

Narrative Design Test Samples

CHAPTER SCENARIO OUTLINE

CHAPTER xx - A TASTE OF THEIR OWN SUNSHINE			
	PROBLEM	SOLUTION	CLIFF/HOOK
xx.1	Solar zombies that repair themselves with sunshine are attacking!	Acquire a very large shady BIRD-OF-PARADISE plant to thwart the solar zombs' solar panels. Requires visit to ANTONIA SNOWBIRD.	PATRICE is attacked by a giant zomrobospider! (Previously defeated but only trapped, not destroyed)
xx.2	PATRICE is in danger from the zomrobospider!	PATRICE has a CHERRY BOMB in her bag. She THROWS it into the hole in the zomrobospider where the umbrella pole was, using her undercooked lacrosse skills.	The BIRD-OF-PARADISE is too small and scraggly, even after being fed Dave's Fantasy Fiesta Fertilizer. They barely defeated the first couple of solar zombs... now there are MANY!
xx.3	The MANY solar zombies are advancing on the inner lawn defenses!	DAVE must urgently repair a snapped copper cable line so they can reach GUS. GUS tells them about the BIRD-OF-PARADISE'S need for high moisture and emotional support. PATRICE sees several SUNFLOWERS in shower caps - they were taking sadness showers because they are currently banned from being outside.):	The BIRD-OF-PARADISE goes in the shower, but it's too little, too late - the solar zombs are OVER THE INNER DEFENSES and on the last stretch of the lawn!
xx.4	So MANY solar zombies have made it past the inner defenses and are on the last stretch of lawn!	PATRICE throws coconut in frustration - it causes a mishapen, regrown solar zombie to FALL into the POND. Sparks fly - fireworks! Water is the answer!	CLIMAX - water is the answer but there's no rain in sight. The BIRD-OF-PARADISE opens its flowers and leaves to create a BIRD-OF-PARACHUTE that can let the PEASHOOTERS safely rain water down on the solar zombies from above!

NEW CHARACTERS OVERVIEW

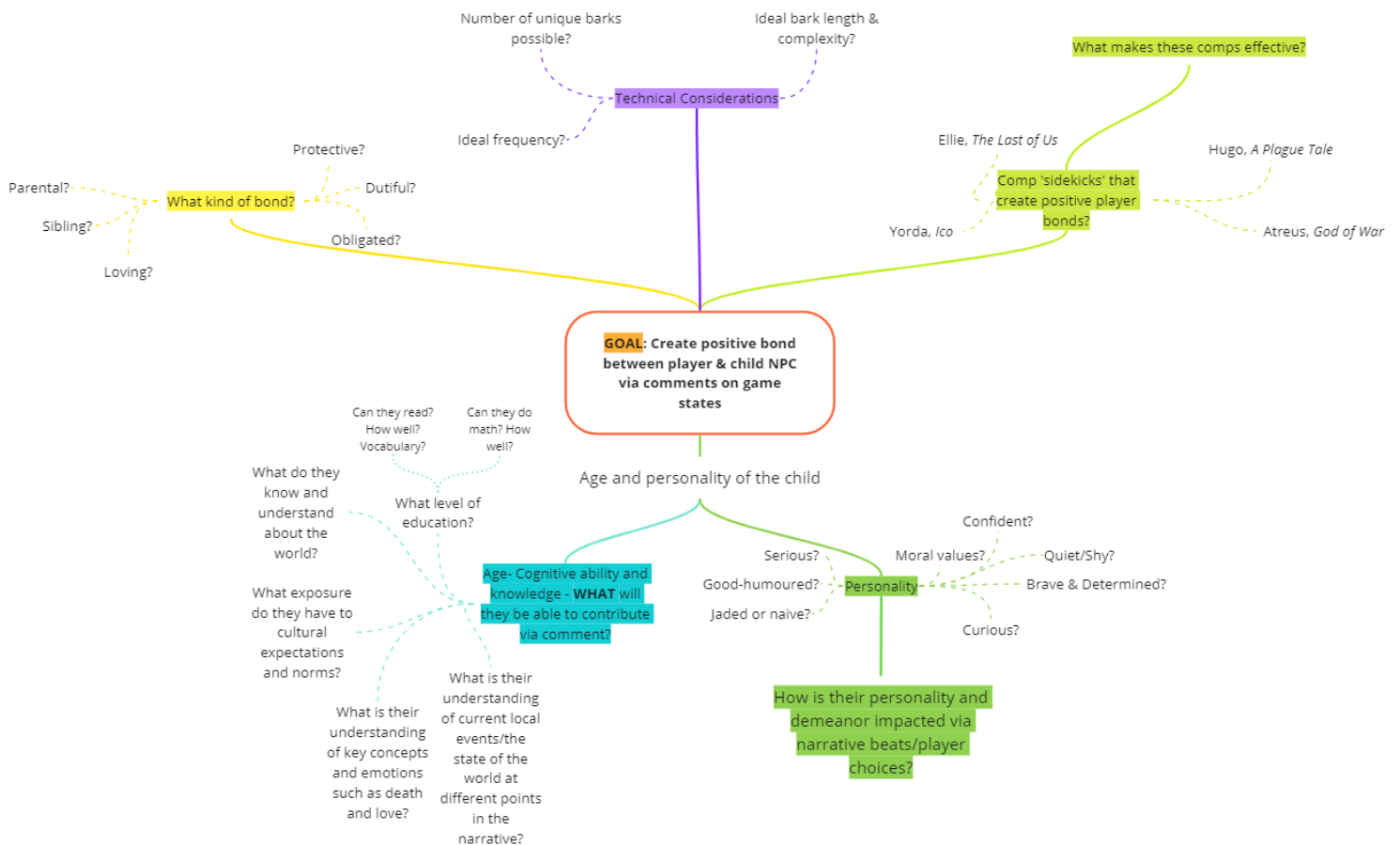
CHARACTER	GENERAL	DETAILS
ANTONIA SNOWBIRD	A woman in her late 50s/early 60s. A Canadian retiree obsessed with the sun and all things tropical.	Keeps many tropical plants in her summertime pool party palace of a home. Sweet, friendly, helpful, here for a good time not a zombie time. But perhaps she has a secret... if the heavily-chained door Patrice sees on one visit is anything to go by.
GUSTUS GREEN (GUS)	A boy in his late teens/very early 20s. Encyclopedic knowledge of plants and communications tech.	Plants were his special interest before the zompocalypse, and now he combines this with his uncanny knack for ham radio and fiber optic whoo to help keep Neighborville connected as they work to rebuild. Intense, very focused, often has to be gently redirected to the topic at hand.
BIRD-OF-PARADISE (BIRD-OF-PARACHUTE)	A stressed, high-strung plant; very beautiful and tropical.	At first, the Bird-of-Paradise does not want to bloom, even under Dave's speciality care. Eventually it does, but not to provide shade as planned - instead it allows the Peashooters to jump off the roof and rain water down on the solar zombies, shorting out their solar panels and rendering them vulnerable. Dave calls it the Bird-of-Parachute in honor of its role.

In a realistic, medieval, action-adventure game the player is followed by a child sidekick. A tool for creating a bond between player and child is to have the child comment on various game states. Write a few example barks and describe how you would approach this system.

ACTOR	DIALOGUE	CONTEXT	INFLECTION
Beatrix [Child NPC]	I bet the boys are behind the graveyard. I won two shillings playing knucklebones with 'em there, once.	During an exploration beat	Proud
Beatrix [Child NPC]	This time of night, I'm worried who else might be scurryin' around out here in the dark. Or <i>what</i> .	During an exploration beat	Alert; Concerned
Beatrix [Child NPC]	I can hear 'em comin'!	High-tension mission; enemies/negative consequence will soon occur	Urgent; Scared
Beatrix [Child NPC]	Overshoes are so <i>heavy</i> , but I don't want to get my turnshoes wet.	Beginning of a game phase/at first mission beat; Rain/storm	Neutral
Beatrix [Child NPC]	I wish I was home, in bed, with a bellyful of supper.	Late stage of extended, multi-stage quest with no downtime beats	Tired
Beatrix [Child NPC]	I'd love to be able to read actual words just like that, like it's <i>magic</i> . Teach me sometime?	Player solves complex puzzle involving text	Curious; Interested

Approach:

- I would approach this system using an emotional lens, considering what the relationship is at the beginning of the narrative and what the intended finale state is.
- This approach would guide natural progression of the bond, providing engaging emotional movement throughout the gameplay rather than a static experience the player may “switch off” to after hearing the NPC repeatedly over time. An effective bond cannot be forced immediately, so building opportunities for the player to grow into the relationship over ongoing narrative beats would be ideal.
- A key goal would involve crafting non-repetitive barks for a wide variety of situations within technical constraints (length, frequency, maximum total number of unique lines, etc.) to maximise player engagement while minimising the irritation or annoyance that can come from overly repetitive or unnecessarily handhold-y NPC barks.
- A collaborative development process (as sampled below; work in progress) would allow the narrative team to create a master reference for the relationship between the child NPC and the PC and its development over the course of the game to ensure consistency, flavor, and logical progression of the emotional bond as the game state changes and influences it.



In a thriller game, set in an alternative 1970s, the player is tracking down a person they suspect of being a spy. They manage to find their secret locker and search its contents. After a bit of thinking, the player realizes their suspicions were true. Describe the 5-7 objects found in the locker. Try not to rely too much on text.

NOTES:

- 'Alternative' is a broad category. How is this defined in the narrative bible? Different outcomes for historical event/s? Magic? Technology? -These questions would inform details and flavor of objects/other possible items that would have meaning in this world.
- For the purposes of this exercise, the Vietnam War is a core conflict of greater global impact. The protagonist is Vietnamese, and the spy is an American who has been posing as an ally.

ITEM	ITEM VISUAL DESCRIPTION	HOOK (least to most overt)
Vietamese-English-Vietnamese Pocket Dictionary	[External] <i>A heavily dog-eared Vietnamese-English dictionary. The cover is marked with indentations from being written on.</i> [Internal] <i>Too many words are highlighted for any to stand out.</i>	Only a tangential link to potential subterfuge. Is only suspicious in the context of the other items in the locker.
Surgical Gloves	<i>Three pairs of black gloves. New. The sharp scent of latex hits the air as you unroll them.</i>	Uncertain connection to subterfuge. Could be used to conceal fingerprints or handle chemicals etc., but they also have many other purposes.
Handful of Coins	<i>A handful of 5 hao coins. Barely weigh anything in your hand. They're mint new; glistening aluminium.</i>	The lightness of the coins could be attributed to them being a light aluminium rather than hollow for concealing tiny items, so it is not immediately clear that the Player should consider the coins evidence of subterfuge. The newness of the coins also lends evidence to them possibly being suspicious.
Pocket Tools	[External] <i>The smooth capsule fits easily in your palm.</i> [Internal] <i>Half a dozen tiny tools in pristine condition: wrench, scalpel, screwdriver, pick, file. Expensive.</i>	Not necessarily indicative on its own, but in context of other items suggests spycraft and subterfuge due to the specialised nature of the tools, the quality, and deliberate concealability.
Dental Mold Kit	[External] <i>Worn edges and a faulty latch - this dental kit has seen a lot of use.</i> [Internal] <i>The putty is grimy but still firm. The shape of dozens of keys are pressed into the underside.</i>	Appears out of place based on what the Player knows about the person - invites closer scrutiny. Key impressions in the dental putty are an indicator that the item is not being used for its intended purpose and is instead concealing its use to gain entry/keys for secured assets.