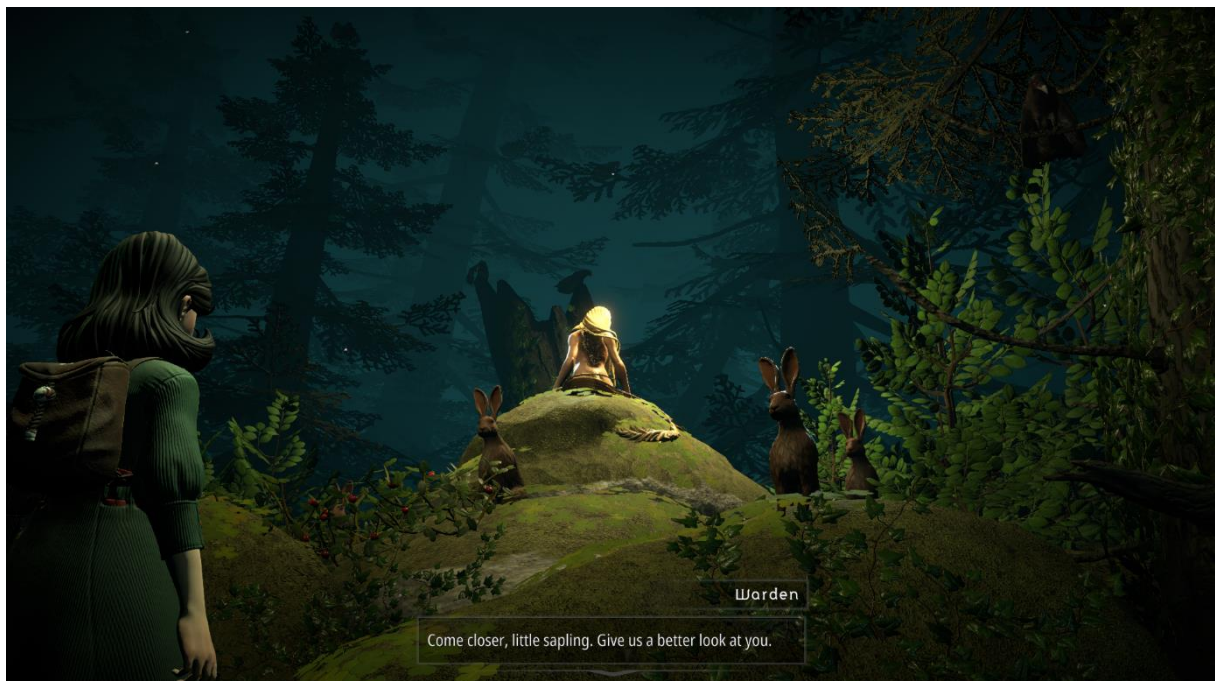

Michael Levall - Writing Portfolio

Linear conversation

Down the Well

In Down the Well main character **Tay** is spirited away to the well between worlds, a place inspired by Scandinavian folklore. Here she meets the **Warden** of the forest, a magical creature who protects the forest and any being living in it. The dialogue is meant to introduce the characters to each other, while giving the player a quest to explore the next area.



WARDEN

Come closer, little sapling. Give us a better look at you.

TAY

Hello? I think I might need your help!

I'm looking for a domain called Midwinter.

WARDEN

In search of the freezing cold are you, little sapling?

A curious undertaking indeed, especially for a visitor like yourself.

I wouldn't burden you unnecessarily, but before offering you my help I must ask for something in return.

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TAY

Of course! What can I do for you?

WARDEN

Down in the Third Depth, one layer below us. Somewhere in the resting remains of our ancients.

Find proof of the fiend who set fire to my forest.

But beware, little sapling. My rabbits told me about the creature's powers.

It is a most fearsome thing indeed.

He soaked the trees in *lies*, forcing them to believe they were burning.

Then suddenly... they were.

TAY

I wonder what someone with an ability like that would look like.

Fine! I won't be back until I've found out who did this.

WARDEN

Look for anything out of the ordinary, that you wouldn't expect to find in a peaceful forest.

When you are done exploring the Third Depth, use this key.

[GAINED ITEM: FOREST WARDEN KEY]

You can use it on any door, and it will always take you back here.

Be safe, little sapling.

We'll be watching your trail.

Linear monologue

Vind

In Vind main character **Mila** flies through a world of floating islands meeting quirky characters and helping them with their odd situations. The following dialogue is between Mila and **Lea** whose lumberjack father is sad because there is only one tree left for him to cut on their island.

In this dialogue the main character is considered mute (similar to Link in the Zelda series).



LEA

Woah! You! When did you get here?!

Never mind that, actually. We have problems!

Our dad is really bummed out about all these trees.

I'm Lea, by the way. The girl covering her face is Lia.

Now there are none left! Trees. None left!

Well, just the one. But he doesn't want to cut it! And dad needs trees to cut!

'Cause he's a lumberjack! And they jack... lumber! Chop lumber. Chop chop!

So! We're gonna make more of them! An entire forest!

We need colour!

Like rainbows! Like morning suns! Like water sparkles!

Crayons!

But! We can't find them!

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Last time we had our box was on the bridge at the play-lake.

The top one! Behind our house.

Maybe a fish snapped them into the water when we weren't looking!

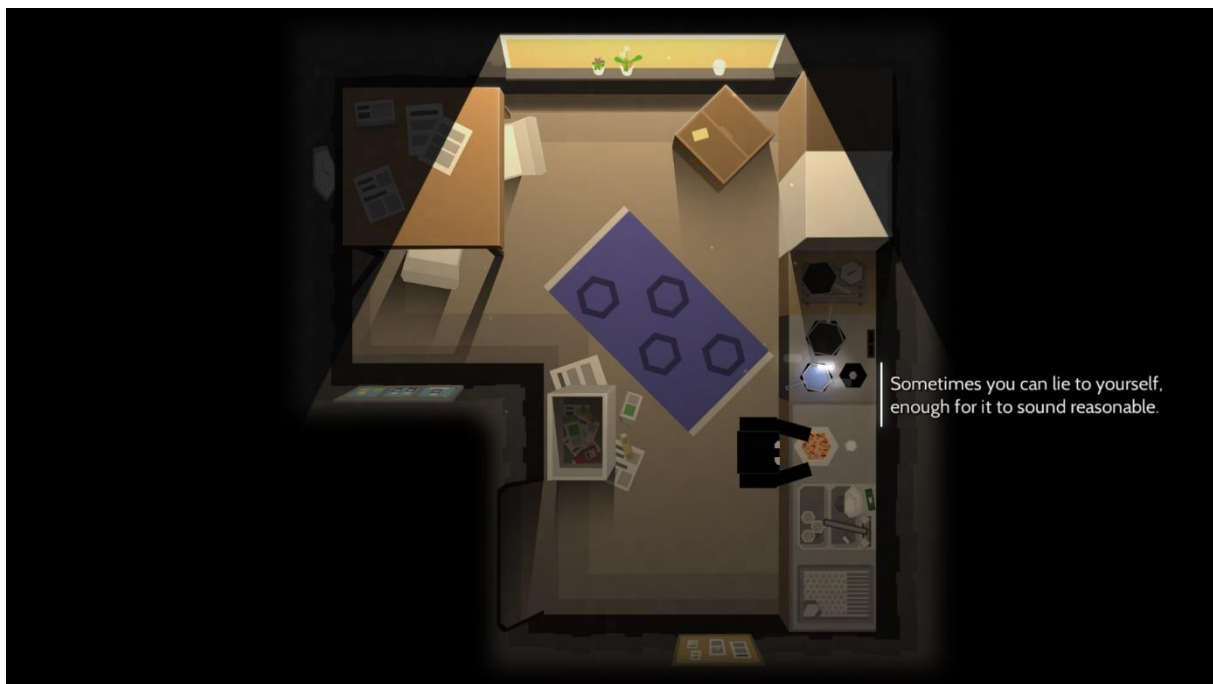
We need to help dad! We need colours!

Help us, lady! It's **super** important!

Please Knock on My Door

Please Knock on My Door is a game about **depression** and **social anxiety** where the main character is haunted by intrusive thoughts and negative emotions. Each day the player gets to hear a monologue that touches upon depression, thoughts of suicide and/or social anxiety.

All lines are voice acted and I worked with the actor to achieve the proper tone.



NARRATOR

Sometimes you can lie to yourself enough for it to sound reasonable.

Sometimes it's born from an experience, which etches itself in like a trauma.

If someone asks you to come to a party, the healthy way to respond...

...would be to trust that the person asking actually wants you to come.

"He is only asking to be polite."

"I don't belong in that crowd anyway."

But then you decide to go because, secretly you still want to.

You find yourself sitting quietly in the middle of a filled room...

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...wondering if it would be okay for you to speak.

But everyone is talking, and you don't want to be rude.

Because then you might not get invited anymore.

So, you just sit there.

With your ugly, fake smile.

Branching conversation

Vind

The following dialogue is a mock-up of how a conversation between main character **Mila** and her companion the **Veil God** (pictured below) could play out.

In this version Mila would not be mute but instead have player selected responses and queries.



STORY EVENT AT CAMPFIRE, LATE EVENING

VEIL GOD: Mm, this food is delicious! You're improving as a cook, Mila.

I'm so happy we get to share these moments together.

[PLAYER CHOICE]

- 1) Feels like an adventure!
- 2) I miss home.

[PLAYER CHOSE 1) Feels like an adventure!]

MILA: It feels like we're on a real adventure!

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VG: Yes, young bird, I suppose it does.

MILA: Home used to be so dull.

Meeting people is exciting! And I've never been this far away before.

VG: I am happy you feel that way, especially considering what lies ahead.

[CONTINUED BELOW]: The threat of the rifts grows ever closer, and we still have the most challenging path ahead.

[PLAYER CHOSE 2] I miss home.]

MILA: I just hope my home will still be there once all of this is over.

VG: Do you miss it?

MILA: Sometimes... but there are more important things at stake, I know that.

VG [CONTINUED BELOW]: The threat of the rifts grows ever closer, and we still have the most challenging path ahead.

VG [CONTINUED]: The threat of the rifts grows ever closer, and we still have the most challenging path ahead.

MILA: What do you mean?

VG: Mila my dear, there is something I have yet to confess to you.

The place we keep visiting, the dark sky that exist beneath the clouds...

...is created from human nightmares.

A dimension born from human creativity, now colliding with your own reality.

[PLAYER CHOICE]

- 1) How do you feel?
- 2) I thought you protected us?
- 3) Can it be stopped?

[PLAYER CHOSE 1) How do you feel?]

MILA: Wow... It's supposed to be your thing, right? Preventing that from happening.

This must have been a big burden for you. Are you okay?

VG: I tell myself there is nothing I could have done differently.

It barely soothes my aching heart.

VG [CONTINUED BELOW]: Without the faith of humans, there is little I can do to stop it.

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[PLAYER CHOSE 2) I thought you protected us?]

MILA: Wait, I thought it was your duty as the god over the veil to prevent that from happening?

VG: It is.

Now that you know of my failure...

Do you resent me for it, child?

MILA: I...

I don't know.

VG: I understand. I do not wish to bring up excuses, but...

VG [CONTINUED BELOW]: Without the faith of humans, there is little I can do to stop it.

[PLAYER CHOSE 3) Can it be stopped?]

MILA: What can we do?! There has to be a way to fix this!

VG [CONTINUED BELOW]: Without the faith of humans, there is little I can do to stop it.

VG [CONTINUED]: Without the faith of humans, there is little I can do to stop it.

MILA: But you're not alone anymore.

I'm here now! Doesn't that count for something?

VG: With every mortal heart we heal, a small part of my power returns to me.

Your help is invaluable, little bird.

Lore entries and prose

Vind

The player can find separate entries from **Dan** the lumberjack's diary (Lea's father, see monologue above). These entries expand on the storyline and Dan's motives, offering depth to the character.

DAN'S DIARY PAGE #2

This page seems to have been torn from Dan the Lumberjack's diary. The entry reads...

I'm at a complete loss.

If I chop the last tree, and there are none left...

...will I still be able to call myself a lumberjack?

But if I don't chop it, wouldn't that be the same?

I'd just be a lumberjack stuck between chops.

This is terrible, the absolute worst fate...

...and before we even had the chance to build a new sky boat.

I regret throwing my axe away. I don't know why I...

I can't let my family see me like this... I should get rid of these last pages...

Please Knock on My Door

Each in-game day the player gets to make a choice regarding how the main character will act in a given social situation. After the choice has been made the player is presented with a diary entry detailing how the main character feels about their choice, and what the outcome was.

DIARY ENTRY - MET JENNY IN CORRIDOR

Hey dad

Isn't it funny how even the smallest things can stay with you sometimes?

Today, as I was walking back to my desk from another pointless meeting, I met Jenny. I don't remember if I've ever mentioned her, but... she's nice.

Anyway, when I passed her by, she looked at me... and smiled. And asked "You doin' alright?"

It kind of caught me off guard, I don't know what I was expecting. So I tried to smile and just kept on walking. How do you answer that honestly to someone passing by briefly in a corridor?

The answer is; you don't.

Barks and one-liners

Please Knock on My Door

When the main character's hunger, tiredness or hygiene stats get too low due to player neglect, the narrator prompts the player to do something about it. The narrator changes from a somewhat caring attitude to a negative one during the game, and the barks reflect this.

All lines are voice acted and I worked with the actor to achieve the proper tone.

NARRATOR, lack of sleep, caring

- 1) Maybe you would feel better if you got some sleep?
- 2) You seem tired.
- 3) You need to get a grip on your sleeping schedule. You're exhausted.
- 4) This isn't cutting it. Get some sleep, you need it.
- 5) You need to take better care of yourself. Go to sleep.

NARRATOR, lack of sleep, negative

- 1) You can barely even stand up straight. Go to bed, weakling.
- 2) Why force yourself to keep going? Let the embrace of sleep take you in.
- 3) This is ridiculous. Stop yawning and get some sleep.
- 4) There's no use in posing. I know you're tired, I can feel it.

NARRATOR, lack of food, caring

- 1) Go on. Get yourself something to eat.
- 2) Why do you let yourself starve like this?
- 3) You need to eat properly. Maybe that's why you're feeling down?
- 4) How do you expect to stay alert at work if you don't eat?
- 5) You need regular eating habits. You're starving, again.

NARRATOR, lack of food, negative

- 1) I've heard starvation is one of the more painful ways to die.
- 2) I can feel your hunger.
- 3) Feels like the hunger is eating you up from the inside.
- 4) Starved. Again. Wonderful.

NARRATOR, lack of hygiene, caring

- 1) You need a shower.
- 2) You can't meet people like this. You look and smell horrible!
- 3) It's been a while since the last time you showered.
- 4) You're supposed to brush your teeth mornings AND evenings.
- 5) How about a long, warm shower? I know you want to. Go on.

NARRATOR, lack of hygiene, negative

- 1) Don't you care what people will think of you if you don't shower?
- 2) You smell like a corpse. Fitting.
- 3) Maybe you could get rid of your acne if you showered properly. [chuckle]
- 4) You look awful. Showering would at least get rid of that greasy hair.