of. Again, we want to avoid spoon-feeding the player the answers, but possibly have this partner character that the player can try to reconstruct backstories with without penalty of failing a dialogue progression, and the partner can refute or add to ideas the player comes up with to gently nudge in the right direction. For instance,