

# BTW

*Baka-Trio Webzine*



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## Commercialism: Boon or Bane?



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# The Death of Creativity

A few years ago, one could get away with making a Ren'Py game using lovingly hand-drawn sprites by a developer who obviously wasn't that artistically inclined to begin with. Just add a story, put in some royalty-free music or self-composed MIDI's, combine them all together using Ren'Py, and you've got something you can proudly call a "visual novel." These moments are in the long-forgotten, "ill-reputed" past now. These days, the English Visual Novel community is approaching a critical mass. We have many talented people from various fields flocking to the forums - professional artists, programmers, musicians, writers, and more recently, even professional game developers. It's no longer impossible for an EVN to challenge the standards of Japanese Visual Novels. The community has taken quantum leaps within the last two years - so much so that people demand much more from EVN releases. Work-in-progress projects often get halted, suspended, or otherwise delayed in order to meet this ever-growing, insatiable hunger for excellence. Some adventurous pioneers are even taking their first baby steps into the world of commercialism. As these would-be profiteers begin to spread their influence to their fellow creators, the situation begs to ask one important question to all of us as EVN developers: "Commercialism in EVNs: Boon or Bane?"

At a glance, there is no question to be asked. Making money from a game that you would have made for nothing but self-satisfaction as a hobby? Why not? This is the main draw-in of making commercial EVNs. It simply doesn't take that much effort to put out your first game, be it non-profit or commercial, so why not make some money? Of course, depending on the skill level of your team, it may take more time to produce a more polished-looking game, but this really depends on how much extra effort you are willing to make for your VN. Even if the game doesn't turn out to be a financial success, there is almost nothing to lose except your pride. Unless you decided to hire experts from various fields to help you create your commercial game, the minimum investment that one actually needs is time plus effort. Furthermore, doesn't going commercial have a positive impact on the community as well? If you make a successful commercial game, people are bound to follow your example and even attempt to surpass you. This promotes a healthy competitive environment where the only perceivable outcome is more and better games -an environment of steady sustained improvement, so to speak.

Undeniably, given the current demographics of the EVN community, we are indeed moving towards this environment of sustained competitive improvement. Yet, the commercialism steamroller does not even stop to look back at the things it has overrun on the road to economic success. Short games are frowned upon as mediocre titles. The number of work-in-progress posts is exponentially increasing with very little actual VN output. Flame wars erupt at every turn and for the flimsiest reasons. Competitive VN development is quickly becoming mandatory since the community demands "quality" and "polish" from every creator. Gone are the days when EVN development was a productive and rewarding hobby for anyone. Now, it's a competitive rat race, and everyone expects

you to join in. The amount of artistic freedom allowed in EVN is much lower than it was before, with works being measured up against once-nonexistent benchmarks. While this may be fine for entertainers looking to please an audience, this kind of environment elbows aside those creators with more altruistic intentions for their games.

Let us go back three or four years ago to when the community was not as large as it is today. The Lemma Soft Forums was a haven for creators - a friendly place within the eternal rush hour of the information superhighway where all types of creators are given equal and fair treatment. But now, LSF has moved on - LSF wants to go commercial. LSF favors unnecessarily blunt and brutal honesty in place of carefully selected, well-meaning advice. LSF has chosen the law of the jungle over civility. Well... this is where we draw the line. We firmly believe that an environment that favors only commercialism is extremely detrimental to the role of LSF as an equal-opportunity community for all EVN creators. Commercialism is a bane on the EVN community and we stand firm in the belief that it should not be allowed to proliferate and ultimately erase the shadows of LSF's past glory.

## Dissenting Opinion

Commercialism is neither boon nor bane but just a fork in the road. It's only a matter of going left or right, versus forward or back. Some see it as a strong perverse influence on the younger LSF authors, but isn't it just the same old plague with a new mask? The Great OELVN Race, the strive for JVN comparison, combating the criticism of the translation community, the explosion of never-get-done WIP threads, prioritizing word count. Behind all of these lesser evils lies a greater demon at fault: people not putting their hearts into their works. Authors are easily swayed by these mentalities because they let themselves be swayed. They haven't committed to whatever tale or message they really want to share. It's no fault of these schools of thought - they're just the latest fads developers get wrapped up in to help cloak their ulterior motives, be it the pursuit of fame or fortune.

Those who really put their souls into their projects are immune to these influences, and only by coincidence do their aims match their "soulless" contemporaries. They are the ones who strive to get better, to produce quality, because it means something to them and their work, not to impress others or to make a sale. They aim to tell a tale, and often these are the types that succeed in producing masterwork. They deserve a reward for their efforts, be it praise or pay. If they pursue the latter road, if they keep putting their hearts into producing art and stories over product and merchandise, where is there to find fault? Just because money is the root of all evil? Yet no one will admonish those that sacrifice the original image of their game to appease the masses in their quest for popularity. At least their games are free, right?

— The Casual Dissident



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## Developer Interview *Jack Norton*



Since this week's theme is on commercialism in EVN, it wouldn't be complete without an interview with some of the pioneers of commercial English Visual Novels. And so, dear readers, #baka-trio proudly presents: an interview with Mr. Jack Norton of Tycoon Games.

**Did you ever play any Visual Novels before deciding to make your own? What was the first VN you ever played?**

Jack: I remember playing some VN / dating sim but that was a long time ago. I played Princess Maker 2 a lot, and also True Love and Paradise Height (I think that was the name).

**Why did you choose to make Visual Novels for a profit?**

Jack: I wanted to introduce visual novels to the shareware world because I thought there was something different from the usual (and ahem, boring) casual games, which are all identical except for different art-style or themes. If you look in most casual portals you always see the same game mechanics. With visual novels it's different because there are lots of good stories to tell.

**What would you say makes your games (Visual Novels) stand out from other EVNs?**

Jack: I am not sure that my games really "stand out". I'm a professional developer so I always try to do my best when I release a product. I simply can't release a game with "average graphics or story", I am very picky when I choose artists or hire writers for my stories. This applies also to the other kind of games I produce (RPG, strategy, etc).

**As a creator, what is your goal in creating your visual novels? What do you wish to accomplish?**

Jack: My goal is to tell stories and make people feel emotions, and experience the same sensations when you watch a good movie or read a great comic / book. In my future VNs I hope to introduce even more cinematic features, like zoom in/out, subtitles, etc.

**We've noticed that in most of your games, the artist likes to draw muscular women. Do you have a personal preference for this style?**

Jack: I like my current artist's style (which I think is a sort of mix between manga and american comics) but I also like standard manga art, the problem is that I wasn't able to find (so far) a reliable manga artist, but it isn't a matter of my personal tastes. I have no preference since I like both styles.



*...keep working and eventually you will reach a position where you can relax and have some decent recurring income.*

**Do you ever cut corners to meet deadlines? Like making compromises which might be different from your initial vision?**

Jack: Yes, unfortunately I have to do this a lot of times for budget reasons and also because usually I need to commission the art months before I start writing the actual game, since it takes a lot of time to make the art, and I have to plan everything in advance (and inevitably something goes wrong).

**You seem to use pretend-historical settings in your games. Is this going to be a continuing trend in future games?**

Jack: I want to do Heileen 2 and other "history style setting" but it mainly depends on which ideas I have for good stories/characters. Of the upcoming titles, two are set in a contemporary modern world.

**Some of the events you write seem rather random, do you do this on purpose to extend the length of your games, or is there another reason?**

Jack: If by random you mean that is hard to spot them all, yes. I remember I played the Blade Runner videogame lots of times. It was a normal adventure with point/click, but on the startup of each game some variables were random, so you never know how the game was going to end. In bionic heart for example I'll have 15+ different endings, so I expect the

player will want to play the game several times to "unlock them all".

**Out of your works (finished/unfinished) which one is your favorite? Why?**

Jack: Well my favourite is Heileen, because was it my first attempt, and I think it went out quite well. When I finished it, I was very proud. It was like taking my first step into an unknown world, which I now I like a lot, that is, I am not making my old kind of games (sports simulation or strategy games) anymore.

**Any words for those who want to follow in your footsteps and start selling their own games?**

Jack: This topic would require a book to fully explain in detail, but what I can say is: never give up. I struggled for years before reaching my current position. Selling games online is not about getting rich quick but keep working and eventually you will reach a position where you can relax and have some decent recurring income.

**Anything else you wish to add?**

Jack: No, nothing else I want to add except keep following my two sites, I'm going to release some new interesting games in the next months ;)



# Builder's Mind



## Hiraya

Then again, I have never really been the one to even consider initiating a love pursuit.



Inside, he pushes the crate to the corner of the living room.



## Philip

What...eh...yeah, yes.

Hiraya is about to graduate from engineering school. She has to deal with a classmate who decided to confess to her, a father who is undergoing depression, as well as the final exams which are coming up. But the biggest challenge would be discovering the true state of the world she lives in.

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# TAKE A STEP BACK SEE YOUR SOULMATES by Mikey

Let me say this: I like to make money, I am competitive, I am getting better at things, I express myself, I get entertained, I relax, I review, I participate. And of course, I do not do these things with just a single medium. I don't satisfy those needs with just one channel.

My need to be competitive, for example, I satisfy partly with kart racing and partly with the ambition in my job. My need to get entertained, I satisfy mostly with films and sometimes with social events. My philosophy, I get from books. And my need to express myself... I do that with visual novels.

Conversely, I typically don't read books to be entertained, I don't watch films to get an artistic or thoughtful experience, and I don't satisfy my need to be competitive by making my visual novels. For all the various aspects of my personality, I have my own mix of different preferred channels or media, pretty much just like everyone else.

With all this in mind, is it, do you think, possible to judge a person based on how he uses just one of these many media? Say if you have someone who uses VNs primarily to make money. Or someone who makes VNs pretty much only to share his creativity with friends. Or someone who makes VNs to improve his writing. Of course you can't. Visual novels are almost certainly not the only medium in his life, and you cannot define or judge people based purely on their approach to them.

You can, however, GROUP them based on that.

Let me explain. The topic for this issue is

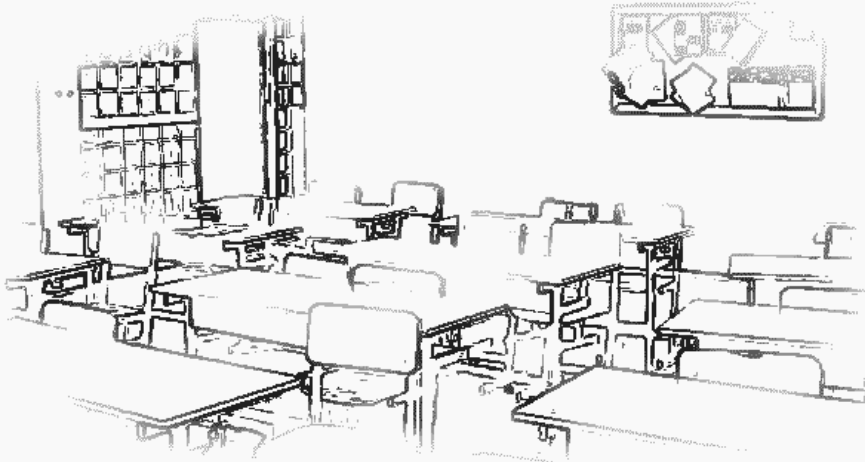
"Comercialism in EVNs: Boon or bane?". But, if you think about it, how could one possibly answer that question? Is it WRONG to use visual novels primarily to make money? Is it RIGHT to use them in that way? Do you really have the right to tell people what is the one right way to use a medium? Of course not. The question does not have an answer - even though it's a sentence ending with a question mark, it's not really a question at all.

What it is, is a practical problem - a problem of a VN-making community which is beginning to house too many different motivations, too many of which are (albeit not morally wrong or right) often spiritually opposite. What this does, in practice, is require a lot of mental effort and empathy to understand all those motivations in the light of a bigger picture, so that the community can function harmoniously without unnecessary conflicts.

The question is when is this effort and empathy start being too much to ask for? When is the time when you may say: "I respect your reasons for making VNs - I don't consider them inferior or superior - but it simply costs me too much energy to constantly have to make myself realize the big picture and see your contributions in light of that."

In short... let's go our separate ways.

I will be in a smaller circle of like-minded people, it will make me happier, and I will surely be more inspired as well. I will be in an environment where I will have more mental space to actually create something with fewer distractions. I will be with my friends. I have realized, that it's not the love for VNs



But not now.

*Let everyone work with their soulmates.*

that creatively connects me with the people I like -  
it's the motivation and approach to making them.

And you can take the editor-in-chief and me as an example. The contents and styles of our visual novels vary considerably, yet we agree on pretty much everything around VN making since our reasons and motivations for making VNs are largely identical. And if someone told me that he could magically arrange for all those people making VNs primarily for self-expression to have their own corner, where they could work and help one another without wasting time dealing with the push for excellence or commercial considerations, I can't say I'd be against such a move. Likewise, I can imagine people with commercial motivations would be able to work more effectively if they weren't directly or subconsciously pushed to constantly explain why it's not morally bad to want to make some money off of a hobby.

The factor determining whether the practical time for a change has truly come for the LSF (as it would be for any community) will be the quantity of its active members and the diversity of their motivations (critical mass, as the editorial calls it). Has the LSF reached that point and is it now necessary to do something about it? I don't really know. But should

the community at some point agree that that point has been reached and wonder what to do next, my recommendation would be to split the LSF EVN-making community according to the primary motivations of the makers.

Or, to put it differently: Let everyone work with their soulmates.

*All of mikey's games can be downloaded from the ATP Projects Homepage on <http://atp.manga.sk> and mirrored at the ren'ai archives <http://www.renai.us>*



Options

# Kasuka

Version 2

Start new Game

Load existing Game

©Grey, 2004



**You're spending the weekend at a resort with fellow students. How will you spend your time?  
Lounging around or meeting new friends?**

**Free Flash-based OELVN. Download it at the Ren'Ai Archives  
<http://www.renai.us>**



## DEVELOPER INTERVIEW

# Papillon

Our second interviewee for this issue is one of the earliest known commercial visual novel developers as well as a long-standing member of the lemmasoft forums. #baka-trio presents: Papillon.

### **Why do the graphics for some of your commercial works look a bit substandard?**

Papillon: Some of my art was drawn by \*me\*, because I had no budget and no time. This is a common problem in indie game development - newbies, especially young newbies who either don't appreciate the value of investment or really, really can't get hold of any money to invest, will often go forward with programmer art.

Now that I have more budget, I prefer to do as little of my own art as possible, but I still end up doing some things because explaining what I want to an artist takes too long. I would rather spend two days thrashing at a GUI in a paint program than two months chasing an artist around trying to get them to understand what I'm thinking and not charge me by the hour for every time they weren't listening.

### **Wouldn't it be better to get different artists to draw the base drawings and use the better one to finish the drawings in a coherent way, like they do in anime, instead of having different styles in your games? Or rather, is it something you're going to fix in the future?**

Papillon: When I can afford to hire a studio to do art start-to-finish, then my art will look like it was done by a studio start-to-finish. As it is, I do not have

a reliable artistic partner who can turn out large amounts of work in a reasonable time frame.

The varied artwork styles of Fatal Hearts originally came about because someone did agree to do the entire project, did part of it, was paid milestones, and then flaked out. A second artist with a very similar style was selected and then disappeared completely. Faced with a complete script and the need to recoup development costs, I chose to get the art together as fast as possible by whatever means necessary - and since it was already going to be mismatched, may as well mix it up some more.

Artists give me ulcers.

### **What do you think of the art in other commercial English visual novel games from other developers?**

Papillon: Um, that it's art? I don't see how I can have a generic opinion about such a broad subject.

### **Just how much work do you have to do to which isn't game-making? That is, how much of your business time is spent on creating, and how much on administration, marketing, demographic testing, etc., etc.?**

Papillon: That's difficult to estimate. What feels like the most time-consuming thing on the non-creative end is managing relationships - dealing with either people who are supplying me with things (art, music), dealing with people who are selling my games, etc. Sometimes dealing with customers but



most of the time they're less trouble!

**What were the sales like for Fatal Hearts, and did you break even in the end? We seem to recall hearing that you were doing better with it than you expected, but also that it was a large investment and you mainly did it because you wanted to...**

Papillon: It certainly paid back the explicit costs for things like the art and the music, several times over. However, if you consider how long it took me to complete and assign me even a bare-bones salary for that time period, then no.

Main lesson from this is, of course, that the game was over-reaching for the resources I had available. I finished it, but it took too long, and I couldn't polish it to perfection - see the earlier problems with artists.

I have vague thoughts for a really amazing science fantasy visual novel... which will probably never get done, at least not until I've had many years to recover from FH!

**Jack Norton apparently doesn't want to make any money. Do you?**

Papillon: ... I don't know where you got that impression, but I think you'll find that you're incorrect. Of course we want to make money - this is our livelihood! Our sole source of income! No money = no food, no house.

**Can I get a free copy of Fatal Hearts?**

Papillon: When there's a contest on my forums to win one, or if you convince Game Giveaway to run the game again. I do giveaways every now and then, you'll just have to wait and pay attention.

Alternately, if you run a review site that already has a lot of traffic...

**Out of all your games, which one do you personally like the most? Why?**



*Don't try to make an epic and never give up?  
Most people aren't very successful the first time  
they try something. You'll get better.*

Papillon: The ones I haven't written yet.

I'm a slow developer who tends to take on ambitious projects. By the time I finish one, I've always learned a lot of new things I wish I'd known at the start, AND I'm sick of working on it, AND I can see all the little places where I've had to compromise and cover up flaws... which means I'm always thoroughly convinced that the project I haven't done yet will be a thousand times better than the one I have.

**Any advice for those who want to start selling their own games?**

Papillon: Don't try to make an epic and never give up? Most people aren't very successful the first time they try something. You'll get better.

The story of a little girl named...

# Kikirin

story and art by lordcloudx



Some of you might find the above picture strange, uninspired or perhaps even a little bit funny. However, as your parents or schoolteachers might have taught you, appearances can be very very deceiving.

This is the tale of a 3 year old little girl named Kikirin. This story happened not too long ago in a small town called Araiah. Kikirin was the only daughter of a computer programmer and a visual artist. She had everything that a child her age could want and perhaps a little more. She had her own playhouse, ten different kinds of dollhouses, a rocking horse and they even bought her a live pony for her birthday. Unfortunately, the animal proved to be too troublesome to keep as a pet and they had to give it back to the stable. However, above everything else, Kikirin had every gaming console ever released by Nintendo, Sony, Microsoft, Sega and even those obscure little companies from Taiwan and Japan.

Despite all this, Kikirin was not by any means a spoiled child. In fact, she always walked around with eyes that were halfway between droopy and squinting, which made her look very disinterested indeed. Her apathetic nature made her parents a bit worried at first, but they were quite relieved to discover that neither the doctor nor the psychiatrist could find anything wrong with her.

"She is a perfectly healthy little girl." Said Dr. M. Bee.

"Perhaps, it's just her nature?" Added the psychiatrist, Dr. Himei.

And so, from that day forward, Kikirin was pretty much left by her parents to her own devices. After all, they both had very promising careers and led very busy lives. While they still tucked her in to bed and said goodnight with a kiss at bedtime, con-

tact between Kikirin and her parents was very minimal throughout the rest of the day. While this might seem like a monotonous lifestyle for a little girl of such tender age, Kikirin never uttered a word of complaint to her parents.

Kikirin tried her best to be an obedient and very prudent little girl. She always made her own bed, brushed her teeth after every meal, kept her room very clean and well organized, and always politely answered the occasional guests who visited her parents.

But, as I said before, appearances can be very very deceiving. Deep inside, Kikirin was a very lonely little girl. She longed for attention. It didn't have to be from her parents, anybody would do. She just wanted someone who would talk to her, play her favorite console games with her or just be there by her side at all times. Kikirin wanted a friend.

Then, one day, while Kikirin was fast asleep. At exactly 10 O'clock in the evening, or a few minutes before, something peculiar happened. As Kikirin dreamt, like all children of her age do, a magical mist found its way into her room through her bedroom window. Nobody is sure where the mist came from, perhaps it was some wizard who had taken notice of Kikirin's plight, or it might have come from the powers that be, whatever you might conceive him or her to be. This magical mist had the power to open the portal to the dream world and summon the mysterious beings that live there into our world. Kikirin had no knowledge of this, but when she awoke, she had a wonderful surprise waiting for her. Waiting patiently for her, was the imaginary friend that she had dreamt of the night before. It had glowing golden eyes, wore glasses, a necktie, wings and a tail. She named him Mr. Dee, because it sounded right.

However, as the days passed on, Mr. Dee



# Kikirin's Story

proved to be a not so very good friend for poor little Kikirin. You see, Mr. Dee was a very sophisticated mythical beast, even in the world of dreams. He had no time for silly little children and their silly little games. Every time Kikirin came up to him, Mister Dee had a ready and very solid excuse, which was sometimes quite hard to understand for Kikirin, since she was after all just a normal little girl.

"I have no time for mundane things." Said Mister Dee on one occasion.

"Excuse me, little girl, but you are interrupting my deductions. I am close to solving this locked room mystery before the author actually reveals the culprit." He had said at another time. To which, Kikirin could only turn away in a mix of sadness and confusion.

Mister Dee's lack of attention towards her made Kikirin a very sad little girl. Much much sadder than she ever was before she had received her imaginary friend. But in case you might be thinking otherwise, Mister Dee was not a heartless mythical beast. In fact, he had developed a soft spot for the ever-amiable little girl who took him in when he was whisked away into the human world. He could not help but notice Kikirin's sadness and decided to do something nice for her for once, but, this didn't mean he would allow this child to interrupt his enjoyment of literature.

The way Mister Dee saw it, Kikirin just needed some companionship. Taking the little girl's classmate PC, he installed a competitive game of Tetris on the laptop, which was connected to an online community of real people. Then, after playing around with it for a few days himself, he taught Kikirin how to play and interact with other people through the online game. Kikirin was reluctant at first, but then was soon happily pounding away at the keyboard, much to Mr. Dee's delight. Now he could continue his readings uninterrupted and with a clear conscience.

The days passed on like this for Kikirin and Mister Dee, each of them busy with their own affairs and both feeling contented at the end of the day. Very soon, Kikirin became a very adept Tetris player. Sometimes clocking in at 100 pieces per minute or just a bit slower than that on a Pure Tetris match. For those of you who know Tetris, this might not seem so impressive, but one must re-

member that Kikirin was just a little girl. It was good enough for her to take on the top-ranked players in the community and give them some decent competition.

This is when the trouble began. Nobody could have foreseen it. Not her parents, not Kikirin, not even the ever-busy Mister Dee. It was by pure chance that Kikirin played a random match with the number 1 online Tetris player known only as "E." It was an intense battle, by online tetris standards, and eventually, much to her own surprise, Kikirin won with her intense downstacking skills gained from many many days of practice. It was probably just a fluke, since E's average of 160 pieces per minute surely gave him a huge advantage over the little girl who only averaged a hundred or less.

"Yay!" Kikirin shouted joyfully to celebrate her victory, totally oblivious to the great misfortune that she had just unleashed upon herself.

Mister Dee, who had been watching the whole time, gave her a congratulatory nod and promptly went back to reading his book. At the same time, halfway around the world, evil wheels were spinning inside E's head. He was a person of great pride and he could not believe that he had just lost to some greenhorn with a mere 100 ppm.

"Hey, J00! Are u some kinda l337 haxxor? There's no way u could beat me at 100 ppm!" Typed E into his computer.

"Im sori but I haf no ideya wat yoo ar token abawt." Replied Kikirin, and she tried her best to type in correct English too.

"lolwhut? R u makin fun of me, Kik?" Was E's prompt reply

"Im not makin fun of yoo." Kikirin answered honestly.

" Awright! That's it! J00 gonna get pwned, Kikirin!" E replied even speedier than the last time.

And this was the last message that Kikirin received from E before he logged off. Kikirin still did not understand E's unintelligible talk, but she was

# Kikirin's Story

happy with her victory just the same.

E, being quite a popular internet personality, had many powerful friends online. One of them was the elite hacker called Ivan. Having made his decision, E called on Ivan to execute his dastardly plan of revenge for him. When Ivan heard the plan, he was more than willing to do the job simply because it seemed like a good challenge for him.

And so, it began

First, he hacked into Kikirin's computer and managed to confirm her identity. The information shocked him at first, but he decided to continue with the plan nonetheless.

Then, he proceeded to spread a very malicious worm into the main control terminals for Araiah. The worm caused a sudden major blackout in the entire town coupled with software errors on almost all digital devices connected to the internet within Araiah. This caused major traffic accidents, power surges leading to fires and general chaos and panic throughout the whole town.

Next, came the last and most important part of E's plan for revenge. Using a little bit of internet magic, Ivan pinned the blame on all the incidents to the little girl named Kikirin. The one living in that modest, but cozy-looking house near the edge of Araiah.

At first, the townspeople could not believe that such a helpless looking little girl could be capable of so much destruction, but, as you might already know, people can be quite gullible when confronted with the voice of authority. Araiah's top computer analysts confirmed that it was indeed Kikirin who had spread the malicious worm that plagued all the internet-capable digital devices in town. Ivan was a very skilled hacker indeed.

The internet can be very scary, especially when used as a tool of revenge. It wasn't long before the town was out of control and a mob of angry townspeople had formed outside Kikirin's home. Her mother and Father tried their very best to protect Kikirin, but they were quickly overpowered and knocked unconscious by the angry mob. They dragged the couple into the house and then barricaded the entire building so that anyone who was

still inside, would have no way of coming back out.

Not satisfied with imprisoning the wretched family, they doused the entire house with gasoline and tossed a single lit matchstick at the wooden walls. A bright orange flame immediately erupted and began to devour the house as the townspeople looked on, with mixed feelings at their handiwork.

Meanwhile, inside her room. Kikirin sat alone crying softly even as Mister Dee continued to read his book, totally impervious to the rising temperature and the thick black smoke that had begun to fill the room.

At that precise moment, something inside of Kikirin just totally snapped. She'd had enough of this. Filling her tiny lungs with the little bit of untainted air that was left in the room. She began to shout.

"Why? I tried my best to be good little girl!" Said Kikirin.

"I always obeyed my mummy and daddy! So why did everyone end up hating me?" She continued.

"I've had enough! I hate it. I hate you all mummy, daddy, even you, Mister Dee!" She said, even as the poisonous black smoke made breathing, much less shouting, extremely difficult for her

But her shouting fell on deaf ears as Mister Dee continued to read while her room was now glowing with an increasingly hot orange glow.

It seemed that Kikirin's fate had already been decided... or was it?

Luckily for her, Mister Dee, who was listening to her after all, chose that very moment just before the entire house was completely devoured by the fire to take action.

Spreading his wings, which had never seen action ever since he came to the human world, he scooped up the coughing, terrified Kikirin into his arms and cradled her protectively. Even though he



would rarely show it, he had grown quite fond of the obedient little girl in his arms Then, with very little effort, he broke through the hot tin roof and flew up safely into the night sky.

"Oh snap! It's a Drake!" Officer Fiyah cried out, but it was too late. Mister Dee and Kikirin had already disappeared into the moonlit sky before anyone else could take notice.

Kikirin and Mister Dee were never heard from again, or so they say.

However, there are some who claim that Kikirin is alive and well and that you might spot her sometimes in that occasional casual game of online tetris.

## THE END

### (A Childrin R Skary Parody/Tribute)

*Ok, now you might be going, "What was that!?" inside your head. Allow me to explain: Kikirin is the official mascot character of #baka-trio and this magazine. The name was coined by Ren during a random irc session when we started talking about "moe-fying" some of the nicks we regularly use and it kinda stuck. In short, this story is just one big excuse for me to poke fun at my chatmates. Well, it also serves as some kinda vague introduction of the denizens of #baka-trio.*

## THE CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Narrator: Lordcloudx

Kikirin: Kikered

Mother: Ren

Father: Jake

Dr. M. Bee: MoonlightBomber

Dr. Himei: Hime

Mr. Dee: DrakeNavarone

E: Enerccio

Ivan: Yvanc

Officer Fiyah: FIA

## APRIL-MAY Releases

\*List may not be comprehensive. Check [http://www.renpy.org/wiki/renpy/Ren%27Py\\_Games](http://www.renpy.org/wiki/renpy/Ren%27Py_Games). NaNoreNo games and non-English titles have been excluded

**GAME:** CardioQuiz

**TYPE:** Quiz Game

**PUBLISHER:** thebackup

**RELEASE DATE:** May 3, 2009

**GAME:** Fading Hearts Parallel

**TYPE:** Visual Novel

**PUBLISHER:** Sakura River Interactive

**RELEASE DATE:** April 29, 2009

**GAME:** Katawa Shoujo Act 1

**TYPE:** Demo

**PUBLISHER:** 4 Leaf Studios

**RELEASE DATE:** April 29, 2009

**GAME:** Suhtlus

**TYPE:** Powerpoint Visual Novel

**PUBLISHER:** Luminarious

**RELEASE DATE:** April 27, 2009

**GAME:** Take Rena Home

**TYPE:** Visual Novel/Higurashi Tribute

**PUBLISHER:** M12/Lux Visual Novels

**RELEASE DATE:** April 26, 2009

**GAME:** Lifbrasir Main

**TYPE:** Visual Novel

**PUBLISHER:** Kazuki Mishima

**RELEASE DATE:** April 26, 2009

**GAME:** Spirited Heart

**TYPE:** VN/Life Sim Hybrid

**PUBLISHER:** Winter Wolves Computer Games

**RELEASE DATE:** April 13, 2009

**GAME:** The Present

**TYPE:** Visual Novel

**PUBLISHER:** Chronic-Spontaneity

**RELEASE DATE:** April 12, 2009

**GAME:** Crimson: A Story of Alienation

**TYPE:** Kinetic Novel

**PUBLISHER:** Cymark

**RELEASE DATE:** April 10, 2009

**GAME:** Midnight Noize

**TYPE:** Visual Novel

**PUBLISHER:** Mooneater

**RELEASE DATE:** April 8, 2009

**GAME:** College Romance II: Rise of the Little Brother

**TYPE:** Visual Novel

**PUBLISHER:** Ewang/Tycoon Games

**RELEASE DATE:** April 1, 2009



# VERBOSITY 101

by lordcloudx

Let's talk about a rather controversial topic. Why? Well obviously, I love controversy. It keeps life interesting. But I digress. Right now, I'm here to teach you a few things about something that you high-brow literary types will most likely look upon with scorn - flowery writing. (I'm presumptuous, yes.) But before you look away in contempt, hear me out. Flowery writing is good. Used correctly, it's an excellent addition to any creative writer's arsenal. It helps you describe any number of scenes in detail and allows you to more effectively evoke the desired emotion from your readers and frankly, it's the most enjoyable type of writing there is. You see, I believe that there is an art to telling a story with words; not just in telling the story itself, but in the choice of words; in the process of selecting the proper phrases to effectively paint the scene into the mind's eye of the reader. This art form, for lack of better terms (and examples), we often mockingly refer to as flowery writing.

There are a few things that I believe everyone should remember if they wish to turn the storytelling process into an art form. They are:

## 1. Learn to love the art of writing.

No, this is not going to turn into a vague philosophical discourse on love. Simply put, it's a prerequisite to actually have a strong desire to express oneself through writing. The art of weaving a story into the mind's eye is as much about experiencing emotions as it is about evoking them. And again, no, it's not about the desire to entertain the reader, nor is it about avoiding a boring story. The story, or at least the characters, should already be alive inside your mind; all that's left is to choose the proper words to give life to them through language.

This is why love is required. The author should feel strongly about the piece he/she is working on - taste the night air, feel the thundering footsteps of a thousand men marching in unison, mourn the death of a beloved friend, feel the protagonist's rage mixed with anguish and total

helplessness. The strong feelings, detached from materialism, which bind the author to his story - this is love.

## 2. Watch scenes from everyday life through a narrator's eye.

Now for some more practical advice. As with all things, even flowery writing takes practice to pull off effectively. A good gauge is if you can feel some degree of catharsis within you after reading your own work.

What you should do for practice is to buy a small notebook just big enough to hold, say, three 100-word paragraphs per page and write in small tidbits of narrations of everyday life every now and then. Try to make seemingly mundane things seem interesting, and don't be afraid to add details and exaggerations of the actual event that you're witnessing. You're not reporting news here, you can distort the facts as much as you like.

Let's say you're boarding a bus on your way home from school or work. If you just say "I board the bus and am soon on my way home" it sounds like a straightforward recitation of events. Think about it for a bit. There should be more than that. What was the color of the bus? What kind of passengers were around? What was the color of the sky? Learn to answer these sensory questions through your writing and find some "excuse" to connect them.

Example: "I step lightly onto the bus's familiar metal platform. I could hear the clickety-clack of the driver's coin holders as I turn towards him to pay the fare. The driver is very business-like and gives me this stern look as if telling me to hurry up and take my seat. I defiantly ignore him, and in as unhurried a manner as possible, I make my way to my usual seat in the back row. There aren't many passengers at this time of the day, most high-schoolers take the earlier trips home. Taking a quick glance out the window, the sun has already begun to set and bleeds into the sky with a dark-orange shade. It's kind of captivating, in its



**Protagonist** Thank you Serysia, with these powers... no, with these very hands, I promise to find the remaining 500. Even if it takes me ten... to a thousand years, I will continue to pass on these powers until everyone has been gathered. Then... someday... surely... we will build that special place that you wished for.

And he added in a faint whisper,

**Protagonist** Then perhaps, we can meet again.

And even though Serysia could barely hear him, she said one last time in reply,

**Serysia** Yes, we will meet again.

*If you put your all into it, there will always be someone out there who will be able to relate to your work,*

own way. The school building, bathed in the sun's late afternoon light, has an eerie abandoned look to it from this angle..."

And from where I stopped, you can connect to an event that might have happened earlier at school or anything else that comes to mind while you're writing.

### 3. Avoid redundant words

While I'm not suggesting that you should be overly verbose in your quest for artistic writing, I will tell you to avoid redundant words as much as possible. For example, if you used "beautiful" to describe the scenery, don't use that same word to describe anything else that immediately follows the description of that scenery. Use the next best synonym or use an analogy to describe beauty for anything that succeeds said "beautiful scenery." A good rule to remember is not use the same adjective twice in a single paragraph or within a three sentences of each other for single sentence paragraphs. In fact, this doesn't apply only to adjectives. Say you referred to a person by her name, such as... Phaedra. In the succeeding sentences, you should avoid using that name again unless absolutely necessary. There are various options. The simplest solution is to use a pronoun, which would be "she" in this example. You could also use a descriptive title like, "The flaming haired girl." And ultimately, you can go back to Phaedra again. The important thing is to keep the text fresh by using unique alternatives as much as possible.

Redundant text makes your work look robotic, uninspired and unprofessional.

### 4. Don't be afraid to make mistakes

This is the one of the biggest traps in creative writing; being too much of a stickler for proper grammar that you end up writing what looks more like a legal document instead of a soulful piece of inspired work. I will admit that mastery of the language and knowledge of proper structure is important, but it's not the end-all and be-all of creative writing. In fact, I daresay that it should be one of the last things on the writer's mind, though still in his mind.

As practical advice, you should learn to let yourself go when you write. Let your mind wander freely with as little psychological restraints as possible and just pen down the words instinctively. Don't worry too much about phrasing, grammar, target audience etc. Just keep going until you feel that your creative energies have been drained. Then, that's when you should look back at your rough draft and polish it to perfection, or as near to perfect as your skill level allows. You might be surprised to find that you actually have to make just a few corrections from your original work.

Just remember, don't let fear of failure hinder you from expressing yourself through your writing. If you put your all into it, there will always be someone out there who will be able to relate to your work.

### 5. Believe in yourself

This, I believe, should be supplementary to "learning to love the art of writing." For example, if one were to ask me to rate a story that I've recently written on a scale of 1 to 10, I'd always choose 10. No, this is not being boastful, nor is it overconfidence. What it is, is pride - an artist's pride in his own creation, which he poured his entire being into. To rate it any lower is to admit that I did not write it to the best of my abilities and if it were true, then I wouldn't have released that story for other's eyes to see in the first place.

Belief in oneself, perhaps even to the point of arrogance (though not in a vocal way), is necessary to effective artistic writing. There is no other way around it if you wish for the words to seamlessly flow from your thoughts to the paper. Sure, afterwards you can claim to the world all you like that you only see your work as average, but when it's just you and your pen, that arrogant self-confidence must be present.

In conclusion, I would like to point out that flowery writing need not be looked upon with disdain. Yes, there are some stories that might have given it a bad name throughout the ages, but I still believe that used effectively, it is the single most direct channel to a unique cathartic experience on the part of both reader and writer.



**"Look at the clock..." Said an authoritative voice.**

**"Drift off into sleep..." The voice commanded.**

**I stared absent-mindedly at the swinging pocket watch in front me. My eyes followed it lazily as I listened to its rhythmic "tick-tock."**

**"When you awaken, you will not have seven days to live, but one week of eternity..." Were the last words I heard before I was whisked away into the world of dreams.**

**A**t that time, I didn't really understand the weight of those words, and I'm not sure if I ever really understood them.

I guess you could say I was observant. Even when my parents tried to hide things from me, I'd somehow find out sooner or later anyway. It was something that might not really have worked in my favor all the time. Maybe, just maybe, it would have been better if I'd never discovered it... on that fateful day.

It's not like I was extraordinarily healthy. I have been suffering from Leukemia since... the day I was born, I suppose. The trips to the hospital were frequent when I was younger, but my body responded well to treatment and I was soon declared by the doctors to be free of the disease.

One might think that I would be a frail, sheltered type of girl from my sickly history, but really, I wasn't. I was more of the rough and tumble type - the neighborhood tomboy who wasn't afraid to get her dress dirty for a little bit of fun. My parents didn't really mind my energetic personality at all. In fact, I'd say they actually enjoyed it. I suppose they could have been a little bit stricter with me after what I'd been through, but they weren't, and really, I liked it just like that, even though our neighbors didn't seem to approve.

"Alyssa, you should act more lady-like."

"Alyssa dear, please take of your body more."

"Mrs and Mrs. Cruz, you two should know better. You do realize that your daughter has a frail constitution don't you?"

These were the usual comments me and my parents received, but anyone in the family would just flash a wide grin when confronted like this. It was the Cruz family way of preventing further discussion on the subject matter, and hey, it was effective too. I can't think of anyone who had anything more to say whenever I'd react like that with a silent smile.

So that's basically how my life was before I discovered this shocking secret. It really started as just another average day for me. It was after school and I met up with Kyrie in the locker room. The three boys in our group, Peter, Derek and Byan, were already waiting for us out-



# Serial Fiction: One Week of Eternity

side.

"Hey! Kyrie, Alyssa! If you two don't hurry it up, Peter's folks will be around to stop us by the time we get there." Derek's boisterous screaming tore in through the glass doors.

Some of the girls with us in the locker room giggled at the sound of his voice, and I was guilty of letting out a slight chuckle myself. Derek had this uncharacteristically loud voice that sounded more like it came from a full-grown man in his mid-thirties rather than a skinny little boy from 5th grade.

"Coming!" Kyrie hollered back.

She sounded really girlish even when she was screaming.

"Come on, let's go." I smiled as I held Kyrie's hand and together we burst out of the room to join the rest of the group.

"Man, you guys sure took your time," Said the impatient Peter.

"We're girls not guys, silly." I retorted.

"Hey, no hostilities. We're all friends here. Come on, we need to get going. We've wasted enough time already." Bryan was quick to take charge as usual.

The place that we were talking about was Peter's backyard. They had this large apple tree right in the middle and we kinda made that place our secret hideout. Well, it wasn't much of a secret, but we had taken a liking to that place and we'd climb all over it and pick the ripe fruits whenever we had the chance. Peter's parents didn't approve of this, of course. The tree was meant to be picked only at certain times of the year but we'd practically stripped it bare before harvest time came during the last two years. Yes, we did get a good scolding, but well, kids will be kids. There's just something about the idea of doing something that seems even slightly rebellious against adults that brought out the little thief in all of us.

I suppose you can pretty much guess what happened next. It wasn't anything spectacular, really. I just lost my footing and fell... well, more like slid down the tree's trunk and scraped my left knee something fierce. The injury wasn't all that serious. The soft Bermuda grass underneath cushioned my fall. The blood looked really scary though. I was scared to death at the sight of my bloodied leg and not knowing what else to do, I broke down into tears.

I'm not sure how long it took, but it seemed like an eternity followed before anyone else around me took action. In reality, Bryan might have taken no more than a few seconds to head for the phone in Peter's house and call my parents.

My memories are hazy as to what really happened next. All I could remember was the incessant sound of panicked children's voices which seemed to go on for hours. Then finally, the reassuring sound of my father's voice and my mother's warm hands wrapped around me... while the ominous ringing of ambulance sirens echoed in the background. Come to think of it, that was the last I'd see of my friends for some time.

I passed out, it seems. I must have been asleep for a while, maybe even days. I'm not too sure, but when I woke up, I was greeted with the familiar overwhelming artificial whiteness of a hospital room. I checked my wrists. No lines had been attached to me, so I thought that I must have been okay. My parents must have overreacted checking me into a hospital for just a slight scrape. The only reason I fainted was from the shock of seeing so much blood. Since I felt well enough, I slowly crept out bed and tiptoed barefoot out the hospital door. I'd

heard something that sounded like my parent's voices, so I sneakily made my way to it. Nothing in the world could have prepared me for what I'd hear next.

"B-but Doctor! Surely, there has to some kind of mistake!"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Cruz, but I checked my diagnosis with other experts before telling you this."

"Alyssa is only eleven! How could we possibly tell her that? A week or less? It's just too cruel."

"Mrs. Cruz, the child does not need to know. Now I need you to calm down and think about what you two are supposed to do as her parents."

I covered my ears. I couldn't stand to hear any more of this. Certainly, I wasn't advanced or mature for my age by anyone's standards, but it didn't take a genius to figure out what they were talking about. I ran as quickly as I could. I had no direction. I just wanted to get away from that place – as far away as possible. I kept running and running. Down several flights of stairs, past the hallways, past the nurse's station, past the hospital's front entrance and to what appeared to be some kind of beach.

I was getting tired. I eventually stopped running and settled down to a leisurely stroll. Still barefoot and clad in nothing but a hospital gown, the cold winds soon got to me and I found myself hugging my body clumsily to keep warm.

Still, I didn't feel like going back to the hospital. I just didn't know what to make of everything that I'd just heard. I had one week left to live? The thought of dying never even crossed my mind until that moment. I just didn't know how to react to that.

But I didn't really need to know. My body knew. I put my hands to my face and felt tears rolling down my cheeks. Before I knew it, I was on my knees - crying my lungs out. I was frustrated, angry, scared... and totally helpless. So I continued to indulge in the one comfort left to me. I cried until my body just naturally collapsed from exhaustion.

"Poor child.... So you've heard about it." A gentle female voice awakened me.

"I-I have." I answered her only in my thoughts, but I heard my own voice speak for me.

Soft hands lifted my chin up to face her. I couldn't see her face clearly, but I could tell she was probably very beautiful.

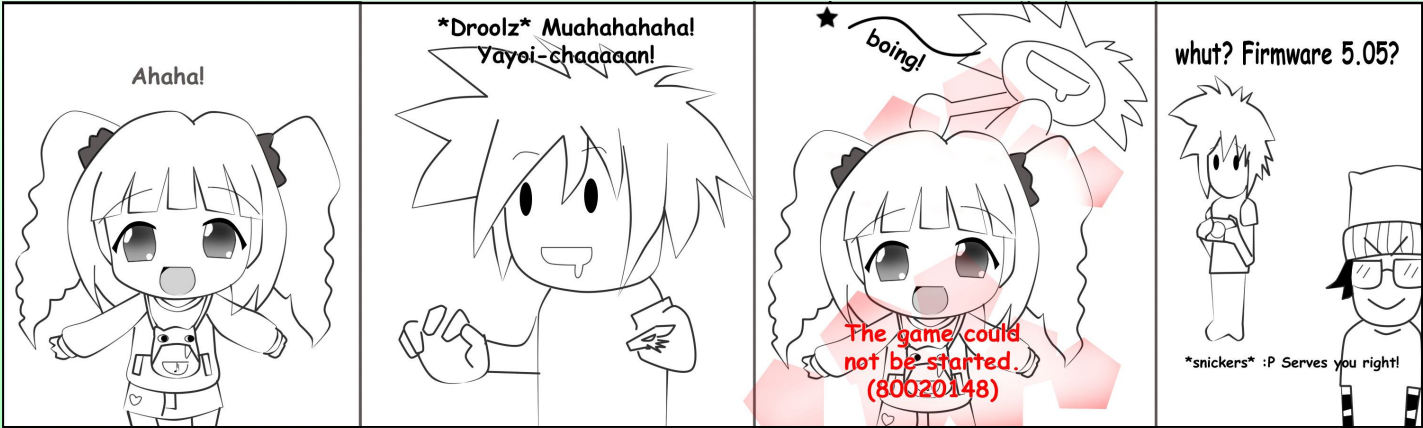
TICK TOCK TICK TOCK

A pocket watch was beating rhythmically somewhere. My eyes began to clear up and I saw that she was holding it in front of me so that it swung back and forth like a pendulum.

"Look at the clock..." Said an authoritative voice.

***Alyssa's story continues in BTW Volume 3 July 2009***

# #Baka-Trio Webcomics







# **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