

Kurze Inhaltsangabe zu City of Hinnom:

Der Protagonist findet sich in einer Stadt ohne Menschen wieder. Der Protagonist hat kein eindeutiges Geschlecht und der Name kann frei gewählt werden, im Folgenden wird auf ihn jedoch mit er/ihn verwiesen. Auf der Suche nach Antworten, durchläuft er die Straßen.

Während der Story kann man drei Charaktere treffen. Alpha ist eine Barista. Iris ist die Kindheitsfreundin des Protagonisten und Lily ist eine mysteriöse Frau, die eine unscheinbare Vergangenheit mit dem Protagonisten hat.

Man steht mehrmals vor der Wahl, mit je einer der drei Charakteren zu bleiben oder weiter zu gehen. Sollte man bleiben, geht man die Route des jeweiligen Charakters, bei dem sie verschwinden, wenn sie Fröhlichkeit empfinden. Nach dem ersten Durchlauf einer solchen Route wird man an den Anfang des Spiels gesetzt. Man behält sämtliche Items und Wissen vorheriger Routen.

Nun kann man entweder eine neue Route gehen oder die alte wiederholen. Wenn man sie wiederholt, kommt man an das gute Ende für den Charakter, bei dem sie sich erinnern, wieso sie in dieser Stadt sind.

Wenn man mindestens ein gutes Ende erhalten hat, kann der Protagonist selbst sein gutes Ende erhalten und der Spieler sieht das wahre Ende des Charakters, bei dem man die meisten Punkte gesammelt hat.

Disclaimer zu Assets:

Alle Hintergründe, Charaktere und Items sind selbst gezeichnet.

Musik und SFX sind extern und stammen von einem guten Freund von mir.

Characters:

Character 1:

Iris

25

Florist/Bookworm (not quite but you meet her watering plants in a botanical garden)

Personality: Passionate and curious, loves nothing more than to immerse herself in a good book. Also empathetic and caring, takes her role of tending plants in the garden seriously, as she believes that even in this dark, desolate and lonely place she woke up in, beauty and kindness can still thrive.

Design:

Earthy and Natural colors

Actually should probably wear a dress or an apron (not apron because also got a barista)

Abilities: very sharp and notices logical fallacies or mistakes by others easily. Expert in horticulture and has deep knowledge of all kinds of plants. Jokes that she learned from being so bored that she read about it, but actually her mother taught her.

Strengths: Knowledgeable because she reads a lot, Curious, pretty athletic

Weaknesses:

Role: Reveal to the player that they might be dead

Narrative Design:

Context: one of three main characters

Background: From a quiet neighborhood in the capital, her mother owns a bookstore.

Was always an avid reader because of that. Discovered her love of flowers at a young age and spent much of her time helping her mother tend their garden. Doesn't know how she ended up here, but faintly remembers some kind of accident. Suspects that she died and everyone else here too.

Details: Should probably have a ribbon or other accessory in her hair

Other details: Her eyes have a spark behind them if she catches a lie

She is there to compare humanity and nature

Motivation: Wants to know what happened to humanity. Hopes to one day return to the world of the living, or at least figure out where she is right now. Until then, she is determined to make the most of her time in hell and to bring beauty and joy to this empty world by tending this lone spot of life within the botanical garden. She also hopes to continue to learn and never lose her love of books and knowledge. She has enough time to read anything she wants and is only afraid of getting bored of it.

Dimensionality:

Concept art:



Fashion: Sporty or Natural

Emotions: Calm, Curious, Deductive, Cheerful, Positive

Final Art:



Character:

Alpha

Barista/Photographer (she is an android but it is unsure if she knows, and if so then for how long)

Design: white/brown clothing; Either black or light hair / perhaps green (robot/alpha reference); Contrasting colors

Abilities: Makes fantastic coffee; Shoots stellar photos of people, favorite style is the dutch angle

Strengths: Philosophy, Kitchen skills, Understanding

Weaknesses: Gets angry when something is slightly off

Role: Introduces the MC to this new world

Narrative Design:

Context: One of three main characters

Background: Doesn't have a very long memory, just knows she's been there for a while

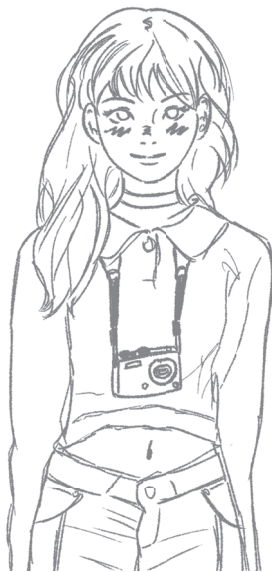
Has met few people, used to live a long time with someone else, unclear whether they died or left

Details: Camera around waist at all times

Other details: Likes to relax a lot, barely works (partly because there are no guests)

Dimensionality:

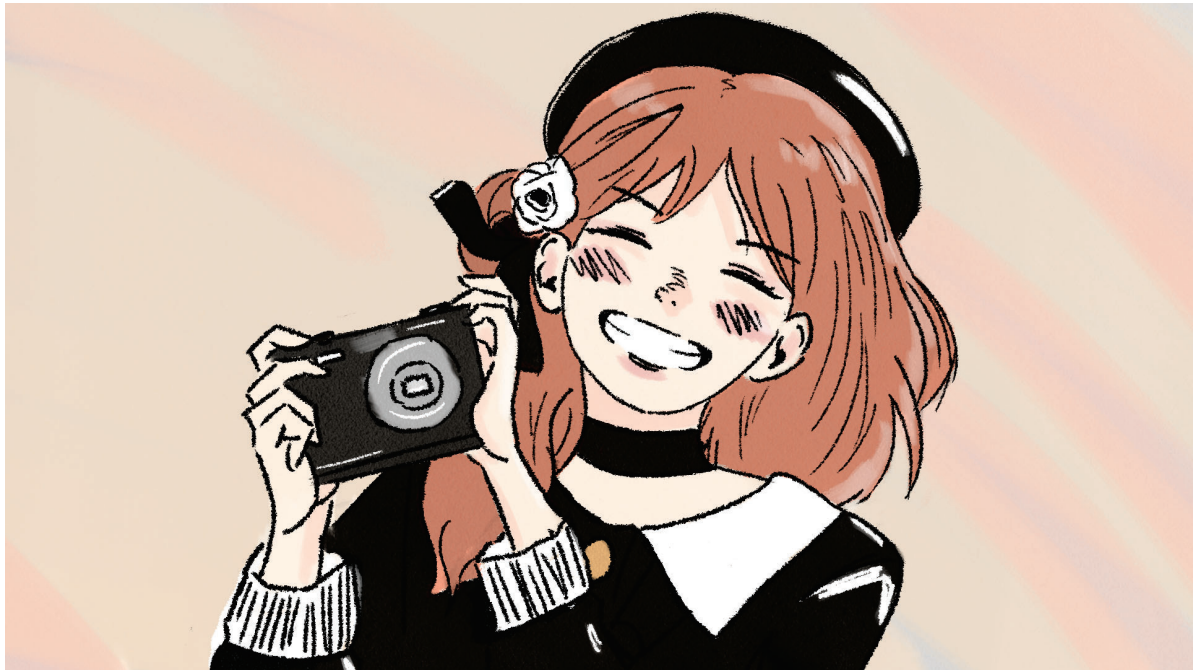
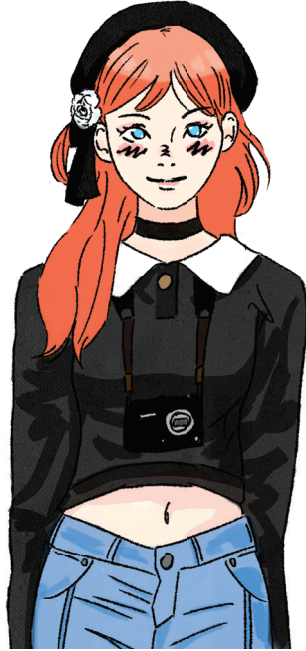
Concept art:



Fashion:

Barista outfit, perhaps casual streetwear as well

Final Art:



Character:

Lily

Young woman in her early twenties and quite short.

Design: Loose clothes and streetwear, pretty wrapped; Dark color scheme; She has light, straight hair. Wears a variety of hip clothing, preferably dark skirts, graphic t-shirts, sneakers and hoodies or sweaters that hide her figure. She has a few tattoos on her legs.

Abilities: Confident and persuasive person, can easily convince people to see things her way.

Strengths: Seems to be good at math and logical thinking, Very good at arcade games. Very headstrong and isn't afraid to speak her mind. Depending on the other person, can have a soft heart.

Weaknesses: Doesn't care for much except her own interests, can come across as aloof and detached. Tends to be stubborn.

Role: Supposed to help MC make the right decision/ come to the right conclusion

Context: One of three main characters

Background: Comes from a moderately wealthy family, always had enough growing up. Has a scar on her left arm that she hid with her hoodie, so you wouldn't recognize her immediately

Details: Has dyed hair

Other details: Hates sour fruits

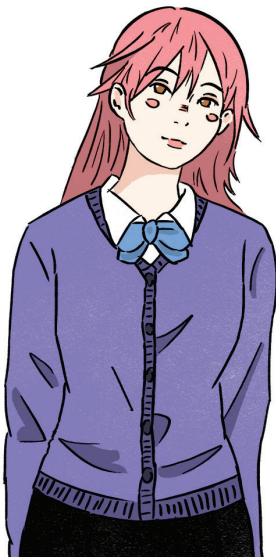
Dimensionality:

Concept art:



Fashion:
neutral/punky colors, Knack for street fashion
Tries to hide her femininity a bit

Final Art:



Design: Charakterdesign, (Klasse), Fähigkeiten, Stärken, Schwächen, Rolle im Spiel

Narrative Design: Kontext, Hintergrundinformationen, Details, Motivationen und Dimensionalität

Concept Art: Äußeres Erscheinungsbild des Charakters (inkl. Kleidungsstil und Ausrüstung), Gefühle des Charakters (Emotionen)

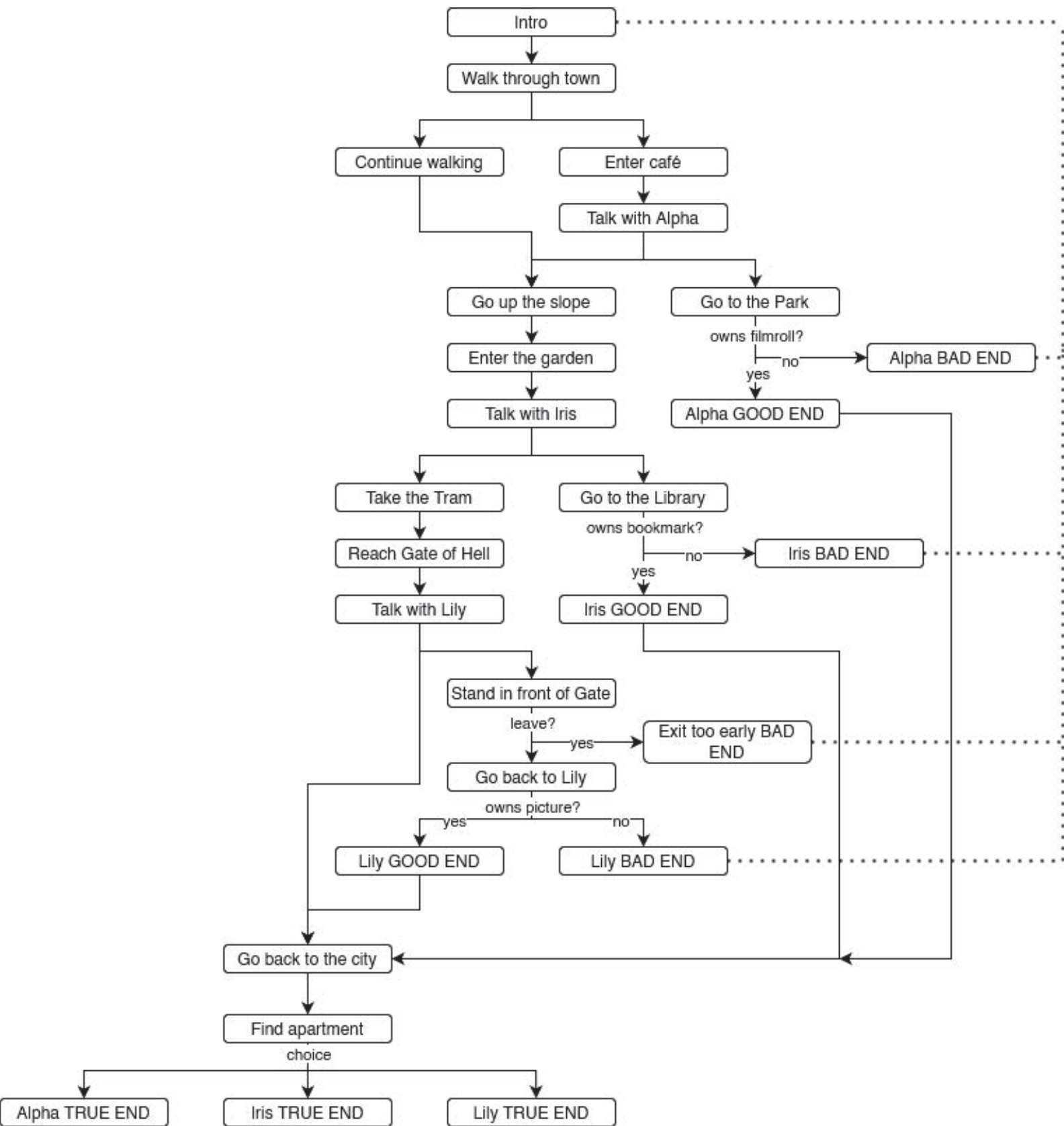
Final Art/3D modelling: (2D/3D); finales ingame-Erscheinungsbild

Animation: Bewegung des Charakters

Casting: Selektion eines Synchronsprechers

Audio/Performance: Voice Acting (Ausführen von Voice-Overs)

Implementation: Platzierung/Positionierung des Charakters mit allen notwendigen Assets, Attributen und Funktionalitäten



Script:

As the sun set over the city, its rays cast a fading glow over the empty streets and buildings.

I've only been here for what I thought were like a few hours, but for as far as I could see, there doesn't seem to be any sign of life. The only sound was the gentle rustling of leaves in the breeze, the buzzing of the dated lamps slowly turning on one by one, as well as the squeaking wheels of the vacant trams stopping in the nearby station.

The buildings were nothing but empty shells. Their windows reflected the artificial glow of the traffic lights. Not that there's any traffic, to begin with.

When I first opened my eyes and found myself here, I thought I must be dreaming. As I walked through the deserted city, I began to question everything. Why was I here? How did I get here? I have never been in a city like this, what is this place? I felt dreary and nauseous. Who wouldn't get a bit panicky in this situation.

I felt like I had just woken up from a dreamless sleep that lasted for days. It was like the last few days of my life were just a blur, a hazy memory that I couldn't grasp. But one thing was for sure: I wanted to go back home but had no idea where it was.

The lamps seemed dated and buzzed about like cicadas. Their noise got amplified because of the absence of all other sounds.

At first, I felt a sense of fear and confusion. Where had everyone gone? What had happened to the bustling metropolis that this place might have been? I couldn't help but feel disoriented and lost.

But as I started exploring the city, I did notice some upsides. I was able to roam the streets and buildings without fear of crowds or traffic. I could explore places I had never been before.

I just couldn't shake the feeling that I was being watched, and that I was not truly alone. This city functioned just fine on its own, store lights were on, traffic lights worked. It didn't even need a population.

Then, what purpose does a city serve if there's no one to live in it. Maybe I was the only one here and all of this was entirely made for me.

There was a tempting scent leading me just a few buildings down the street. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee, I wondered if that's automated as well.

This café appeared pretty inviting. The lights were on, so who knows, maybe I'll find someone else.

(Intro word count goal: 3000)

ACT A (ABYSS/ALPHA)

As I opened the door and the typical bell signals that a customer entered, I was greeted by a timid voice. A red haired girl with a camera around her neck stood behind the counter, carefully grinding coffee beans as if she wasn't sure how much pressure to apply. When she saw me, her eyes lit up a bit.

Alpha: Oh finally a new customer! Welcome. How much coffee do you want to drink?

Player: You're supposed to first say something like 'How can I help you'.

Alpha: Oh, is that so? Well, no one has ever complained about it so far. Come, sit down. I'll pour you a cup. You are being served by Alpha, the best barista in town!

I gave her my name as well, then took a seat at the counter as she put a cup of steaming coffee in front of me. Some milk and sugar were also there

Player: You talk like you get lots of guests.

Alpha: Of course.

Player: It doesn't seem like it, judging by the empty streets.

Alpha: People don't stay in this town forever. Most leave after a few months, I don't think anyone has stayed longer than a year.

Player: Where are we?

Alpha: This café is called "Étreant".

Player: No, I mean this city, this world.

Alpha: I don't know.

Player: You say no one stays longer than a year. How do you know? How long have you been here?

Alpha: Ten years, two months and sixteen days.

I gave her a confused look.

Alpha: I am apparently the only one that can't leave this desolate place.

Player: So you mean you're the only one around?

Alpha: There are a few spread out in this city, however it's uncommon that any groups form. The only exception are small pairs of two that prefer to spend their time together.

But they rarely come by these days, it's been exactly three months since someone's come by to talk.

Player: Must be nice to have a little human interaction again.

Alpha: It can be lonely at times, but I've made peace with the situation. If I wanted to, I could walk around and I'll surely find someone within a couple hours.

Player: So it's your choice to stay here. Sounds like you prefer to be alone.

Alpha: Do you need others to be happy?

Player: Well, I've been pretty independent most of my life. I'm not in a relationship right now, but whenever I was in one, I've always felt happier than when I was single. With friends it's similar. I'm having a blast spending time with my best friends, but I'm not exactly an empty husk if I spend a few days without them.

Alpha: What about just general society? You seem to miss that there are normal pedestrians, total strangers on the street.

Player: That's just because it's such an otherworldly feeling. Quite haunting actually.

She got quiet, so I began mustering her. Alpha was focusing entirely on grinding coffee beans. She had a face like a flower and features like the moon.

Player: Say, why do you have a camera around your neck?

Alpha: You never know when you have to take a quick snap of some magical moment. Do you like photography as well?

Player: I took some courses on it but it's not really for me. In my mind I see the perfect shot, but when I look at the result, it's just not what I had in mind. It's incredibly frustrating.

Alpha looked away from the coffee mill for a second to greet me with a warm smile.

Alpha: I get what you mean. Everyone feels that way at a certain point when they begin something new. It's part of the Dunning-Kruger effect. You're disappointed because you don't improve as fast as you want to.

Player: Well it's not really that I think I'm better than I actually am. It's more like I can't accurately replicate what I'm envisioning in my head.

Alpha: There's a simple solution to that. Practice. Try over and over again until you figure out what you need to do in order to achieve what you see in your head.

Player: And the frustration?

Alpha: I'm afraid you'll have to bear with it, sorry.

Player: Or I just keep admiring the works of others. Like yours.

Alpha was caught off guard for a second, she paused pouring the freshly ground coffee into her container. However, she quickly gained back her relaxed composure.

Alpha: You would like to see the photos I took?

Player: Sure.

Alpha: Well, I can't show you the latest that I took, because my current camera roll isn't developed yet. But I should have some lying around on the counter here.

She started cramming around under magazines and newspapers. I wondered, what kind of information would be in those? Maybe those can tell me something about where I am. Meanwhile, Alpha's eyes sparked and she handed me a couple of polaroids.

Player: You took these?

Alpha: Sure did.

Player: You really like the dutch angle.

They all had different themes. Some were of the café, one was of a rose, and one was of a garden. I didn't know much about lighting or composition, but I could tell she was good.

Alpha: There's a copy shop down the road where I can develop as many as I want. I have more or less the entire street for myself.

Player: Say, this garden. Where is it?

Alpha: Oh, it's not far. Just follow the street south and then walk up that slope where you come across a white car. None of the cars work around here so they always stay at the same spot. You can't miss it from there.

Player: You could stay anywhere, though. So why do you tend this café?

Alpha was fidgeting with her pinky fingers. That must be the first time I've seen someone do that.

Alpha: Hmmm. This was the first place I found. The rich aroma that lies in the air makes me feel at home, you know. Of course I could find myself a nice home, maybe some

millionaire mansion with a huge pool and a sixty inch TV. But when I sit down here and rest under the comforting orange ceiling lights, I don't really wish to go anywhere else. Isn't that why most humans are creatures of habit? You can go out and adventure any time, but at the end of the day you find peace in the place you feel most familiar with.

Player: A lot of people are just afraid of change instead of being drawn to the familiar.

Alpha: Well, tell me then. Why are you here?

Player: I was kind of in the same boat as you. The smell of coffee drew me here.

Alpha got a bit more serious in her expression.

Alpha: No, I mean why are you here in this place? You must have woken up and found yourself in this strange city, am I right?

Player: I have no idea. My memory is mostly intact as well. I know who I am, where I live, who my parents are, where I go to university. The only thing I don't know is how I got here.

Alpha took one of those newspapers and folded it open.

Alpha: What's the last date you remember?

Player: I clearly remember May 20th, anything after that and I can't recall if I even experienced that day.

Alpha: The day that's printed on here is May 27th.

Player: When did you get this one?

Alpha: Oh, it was already here the day I got here.

Player: But you've been here for over 10 years. How does time even pass here? I've walked around for a few hours, the sky hasn't changed one bit. In fact, there's no sign of the moon or stars.

Alpha: The night doesn't end. I've just kept track of time by monitoring different clocks. Those work, but the natural progression of time as we understand it doesn't really exist here.

Player: In other words, looking at that newspaper was entirely pointless.

Alpha: Yep, hehe.

She has a weird understanding of humor.

Player: What kind of articles are in that one, anyway?

I grabbed another newspaper from the counter and began to skip through the pages.

(Insert novel Pages.)

Keeping the City Simple and Clean

The city is working hard to ensure that its infrastructure remains intact for residents and visitors alike. With a growing population and increased demand for services, the city has been busy implementing a number of projects designed to improve and maintain its infrastructure.

One of the key initiatives has been the upgrading of roads and to ensure that they can accommodate the increasing traffic. The city has invested in new construction techniques and materials that are designed to last longer and withstand the elements, ensuring that residents can travel safely and efficiently.

In addition to roads, the city has also been focusing on maintaining its buildings, parks, and public spaces. The city has undertaken a comprehensive maintenance program that includes regular inspections, repairs, and renovations to keep its facilities in top condition.

Another major area of focus has been the city's water and sewage systems. The city has invested in new technology and equipment to ensure that the systems are efficient and reliable, while also reducing the risk of leaks and other problems that can harm the environment.

Despite these efforts, the city recognizes that there is still much work to be done. However, with continued commitment and investment, the city is confident that it will be able to maintain its infrastructure and provide its residents with the services they need and deserve.

Finally, in the heart of the city, there is a park that offers residents a peaceful retreat from the hustle and bustle of urban life. The park features lush green spaces, beautiful gardens, and a charming gazebo, and at the end of it all, there is a gate that leads outside the city, into the open country. The park provides residents with the opportunity to escape the city for a while, and to enjoy the beauty of nature.

That sounded like a whole lot of nothing. And what's that about a gate?

Alpha: It's eerie, right? Almost as if it wasn't a human that wrote it.

Player: Well there don't seem to be many people around to write it, anyway.

Alpha: No one knows the origins of those newspapers. But they still provide us with useful information.

Player: Got any examples?

Alpha: You asked about a gate, right? So, there is actually a gate that leads outside this city. It's only accessible by taking the metro from the central train station downtown.

Player: So if I go there, I could leave.

Alpha: Depends on what you mean by leaving. If you want to leave this place, shouldn't you know where you are in the first place? Otherwise who knows where the exit leads. So let me ask you: Where do you think you are?

Player: I don't have a clue. For all I know, I could be dead. Although I have no recollection of dying.

Alpha: Okay, let's say you're dead. Where do dead people go after they leave the afterlife?

Player: Back to earth? Another part of the afterlife? People have been philosophizing about these kinds of things for centuries, it's not something I could answer within a couple seconds of thinking about it.

Alpha: I didn't expect an actual answer from you, to be honest. But the way I see it, they don't go anywhere at all. The afterlife they are in, that's the place they went to for their final rest. That's it, nothing comes after.

Player: So you're saying the exit doesn't lead anywhere.

Alpha: I can't say for certain, after all I haven't been there. I've only read about it in those newspapers. Other guests that ended up here and read them have decided to go there and figure out what's going on. Unfortunately, each one that came back to tell me about the gate told me they hadn't passed through it.

Player: Maybe the ones that exited had no way of coming back, or didn't want to come back at all.

Alpha: I'm afraid if you want the answer to that, you'll have to try it for yourself.

- Stay here with Alpha (locked into alpha route)
- Say you'll head on (garden or gate option)

Stay here:

Player: I've only just arrived here, I'm going to stay for a bit. I might change my mind, but as it stands now I'm not in a rush.

Alpha: Stay as long as you like. I quite enjoy this new company.

I looked over at the clock, the hands hadn't moved an inch. There was no way to tell the time.

Player: So when do you usually call it quits and decide to clock out? I can tell you enjoy being a barista, but you must get tired eventually.

Alpha: That's the thing, I usually take off for the day after each guest leaves. There's an odd pattern, only a maximum of one person comes in each day.

Player: You're sure you didn't just miss some?

Alpha: I'm quite fit, you know. I don't tire out that easily. So one time I decided to pull three all-nighters in a row just to check. So three days in a row I witnessed only one person entering.

Player: Three?? That's crazy, I get tired after being awake for just 36 hours.

Alpha gave off a self-satisfied snicker

Alpha: Heh, I manage. I got tired on the third day, but that made sleep just sooo much better. Plus, I'm a light sleeper, so if someone enters through the door I can still hear the bell.

Player: You know you don't have to sacrifice sleep just because you want to service guests in this café that technically isn't even yours.

Alpha: True, but I enjoy it. Helping people and listening to their stories is a fun pastime.

Player: Do you ever catch a break?

Alpha: Oh, sure. With how little customers I get, most of the time I get to relax, anyway.

Her eyes lit up, Alpha must have had an idea pop into her mind. With how open she is, it's probably not that difficult to read her.

Alpha: Say, do you want to visit one of my favorite places in this city?

Player: Sure, why not.

Alpha: Great. It's not far, only about 5 blocks down. Once we see the bridge, it's right next to it.

We headed out and took a stroll through the dimly illuminated roads. There was no one besides us, each word we said echoed back along these unfamiliar buildings. Alpha was quite amused about this and created different sounds ranging from birdlike to normal shouts. From time to time she would stop to take pictures of just about anything. Stores, signs, traffic lights, you name it. When we got to a river bank near the bridge, Alpha slowed down and pointed to a spot with dozens of picnic mats scattered across a park. We sat down and began talking again. Alpha was holding her camera up.

Alpha: How about I take a picture of you?

Player:

BAD END:

Alpha: I mean, I would take a picture. But my last film roll got used up after I snapped that bakery earlier.

Player: I'm okay with that. I never know what to do when someone takes my picture.

Alpha: Just be natural. If you try holding some pose, you'll always end up looking stiff.

Player: I'm pretty sure I look stiff being natural as well.

Alpha: Wait, that thing next to the mat over there...

Player: Which one?

Alpha didn't answer. She was staring into the distance, her eyes weren't focused on anything.

Alpha: I think I know why I'm here.

Player: You do?

Alpha: I'm so lonely.

Player: But I'm right with you-

As I said that, I realized that it was her that wasn't with me anymore. I could still make out the dent she made sitting on the mat, but she was nowhere to be found. I checked out the mat she mentioned, in the grass laid a film roll. From what I could tell, it's still usable. I grabbed it and put it in my pocket. However, Alpha was gone.

There was no way to explain what had happened. Why would she disappear right after realizing why she was here? Doesn't that mean that there's a reason I'm here, as well? I was still a bit shocked, so I rested for some time before I could think straight again. There was no point in mourning Alpha for too long. After all, I don't know what happened to her.

But for now, I should head on.

Alpha's letter:

Frustrated and Lonely

GOOD END:

Alpha put in the film roll I gave her. She wound it up and then focused on me as I tried to strike a somewhat natural pose.

Alpha: You look a bit like a dork right now.

Player: What's that supposed to mean?

Alpha laughed as I said that, then I saw a flash of light. She took my picture while I was irritated about her remark.

Alpha: That's way better. Now you're showing an authentic emotion instead of pausing for a good shot.

Player: Well yeah, I don't want to mess up the photograph.

Alpha: I prefer capturing the raw essence of people I take a portrait of. Especially if you're the focus of my photo.

Player: Did it turn out well?

Alpha: We'll have to wait until the film is developed, but I have a gut feeling that it's a pretty decent shot.

Player: You said I'm the first one to stick around for a bit longer. So I figure you don't have some wall where you hang up the pictures of all your guests?

Alpha: Nope, you're the first guest in this city that I've photographed. It's been a while since I took one of an actual person.

She had a wide, sincere grin on her face.

Alpha: I'm so happy-

In the exact moment she spoke that last word, she vanished. I sat in dead silence for a while. Even though I knew this would happen, it's still surreal to know she's gone. She may have been happy in these final moments, but that leaves me feeling emptier than ever. But I wanted to make her happy, so she could finally leave. This just means I can't leave for another while, but I'm fine with that. I'll stay for her, as a way to repent. Who knows, maybe I'll see her once I have moved on as well.

Head on:

Player: It does sound intriguing. I decided, I'll check it out.

Alpha: Good luck.

Player: Know what, if I figure anything out at all, I'll return to tell you about it.

Alpha looked calm, but I could tell there was a feeling of disappointment beneath that smile of hers.

Alpha: I hope we meet again. Stay safe.

I stuck around for another fifteen minutes or so, drinking Alpha's magical coffee. No idea how much time she had to practice, but by the taste of it, she's a master of the craft. Once my cup was empty, I said goodbye to Alpha and left Café Etreant. But I had a place that I wanted to go to.

(Alpha word count goal: 3000)

(things that should appear:

- Philosophizing about humanity
- Good end 1: sit side by side and talk about bittersweet things
- Philosophy
- Kitchen skills
- Understanding
- Gets angry if something is slightly off (bad end complains about the light)
- Used to live with someone some time ago
- Bad End Letter: frustration because of loneliness
- Good End Letter: she is happy that you are the focus of her new photos

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ACT B (BOTANY/IRIS)

I walked up this alleyway that became less inviting the longer I stayed on it. There was a car a bit further up showing no signs of deterioration.

The trees stood tall and completely blocked out the view to the sky. The only sounds were my footsteps echoing off the pavement, and the occasional rustling of leaves.

But then, as I reached the top of the slope, I saw something that was a bit out of place. In front of me was an overgrown botanical garden, bursting with life. Vines and flowers covered every surface, climbing up the walls made up of glass panels all the way to the roof. I couldn't tell if the place was abandoned or if someone started taking care of it. It gave off a sense of tended chaos. The air was heavy with the scent of sap and flora. I took a step forward, the street had turned to gravel.

The garden was a blooming and tamed biotope illuminated under subtle lampshades. It was like a secret world hidden away from the overstimulating sight of the city. I stopped for a moment and took a deep breath, taking in the peaceful atmosphere. This was something I haven't felt for a long time, even during my life before I got here. Time felt completely absent here, and I felt like I could stay here forever. The further I went, the more I could make out a gentle humming, like a soothing voice singing me a lullaby that I had long forgotten. The gardenias growing on the side became plentiful and turned into a field. The humming turned into a clear song before it abruptly ended. In front of me appeared a girl watering the flowers. She got startled by my presence. One good look at her and I realized that I knew this person. Seeing her again made everything feel like a dream.

Player: Iris, is that you?

Iris: It's been a while, haha. Nice to see you again, Player.

She put her watering can aside and stood directly across from me.

Iris: I admit you gave me a bit of a fright just now, I haven't seen anyone for quite a while.

Player: I didn't mean to scare you, your singing just enchanted me for a second.

Iris: Oh don't worry. All was fine as soon as I recognized your face.

I haven't seen Iris since ninth grade. As kids we used to live on the same street. Iris and I practically grew up together, ever since kindergarten we were practically inseparable and did everything together. During summer we would go out and play every day and only went back home right before dinner.

Player: Still, I'm surprised to find you here. I've only just arrived here so I'm still extremely confused.

Iris: It's not gonna get any less confusing, to be honest with you. I've been here a bit longer than you and I'm still not sure about what's going on.

Player: When did you get here?

Iris: Oh, around three months ago. It was so bizarre, I can't remember much from before I got here, even though my long term memory seems intact.

Player: I get what you mean.

Iris: So I wandered the city for a bit. Thank god it's not hard to find food or shelter. When I found this garden, I don't know, it just felt so peaceful that I decided to stay around here. There's a library nearby with an apartment complex right above it, that's been my home ever since I got here.

Player: I see you're still an avid reader. Man, you used to bury your face into a book that it was near impossible to get you away from it unless you finished the section you were reading.

Iris: I don't think that will ever change. As odd as the books here are, I still love to lose myself in them. Once I turn one page, I turn a dozen more. And it never fails to calm me down.

Ever since I've known her, Iris has been struggling with anxiety. It didn't strike me when I met her, because she came across as calm whenever I was with her. But as time went on and we got to spend so much time together, it became more and more apparent.

Player: I actually read a newspaper from here. I must say, it's not bad or indecipherable, just... uncanny.

Iris: Enen. The stories I read were odd, because nothing is related to the real world. Sure, most of it is fiction just like what I'm used to from back home. But these stories make it seem like the world doesn't exist at all. It's so hard to describe.

Player: You mean like they don't mention anything that exists?

Iris: No no, it's more about the typical story patterns. Like how most stories are based on patterns that we're familiar with, like the hero's journey. The stories in this world are written with a different structure.

Player: This world... so you agree we're in some kind of other universe.

Iris: You want to hear my theory?

I've missed the way her eyes spark when she smirks.

Player: Hit me.

She leaned forward and punched me on the shoulder. Oh the way I sighed, she's just as silly as ever. And now her smirk turned into a cheerful mock.

Player: I didn't mean that literally. Hit me with your theory.

Iris: I think that I died. I don't know how, or when. But it's what makes the most sense to me. We died and this is the place where we end up after death.

Player: I've had the same thought, though I didn't consider it an actual possibility.

Iris: Why not? It's perfectly plausible. You agreed with me before, you can't remember the time right before you got here, even though you just know that you should have a memory. That memory just happens to be missing.

Player: What if our mind is playing a trick on us, to explain why we are in this unfamiliar place.

Iris: Or, this is what I think, our mind just lost the moment from around the time we died. Kind of to protect us from knowing the reason we died. Or that we're dead at all. I can't explain to you why that would happen. After all, it's just my theory.

Player: It does make sense, now that I think about it. It's just so weird not being able to have a gap in my memory.

Iris: It's not quite empty for me, though. I'm not quite certain, but I do recall some sort of accident. But it's so faint, it might not be a real memory.

Player: I just don't get why the afterlife is such a dark and lonely place.

Iris: I don't mind the loneliness that much.

Player: Well, you've always been on the introverted side.

Iris: Doesn't mean I'm not happy to see you again.

Her gaze wandered off for a second, maybe there was something interesting behind me. Then she continued.

Iris: I've met some people during these three months, though mostly only once. But it's so rare that instead of feeling exhausted, like I used to feel when I met new people, it's refreshing and gives me a boost in energy. But I'm fine by myself, reading when I feel like it and once I'm done with that I tend this garden here.

Player: I can tell you take really good care of this place. You always had a green thumb.

Iris: Yeah unlike you, tehe. Remember that cactus you won in that writing competition?

Player: You mean the one that dried up and died?

Iris: How does that even happen? It's a CACTUS!

She seemed to enjoy recalling this story.

Player: I just forgot about it. After all, I never wanted to participate in that contest. You were the one who practically forced me to sign up because you were going to as well. And if I remember correctly, you won first prize.

Iris: You have a really good memory.

She sat down on the concrete part next to that artificial pond. I was kind of tired from walking up that slope, so I joined her.

Player: How have you been doing these years? We kind of lost contact after ninth grade or so.

Iris: You did move away to the other side of the city and changed schools, of course we wouldn't spend time with each other like we used to.

Player: It is difficult to keep it up. I'm just glad we still met up that summer.

Iris: Anyway, the neighborhood stayed quiet as ever and I helped mom out in the bookstore whenever I could.

Player: I thought you just read about plants and stuff instead of working.

Iris knocked on my shoulder in an excited manner and answered hastily.

Iris: That- you know that was just me joking when I told you that!

Player: I know, I know. I was just pulling your leg, calm down and stop slapping me. Your mother taught you about plants, right?

Iris: Yep. That's probably why I like tending the flowers here. It reminds me of her. When I was feeling down, she would show me the flowers from our garden. No matter how bad a day was, flowers still bloom, that's what she said. That's why I believe that even in a dark and desolate place like this, beauty can thrive.

Player: I admit, this city is not the worst place to be.

Iris: I am curious, though. Why are so few people here, what is this place, and what about the rest of humanity?

Player: The rest of humanity?

Iris: Well think about it. Let's say my theory is correct, and we are dead. How many people have died in the history of humankind? Shouldn't this place be brimming with people?

// condition met Alpha

Player: Have you met a barista named Alpha?

Iris: No I haven't.

Player: She said few people stay for longer than a year. Most leave after some months.

Iris: Whenever I met someone, it didn't take long for them to disappear forever. And also, if this is the place of the dead, where is the place of the living?

Player: I don't think it's that easy to just come back to life.

Iris: What if it is actually easy. That would explain why so few people are here.

Player: Maybe reincarnation is real and that's why we saw such an increase in population. Everyone who died decided to return to earth and live again.

Iris: Good idea, but it might not add up mathematically. I read that about 109 billion have died, in all of history. Sure, there are other options like being reincarnated into animals. But what about the immeasurable amount of animals that have lived and died as well? How would they be reincarnated?

Player: Could be that not every lifeform gets to be reincarnated, only us.

Iris: Then I would like to know which ones do and what differentiates us in such a way that we get to be born again.

Player: When would reincarnation have started, anyways? Life must have started in tiny numbers. At some point back in time, there must have been less total deaths than total living organisms. There must have been life without a previous possible reincarnation.

Iris: You're essentially asking where existence came from. Also, your idea falls flat because you count on the fact that there is some sort of countable instance that is able to be reborn. It might not be like that at all.

Player: Classic Iris, I try to be profound but you find some fallacy.

Iris was dangling her legs around, she's pretty short.

Iris: You know. No matter how it works, I kind of hope it works at all. To be honest, I want to go back.

Player: If we really are dead, then I'd like to go back as well.

Iris: I miss mom.

Player: Are you worried about her?

Iris: I know she can manage by herself, but this sucks. Dead people shouldn't mourn the living, right? That's the wrong way around.

Player: We don't know for sure.

Iris: Sure, but at this point I might as well be, since I can't go back.

Player: Well what if you can? You've been here longer than me, do you know where the city ends?

Iris: Hmmm, I didn't go very far. I don't know how big the city is. But I've seen signs for a train station. Trains could lead outside.

Player: You never thought to check it out?

Iris: This might sound strange, but I just feel like I want to stay here a bit longer.

Player: But you just said you missed your mother.

Iris: I don't know if the trains lead anywhere, or what lies beyond the city. That's why I'm reading so much. I just hope I find some sort of information that can help me out. So I'll stay here for the time being.

Player: Knowing you, your mind is set and there's no way to convince you to change it, huh.

Iris: You know me better than anyone else.

- Be on your way.
- Stay with Iris.

Be on your way:

Player: Tell you what, I'll figure a way out. Then when I find something, I'll let you know.

Iris: Why did I know you were gonna say something like that...

Iris: Alright, but be careful.

Player: Have I ever not been?

Iris: Umm, do you remember in sixth grade when we were at the aquarium-

Player: Yeah yeah yeah yeah I get it I get it.

Iris: You know I'm just trying to care for you.

Player: I know.

Iris: Well, it was nice to see you again, Player. If you figure anything out, I'll be either here or in the library further down.

Player: I promise I'll come back.

I made my way outside of the garden and tried to find signs that lead towards the train station.

Stay with Iris:

Player: I think for now I'll stay with you. Not that I'm in a rush to begin with.

Iris: Sure. We can catch up on all kinds of things.

Player: Like?

Iris: Dooooo you have a girlfriend?

Player: Huh? No I don't.

She looked slightly relieved.

Player: What about you then? Snag a boyfriend yet?

Iris: Nope.

Player: Wow we're both kind of lame.

Iris: I mean for me there is a guy that I like. It just hasn't been possible for me to ask him out these past years.

Player: And you still hang on to him?

Iris: He's incredibly special to me.

Her expression softened. Iris stood up from where she sat and brushed the dust off from behind. Now she walked along a thin line, placing the heel of one foot directly in front of the other. She used to do this a lot when we were kids.

Iris: I want him to love me across the universe and back.

Player: Chances are he won't unless you tell him. At least it's gonna be uncertain.

Iris: Before I can tell him I will have to leave this place.

Player: What if he's in the city, too?

She stopped for a second, I must have startled her again. Then she turned around and looked directly into my eyes.

Iris: Let's go to the library. I could read you a book and we could try looking for clues on how to leave.

Why did she suddenly change the topic? Ah whatever.

Player: Sure. I was eager to see your current home, anyways.

Iris: Sparked your interest, didn't I?

She started moving on already so I was quick to get up and follow her. She used to be in the track team so it's hard keeping up with her when she's walking. I remember a hiking trip we took once, what looked like a breeze for her had me out of breath until my lungs hurt. But no matter how far I fell behind, she'd be there to take my hand. She reached for my hand, but hesitated at the last second. Instead, she turned around to tell me we needed to take a left and were almost there.

The exterior looked like your usual bookstore. As with all the other buildings, the lights were already on. I really don't want to see the electricity bills around here. Iris went ahead, as I entered the store, I smelled the familiar scent of newly printed paper.

Iris: I usually read in the back, there's this nice sofa that's just so comfortable, and it fits two people.

Player: Do you know what you want to read?

Iris: I have a big heap of books stacked up back there. I'll pick the first one I see. Not that I would know what's in these books. I can't search the web for a summary.

Player: Makes sense.

Iris grabbed the book from the top of the pile and sat down onto the sofa with her legs up. I was feeling a bit tired, and since she was going to read me something, I could just lie down on the spacious couch.

Iris: Hmm, I should have a bookmark around here. What if I forget what chapter I'm on after this?

GOOD END

Player: I actually have one right here.

I handed her the purple bookmark that I kept on me. She seemed a bit confused.

Iris: This is... where did you find it? It's definitely the one I was looking for.

Player: It was right here on the couch.

I couldn't tell her that she dropped it last time. That would be too confusing.

Iris: Well, thanks. That marks the second time you gave it to me.

Player: What do you mean?

Iris: Don't you remember? This bookmark was a birthday present you gave me when we were kids. I've kept it on me ever since.

Player: A bookmark and a keepsake.

Iris: More like a lucky charm.

I do faintly remember, no wonder it seemed familiar. It's been so long, but I bought it for her because I couldn't come up with a better gift. Worked out for the best apparently.

Iris: I'll start reading. If we don't get through it in one sitting, we can pick up on it next time.

// novel pages

For centuries, the stars had graced the night sky with their twinkling light. But as time passed and civilization grew, their brilliance was slowly drowned out by the lights of life. Until one day, they vanished completely from sight, and the planets forgot about the beauty that lay beyond their world.

But one day, as a lone goddess was wandering through the woods, she saw something strange in the sky. At first, she couldn't quite make out what it was. But as it got closer, she realized that the stars were returning to their rightful place. They sparkled and

danced in the darkness, and the goddess felt a sense of awe and wonder wash over him.

The stars had become too preoccupied with their own creations, and had lost sight of what truly mattered in life. It was time to let go of celestial things and embrace the world around them.

As the stars continued their ascent, the goddess felt a sense of peace. She knew that this was a new beginning, and that stars could learn to live in harmony with the planet once again. With a smile on her face, she set off into the forest, ready to explore the lush forests that he had been missing for so long.

The stars above continued to twinkle and shine, a reminder of the beauty that lay beyond the untouched world. And as the goddess made her way through the trees, she knew that he had found his way back to where she belonged as well.

Iris stopped at the last part. I heard her whisper what was probably my name. But when I turned to her, time was already up.

On the spot where she sat just a moment ago, now laid the book she read me. But I knew that would happen. I admit, it hurts. A lot. I missed her a lot after I moved away, seeing her again now made me so happy. I just wasn't happy enough to vanish, myself. That might have been because of this feeling of regret I felt at the same time. I could have tried harder, I could have spent more time with her. But I didn't. At least I got to see her one last time. And wherever she is now, I'm just glad I made her happy one last time.

Maybe reincarnation doesn't just involve what's living. We're all made of cosmic dust. So I really don't need to know, right now I feel like not knowing the actual answer is a blessing. Because in this case, she had already turned into the stars for me.

BAD END

Player: Is it really that hard to remember a page number?

Iris: Well, no. But what if too much time passes and we forget where we stopped?

Player: Then we can read another book.

She looked very dissatisfied with my answer. As to not make matters worse, I stopped talking. So she began reading from the first page.

//Novel pages.

Once upon a time, the stars left their home in the sky to descend upon Earth. They wanted to experience something different, to see what it was like to live amongst the creatures of the land.

For many years, the stars thrived on Earth. They shone brightly in the night sky, lighting the way for humans and animals alike. They watched as the humans built their cities, paved their roads, and polluted their skies.

But over time, the stars began to feel out of place. They missed the vast emptiness of space, the peace and quiet of the void. They longed to return to their home in the sky. So, one by one, the stars started to make their way back to space. It was a slow process at first, but soon more and more stars began to follow suit.

As they rose back into the sky, they looked down at the Earth with a sense of sadness and regret. They had enjoyed their time amongst the creatures of the land, but they knew that they belonged in the vast expanse of space.

The humans looked up at the sky, wondering where the stars had gone. They missed the light and the beauty that the stars had brought to their world. But the stars knew that they were meant to be in space, to shine and twinkle and light up the darkness. They knew that they had returned to where they truly belonged.

And so, the stars continued to shine in the sky, a symbol of the beauty and wonder of space, and a reminder to the humans of what they had lost.

She abruptly stopped there.

Iris: Hey, do you want to hear something odd? I think I remember why I'm here now. Something in this story reminded me of it.

Player: Go on, tell me.

Iris: I died in a car accident. I was on my way back home from grocery shopping. Mom couldn't go that day because she caught a cold. The next bit is admittedly a bit fuzzy, but I wanted to cross the street, when all of a sudden I got hit by a van. After that I was shrouded in black, and woke up in this city.

Player: So you're saying we really are dead.

Iris: That's not all. I know why I'm in this place, specifically. I remember that there are things I regret, and this place is for me to come to terms with them.

Player: Like what?

I didn't hear an answer back. All that was left of Iris was this bookmark that was lying on the couch where she sat mere seconds ago. I didn't know why, but this little piece of paper seemed familiar for some reason. I held on to it for the time being.

Why was Iris gone? I couldn't figure it out. And I didn't know what to do now. It felt like she was ripped out of my life without any warning. I sat there for what was probably an hour before I could move again. If what Iris said was true and we're all dead here, then there must be an explanation for everything. How she disappeared, and why I'm here as well. Iris was sure that there was an answer written down somewhere. But she didn't find anything even after three months here. I checked the page she read before she disappeared. Nothing stood out. There was one place I could think of right now that could lead somewhere, so I went on my way.

(Iris word count goal: 3000 (2000 before branching))
(things that should appear:

- Philosophy about culture and nature
- Passionate and curious
- Was always an avid reader
- Her eyes spark
- Compares humanity and nature
- Bad End Letter: explains her frustration with her mother and her future goals, also how frustrated you made her
- Good End Letter: she admits he is the one she likes but she was unsure to tell him because you barely even recognized her and she got insecure. After reading the book she was overjoyed)

ACT C (CHAOS/LILY)

I returned to the center of the city and walked through the vacant roads that should be bustling. I should be dodging people and cars as I made my way towards the train station. I finally found a sign that led the way. After what felt like hours, I finally found the train station, with its towering glass walls and bright lights. I hurried inside, eager to see if I could catch the next tram that would take me out of here. I didn't have to buy a ticket, so I just hopped over the barrier and took a seat in the first wagon I saw.

It felt weird to enter as the only passenger. The hum of the engine echoed through the hall until the doors closed and the tram accelerated to leave the station. There wasn't much of a view, it was mostly just the back of some buildings, so I closed my eyes to focus on the sway of the tram.

After maybe five minutes, I came to a halt. I stepped off the tram and followed the path, which led to a large, open area. If this was a park, it felt odd. The city was behind me now, and I was surrounded by a lush field on rolling hills with sparse trees. It was the sky that was out of place, with towering clouds in an ominous red light. The most unusual thing about this place was the wall that stretched for miles to no end. Right behind it was a gate that cast its shadow all the way to my feet.

???: I wouldn't go through there if I were you.

On a bench sat a girl with dyed pink hair and a baggy outfit. She stared at me as if I'd done something to annoy her.

Player: Why, what will happen if I go through?

???: It's the gates of hell

Player: Who in their right mind would go through that gate and willingly enter hell?

???: You got it all wrong. This is the exit, you're already in hell.

Player: What?

It made perfect sense for me to be in the afterlife. To be honest, I had already made peace with the idea. But hell? Hell no.

Player: Why would I be in hell? Sure, I might not have lived a perfect life. After all, I'm not a saint. But hell is just a bit extreme for the types of sins I've committed.

Player: Oh, and also, if this is hell, it's not so bad. Feels kind of too idyllic. Where's the fire and all the torment? Shouldn't I be screaming in agony?

???: Calm down, man. You don't have to believe me. But it would be smarter if you did. Hell isn't really meant to be about fire or punishment.

Player: Who are you even? How do you know?

???: I was here first, shouldn't you be the one to introduce yourself before me?

What's with her attitude? I guess I'll play along for now.

Player: Alright, I'm Player.

Her expression became kinder, but I still feel like she's mocking me.

Lily: Nice to meet you, Player. I'm Lily.

Player: So, Lily. If this place isn't about burning for all of eternity, what else could it be about?

Lily: Loneliness.

She answered in a short and convincing manner.

Player: This place isn't very lonely, I've met three people already and it's only my first day here.

Lily: The people you meet here won't stay with you forever. You'll lose others, over and over again.

//condition having met Alpha and/or Iris

Lily: Going by your facial expression, you've already experienced that. Am I right?

She was.

Lily: Why are you just standing over there? You're creeping me out a bit. There's no rush in hell. Come sit down.

Seriously, what's with her?

Anyway, I sat down beside her, she might just be a year younger than me.

Player: How come you know about what's going on?

// condition met one of the others

Player: The ones I met so far had a hunch at best.

Lily: Judging by that question, you haven't figured out what happened for you to end up here.

Player: No, I can't remember the week or so before I arrived in this city.

Lily: That's kind of what this place is all about. And since you just arrived, you shouldn't be stressing about it too much. There's technically a time limit of one year, but that's more like a deadline for figuring it out by yourself. If a year passes, you'll just know, no matter what. There's no fixed time you have to stay, though. You can have a year here, or a month. But no one's here forever.

Player: You sound like you already remembered for yourself.

Lily: I did.

Player: Then why are you still here?

Lily stared off into the crimson clouds beyond that infinite wall.

Lily: I just don't need to go right now. Besides, there are people like you that are confused, or struggle to understand this world. So I want to help them. That's why I'm staying a bit longer.

Player: You don't seem like a person who's altruistic like that.

Lily: Watch it.

I actually felt a chill down my spine. I thought that just happens in fiction. Better not get on her bad side.

Lily: How long you stay here depends on what you did before you died.

Player: Isn't that a bit paradoxical, given that it takes time to remember what you did?

Lily: It's most likely that the time you need to remember also depends on it.

// condition met Alpha

This doesn't make sense. Alpha said she's been here for ten years.

Player: I met someone who's been here for longer than a year. What about that?

Lily: Oh, I think I've met someone like that as well. They're not real people.

Player: Huh?

Lily: Have you noticed how practically everything that's written, newspapers, magazines, they're all super odd? As if they weren't written by humans.

//condition read something

Player: It did seem weird to me.

//didn't read so far

Player: I haven't read enough from here.

Lily: I think some people here are meant to observe and guide us. But they aren't real people.

Player: You mean like angels?

Lily: No, not that. I mean they aren't people - yet. I found one book, it talked about existence preceding essence. From the way it sounded, some of humanity exists here, but is still missing something that actual humans possess. But that is only obtained by being born. So they exist as human beings, but are missing human essence.

Player: So they're like precursors to humans.

Lily: Exactly. They don't have a body they can inhabit on earth yet. So they wait here. And some are unlucky, having to stay for years.

Player: Who gets to decide when they move on?

Lily: It's the exact same principle that applies to you and me. Realizing.

Player: This definitely sounds more like a theory to me than an actual truth.

Lily: It's just what I figured out, after all. I don't blame you. But it's not something I came up with. Someone else wrote it down for me to see. Who knows, maybe it was an essence-less human that found its own realization. And just like me, they decided to stay here because they wanted to help others.

Player: Sounds like not everything was revealed to you after you remembered how you got here.

Lily: Might be. Perhaps that's why I haven't moved on yet.

This park had its own atmosphere to it. When Lily and I stopped talking, there was the rustling of the leaves and the sounds of waving grass, but the place was void of other natural sounds. No birds, no families with playful kids.

Lily: "Hey, do you think there are more people in heaven or hell?"

Lily asked out of the blue. I wasn't sure what to answer because I've never thought about it.

Lily: I think it's even.

Player: What makes you think that?

Lily: Hold on, first answer my question.

Player: I would like to think there are more people in heaven.

Lily: This place definitely makes you believe that. It's so empty here. But still, you'll never know. And also, it's so easy to sin. No matter how you live, you're bound to end up in hell.

Player: Not every sin sends you straight to hell.

Lily: Then why call them sins at all?

Player: It's just a moral compass for your life. Because you can break it down to one simple mantra: don't be a dick.

Lily chuckled a bit.

Player: I'm serious. Religion isn't there to punish you for breaking rules. It's supposed to make you question which actions will make you a decent human being. Humans have an inclination to do evil, but it is up to them to fight against it.

Lily: Sounds like being evil is an instinct.

Player: Knowing good from bad also is, since different cultures generally agree on the really bad things. Like killing people.

Lily: That just stems from the human fear of death, because we don't understand what comes after life. But have you ever thought the other way around?

Player: What do you mean?

Lily: Let's take death as the original, because nothingness preceded life, which first had to form. You can see death as the absence of life, which is the traditional way of thinking about it. But what if life were the absence of death?

Player: There would have to be life for death to exist. If there's no life, death wouldn't serve a purpose. Nothing is dead because nothing was alive to begin with.

Lily: This is just a thought experiment, can you roll with it?

Player: Well I don't really know what you're on about.

Lily: Just try this. Imagine death, but without any sort of afterlife. There's not even darkness, because your consciousness doesn't exist either to understand that there is nothing left of you. If you take death as the original, just pure nothingness. What is life compared to it?

Player: It would just be everything.

Lily: Describe everything.

Player: Does it even matter? After all, we're in hell right now, a place after life. Doesn't this prove that there is not 'nothing' after death?

Lily: Nothing might not be here, but how do you know nothing isn't around us? Take this gate, for example. We can see some clouds, but what's beyond the clouds?

Player: Either nothing or something.

Lily: That's probably why this gate exists. To see if you want to find out.

Player: You tried to trick me into going through, didn't you.

Lily: No, like I said. I want to help people here. It's up to you to decide whether you want to stay or go. However, there is a condition for going through the gate.

Player: That being?

Lily: You need to know your reason for being here. Then you can exit.

Player: I'm guessing you don't know what happens if you don't know but still pass through.

Lily: It can't be anything good.

- Exit immediately
- Go back to the city

Go back to city:

Player: You know what, you're right. It's probably for the better if I go back to the city and, I don't know, live life until my memory comes back, as well?

Lily: Dunno if you could call it living, but you do you.

She just rubbed me the wrong way. Whatever, I decided that I'd return for now. I found out quite a bit by talking to Lily, and I doubted that park had anything more to offer. So I took another tram. But I didn't get off at the train station that I left from. Instead, I waited a bit and exited at the next one.

APARTMENT ROUTE

Exit Immediately:

I stood before the gate, but I just wasn't sure about this. There was no way to tell what would happen. Lily didn't come to stop me, either. It was only me and my own choice.

- Exit
- Go back to Lily

Exit:

I took a step forward. In the exact moment that my foot touched the ground past the gate, everything vanished. It wasn't like I got shrouded in darkness, because darkness didn't exist in that moment either. It was more like everything I could ever perceive was gone. I had no senses left, no thoughts, and no self. It was over.

BAD END

Go back to Lily:

I turned around and sat back on the bench. Lily didn't mind me at all. On the contrary, she looked over and had a look on her face that just screamed 'I told you so'.

Lily: How was the gate?

Player: I want to stay a bit longer.

Lily: Stay as long as you like. This is your life, after all.

Player: I don't know if you could call this living. We're in hell after all.

Lily laughed, albeit quietly.

Lily: Are you good at arcades?

Player: I guess I'm not bad. Wait why are we talk-

Lily: I bet I'm better. Let's head over to an arcade center and I'll show you.

Player: It's on. The winner has to cook the other one a nice, homemade dinner.

Lily: Homemade? We can just use the kitchen in some fancy restaurant.

Player: Even better.

We took the tram back to the main station. After a ten minute walk, we arrived at the arcade center. I hate to admit it, but she absolutely destroyed me. How could she be that good at claw games? She told me that she grew up in a moderately wealthy family, and when she was young she would use a good portion of her allowance to play all kinds of arcade games.

I kept my word, of course. So after my immediate defeat, we took a stroll down the street until we found an empty restaurant we both fancied. The ingredients were top notch, but I'm not the best cook.

Lily: It's not bad, I've just had better.

Player: Be happy I cooked at all.

Lily: Well duh, you owed me.

We spent the next few days together as well. Despite her first impression, we actually got along great. It was almost as if we'd known each other for a long time. She would tell me stories of what she'd experienced in hell so far. If hell really was about loneliness, then being with her made the whole experience bearable. She showed me the apartment complex that she lived in, and I decided to move in two doors next to her. For some reason she was against us being immediate neighbors. We did everything together for a while.

LILY BAD END

Then one day, she was gone.

I knocked on her door one morning, but she didn't come out like she usually did. I entered her apartment, there was no sign of her anywhere. When I went to check her room, it was empty, except that there was something on the bed.

She left me a letter, but I couldn't quite believe what she told me.

//Letter

If we knew each other, why didn't she tell me? I tried to remember, but it was as if my mind had blocked out a portion of my past. I could vaguely picture someone's face, but I wasn't completely sure it was Lily. I also couldn't remember anyone going by that name.

I sat down on her bed, the scent of her perfume was still lingering. She must have left not long ago.

I guess this place really is about loneliness. The difference is that instead of being lonely from the beginning, you're left alone instead. Missing someone is worse than having no one to miss at all.

So all I could do now was to keep going and find my own path that I want to walk. What I wondered was how long it would take for me to reach the end.

LILY GOOD END

This time I knew, though. Things could be different. She didn't mention it herself that we knew each other. So I wanted to confront her about it. I knocked on her door. A few seconds passed, loud stumbling and rumbling could be heard from inside her apartment. The door knob turned and before me stood Lily, her hair wasn't fully dry. She probably just came out of the shower.

Lily: What do you want?

Player: Can we talk?

Lily: Can't it wait until tomorrow? It's a bit late now.

Player: It's important.

Lily hesitated for a bit, but ultimately let me in. I sat down on the couch as she still took her time getting ready in the bath. Once she was done, she joined me and sat down on the floor.

Lily: What is it? Don't tell me you came over to confess to me. No, no, no no no. It's still way too early for that.

Aren't those a bit too many nos? Whatever. I put the pictures from our childhood on the table so she could look at them. She was not surprised in the least.

Player: Do you recognize these?

Lily: Of course.

Player: Why didn't you tell me?

Lily: I didn't think it would make a difference if you knew or not.

Player: Come on.

Lily: I didn't tell you because it would have hurt too much. And I wanted to move on.

Player: There's another condition for leaving this place, right?
Lily grabbed one of the pictures from the table and stared at it.

Lily: Have you looked at this particular image?

Player: Yeah it's me standing atop a rock with you next to me.

Lily: Look at my arm.

She handed me the image, I didn't notice it before, but now I could clearly tell what she meant. She had a huge scar in that picture. I knew that because I had looked at the picture before.

Lily pulled back the sleeve of her sweater, it was the same one. It was at that moment that I remembered how she got it.

Player: You were climbing a tree when the branch you were standing on broke off. As you fell, you cut your arm on the part where the branch snapped.

Lily: The doctors said you will most likely never remember.

Player: I didn't remember on my own, you told me.

Lily: Huh?

Player: It's incredibly fuzzy in my head, but part of my memory just came back. I do remember being in the hospital, but they told me it was for an operation. That memory loss was common after it, but wouldn't necessarily be gone forever.

Lily's eyes grew big.

Player: Why couldn't I find out who you were?

Lily: I was afraid that I would instantly vanish out of joy, if you recognized me and we had a happy reunion. But if we leave from here, there's no guarantee that we'll ever see each other again. I wanted to spend some time with you before I...

Player: You were planning on leaving tomorrow morning.

Lily was completely quiet.

Player: You know we can't stay here forever. You told me, remember?

Lily: I just wanted a week. And that's what I got. You don't know how special this past week was for me.

Player: It was to me, as well.

I couldn't tell if Lily was overjoyed or crestfallen at that moment. Unfortunately, I knew what was about to happen.

Lily: Player, I-

And just like that, she was gone. She was gone. She was gone. She was gone. She was gone.

I didn't think that she would vanish right away, however. I planned on telling her a bit about what I could remember. When I first met Lily, I actually liked her as well. She was really good at math, and I'd be so impressed whenever she showed me how fast she could solve homework exercises.

This time it was me who wanted to ask her to solve an equation that would have broken her. Now she had the luxury of living a new life without restriction, without pain, without me.

(Lily word count goal: 3000)

(things that should be in it:

- Confident and persuasive
- Can convince people to see things her way
- Hates sour fruits
- You know each other but MC didn't realize
- Letter: attached an image of you two being childhood friends, frustration of losing contact
- Good end: wants to make up for all the time lost
- I could know you for a hundred lifetimes and it wouldn't be enough)

FINAL ACT (APARTMENT)

I walked through the silent city one more time. My footsteps echoed off the empty streets. The buildings loomed above me, casting long shadows in the dim light. The emptiness was still unsettling.

As I walked further, I started to recognize the neighborhoods I was passing through. Although it wasn't exactly the same, it still felt familiar enough. Like someone shuffled around parts I knew so it just about threw me off.

I turned a corner and came to a stop in front of an apartment complex. It was unmistakably my old apartment building. Why was it here? I took a step closer, staring up at the windows. I could almost smell the days of my old life, it was all so vivid. I climbed the stairs and could feel my chest tighten.

This wasn't the city I lived in, but this was one hundred percent my home. The sign next to the door even had my name on it. I reached for the door to my old apartment and hesitated, my hand hovering over the doorknob. My heart raced in my chest, my lungs felt as if I had just ran a marathon. I took a deep breath to handle the anxiety, then pushed the door open.

The apartment was exactly as I remembered it. The same furniture, the same pictures on the walls. My table hadn't moved an inch. I hoped that I could stay here and live like I used to before I found myself in this city.

Then I was struck by what I could only interpret as some sort of divine realization. This must have been what Lily meant. Because at that moment, I knew. I remembered why I ended up here in hell.

Really? That's the explanation? I expected some grand revelation of the week before I died. But it was all so... ordinary. All the little things, like being mean, taking things without asking, lying from time to time. Those were the reasons I was here. Nothing major, no grand evil I had committed.

My death was interesting, though. The convenience store I worked at got robbed, and I got stabbed trying to protect my younger co-worker.

The odd thing was, I wasn't mad after having found this all out. Quite the opposite, it all made sense. This place isn't there to punish you. I'm here to reflect on all I've done during my life. I wasn't a bad person, and this wasn't really hell, either. More of a place between. I could decide for myself how I would repent for my life. I certainly wasn't a perfect human being. But I understand the point of me being here.

The true way to leave this place was by overcoming loneliness, I had to truly feel happiness again.

So I decided to stay here for a few months. I could clearly remember my entire life, all the good things as well as the bad things. It was almost as if I was reliving my life, just

at a faster pace. I couldn't believe how tranquil and at peace I found myself in the end. It was definitely the right choice to stay in this city for a while.

Until I felt that I was ready to move on.

I was ready to find my own happiness. I must have been on my way already, because all I could think of right now was...

- Alpha
- Iris
- Lily

Alpha End:

The sun was shining down on the small café as I sat across from her, sipping on coffee and chatting. The coffee she made tasted miles better than this one. Alpha looked out the window and watched the people walk by.

Alpha: Do you want to see the pictures I took yesterday?

Alpha handed me her camera, I looked through her gallery, although the display was reflecting the sun into my face.

Player: Amazing as always.

We chatted for a while longer, she told me all about her favorite photographers and the way she was experimenting with the dutch angle recently. I was fascinated by her passion, but couldn't really keep up with it. Instead when I talked about my hobbies, it was more the latest movie I watched, but I was familiar with cinematographers.

When we both realized that our cups had been empty for the past fifteen minutes or so, we decided to head to the next location. I promised her to prepare a picnic, and I knew just the right spot, at a park beside the river.

Iris End:

I was browsing the shelves at the bookstore, lately I've been so bored that I just didn't know what to read. I completely zoned out at one point, only being brought back to reality by a heavy sigh next to me. I looked over and saw a short, brunette girl with glasses next to me, holding up two books. She was struggling to decide which one to pick.

Player: Do you need help?

She turned to me, surprised, as if I had just scared the soul out of her. As our eyes locked, her anxious expression changed and a smile spread across her face.

Iris: I can never decide what to read next.

Player: How about I pick the one I prefer out of these two, and you read the other one.

Iris: But what if I want to know what happens in the one you're going to read?

Player: How about I tell you over a coffee sometime? I'd like to know about your book, as well.

Her eyes sparkled.

Iris: How does next weekend sound?

I picked the romance novel that featured a gardener as a protagonist. She told me her name was Iris, and suddenly we found ourselves chatting about our favorite authors. I was struck by how much we had in common. We both loved 20th century classics like Hemingway.

At some point she noticed how late it was getting, so we both headed to the cash register and exchanged phone numbers. I walked out of the bookstore and felt like I was on cloud nine. It was a meet-cute straight out of Hollywood, and I couldn't wait to see what would happen next.

Lily End:

I was now just as old as when I died in my previous life. I still remember my time in hell, and that includes regaining my memories. After all this time, I still haven't forgotten her either.

The semester was over and it was the middle of summer break. I was on my way to the train station and wanted to go bar hopping with my friends from uni. I still had around ten minutes until the metro came, when I suddenly picked up on a familiar scent. It immediately transported me back in time, this was her perfume.

I turned around looking for the girl I just passed by. For a moment, time was frozen. I remembered the afternoons we had spent together, laughing and dreaming.

Lily was staring right at me, she was just as surprised as I was. We were both standing still like idiots, and I felt a rush of emotions.

Lily: Took you long enough. I was worried you forgot about me

Player: How could I ever.

She had a fat grin on her face. Finally, I found her again. I was in a bit of a hurry, unfortunately, so we exchanged contact information and promised to meet up as soon as we could.

Meter bar: for clues that you found to indicate true end

Concept:

You're in hell but it's kind of peaceful, you enter a cafe and meet a new character.

Meet 3 characters in total in hell city

Player wakes up in a city without people

It's kinda post apocalyptic but functional

One day enters a cafe and is greeted by fresh aroma of espresso

A girl is brewing as a barista

Girl thinks she is real but turns out she is an android

Philosophizing about humanity

Meets a second girl in a garden, she is watering flowers, a florist

Talking about nature? Or sth similar to humanity but with nature compared

Meets the last girl at the gates of hell (just the other side since you're already in hell)

Talk about life (compared to death, what is life? Are more people in heaven or hell? I think it's even. Also, you're not here forever.)

One way to leave hell and ascend is by overcoming loneliness and truly feeling happiness

About characters reflecting on their choices during life

Hell as a metaphor

Flashback of apartment from MC represents trauma

Need items and info for good ending from previous bad endings, like a film roll for her to take a picture of you that you get from a right decision you made previously. Then you can jump to a previous part in the story

Depending on how often you replay a scene, new dialogue happens (based on items you collected)

!!! It has three choices at decisive point: good, bad and true for the true ending !!!

Starts off with a dark screen

Trying to remember

Can remember who you are

But not Where you are

The last thing you did seems like weeks ago

Open your eyes

You're in a city you have never been to

Everything seems empty

No people

Seems apocalyptic and functional at the same time

You decide to explore
Trains run, lights go on and off
You find little details about the world, seems like humanity never existed
You walk along a main street and smell something familiar
The scent of coffee
For the first time, the lights in a shop are on
You enter it and see a girl in an apron with short dark hair
She is brewing coffee
You start talking to her
This is the first time she has seen someone in quite some months
But she is happy to no longer be alone
You sit down, everything seems comfy and at home
You notice peculiarities about her
Turns out she is an android
You philosophize about humanity
You have the decision to tell her she isn't human or keep her in the dark

If you tell her, she replies that she always knew -> Barista route
If you don't, you drink your coffee and leave shortly after

You follow the road up a hill
Eventually you end up in front of a botanical garden
You enter and are greeted with lush green plants
Contrast to the pretty desolate outside world without much vegetation or life
Even small insects are there
You hear singing
You follow the voice until you see a brunette florist near some (insert symbolism flowers)
You startle her, she is very timid
She hasn't seen anyone in years
Fine for her, she is introverted and prefers to read books from the library nearby
She says the stories are odd, because nothing is related to the real world
She isn't sure why she is in this place, as are you
But she has the theory that she died
You mention something similar, that you can't remember the last week you lived
They might be in the afterlife
She philosophizes with you about culture and nature, stories and what's left of humanity
She offers you to stay a bit with her and enjoy some stories

If you accept -> she reads you a story she wrote; Florist Route
If you don't -> you say you must be on your way

You find a tram near the library
It operates every 5 minutes so you wait a bit
You enter

The tracks take you away from the city center
Lights dim and go sparse
You end up in the outskirts of the city
You walk along the street
Want to see how far it goes
Only a few minutes later you end up in front of a gate
A girl sits on a bench next to it
She tells you it's the gates of hell
You ask who would go through that gate and enter hell
She replies it's the exit, you're already in hell
You doubt because this hell seems idyllic
She explains how hell isn't meant to be about fire or punishment
But about loneliness
Not very lonely if you met 3 people today
She talks about life and death
If you take death as the original, just pure nothingness
What is life compared to it?
Are more people in heaven or hell?
She thinks it's even
Also says no one is here forever
You can have a year here, or a month
It depends on what you did before you died
You explain you can't remember
She says that is what this place is about
You're supposed to remember why you ended up in hell
You can't think of anything.
You ask her if she knows
She says she does and after that revelation she decided to stay here a bit longer
As a self imposed punishment
That's why she knows she is in hell
You ask what happens when you go out the gate
She says once you know your reason you can exit here
But she doesn't know what happens if you don't know
She imagines it can't be anything good

You get the decision to either exit or go on your way

When you exit immediately -> bad end

When you turn around there is a new option to stay with her

When you stay -> mysterious girl end, you never find out but she eventually leaves
You go on your way -> you find an apartment complex that eerily resembles yours from the real
world
You go to your apt number

Open the door
You remember why you ended up in hell
All the little things, like being mean, stealing, etc
Nothing major
You realize a lot
And decide to stay for a few months

Your final option is who you spend your time with

Barista
Florist
Gate of Hell Girl

END

Alpha Good End:

Sit side by side and talk mostly about bittersweet things. She asks you if she can take a picture of you. She admits that for the first time being here, she's happy. As she smiles while taking the picture, she disappears as you stay because you're not happy since you knew it would end like this. Still wanted to make her happy so she could leave. You won't leave yet to repent for sins.

NEED:

BACKGROUNDS:

- City street at night (done)
- In front of café (done)
- Inside café (done)
- Slope up a hill in the city (done)
- Inside the garden (done)
- Small train station (done)
- Gates of hell (done)
- In front of apartment (done)
- Inside apartment (done)

CHARACTER CARDS:

- Alpha brewing coffee behind the counter (cut)
- Iris watering some Flowers (cut)
- Lily sitting on a bench (done but omitted)
- Flashback of why you are in hell (cut)
- Alpha Bad End where you find a film roll (done)
- Alpha Good End where she takes picture (done)
- Camera on the ground when she disappears (done)
- Iris Bad End where you find a bookmark
- Iris Good End where she reads you a book (done)
- The book she was reading you lying on the couch when she disappears

- Lily Bad End where you find childhood picture (done)
 - Lily Good End where you (maybe leave hell with her) (cut)
 - Other
 - (there has to be a path you get to after you've done all the routes. After you solve your background and how to get your own happy ending you can choose your girl's ending) (done)
 - Alpha True End drinking coffee together (might miss image)
 - Iris True End Meet Cute in a Bookstore (might miss image)
 - Lily True End you both remember your time in hell even after regaining memories, staring at each other within a crowd of people in front of a train station (might miss image)
1. Ordinary world: skipped because you just wake up in hell
 2. Call to adventure: waking up in hell and wandering the city
 3. Refusal: to wander around much, wants to find a safe spot
 4. Meeting with mentor: meets alpha
 5. Goes out into the world and up the hill to the garden
 6. Greatest fear: edge of hell
 7. Ordeal: talking to iris
 8. Reward: finding out the truth and going to the apartment
 9. Exits hell
 10. Final test: restarts game with previous knowledge and new options through items
 11. Good end with best girl