3433 Team 4 Story Build Process Description

For our interactive story, we to implement Tara's story idea of "The Valley Voyager." We wanted to use a hypertext style format, as creating an entire 2D or 3D world to walk through sounded too difficult and lengthy in the time we had left in the semester.

For the story, we tried to create vivid descriptions of the world and the emotions of each of the sections of the story. We wanted a player to really experience this world and "live through" the experiences of our player character, who journeys through "the Valley" on his/her way to a better life in the city, having secretly stolen the wealth that will make this possible. We also wanted our player to be surprised by the ending, where this player character's goal is not accomplished, as he/she falls victim to the very greed that drove them into the desert valley, and the ally of the player character, Arion the golden horse, suddenly reveals himself as a demonic-like foe. We tried to create different choices to accomplish these goals, while also making the player feel this story develop as the player character moves through the Valley, experiencing these different places and choices. However, in the time we had, we limited the story to one ending and not as much consequence of player choice.

From the feedback of our first draft, we found that many people felt very connected to the story and "experienced" the surroundings. They were surprised by the ending and seemed to like our story. However, the place that lacked was in the player choices. They felt that they were not interactive or meaningful enough to the story, as choosing where the player went or what the player said, though it showed different places in the Valley or revealed slightly different details about the characters, did not feel as interactive.

Because of this, Tara and Yamira tried to edit our story to be more impactful. We reworded certain sections or added extra consequences to choosing certain paths, particularly at the beginning of the game. When choosing the desert path, the player now can lose gems because they choose not to hide from the sandstorm or can gain a gem if they check a secret crevice in the rocks. They can avoid the evil traveler, secretly another thief, or talk to him and realize he stole their gems in the sandstorm.

We also added extra endings to the story to give the player even greater control of the outcome of the story. One ending remains the same as our first ending where the protagonist is killed by the evil Arion. Another kills the player character earlier in the story if they choose for the protagonist to be unapologetic about stealing the gems when Arion confronts him/her. We felt that this showed how the protagonist was not sorry and had fully surrendered to greed, which would allow an evil spirit to go ahead and take advantage of that. Yet another option allows the protagonist to become distraught and want to get rid of the gems. He/she then can either throw the gems into some nearby quicksand and return to the protagonist's village or return the gems to the merchants and be arrested, though without the guilt that the protagonist was suffering from. Both of these endings have the option to turn back, where the player is killed instantly for their greed as in the earlier ending, or (if the player is successful in doing the right thing) Arion hisses at the player and disappears, implying Arion's true nature and dissatisfaction that the protagonist chose good. One last ending allows the player to be greedy, be "forgiven" by Arion like our original ending, but then actually make it to the city by choosing the correct canyon path--the "rocky canyon." We decided that this would be fitting to be in line with the

belief that the path to good can be harder than the path to evil, as choosing the “rocky canyon” (Path 8A) would probably sound less attractive than choosing the “serene canyon” (Path 8B), where Arion kills the player. However, if the protagonist chooses correctly, he/she is left feeling guilty that he/she has stolen his/her way to a better life. Arion also hisses and disappears here, as well.

After these rewrites, we implemented our story into Unity, as this was the platform most familiar to us. Maisha set up a GitHub repository, so our project would be accessible and updated for everyone. Next, we copied and pasted our story text into the game, and Tara created code to move the player through, changing the text, background, and music and sound FX. We tried to add to the emotion of our story by making the background colors match the mood or location (red for a tense moment or blue when walking by the river). This was the same with choosing sounds and music from freesound.org and free music archive. We left the buttons that drive this story progression as buttons, instead of making them look more like traditional hypertext, as that would have taken far more time to create in Photoshop or another program and implement into Unity.

However, to add to the narrative, Maisha created 2D UI assets for a gem counter and a fish counter, to remind the player what resources they have collected. Additionally, when the player must choose if the protagonist disposes or gets rid of the gems, actually seeing and hearing (with a sound FX) that their gem count has gone down to zero is much worse than just reading about it. We hoped this would bring out these feelings in the player, causing them to feel more of the protagonist’s indecisiveness about what to do. The fish counter was not as necessary but served a similar (though less dramatic) purpose. Maisha also created an awesome logo for the game that displayed Arion’s silhouette, eluding to Arion’s mysteriousness and secret motives.

As we finished implementing these scenes, the length became a concern. Therefore, Tara tried to edit out unnecessary pieces to make the game a little shorter. So far, we have edited the section after Arion befriends the player to directly transition to Arion asking the player character about himself/herself, instead of having a traveling section in between. After the player lies to Arion about the gems, we transitioned back to the traveling section (Paths 4A/4B--to show the player character bonding with Arion) and then directly to the second merchant shop, where the merchants recognize the gems as stolen. This bypasses one later travel section (Paths 6A/6B and 7A/7B). Also, we changed the text at the start of the second merchant shop to fit the new transition better and added an option to bypass the second merchant shop altogether--allowing the player to choose where to travel in the last travel section (Paths 8A/8B) and end the story earlier, not even discovering the secret of the gems. We also edited and added extra options inside the merchant shop: look for a map, talk to the merchant (which lets him show you the map), leave (transitions back to Paths 8A/8B and their corresponding endings), or sell your fish if you still have it (which still causes the merchant to see the protagonist’s gems and become angry). However, we may still continue to edit this down if the length is still too long.

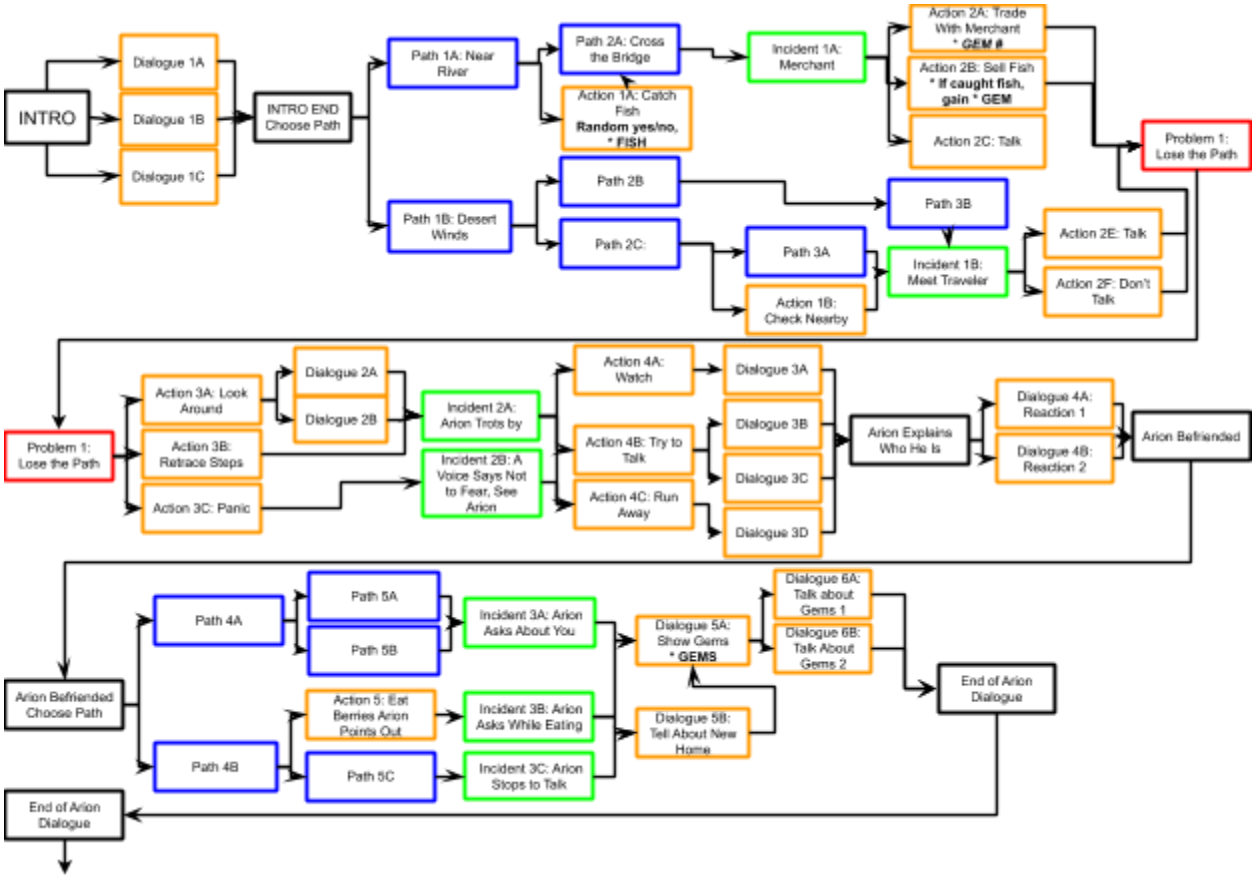
Additionally, after adding the music and sound FX to the scenes, we found that it may be too choppy in places, since the text is currently split among multiple scenes. Some of these

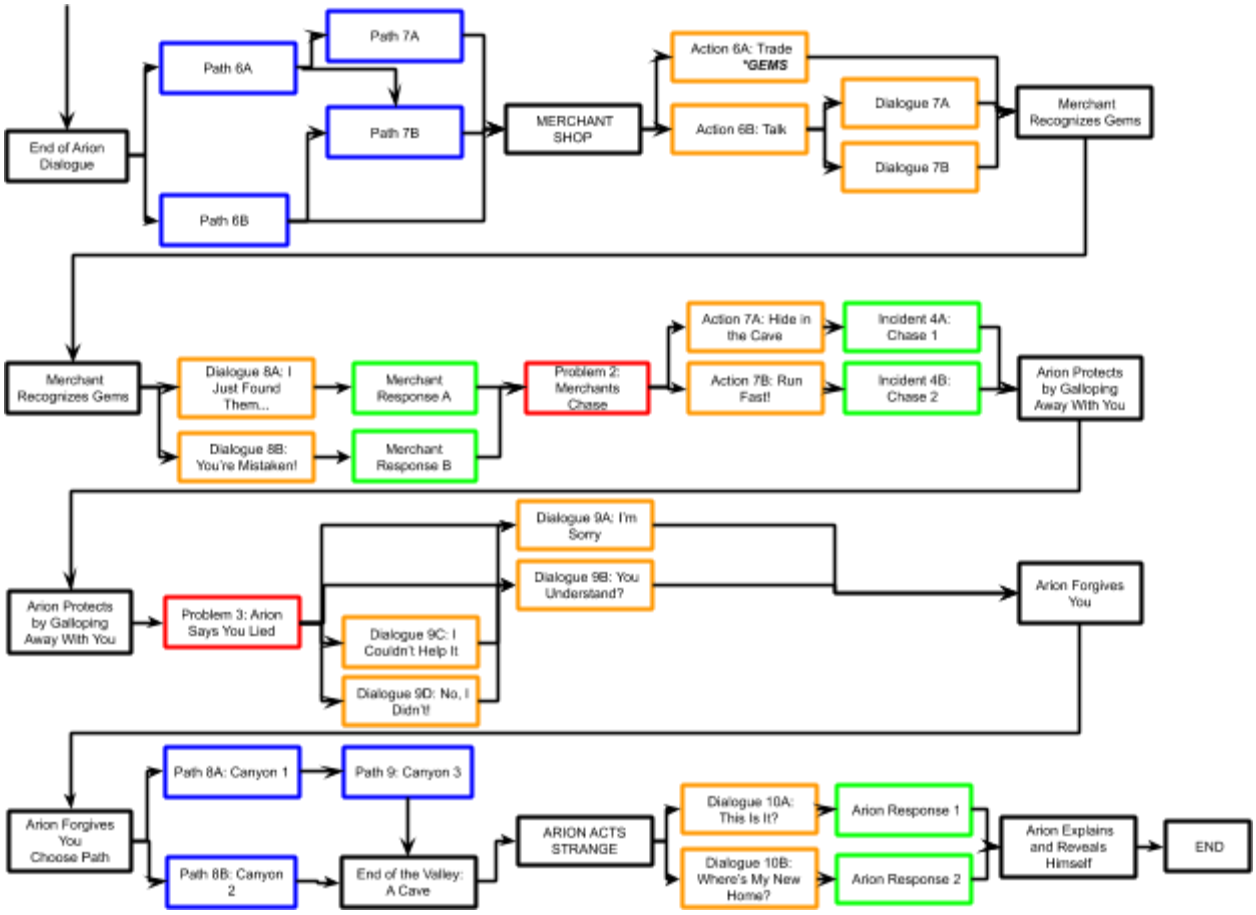
scenes may need to be combined and/or some music eliminated to make things less choppy and confusing for a player. This will be determined and tweaked in the final version.

Progress Schedule (and things left to implement):

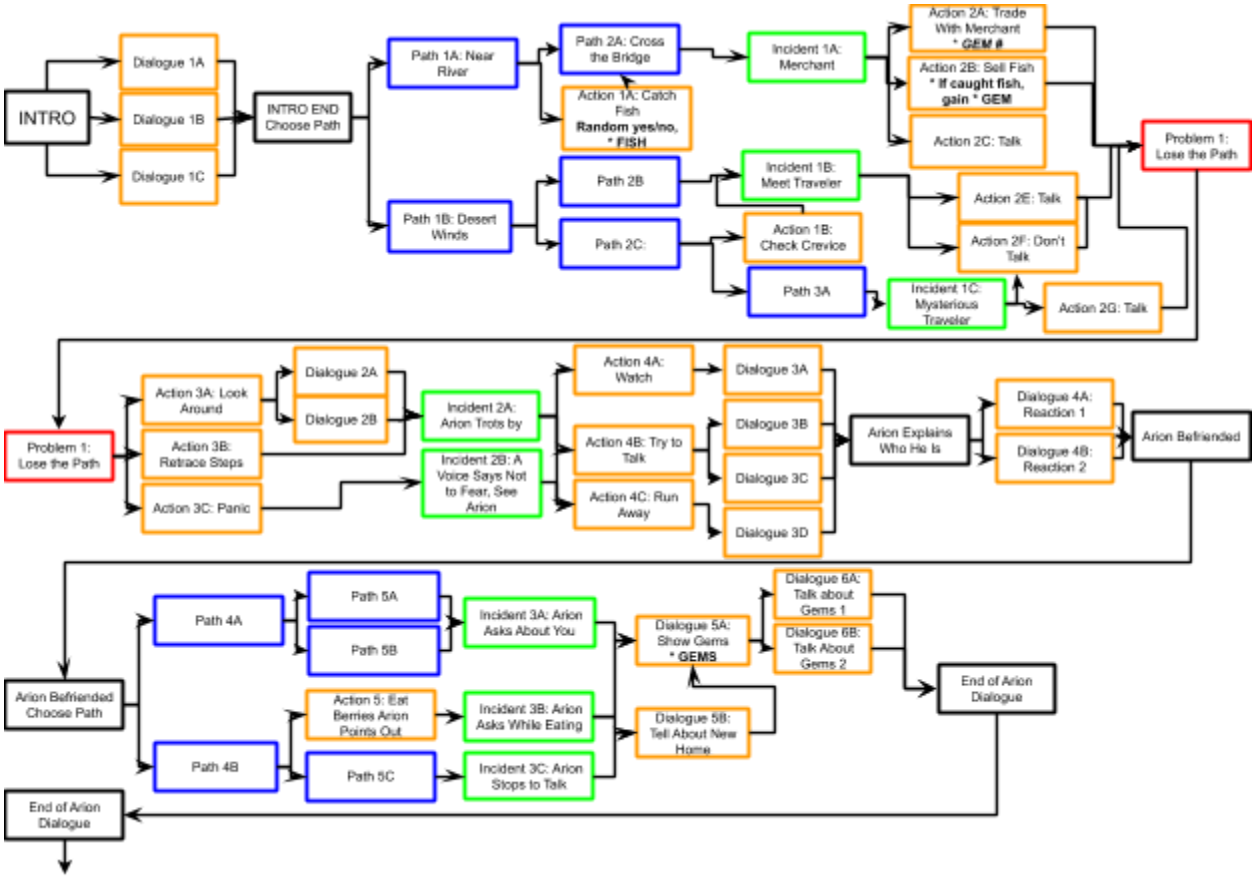
- ~~Draft written~~
- ~~Story edited~~
- ~~Unity scenes created and coded~~
- ~~2D UI assets and logo created~~
- ~~Free sounds and music found~~
- ~~Project edited for length~~
- ~~Sounds and music placed in Unity scenes~~
- Scenes spliced together to make music less choppy
- Story cut down further (if needed)

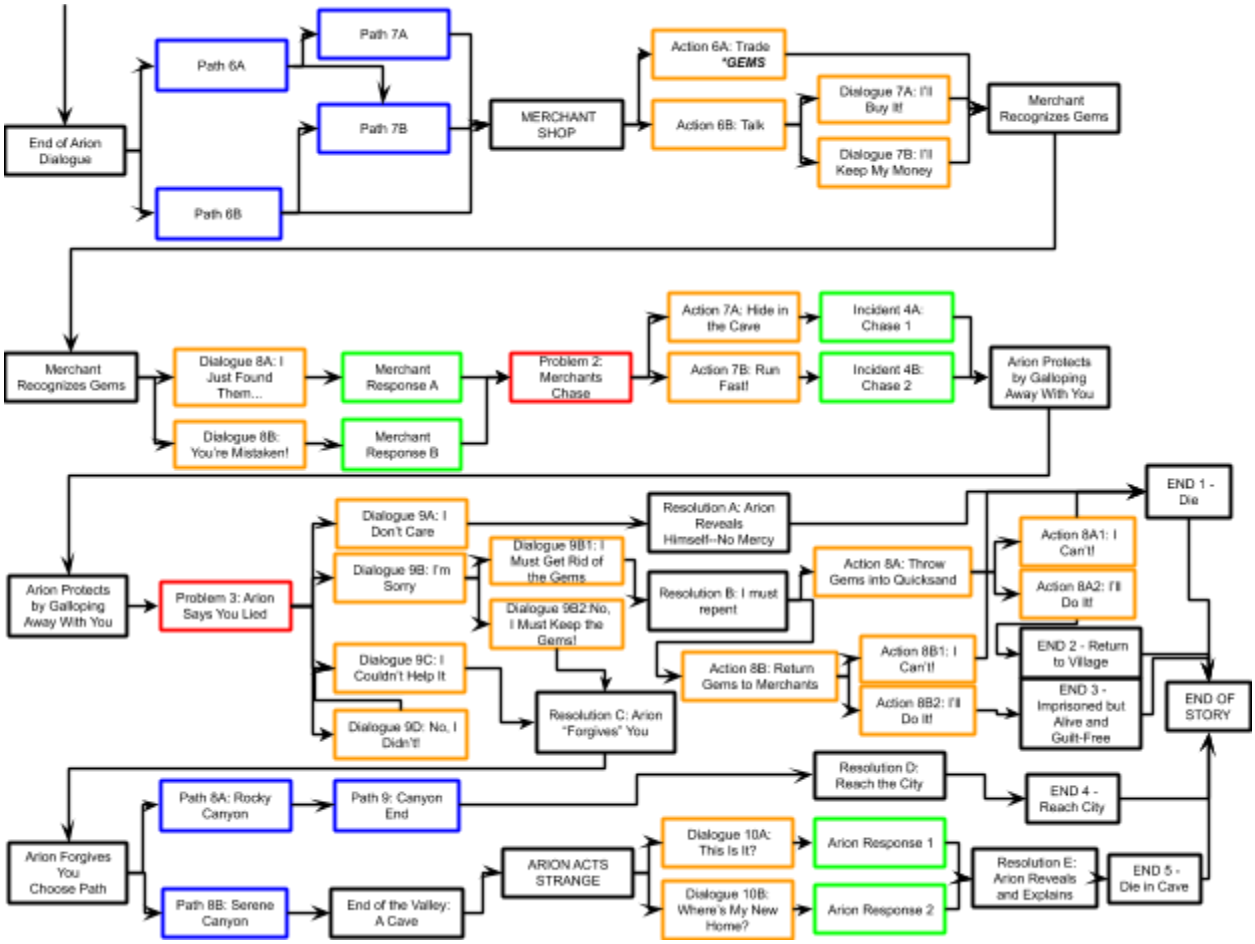
Original flow chart:




End of Arion Dialogue
Path 6A
Path 6B
Path 7A
Path 7B
MERCHANT SHOP
Action 6A: Trade *GEMS
Action 6B: Talk
Dialogue 7A
Dialogue 7B
Merchant Recognizes Gems
Merchant Recognizes Gems
Dialogue 8A: I Just Found Them...
Dialogue 8B: You're Mistaken!
Merchant Response A
Merchant Response B
Problem 2: Merchants Chase
Action 7A: Hide in the Cave
Action 7B: Run Fast!
Incident 4A: Chase 1
Incident 4B: Chase 2
Arion Protects by Galloping Away With You
Arion Protects by Galloping Away With You
Problem 3: Arion Says You Lied
Dialogue 9A: I'm Sorry
Dialogue 9B: You Understand?
Dialogue 9C: I Couldn't Help It
Dialogue 9D: No, I Didn't!
Arion Forgives You
Arion Forgives You Choose Path
Path 8A: Canyon 1
Path 8B: Canyon 2
Path 9: Canyon 3
End of the Valley: A Cave
ARION ACTS STRANGE
Dialogue 10A: This Is It?
Dialogue 10B: Where's My New Home?
Arion Response 1
Arion Response 2
Arion Explains and Reveals Himself
END

Updated flow chart:





(has been further updated as per build process description)