



*Baka-Trio Webzine*

VOL. #

June 2009

2

# Approaches To Storytelling

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-The Boy Who  
Loved Crows

## SERIAL FICTION

-Super Network Wars Omega:  
Suikoden Pilipinas

## FEATURES

-Accepting A Storytelling  
Technique  
-Channel Yourself  
Through Storytelling

## INTERVIEWS

**Katy Towell**  
**Taleweaver**

# How To Tell a Story

Storytelling is the definitive goal of visual novels. This bold statement might already have triggered some knee-jerk reactions or metaphorical gag reflexes in some of you, but nevertheless, it is, in the context of the English Visual Novel community, true. Barring the very few exceptions (religious propaganda, multiple choice games, tutorials in visual novel format) almost all known English Visual Novels *prima facie*, exist to tell a story. Thus, we (all of us engaged in visual novel development) are tasked with answering the practical question of, "How do I tell my story?" There are no definite or short answers to this.

First of all, human civilization has reached a point where norms or "conventions" to effective storytelling have long been established. The pragmatic veteran will often instruct the novice writer to internalize these conventions and through emulation, improvisation, constant reference and a degree of adherence to these established principles, begin to construct his story – and this is totally sound advice – after all, why would one try to learn how to paint by observing and guessing at the strokes that Michelangelo used on the ceiling of the Sistine chapel when there is a book readily available showing you how to do it step-by-step?

Then again, there are some individuals who enjoy fumbling their way through the storytelling process without a roadmap, and while the chances are higher for a flawed product to come out as the end result, there are those rare few who can create something that actually conforms to and even transcends the current conventions of storytelling.

Is it then advisable for the "average joe" to stick with the conventions? Is deviating from the norms the exclusive territory of established writers or the naturally gifted? More importantly, is there such a thing as a "best method of storytelling?" The answer to these questions will always be, "it depends." It depends on the type of story you want to tell. It depends on the target audience you are aiming for. It depends on your own goal in telling a story. The reason we say this is because we believe that there is no single supreme storytelling technique. Every method, whether it is listed as a

known convention or is a self-made contemporary style, may or may not work depending on all these factors. "Success" therefore, can only come with the alignment of these factors that affect recognition and acceptance.

Thus, it becomes clear that choosing an appropriate storytelling technique is much more complicated than it seems to be worth. Why would anyone invest so much effort in writing a story when the risk of failure seems stacked so greatly against him? It might seem like a fool's errand, but there is, however, a proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. While choosing the appropriate storytelling technique might seem like a hit-or-miss affair, writing a good story is not. Even in this day and age, science, logic and maths have not advanced to the point that even a "good story" can be quantified – and yet throughout human history, people – regardless of language, educational and socio-cultural background – have consistently hailed some stories as "good." – From this, it can be inferred that a good story is universal, regardless of time, language, race and of course, storytelling approach.

What then is the true secret to effective storytelling? The answer is a simple generalization that anyone who has achieved great success in any field of endeavor will readily tell you; just be prudent in anything that you choose to do. Everything else will follow.

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## DEFINITIONS

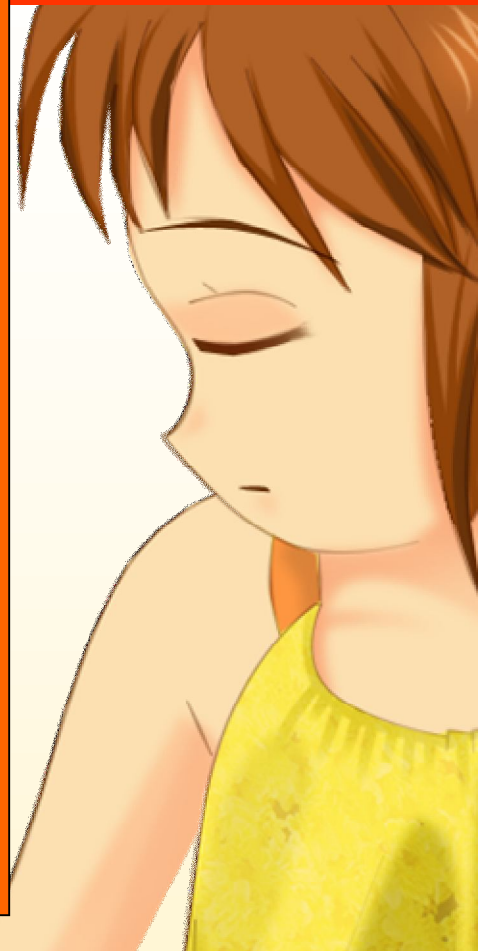
*\*Since everyone has their own interpretation of certain words, this section lists some terms used in the articles within this webzine and their working definitions as they are used in this publication.*

**Storytelling** - Conveying a story or stories through written words, audio-visual cues and other visual novel elements.

**Visual Novel** - Refers to both branched and non-branched stories which rely mostly on text, static art, music, sounds, and sometimes limited animation for the purpose of storytelling.

**EVN** - Literally, "English Visual Novel" an abbreviation of OELVN (Original English Language Visual Novel.)

**Conventions** - Sets of rules, requirements, or methods that govern how something is done or performed.





# "Dedicated to those who dream of the sky."

**Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this article belong solely to the reviewer and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of BTW.**

I'll be honest. At first, I downloaded this game because I wanted to read something nice and short. I saw the "10 minutes" playtime tag on this visual novel on the ren'ai archives and decided to give it a try.

I went into this game with a critic's mindset. I wanted to dissect it for its individual elements and in the end, conclude with something along the lines of "Oh, nice game. I'll give it 8/10." And then I pushed the "start game" button and was greeted with a black screen containing the words, "Why did we forget how to fly?" in elegant white letters. It might not seem like anything special, but personally, this initial screen impressed me enough to quickly drive away any thoughts of critiquing this piece. The soft, soothing background music that followed after just helped to seal the deal.

It was the right decision on my part, because otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to enjoy this VN as much as I did. I ended up devouring it within 8 minutes or so, just shy of the advertised play time, but I was far from disappointed.

In the author's own definition of success: it made me pause and think for a moment before I simply allowed the words to draw me in. I have to admit, I'm partial towards the dramatic narrative style which was used in "The Boy Who Loved Crows," specifically because it's very similar to my own style of writing.

Of course, I'm not jaded enough to say that this VN is perfect. If you look at the individual elements, ultimately, some flaws will come to the surface. First of all, the relationship between Jonas and Astraeus isn't fleshed out well enough and Jonas' concern for the boy can seem a bit out of the blue. Secondly, there are a few negligible grammar/punctuation errors and the writer also equates blackbirds to crows, which I believe is incorrect. There's also the character art, which though very good, wasn't colored on purpose and there seems to be no logical explanation as to why this was done. As to the merit of the story itself, it uses two characters with intrinsically contrasting characteristics to highlight the other. In this case, Astraeus' has the more prominent dreamy personality while the protagonist actually acts as the foil making him less interesting. The plot itself is simple, linear and per-



## A review by lordcloudx

haps lacking in substance for some. It's easy to just sum it up and say the author relied too much on artistic interpretation in the ending to make this piece seem like something more than it actually is. There are too many unanswered questions to put it simply and I can't say with any certainty that I understood the message behind the final scene.

However, I find all these things negligible when looking at the bigger picture. Even without reading the writer's notes, it's easy to see that the individual elements of this VN only serve as tools towards furthering the experience that it imparts. I often stress this point to my cohorts in the channel and to the EVN community in general; I believe that the visual novel as a storytelling medium can impart an experience more powerful than any other media can ever hope to accomplish and it's this reviewer's opinion that "The Boy Who Loved Crows" illustrates this point beautifully. Ultimately, this is not the kind of VN I would recommend to those who want something concrete, something logical, or something with more apparent substance, but for those who are willing to cast logic aside for a moment and put in a little emotional investment and allow the writing to lead you through the story, this is 10 minutes or less of good reading that you won't want to pass up.

# Accepting a Storytelling Technique

**Story appreciation is often a matter of perspective**

*by mikey*

Fifteen years ago (give or take), I remember I was sitting in a school bench, furious. I have replied "The philosophy of Dostoyevsky's works" to the question our social studies teacher has asked. It was a backup answer – not the one I really wanted to give, since it was actually Tolstoy who I wanted to work on as a semester assignment. But I was a teenage boy, and they sit in the cool back parts of the classroom, which however, also meant that when teachers ask for assignments, starting from the front desks, you are inevitably going to be asked last. This saw me being confronted with the importance of what's often referred to as "aligning oneself with others". Realizing it, however, didn't change the fact, that I had to switch to Dostoyevsky, instead of Tolstoy.

This all began in literature class the summer before. I read "War And Peace" because I was told to do so by my teacher, and I did a completely standard book report and presented it to the class. Yet, something made me come back to Tolstoy – I suppose it was the romantic parts, since I can't really imagine I secretly liked the depictions of struggling soldiers. And so I told myself why not try another of his books. And Anna Karenina it was. This was the beginning. Short stories followed, and during that summer, I have read pretty much all of Tolstoy's works.

I loved the style – descriptive, vivid and emotional. So when the next semester began, it was only logical that I wanted to use this in social studies class as the topic for my semester assignment, bringing us to the situation at beginning of this article.

Anyway, there was nothing I could do at that point, and I was stuck with Dostoyevsky. Not only did I have to read his books now, but the truth was, I didn't like the way he wrote them. The style was terrible, scenes weren't properly described, details which I was used to weren't there at all. I chewed through "Crime And Punishment" and cursed the girl who had Tolstoy, especially since I knew I liked Tolstoy more and knew I would have been a much better candidate to write about his philosophies.

I kept on reading – I had to – and then (you may have expected this) I fell in love with Dostoyevsky. Suddenly, I liked his style, the lack of descriptions and generally a rougher way of delivering the messages. I ended up loving every bit of my work on the semester assignment. It was something new, and I found a way to appreciate it – strangely, pushing the descriptive style of Tolstoy into the list of styles I suddenly didn't want to read. Note that I didn't say "didn't want to read anymore". The theory for that comes later.

And with that, I have finally arrived at the topic of this month's issue. The approach to storytelling. I'd say it's safe to maintain that Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy have very different ones. What cannot be said is that either of these styles can't be appreciated.

I have another example for this theory – the first time I consciously experienced a "flashback-styled" narrative, for example, I didn't like it. It was only after some time that I grew accustomed to it and learned to appreciate it. The assumption behind this is that a person can only have a certain amount of styles which he appreciates (likes the most). And for each new style, one has to more or less go, so that a certain focus can be maintained. You could say there are a limited number of style slots in one's head. So I used to like parallel stories, but now I've embraced point-of-view styles (where different people tell the same story in different ways) and parallel stories don't really do it for me anymore – they've been pushed out. I still like flashbacks, though. What I did was just replace one favorite style in one of my slots for another. I didn't "grow out" of it, though, just "replaced" it.

Sure, I can appreciate different styles, but as explained above, when a certain limit is reached and all the slots are filled, it costs a significant amount of energy to calibrate your mind to a certain additional style to be able to appreciate it. It's (for most of the time) not the style that is clumsy, or bad, or unfitting – if you say "it sucks", it's your mind protesting against having to make an effort to get into its specifics. And it's a very normal thing, too, by the way, to be biased – even

if you assumed you could have unlimited mental energy and give everything a chance (and would enjoy it), it would then actually mean you have no bias at all – which would in turn mean you probably don't have a personality.

The conclusion isn't complicated. Pretty much any storytelling or writing style can be appreciated, the techniques are equal – they are just techniques, after all. What makes them seem more fitting to a genre, or better suited to express something, what determines their popularity is actually the social, historical and personal context of the audience it's intended for. The question "Which approach to storytelling is the best?", is, as is often the case with questions containing the word "best", not really a final question at all. It cannot be answered universally, which can be simply proven by imagining that only two people exist on the planet, and they have opposite opinions – and so, the answer is not universal, it's biased. But this isn't surprising either, I imagine.

Still, to come to a meaningful conclusion, one has to be biased.

And so, my bias is that I believe that in the context of writing a hobbyist visual novel, the choice of a storytelling technique never matters as much as the willingness of the players to adapt their mindset to it. There always seems to be a lot of material telling authors what to do, how to make their work interesting, likable or expressive. There are countless sources which give out tips to writers, not to mention the numerous books. You can even take classes. It's a fascinating and inspiring world, really – how to weave a story, how to entice, hook, surprise, explain and get something special across.

Yet, if I, as the reader, the recipient of a work, want to contribute to my experience, there is hardly anything to give me advice. How can I be a better reader, how can I best overcome my prejudices, how to train my mind not to be shocked by an unusual form of storytelling, how to overcome the psychological discomfort that an unusual style represents and how to free up the energy needed for the effort.

In many ways, this is what the criticism of standardized and stereotypical forms of storytelling (e.g the opening / conflict / resolution pattern) should really be about – people seem to criticize other people for liking familiar patterns, for watching a series with the same structure and stereotypical

characters where minor deviations from the formulas are already advertised as memorable and unique. But the truly unsettling thing is not that people like a certain popular style – it's that the popularity of that style makes them believe it is the "right" one, or the "best" one. The criticism shouldn't be directed at the popular style itself. It should be directed at the unwillingness of people to make an effort which puts them briefly out of their comfort zone.

No one really wants anyone to change here – or

make his life deliberately less enjoyable. But from time to time, exercising your mind with unfamiliar patterns does it as good as normal exercise does for your body. As for me, I enjoy this "exercise" a lot, preferring especially the freeware hobby visual novel scene for this. It's an ideal place, an ideal context. This is why the decision about which kind of storytelling technique the author chooses is not that important to me, and I'll gladly leave it with him – because I know I will give it the chance, and even if it's not what I'd typically read, I will make that effort and I will do it gladly.

And you'd be surprised how much of a difference this makes. Being just a little bit forthcoming, as a reader. Builder's Mind, Fade, Cell Phone Love Letter, all are visual novels I really enjoyed, written with storytelling styles I don't normally enjoy (parallel, abstract, etc.), and which, if they were being presented to me in a different context or format, I would most probably not even pick them up. But I did, and I loved them.

But as this already crosses over to the theory of different media for different needs which I wrote about in the previous issue, let this be the conclusion.

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## ...the choice of a storytelling technique never matters as much as the willingness of the players to adapt their mindset to it.

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# Drawn To You

~art school romance~



Start Game  
Continue Game  
Preferences  
Quit

Liany is a freshman in the north Ashburg Institute of Art. Somehow though, her paintings still come out dull. Liana's best friend thinks she knows the answer - so can Liana find something that will inspire her? Or... someone?

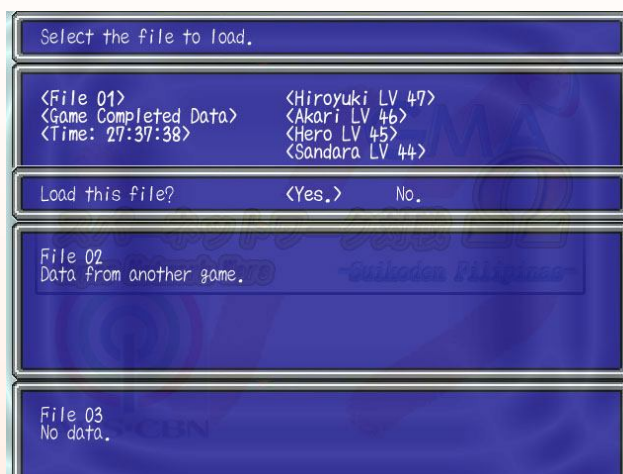
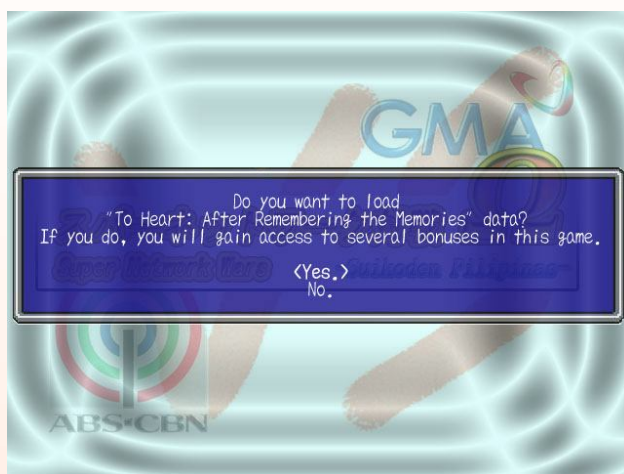


Download it at  
<http://www.renai.us>  
by Reccasoft Games  
<http://reccaphoenix.wordpress.com>



**Original concept by Red “KiRa\_YaMaTo”  
Mendoza**  
**Written by Benedict “Moonlight Bomber”  
Villariaza**





**Author's Note:** *As of this writing, there are now thirty-seven chapters (or episodes) of this work, written bilingually (English and Filipino) and found at [supernetwork-taisen.wordpress.com](http://supernetwork-taisen.wordpress.com). When I complete this (in seventy more episodes or so), I will then translate this into pure English, with footnotes provided for non-Filipinos to enjoy.*

## Episode 0: Fabula Nova Philippinensis

As a special anniversary treat, -KiRa'S-WoRld-, in cooperation with DagitabSoft, presents to you this special fanfic-slash-parody...

Super Network Wars Omega: Suikoden Pilipinas

My name is Matthew Luke Laonglaan, 16 years old, male, wearing a red wristband.

I have personally witnessed what seventeen valiants have done to subvert the force that threatened to split the Philippines in two via dirty politicking.

I wholeheartedly congratulated those heroes, who are mostly Japanese.

And even though I have seen with my own eyes the "disappearance" of some of them, I felt that the "disappeared" still have a mission in another dimension. And I guarantee they'll come back.

After a few months... bad tidings came into my life.

While going home, my parents got into an accident in a high-risk area at EDSA. They both died on the spot.

All of me came crashing down due to that event, because I really loved my parents. And it so happened that my relatives lived in faraway provinces. I asked myself, "Who will now guide me?" I even locked myself up in my house for a few days.

On that rainy day... when my parents were brought to their final destination...

...I once again met my childhood friend, Hyacinth Monterola.

---

My name is Hyacinth Monterola, 16 years old, female, wearing a green wristband.

Matt and I became friends since elementary. Our houses are next to each other, that's why.

In the long time we've spent together... nothing much has changed.

But when I learned that his parents died, I drowned in tears due to excessive sadness.

Even my parents sympathized with me, because they were best friends with them.

I tried to enter his house, but it was locked. I then learned of the suffering he felt at that time, so I respected his decision.

On the day of burial, I once again met Matt.

"Matt... condolences..."

"Yes. I know, Hyacinth. Now, I no longer have any companions at home. And my relatives are in far-flung provinces. Who will now guide me? May God help me."

"Don't worry... you're still at my side. It hadn't changed, and it never will be for a long time."

And so we hugged in the darkness, while the last pile of dirt was placed in his parents' grave.

---

The Philippine Calm was indeed starting roughly. The reason? There were several portals that mushroomed in several parts of the Philippines. It was even reported in several mass media.

March 31, 2006 Headlines

The Philippine Daily Inquirer: Mysterious portals appear (Subtitle: Persons pop up from them)

The Philippine Star: Portals mushroom in several cities (Subtitle: People come from them, no damage reported)

Pilipino Star Ngayon: Portals pop out in the Philippines! (Subtitle: No damage!)

Bulgar: Portals come out of nowhere! (Subtitle: Connected to EDSA War?)



## Hyacinth Monterola

TV Patrol (March 30, 2006)

Ted Failon: This morning, there were portals that suddenly sprang out in different parts of the country. Could they possibly have any connection to the disappearance of some of the heroes who eliminated Melficio Victorialuna? ABS-CBN Chief Correspondent, Korina Sanchez reports.

Korina Sanchez: There were portals that appeared in different parts of the archipelago. Many of them were in cities. There were also reports received by yours truly that there were some mysterious persons who came out of those portals. They did not wreak havoc; instead, they were a bit confused until they learned that they were in the Philippines. Here is an interview with one of them.

Mysterious Baker: One day, I was just making Pan No. 75 in Pantasia when something gulped me. I lost consciousness. When I regained it, I learned that I was in the Philippines. The exact location was near a bakery which is near the ABS-CBN Broadcast Center.

Korina Sanchez: And according to research done by the National Bureau of Investigation, they learned that the portals that showed up were similar to the portals that engulfed Hiroyuki Fujita, Akari Kamigishi, John Pratts, Heart Evangelista, and some other heroes of the EDSA War when they were honored on February 28. They still couldn't determine the mastermind behind the portals. Korina Sanchez, Patrol ng Pilipino .

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Several days later... What you didn't know about the RAY-MART SANTIAGO x CLAUDINE BARRETTO wedding...

At the Tagaytay highlands... A teener was rushing on his

baking prowess.

Kazuma: Guys! How many more minutes before the wedding?

Personal Assistant: Around 50 minutes! And act fast, 'cause you're late!

Kazuma: Yes! I'll be fast!

Meanwhile...

Mechanic: Kira, are you sure you wanna do this?

Kira Yamato: Of course. I did this when I busted up the Genesis... But here, Claudine will be happy...

Assistant Director: Mr. Yamato, the director says you must get ready... You'll be flown in the Archangel.

Kira: Alright, when I get the specs right.

Just then, he saw a familiar face.

Kira: (shouting) ATHRUN?? ATHRUN? Is that you?

Athrun: Yes, it's me! But why are you in a flight suit?

Kira: This. I was instructed by Claudine to make fireworks.

Athrun: Huh? Fireworks? Will you use the Freedom?

Kira: Yes. Just watch me from above.

At the wedding venue...

Personal Assistant: Hey, Zenki, don't make a mess!

Zenki: I DON'T GIVE A DAMN!

Personal Assistant: And why?! The wedding's a few minutes from now, and you're still making a mess!

Zenki: Ha ha ha ha! I'll mess up this wedding of two worms! (then suddenly disappears)

While waiting for the bride, Raymart was seen talking with Naruto.

Raymart: Hey you, why are you interfering in this wedding? Shouldn't the Saiyuki group be on guard?!

Naruto: Don't you gatecrash; we're the exclusive guards... Or else I'll Kagebunshin you!

Raymart: (thinking) I wish Goku were here, not those brats...

The wedding was done in full... without any worries... thanks to the anime forces who were in hand during that event.

At the reception...

Guest 1: Excuse me. Did you make this bread?

Kazuma: Yes, sir.

Guest 2: But this might not pass our taste test.

Kazuma: Don't worry!

Guest 2: Alright, we will taste it. (The two guests were now eating one of Kazuma's pastries.)

Guests 1 and 2: (shouting and leaping) DELICIOUSUUUUUUSSSSSSSS!!!!

At the VIP Area...

Mr. Lopez: Hello, Mr. Gozon, long time no see.

Mr. Gozon: (sighs) How's your network? Still no. 2?

Mr. Lopez: Hahaha, indeed it's no. 2, but no. 1 to the otaku.

Mr. Gozon: Hey, we're the "Anime Authority".

Mr. Lopez: But no longer. HERO is our ace in the hole.



## Matthew Luke Laonglaan

Mr. Gozon: Really? So that's why this wedding is laughable.

Mr. Lopez: Don't be overconfident. We have Naruto and Kazuma, and also Kira.

Mr. Gozon: That's all? They're nothing. We have Echizen.

Mr. Lopez: Ha! We have yuri. And I'm addicted to it.

Mr. Gozon: But I instructed the Guard to block your anime. It's disturbing!

Mr. Lopez: (angry) YOU!!!! (tries to punch Gozon but halts due to...)

In mid-air...

Sky Patrol : Kira, are you OK here?

Kira: Yes, Captain!

Director Johnny Manahan: Kira, DO IT NOW!

Kira: HEADING OUT!

And the Freedom's Picus launched an array of Fireworks which awed the guests... The Freedom also wrote "Best Wishes Claudine" and "ABS-CBN No. 1".

Claudine: So pretty! Thanks, Kira!

Raymart: Really?!

**To be continued in BTW Volume 3 July 2009**



# Glossary of terms used in Super Network Wars and other stuff...

Episode 0: Fabula Nova Philippinensis - A reference to the code name of the Final Fantasy XIII project, Fabula Nova Crystallis. The title and the opening sequence also imply that this crossover novel is the sequel to "To Heart: After Remembering the Memories", an earlier work of mine.

KiRa'S-World- The personal blog of the one who originally concocted the backbone of this, KiRa\_YaMaTo.

DagitaSoft -The name of my future game development company.

EDSA- Epifanio de los Santos Avenue. One of the main thoroughfares in Metro Manila and the site of the EDSA Revolution.

The Philippine Calm -The term for the period of overall peace in the Philippines after the defeat of the main villain in "To Heart: After Remembering the Memories", Melficio Victorialuna. The battle that led to this is called The EDSA War.

March 31, 2006 Headlines - The first two are national English-language newspapers, the next two are national Tagalog-language tabloids.

TV PATROL - A Tagalog-language primetime news program on ABS-CBN, one of the Philippines' largest television networks (the other is GMA).

Patrol ng Pilipino - Tagalog, "Patrol of the Filipino". But you know this already by context, right?

RAYMART SANTIAGO x CLAUDINE BARRETTO- Raymart and Claudine are a showbiz couple. They were actually married in late March or early April 2006. This is just an example of many instances of real-life events mixed with fictional elements later in the novel, since they are very important to the storyline

Saiyuki- Gensomaden Saiyuki, I mean. The series was aired on GMA at the time of the wedding, while Yakitate! Japan and Naruto were aired on ABS-CBN.

Goku- GMA also aired Dragonball. It's because Raymart belongs to GMA (or a Kapuso, "of the same heart"); while Claudine belongs to ABS-CBN (or a Kapamilya, "of the same family").

Mr. Lopez and Mr. Gozon - The head honchos of the two networks, are heated rivals, especially when viewer ratings are brought up. This rivalry is one of the main themes in the story, hence the title.

Hero TV - The all-Tagalog anime cable channel,

operated by a subsidiary of ABS-CBN.

Echizen - The Prince of Tennis was aired both on GMA and its sister channel, QTV-11.

Yuri- Mr. Lopez refers to "Maria-sama ga Miteru", which was aired on ABS-CBN but pulled off the air some time later allegedly due to its sensitive themes.

"The Guard"- refers to current Movie and Television Review Classification Board (the Philippine equivalent of the FCC) chairman Consoliza Laguardia.

Sky Patrol - The air surveillance team of ABS-CBN, used mainly for traffic updates.

Since this novel is heavily inspired by the Suikoden series, it's mandatory to include a list of Stars of Destiny as they are first introduced here.

## Stars Introduced So Far

Tenkai Star - The Chief Star of Heaven (Song Jiang, the Opportune Rain)  
Matthew Luke Laonglaan

Tengou Star - Star of Conflagration (Lu Jun-Yi, the Jade Ki'rin)  
Gabby Lopez

Tenei - Heroic Star (Hua Rong, Li Guang Minor)  
Hyacinth Monterola

Tenritsu - Star of the Standing Spear (Dong Ping, Warrior of the Two Spears)  
Athrun Zala (Gundam Seed / Gundam Seed Destiny)

Tensyo - the Swift Star (Zhang Qing, the Featherless Arrow)  
Kira Yamato (Gundam Seed / Gundam Seed Destiny)

Tensatsu - Murderous Star (Li Kui, The Black Whirlwind)  
Zenki (Zenki)

Tenkou - Clever Star (Yan Qing, Graceful One)  
Korina Sanchez

Chikou, Wild Star (Kong Ming, the Pleiades in the Night Sky)  
Naruto Uzumaki (Naruto)

Chisyu - Prisoned Star (Zhu Gui, Demonic Beast on Dry Land)  
Kazuma Azuma (Yakitate! Japan)

# NEW EVN RELEASES



## Angelic Orbs By Vatina



## Science Girls By Spiky Caterpillar/Hanako Games



## Daddys Monsters.Com Behavior Simulator By Daddysmonsters



## Remembering Amie By Kazuki Mishima

EVN List is not comprehensive. Check [http://www.renpy.org/wiki/renpy/Ren%27Py\\_Games](http://www.renpy.org/wiki/renpy/Ren%27Py_Games) for more.

# An Interview With ~Katy Towell~

**T**his month, we have an all-encompassing "Approaches to Storytelling" as the magazine's theme. We get to know the creative mind behind the cult-hit *Childrin R Skary* *Flashes*. BTW presents: an interview with writer, illustrator, designer and flash animator, Katy Towell.

**Are there any particular inspirations for your *Childrin R Skary* flashes in general? Do you draw from real life experience or other sources? Is it something unique for each individual animated short?**

It's a combination of real life experiences and imagination for each one of them. For example, I've never had much experience with oily creatures who bubble up from the ground and destroy cities, but I think everyone knows what it's like to be misunderstood despite your best intentions. Or to feel lonely or afraid or angry. I try to draw from feelings everyone can relate to.

**Regarding the art in *Childrin R Skary*, why did you choose to make them in that particular style? (Intentionally disproportionate eyes, mostly black and white colors, etc.)**

It was a process of trial-and-error, really. I tried different styles until something stuck out to me. In the case of the eyes, I remember wanting to make the eyes larger than normal but not being sure what size, so I placed two different sizes next to each other to compare and ended up liking it best that way. Gotta love happy accidents!

**What do you think of the possibilities of branching stories? (Visual novels, choose your own adventure stories. etc. We from BTW belong to the small, niche English Visual Novel Community)**

I admit this isn't something I've really considered in the past, but I've only just learned about visual novels. You've enlightened me! Of course, anything is a possibility. At the moment, I'm working on an old-fashioned, one-story, written novel. After that, who knows?

**Would you consider making a visual novel with branching story paths if you had the time? What kind of visual novel would you make if ever?**

If I had the time, sure. As to what kind... no idea! I'd probably have to weigh in with folks more experienced on the subject. It's always good to try something new.

**Which elements (art, music, voice, animation, text) do you consider the most important when making one of your animated flash stories? Do you place more importance in any particular aspect of your projects?**

All of those elements are essential, but I place the most importance on story. You can have the most impressive artwork, most moving music, and best narration in the world, but all that is wasted if the story is terrible. Think of some of your favorite movies from your childhood. You might not have seen them in ten, fifteen years but you remember the story.

**Do you believe in allowing your target audience to directly participate in the creation of your story-book styled flashes? (Modifying a work-in-progress based on audience feedback, etc.)**

To some extent, yes. Audience feedback is very important. If they don't like something about one cartoon, I try to improve that for the next one. If they want to see more of something, I try to expound on that. The important thing to me, however, is that the actual ideas remain my own. But the audience certainly helps me utilize those ideas in better ways.

**Do you subscribe to any known conventions/norms of storytelling/writing with Childrin R Skary?**

I couldn't name most of them, but I'm sure I do. I do believe in "show, don't tell." Of course, this is easier when there's a visual element because the narrator can say one thing and the underlying point is made in the graphics. That advantage isn't there when it's strictly text, but I try to keep that in mind whether it's just writing or a mix of graphics and writing. The audience doesn't like to be talked down to, whether they're kids or grownups. Even though most of my work takes on the tone of children's tales, there's more beneath the surface of each story, and I hope the audience can - and will want to - find that.

**How would you classify yourself as an artist? What do you think are your biggest strengths? Are you more of a writer? An illustrator? A flash animator?**

I'd say I'm a writer first, an illustrator second and a flash animator mainly by necessity. It's funny - I never intended to do any animations after The Little Girl Who Was Forgotten, but the audience response was so phenomenal that I realized I couldn't stop there. But even with those, it's the writing to which I most look forward when I begin a new project. Everything else makes that come to life for me, which adds to the fun.

**Recruitment is a problem that often plagues the aspiring visual novel developer in our community,**



*Screenshot from Genevieve.  
One of the Childrin R Skary Flash Movies*

**do you ever have a problem with recruiting people that you might need to do a particular task for your flash animations?**

I have some very talented and supportive friends, and they're really my go-to people for narration and music. Everything else is done on my own, so recruitment has never been a problem. I get offers from fans every now and then, too, which is good because I think the best work will come from people who like the subject. Find enthusiastic people who are willing to work with you on the details, be willing to consider new ideas if they have a different approach, and you've got all you need.

**Do you ever make compromises in some aspects of your works in order to put out a finished product rather than absolutely nothing?**

I have before, yes. Sometimes those compromises end up improving the whole project anyway, but sometimes I look back and wish I'd taken more time.

**Is length/playtime a consideration when you plan an animated flash/audio podcast? Do you try to meet a certain standard in terms of length?**

No. I do keep attention spans in mind when working on these things, but when something runs on longer than expected, I break it up into easily-digestible parts. So, I guess the only real standard is just whether or not it feels finished. If something's done well, it can be as short as a minute-and-a-half. Just as long as it's truly complete.

**Does your work ethics differ greatly between your professional endeavors and hobby projects?**

Absolutely not! You have to put your best into all you do - even if it's not something in which you're personally invested. In doing so, you can learn a lot and use that knowledge on the projects you do personally care about.





# Channel Yourself Through Storytelling

**By Hime**

Storytelling can be done in millions of ways, and how it is done tells a lot about the person. On a practical level there are differences in the focus of the story, timelines, choices of words and all that – but the storyteller's approach to his or her work matters a lot as well. We all have our own reasons to tell our stories in the first place, after all. My writing actually looks much like it used to several years ago, but my attitude towards storytelling has changed a lot and this has brought much inspiration to me while it also making my texts far more interesting to read. This is my approach to storytelling – it might not be the best one, but I love it and thus want to share it.

A few years ago, writing fiction was almost like a chore to me. I tried hard to think of what would be satisfying to the reader, what would be wise or professional to write and so on. The results definitely were not bad, and people enjoyed reading my stories – but there was something missing in the process. In the end, I feel that all this was because my texts were separate from me: they were not a part of me, and I was not a part of them – what I was creating was somehow artificial, as if I had written it as someone else's text. I was telling stories in the way I was used to reading them, not the way which was natural for me to tell them. After this realisation I had to find the way of writing me – how to channel myself and search for myself



**FIA's Winter Shard. Is a good example of channeling humanism and compassion beneath a cold, heartless exterior.**

through what I wrote. It sure took a lot of attempts to really get right, but nowadays writing is one of the most therapeutic activities I know. I explore myself and my feelings as I tell the story, especially through the main character. This must be why most of my texts are in first person and the main characters tend to be male (as DaFool once said, my animus might be more developed than my anima).

The content has become far more original as well, without even requiring any separate effort. Due to this the people I share my stories with have also noticed the change in my approach. It seems that it is a lot more fun to read something when you can feel the writer's touch and soul in the product. More than anything I see stories as pieces of their tellers. This doesn't mean that I think the writers are practicing self-insertion or anything of the sort. To be honest I have not found self-insertion a good way of channeling myself (of course, it might be a great style for someone else). It just means that I can sense a reflection of the writer in the piece, as if the text was a collection of metaphors or a little

enigma that tells something about who wrote it. This way of perceiving fiction can also offer a lot to one as a reader, and in some cases, it can even lead to the reader learning more about the writer to some extent or another. Quite romantic, is it not?

This way of viewing writing as a method of channeling oneself works especially well with amateur work, as there have not been pressures from the need to sell well and please the public. Perhaps this is one of the reasons I love the small but fruitful OELVN scene. Many, if not most works of our community are written by single hobbyists and it really shows – which is lovely if you ask me. I have no idea how much the writers of LSF think about exploring themselves through their work, but I believe that a lot of us, consciously or unconsciously, do it. And if you ask me, it's great: please do it and enjoy it. In the best case it can make both the process and the final piece more delightful for you and your audience!



# A Missing MEMOIR

(c) Marcus L. 2007

logue chapter 1 chapter 2 chapter 3 chapter 4 chapter 5  
credits quit

**A man wakes up in a hospital with a gunshot wound and no memory of his life, or even who he is. With no past and no future his only companion is a kind and cheerful nurse. But the past cannot be ignored and it returns to haunt the nameless man once more**

by Marcus L.  
Get it at the Ren'ai Archives  
<http://www.renai.us>



# DEVELOPER INTERVIEW



## TALEWEAVER

**Scriptwriter and producer of Metropolitan Blues**  
**Creator of The Loyal Kinsman**  
**Scriptwriter and director of Daemonophilia**

From Tall Tales Productions; we get to know long-time English Visual Novel developer, the writer behind *Daemonophilia*, *Metropolitan Blues* and several upcoming projects, Taleweaver.

**What written storytelling techniques do you find most interesting?**

That's a question I could write entire essays about. In my opinion, a good story needs to immerse the reader within the world it creates while at the same time surprising him over and over again to keep everything interesting. Some of my favorite storytelling techniques do the latter - I like unreliable narrators very much, for instance - but generally, everything that keeps up the reader's attention is fine with me. If you asked me for the three most favored storytelling techniques I use myself, I'd name Unreliable Narrator, False Foreshadowing and Playing with Prejudice.

**Do you take a plot-centric or character-centric approach to storytelling?**

Definitely plot-centric. While it is true that the best stories are about people, even the most interesting characters cannot shine unless put into a situation where they can prove themselves. Thus, almost all of my ideas start with a classic plot bunny, and then I develop the characters that benefit that plot.

**What things do you consider important when writing/planning a story?**

First and foremost, inspiration! I carry a Moleskin notebook with me to write down everything that comes to my mind and could become a story. I look through the notebook around once every two weeks, and if I see an idea that immediately makes me remember why I put it down, that's usually the next story I try to work out in a little more detail. A few of these "developed ideas" make it to full story, most others just slumber in my notebook.

Once I'm into the actual writing part, I'm very much into the details, meaning I do a lot of research on the topics I write about. There's a crime novel I wrote set in modern-day Tokyo, for example, which was written with a map of the city, a map of the subway trains and a detailed book on the Tokyo Metropolitan Police on the table, all for reference on places and people.

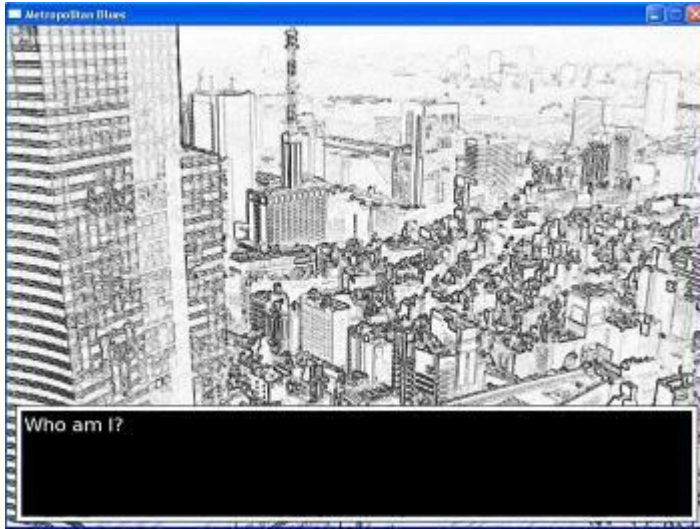
**Did the ecchi-ness and sexual themes of *Daemonophilia* lead you towards *Generation XxX*?**

No - both have little to do with one another. "*Generation XxX*" is one of my older narrations, adapted a little and brought into VN form as I really wanted to make more of the idea. "*Daemonophilia*" was one of the aforementioned plot bunnies from my notebook - "25-year-old male virgin meets incompetent succubus" is what it started with - whereas *GenXxX* is more or less a story born from a challenge by a fellow writer. He claimed that it was impossible to write a story that was decidedly pornographic yet had a plot "at least as immersive as that of an anime series". Thus, *GenXxX* became a *Mahou Shoujo* parody with a definite sexual edge.

**Do you have your own "Taleweaver" style of storytelling? If so, can you tell us a little bit about it?**

There is a "Taleweaver" style of storytelling - but I'm afraid I don't know anything about it. I can only create it, not describe it. My style is an attempt to write stories like those I loved to read as a child, so my main influences are probably Michael Ende, Mark Twain and especially Astrid Lindgren, who once wrote: "Only those who grow up yet remain children are truly human." Maybe the Taleweaver style of storytelling is writing stories the way they should be told to children?

**Are there any fundamentals of fiction writing that you'd recommend as essential for those who are just writing their first stories?**



*Screenshot from Taleweaver's Metropolitan Blues*

No. Writing is an art, and like with any art, people shouldn't worry too much about form. Most courses on creative writing don't really teach how to write but rather focus on how NOT to write, curbing styles outside their own definition. If there's one book I'd consider fundamental, it's Miyamoto Musashi's "Book of Five Rings", because it teaches thinking outside the box and learning to accept your natural strengths.

Aside from that, if there's one advice I can give to a young writer, it's this: Read as much as you can. There's no better way to learn than from the professionals.

**Do you believe in the line, "Your first few stories will always suck, so get them out of the way as soon as possible so you can improve"?**

I believe in the line, "Your first few stories will always suck, so get them ON PAPER as soon as possible AND USE THEM TO IMPROVE." Never throw away anything you have created, it can always serve you as a reminder of how not to do it!

**What is your measure of success with regards to storytelling?**

Storytelling is successful if it manages to entertain me. If other people feel entertained as well, that's a nice bonus.

**When making a visual novel, do you have a universal audience in mind or is it limited to the EVN community?**

A difficult question. I consider VNs another way of expressing myself with writing, and I usually write for a universal audience; however, if I really had a universal audience in mind, I'd probably create VNs in my native language, German, and try to find readers/players around where I live. Maybe making visual novels is my way of writing for an English-language audience?

**How do you name characters, events, and locations for your stories? How much significance do you put into these names for your stories?**

Oh, that depends. Sometimes, I want names to have a meaning (like the family names of my protagonists in GenXxX), in which case I go through dictionaries and encyclopedias to find them. At other times, I just want the name to sound well for the character I'm depicting (Simone from Daemonophilia got her name that way). But by and large, names aren't that important to my stories - it's the plot that counts.

**Do you believe in fully utilizing the VN medium to deliver an experience to the reader?**

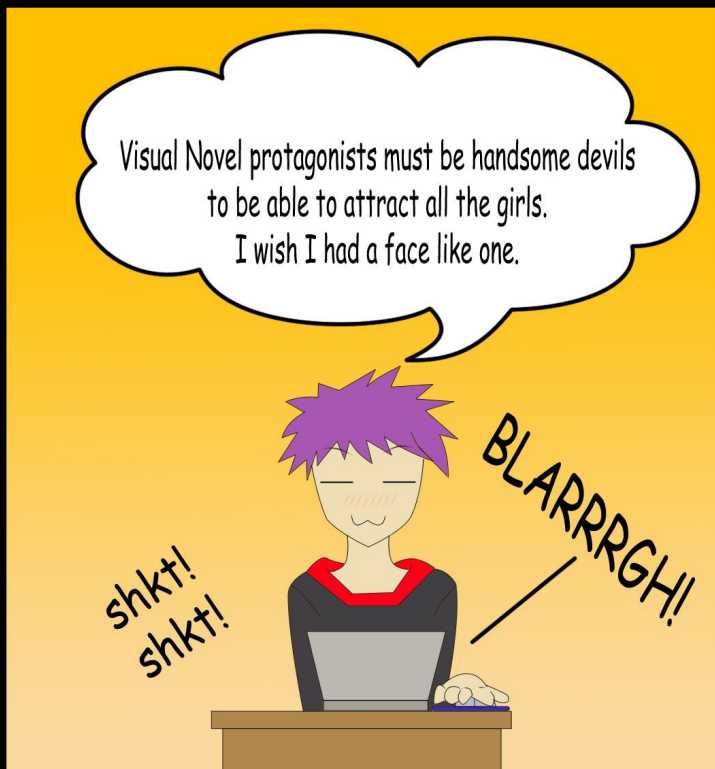
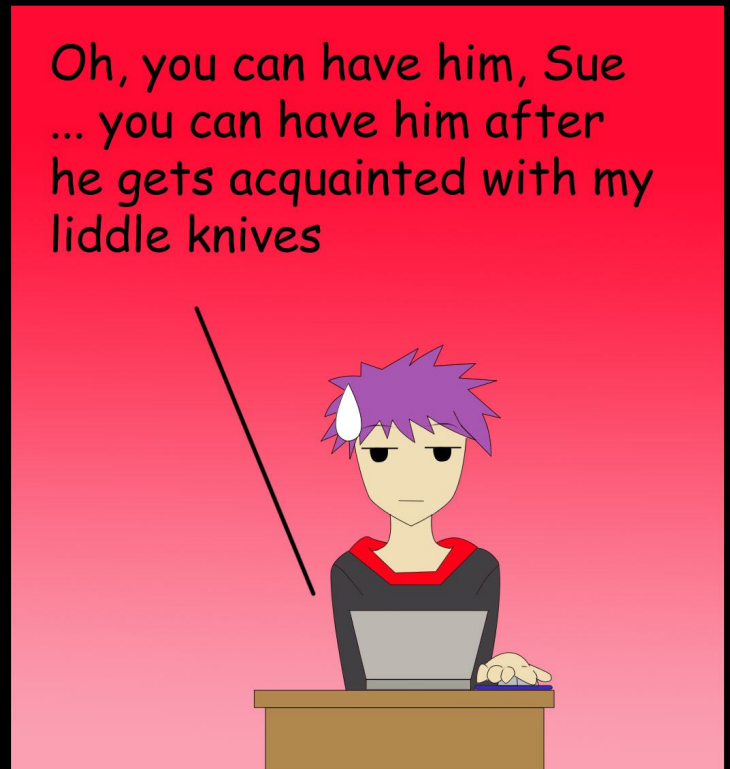
Absolutely! I'm so impressed with what other VNs have already done (Katawa Shoujo! Wow!) that I really look forward to seeing how much better it can get. Really, I wish my Ren'Py skills were better so that I could take the VN medium to the next level...

**Anything else you wish to add?**

Yes! I'd very much like to improve on both my writing and VN-making, so any constructive criticism is gladly accepted - heck, I'll even take plain old criticism if I can get it! Call me hungry for feedback, but that's how I am. So if you have anything to say about my works - please tell me!

#Baka-Trio Would like to thank Taleweaver for granting us this interview.

#Baka-Trio Webcomics  
Art by lordcloudx  
Original Concept by Hime







# **KIKIRIN WANTS YOU TO SEND US FEEDBACK**

Do you agree/disagree with any of the articles featured here? Do you want your game featured in next month's issue? Would you like to submit an article of relevant interest to the English Visual Novel Community? E-mail us at [baka\\_triad@yahoo.com](mailto:baka_triad@yahoo.com) for your submissions/comments