

LITTLE GIRL

Narrative Design Document

Table of Contents

Preface	3
General Overview.....	4
Narrative Summary.....	4
Characters (in order of appearance)	4
Narrative Flow, Spaces	4
Narrative Flow, Gameplay Segments	4
Contextual Notes.....	5
Narrative Themes and Messages	6
Racism, Xenophobia and Systemic Oppression	6
Military Desensitization	6
Law Enforcement Brutality, Corruption and Abuse of Power	7
Respect for Differences	7
Worldbuilding Overview.....	8
General Civil War Alternative Timeline	8
1861.....	8
1862	8
1863	8
1864.....	9
1865	9
1866.....	9
Situation as of February 1867 (Present Game Date).....	10
Information about The Longest Train.....	10
Union's Recognition of Independence of the Southern and Western States	11
Narrative Structure, Prelude.....	12

(Sample, Document Incomplete)

Preface

*The longest train
That I ever did see
Was a hundred coaches
Long.*

*Its front was born
In the western coast,
Its tail was mourned
In the east.*

*Little girl, little girl,
Don't lie to me.
Tell me, where
Did you sleep last night?*

*Your daddy was
A railroad man
Killed a mile and a half
From here.*

*His head was found
In the driver's wheel,
His body was
Never found.*

*Your master hunts you
In the night,
But you wanted
Never to be found.*

*Little girl, little girl,
Don't lie to me.
Tell me, where
Did you sleep last night?*

*In the pines, in the pines,
Where the sun never shines,
And you shiver
When the cold winds blow.*

General Overview

Narrative Summary

In an alternative-reality California where the Confederate States have won the American Civil War, an enslaved little girl and her sister must escape their master's farm and travel across the country to get on a ship to Europe.

Characters (in order of appearance)

a Little Girl A little slave girl from California, intent on escaping her Big Sister Her older sister, hesitant about escaping, scared that the plan may fail
an Old Man A vile and volatile old man, the two sisters' owner
an Old Lady A helping old lady, that belongs to the Underground Railroad
an Unnamed Soldier A traumatized, delusional soldier who lives in the nearby woods
a Kindred Boy A slave child, found among others and spoken to when passing the town

Narrative Flow, Spaces

Prelude

Crossroads (cutscene only)

Act I

Barn > Farm > Owner's House > Farm (outer) > Woods I

Intermezzo

Soldier's House > Woods II

Act II

Village > Old Lady's House > Woods II

Act III

Woods II > Train Station > The Longest Train

Narrative Flow, Gameplay Segments

Narrative

Puzzle

Narrative

Puzzle

Stealth

Puzzle

Narrative

Stealth

Narrative

The first stealth segment should come in as a surprise, but in a low-risk situation; we want the player to feel the sudden rise in tension, but not become frustrated with an unexpected outcome in case of failure.

Contextual Notes

The game's visual identity is tailored to **look and feel like a silent film from the 1920s** (of the likes of Metropolis and Nosferatu), and in-depth cutscenes are intertwined with **point and click adventure**-styled gameplay segments to unravel the story in a serious tone, and to **deliver a heartfelt and emotionally impacting message of solidarity and unity**.

Each scene is captured through a series of **fixed camera angles** reminiscent of the Resident Evil game series, strategically positioned to escalate tension and **expand or limit vision** and information gathering.

An Expressionist, Tim Burton-like style **exaggerates features and forms**, even within the lack of colour. Throughout the story, there is a very small increase in color, from the initial black-and-white grayscale to a faded color palette (to be defined with the art department). **This change occurs gradually as the player progresses** through the game's objectives.

Similarly, the main menu also evolves as the player unravels the story. Initially an interactive menu that travels around an old normal cinema room, the environment becomes more and more destroyed and messy as the narrative develops, getting to the point in which it's possible to hear a riot happening outside of the doors.

(This will eventually tie into another game's narrative in the future, shh!!)

At any point of the game, **only the Little Girl's face should be visible**. A vital part of the narrative impact of the girl's story is that she's not comfortable looking people in the eyes, and, as such, **the game shouldn't contain camera angles that show any faces besides hers**. Every character should have a specific body part extremely detailed (even excessively, at times), in the following way:

Big Sister

Her chest is detailed, as a memory of all the times the Little Girl hugged her and slept in her arms.

Old Man

His shoes are detailed. The Little Girl is used to looking down when he's around.

Old Lady

Her belt and hands are detailed. This is a woman that works tirelessly in the railroad, and it shows.

Unnamed Soldier

His shoulders are detailed, as he represents safety, a haven from the dangers of the world.

Kindred Boy

His scars are detailed, as they're the main characteristic that the Little Girl notices.

Unless specified otherwise, dialogue portions are presented as intertitles, and not spoken word.

Narrative Themes and Messages

Throughout the game, many themes, messages, and subjects will be touched upon, with a general idea of solidarity and unity as the main foundation for the story.

Racism, Xenophobia and Systemic Oppression

In a world where the Confederate States of America are established and slavery and racism are generally accepted, **one of the most important messages the narrative revolves around is racism.**

During their journeys, the Little Girl and the Unnamed Soldier experience and witness multiple situations in which racism and hatred are glaringly present, both from white people to black people and the other way around. This is a vital dynamic, as one of the main ideas that should come across all of these interactions is that **'hate generates hate'**.

A major part of their character arcs is that they are **gradually let go of their own hatred** and identify and understand that their **improvement must come from themselves**, through unity and communication.

Military Desensitization

The Unnamed Soldier is an archetype of the military force, constantly exposed to some of the most horrendous environments and monstrous actions known to man. Through his life as a soldier, he has been prepared for these actions, and has learnt to **repress feelings of disgust and fear**, which has ultimately **led to psychological trauma.**

Haunted by his past and scared of his own shadow, the Unnamed Soldier lives in the woods near a town where he lost a battle. **He sleeps in a small wooden cabin** he built himself, in which he lives **along with hallucinations of his family.** During the day, **he roams the woods**, as its thick tree line keeps away direct sunlight, and **allows him to avoid his shadow.**

He's very much desensitized after such aggressive battles, and **barely even flinches when witnessing violent scenes**, nor does he **protect the Little Girl's innocence** when she's there.

In his mind, it's important for the girl to be exposed to such vicious circumstances, as it will **'roughen her up' and make her become tough.**

The Little Girl has a different stance on this, and **hides her eyes and ears as much as she can** when subjected to disturbing situations.

Nearing the end of the game, the Unnamed Soldier's attitude leans a bit towards a protecting side, understanding that maybe his methods did more harm than good.

Law Enforcement Brutality, Corruption and Abuse of Power

In certain narrative beats, the two main characters will observe situations of abuse of power and law enforcement brutality. Some will be based on race, others purely due to the corruption of the “protective” forces.

In these cases, the Little Girl will always take a position of helping, while the Soldier will take a position of passing by without interacting to maintain stealth, as interfering would break their cover.

Despite the Soldier’s initial position to not interfere, he will always give into what the Little Girl defends: values of protection, appealing to the reason why he joined the Union, to fight injustice and oppression.

As such, the Girl and the Soldier will always intervene, and help the oppressed people. The Girl serves as the Soldier’s conscience and will, at all times, attempt to guide him towards what his moral sense tells him is right. And at all times, she will succeed.

The Unnamed Soldier himself is an example of loss of morality and sensitivity, and his arc is a personal journey that alludes to the way that many people need help guiding themselves in difficult choices, where doing the right thing is often the hardest course of action.

Respect for Differences

Oftentimes, it’s heard that everyone is equal and that differences should not be seen. This story is about how differences exist and will continue to exist, and that the beautiful thing about society is learning about them, and learning to understand and accept them as well.

Even within the same race, the Little Girl and the Unnamed Soldier have extremely dissimilar backgrounds, habits, and customs, and in their interactions, an evolution is shown. From two clashing stranger personalities to a respectful and empathetic friendship, the experiences they go through together and their mutual help build a trust between them, and they’re able to overcome each other’s differences because of it.

Worldbuilding Overview

General Civil War Alternative Timeline

1861

[February] Confederacy begins preparations for war following the Fort Sumter situation.

[April] Battle of Fort Sumter (as was, CSA won and recovered control of Fort Sumter).

[May] Confederate invention: The Meat Grinder (a Coffee Mill-like machine gun which used water-cooling to avoid overheating problems and had an effective range of ~750m).

[October] First Battle of Springfield (Confederacy win on Missouri).

[November] The Trent Affair (improved CSA-UK and CSA-FR relations - not enough to get military or political support, but enough to delay the Lyons-Seward Treaty).

Carl Stephens elected the first permanent President of the Confederate States of America.

1862

[February] Battle of Valverde (as was, CSA routed USA forces in New Mexico Territory).

The Mirror Divisions take place.

[March] Battle of Pea Ridge (guerrilla groups defeat Samuel Ryan Curtis, armed and trained by Earl Van Dorn to man the Meat Grinder).

Battle of Glorietta Pass (Pyron's supplies were brought in from Texas and picked up before the conflict began due to a guerrilla group intercepting the Union's sabotage).

[May] Battle of Winchester (as was, "Stonewall" Jackson defeated Nathaniel P. Banks, propelling his Valley Campaign, diverting vast amounts of Union soldiers to the Valley Front).

[July] The Seven Days Battles are won by Robert E. Lee, concentrating the barrages of artillery fire into the Union's batteries, causing the Union's reserve guns to come into play and, too, be decimated.

[December] Confederate forces (under General Tyler Wilkes) successfully invade Southern California and Utah, taking advantage of the diversion of troops caused by the ongoing Peninsula Campaign (led by Robert E. Lee)

1863

[June] After months of inconclusive battles, John Wilkes Booth, along with four other co-conspirators, kidnap Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant, meanwhile seriously gravely wounding Andrew Johnson.

[August] Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson retreat and reorganize, splitting the Peninsula Front into four armies, one of which would defend the Kentucky flank, another would press the attack and the two others would provide

guerrilla-like support (one of those would act as a pivot, supporting any of the main divisions if necessary, while the other stayed in Eastern Virginia).

[October] Campaign of Chattanooga stopped at birth: (Ulysses S. Grant still in Booth's custody) Joseph Hooker among the casualties; Rosecrans, Thomas and Sherman forced to retreat by flanking guerrilla-like warfare from a detached division of Bragg's army (responsible for Hooker's death).

[December] The Gettysburg Siege takes place, Robert E. Lee takes on Meade's fort, resulting in a tactical defeat, but strategic victory.

1864

[January] The Confederate States of America release President Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant.

[April] Red River Campaign stopped by Richard Taylor.

[June] "This is not war, this is murder": Robert E. Lee easily repulses Grant's attacks on Mechanicsville, Virginia.

[September] Shenandoah Valley Campaign stopped by Jubal Early in the Second Battle of Winchester.

[November] George B. McClellan wins the 1864 presidential election of the United States of America (McClellan: 55.0%, Lincoln: 45.0%); following Lincoln's kidnapping (and the rapid downfall of the war's frontiers), the public opinion on the current political and bellic situation of the country went down, resulting in Lincoln's defeat.

1865

[March] General Tyler Wilkes divides his army into three: one stays in Southern California, the smallest stays in South Utah (with orders to fall back if attacked and heavily outnumbered, served more as a recon and guerrilla team) and the largest force starts The Redding Campaign, supported by the CS Navy. Wilkes takes Anaheim in the Battle of Santa Ana.

[April] In what is known as the "Rise of Petersburg", Lee defeats Grant's attack on Petersburg, Grant is captured and killed (crime of war).

[May] Wilkes takes Visalia in the Second Battle of Dinuba.

[October] The Hawthorne Campaign started by General Oscar Walker.

[November] Walker takes Death and Amargosa Valleys, in the Battle of Funeral Mountains Ridge.

[December] Lee invades Harrisonburg but is repelled; the battle lasts for three days, resulting in casualties of around 62,835 (US: 34,712 / CS: 28,123).

1866

[March] CS Navy attacks and destroys US Navy's Harmony Harbor.

[May] Wilkes attacks Merced, succeeding on the fourth day (May 4th), in the Four Day Hell of Merced, resulting in casualties of around 41,083 (US: 24,902, CS: 16,181).

[September] Southern Utah army attacked in Bluff; falls back to Flagstaff and regroups.

[November] Southern Utah holds Flagstaff, part of the Southern California army flanks the Union forces and engages in guerrilla-like warfare, culling the Union forces' numbers.

[December] Opening ceremony of the Robert E. Lee Railroad, connecting South California to South Carolina with hopes of more easily enforcing the Western frontier of the war.

Situation as of February 1867 (Present Game Date)

Lee retreated from Harrisonburg, having done lots of damage to the outskirts of Washington, DC.

Wilkes, leading the Redding Campaign, is currently regrouped at Merced, California.

The Southern Utah Army is held at Flagstaff, facing reduced Union forces.

The Southern California Army returned to Southern California.

The Confederate States Navy controls the Western Coast.

Information about The Longest Train

The Longest Train is a train that runs on the Robert E. Lee Railroad. The railroad was finished on December 3rd, 1866, and was inaugurated on December 17th, 1866 (the one-year anniversary of the Battle of Harrisonburg).

To honour the most influential general in the War of Yankee Aggression – Robert E. Lee – both the railroad and the first coach of The Longest Train were named after him.

The railway was created to connect both sides of the Confederate offensive, crossing the Confederate States of America and allowing the transportation of supplies, weapons, and soldiers from one side to the other regularly.

An impressive technological achievement, the train used five engines distributed throughout the carriages.

The supply group – the group of coaches that transport the supplies – is powered by one engine.

Its usually lightweight cargo needs not more than that to move, which makes it suitable to be the last group.

The artillery group – the group of coaches that transport the weapons – needs a more complex engine (formed by two).

Its heavyweight characteristics ask for a more advanced engine, which is formed by two engines itself.

The back engine, closest to the supply group, divides its power into two sections, one which supports a lonely engine that pulls the supply group and another which supports the main engine of the artillery group.

The front and main engine, closest to the personnel group, focuses only on its group. For this reason, the front part of the group is where the heavy artillery is stored, while the lighter artillery is stored next to the back engine, which can then divide its attention properly without slowing the train.

The personnel group – the group of coaches that transport the soldiers – is propelled by two engines.

The back engine supports the rear coaches. It has the versatility to, if needed (when tighter curves approach), control the front engine of the artillery group, so as to avoid any damage or derailling from weight shift. The driver manually activates this control.

The front engine, located in the second coach (just after the driver's coach), is responsible for controlling all the other engines' potency as well as its own. It is the largest engine, followed by the main engine of the artillery group.

The focus on train length meant that it could transport heavier cargo whilst maintaining a low mass center. The train is composed of a hundred coaches, with each coach ranging from 14'9" to 60'3".

The Longest Train was a vital part of the Confederate States' strategy as it allowed quick communication and supply trading between war fronts. This proved to be a pivotal difference, without which they wouldn't have achieved independence.

Union's Recognition of Independence of the Southern and Western States

Following the attacks on Harrisonburg (lead by Robert E. Lee) on December 14th, 1865, the United States of America, biggest source of food for the United Kingdom, saw themselves pressured to accept the Confederate States' independency by the United Kingdom and France.

George B. McClellan, President of the United States of America, issued a statement in which he assured the North American people that this independence would not mean a cease of conflict.

In truth, this independence, officialized by CSA's Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin and the United Kingdom's USA Ambassador Richard Lyons in what would become the Benjamin-Lyons Treaty, was nothing more than an agreement that the Confederate States would not attack the Northern (and, more specifically, the North-eastern) states of the USA.

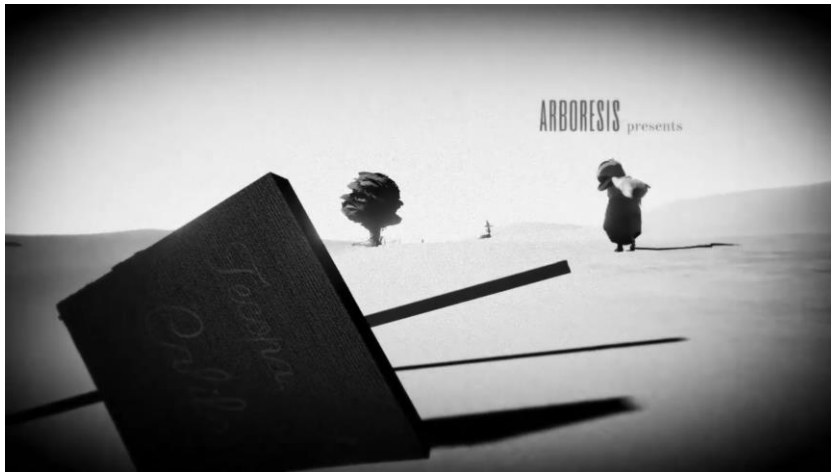
The Confederate States of America, then, became officially known as an independent nation on January 2nd, 1867.

Narrative Structure, Prelude

The Prelude is composed solely of an introductory cutscene, with no gameplay elements.

A slow and slumped Little Girl walks along a long, long road. The scorching desert sun distorts the air near the ground, stepped on by the girl's bare feet. She carries a large seed bag on her back and tied around her torso, along with many satchels and pouches with groceries and supplies.

A small location plaque lays half-buried in the sand. It reads "Tecopa, California".



The Oresis Tree on the left side of the road casts the only meaningful shadow in sight, accompanied by scarce rocks and weeds that populate the otherwise empty desert road.



Like the Little Girl, a distorted figure walks towards the crossroads from the opposite direction. When the girl approaches the crossroads, the figure is revealed to be a man in a Union military uniform. His face is not shown as he nears the main character and kneels.

INTERTITLE

The Characters

a Little Girl.....
her Big Sister.....
an Old Man.....
an Old Lady.....
an Unnamed Soldier.....
a Kindred Boy.....

The two are shown hugging, and the Little Girl presses her head against the soldier's shoulder, putting her hand on the Union insignia on his sleeve.

He's a Corporal, his uniform is battered, and his hat tightly wrapped around his lower forehead.

INTERTITLE

Centuries past would they meet;
Once, thrice, many times more.
Always there at the crossroads:
One on the right, Another on the left.
They hugged in silence, and wept.
"Goodbye", they said, and on they went.

- R.

The Little Girl is shown walking away, as the soldier goes the other way. She slows down and looks back one more time, then proceeds.

The game's title screen is shown, followed by the Act I title screen.



INTERTITLE

Act I

Dried flowers, old windows, and the morning sun

FIN

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