

Results of the Experimental dual CYOA

Doctor Veridan Spring (The Bath Water Hero)

For the Benefit of /CYOA/ and The Sorvis group

Abstract

In this experimental quest several things were tested such as the will of players to follow instructions given by clearly nefarious sources, affects of antagonism directed at players by the big-bad from the quest, various meta elements such as get based bonuses and direct contact between MC and players, player controlled combat strategies with unicorns and pegasi, opposition to ideas by those playing the quest and those who choose not to participate, as well as a few other aspects of this quest.

This experiment was carried out over four threads of this quest with various appearances of a robot controlled (agreeably being) the main antagonist of the quest mocking the players and encouraging them to submit to it's whims coupled with the announcement of the quest's running time. The quest itself had two MCs who were simultaneously controlled, who the main antagonist instructed to attempt to kill each other. Players were given full freedom over actions as well as given the option to drop useful items for the MCs using significant digits. Players eventually began to attempt to defeat the antagonist and but failed to use drop system efficiently as well as briefly using both MCs to defeat opponents that required two characters before failing the last combat scenario that was meant for use of cooperative tactics.

Introduction

Talk of a Dual CYOA had been going around the CYOA Discussion thread on 4chan's /mlp/ board for some time. Most of all the viability of players controlling two main characters simultaneously who may have separate or opposing goals was the main focus of this test. As this kind of test is very time consuming there were other factors being tested as well; such factor as the willingness of player to follow instructions given to them by a force that is clearly working against their best interests, the viability of meta gaming aspects such as weapon drops for repeating digits, quad events and characters within the quest (including the main antagonist having knowledge of the players and their world's influence on the events in the quest), players willingness to participate as well as the objections to participate given by non-player (when relevant), and the ability of players using two characters in scenarios that were designed for and often required to player controlled ponies to overcome.

Methods

The test was ran as a CYOA or Quest (interactive story with a player controlled Main character) run on 4chan's /mlp/ board. Actions success would be determined by likeliness of success, if an action was more than certain to succeed it would if it was near impossible to succeed it would not, as various actions started to have a variable chance of success I would roll a D20 to determine the degree of success, deciding that the roll would have to beat some number to succeed. Rolls were mostly and almost exclusively used to determine the accuracy of shots fired by weapons.

It was decided that the MCs for this test had to be ponies that the player did not have any previous connection to, to avoid any bias towards them before the quest could get underway. The players were tasked with creating both characters in order to give them a degree of attachment to the two mares used in this test. Both mares had no combative experience outside of the experiment to avoid any clear advantages of one over the other as well as keeping the quest from having a clear "under-dog". Both characters were given a sympathetic back-story that gave them both no major connections avoiding one of them deserving survival other the other. Their back story was only supplied to the players as it became relevant.

Subject one was Cleaver Buttons, a unicorn mare who has a special talent for quickly solving basic math problems. She graduated with a masters in teaching which she used to land a 4th grade teaching job which she held of three years before the school was deemed unnecessary and closed with the foals being sent to two near by grade schools. There were too many teachers in town and due to Ms. Buttons lack of

experience she was not able to pick up another teaching job in town. At the time of this test, she was unemployed.

Subject two was Freshly Squeezed, a pegasus with a talent for using fruit in various dishes. She had gone to a community college intending to obtain a degree in culinary arts for three semesters before dropping out feeling as if the degree she wanted wouldn't really help her in the long run. Ms. Squeezed had worked for four kitchens who had varying degrees of success, all from different towns. The last restaurant she worked for closed down for financial reasons leaving her unemployed at the beginning of the test.

The Ponies were tasked with killing each other at the beginning of the test to quickly raise the stakes of the two mare's situation as well as force the players to quickly sympathize with both mare's mortal situation. The order for the ponies to kill each other was given in the preface of the quest as well as by the antagonist and host of the quest at the beginning, giving the players a figure of authority on two fronts to obey/ disregard. Players are given full control over both ponies with no set options given to the players to encourage creative solutions to challenges set before them. Players are also told to specify which pony is supposed to carry out each command. This scenario was modeled after OCT's (Original Character tournaments) such as 'The Colosseum,' 'End Zone,' 'Law of Talos' as well as Death Watch from 'Madworld.'

As the quest continued, the players were given various snippets of both character's thoughts about their situation hinting that neither pony had any interest in murdering the other outside of their own survival to give players a higher sympathetic connection to both ponies as well as hint that the objective

given to them could be ignored. When given a command that a pony could not carry out due to lack of ability both mares would lament their inability to do so, as the players did still have an intimate connection with both MCs, as well this being a great opportunity to give both characters time to reveal more about their character.

The players had a method of using repeating digits in their post numbers to drop weapons and other useful items as the quest progressed. (It was thought that this would be exploited unfairly at the start but actual exploit took some time) This drop system was modeled after Death Watch's sponsor system. Eventually this had to be turned off due to it being exploited but was later reinstated as quads broke control over various "game" aspects of the quest as well as being the point at which the player controlled characters teamed up.

When both mares teamed up to begin fighting the antagonist emphasis on which pony took each action became less important, as such actions with no specified pony were given to the mare that would be more likely to take that action.

A choice was given for the setting for this quest at the beginning of the quest but later all locations were put in as the quest progressed and the player's goals changed. A way to defeat the antagonist of this was placed into the quest from the beginning as I believe that there should always be a way to overcome an obstacle such as the one presented with enough effort and perseverance.

Results

This test showed that many of the tested aspects of this quest were successful. The players did eventually figure out that they could avoid following the directions given to them, which gave me hope for the two mare's well being. In the end Ms. Freshly Squeezed died when players failed to effectively use the environment for a combat situation. The dubs drop system was used fairly for longer than I had expected. I had assumed that the players would attempt to place a live grenade in the opposing pony's inventory a lot earlier than it happened, What I did not foresee was the drop system being exploited by someone who had an ability to predict the presence of repeating digit gets exploiting the system to encourage it's abandon. Once cooperation was achieved by the players both character were able to fight an enemy that was designed to be fought by two ponies effectively, the second encounter after the two MCs had teamed up was quickly disbanded by a lucky hit early on so that encounter's affects can be discarded and the last combat scenario did not go long enough to fully gauge player's ability to effectively use both ponies, but it does seem that their failing approach to the last encounter did involve a degree of cooperation, once again the reason the last encounter was a failure was more attributed to not using the environment effectively than anything else. The antagonist was well hated by the players as well as non-players as the quest kept moving. The antagonist's consistent mocking of the player's in the CYOA Discussion thread seems to have been noted by Hijacker who drew the robot smashed up when someone asked him to draw a CYOA character he disliked dead. There also seemed to be a lot more people playing this quest than I had expected; due to the

nature of this quest I had expected the amount of people who cared about the quests progressing to be very low, but near the end and at the end, many more people began to post as events became much more dire.

Discussion

In closing I would like to express some of my personal challenges with this quest. While running drawing scenes and writing posts for the actions of both MCs was often time consuming, even so it still seemed to be comfortable enough if I ever wanted to do so again.

A personal challenge for this quest came from actually committing to killing Squeezy off. When this quest started I had promised myself that I wouldn't back out of killing either Buttons or Squeezy if the need arose. Unfortunately due to bad choices and significantly high rolls from one of the robots in her final moments. When Squeezy took that robot with the sword arm she got a Nat 20 to hit, when the robot in the final encounter fired at Squeezy she got a 19 to hit, wanting to give her a last chance the robot only permanently disabled her ability to fly at that moment. There wasn't many good ways to win that scenario from that point using only brute force, and I had hoped that players would use the get system to make some cover for her but in the end hope was not enough and I felt as if her demise was the only responsible thing to do. Of course it could be argued that Squeezy should have died when Buttons shot her with the crossbow from blood loss but, she didn't and what I had assumed would be a one thread quest turned into 4.

The reason I had given for the get system turning back on was the hurricane coming to the island. In universe there was a barrier created by the robots and their alien controller keeping the hurricane from reaching the island. When this barrier went down the get system turned back on. Another in universe aspect of this quest is that although the aliens had been monitoring the quest from the 4chan thread the robots and alien controller had an 8 post delay for gaining knowledge of

the pony's locations and action from monitoring the thread. The aliens from outside the universe the island was in kept sending a constant stream of information to the alien controller and his equipment but as time pulsed from the outside universe to the universe that the island and ponies inhabited there was a delay due to the need to process larger chunks of incoming information.