

# STORY DEVELOPING

WITH *never a  
regret* 

I never actually realized how cool it might be to write one of these. So, I'm going to give it a shot. Before I start, if you're a reader then well, keep going and hey, thanks for joining me. If you're a writer, know that every writer has their own process. If you're looking to tweak yours then sure, no problem with that. If you're set in your ways then my only advice is to be open minded, not that your process is flawed and you should do what me or another writer does, just that you never know what could help you. Also, depending on what you're doing (visual/graphic novel, video game, novel, script, etc.) and the length of it your process will shift.

I'm going to do the development of **Never a Regret** which is actually a short story game, so my process and development is a bit different, seeing that I don't need to come up with characters and overwhelming plot ... should I even do this story ... who cares, let's go.

## STEP ONE: GET A PLOT

This is actually the hardest part, I don't care. It's actually harder than getting a plot for a normal story. I say this because unlike with a normal story, you already have the characters and how they act. There's so much I have to think about with preexisting characters and storylines (even if they're mine ...).

1. You have to figure out where the story falls on a timeline or if it even will fall on the timeline. There's pros and cons to both, canon stories limit you since you have to now figure out what you can and can't say, where the characters are at, what is known, etc. Non-canon stories mean you can do a lot more but then sometimes it feels like you leave everything canon behind. Characters won't act the same in non-canon, will their relationship be the same, where are they and what are they doing in this timeline? It ends up sometimes feeling like a completely different story and I definitely don't want that.
2. The plot itself. Do I want a mushy story? One filled with angst? Or maybe even one that has the whole 'porn without plot.' Should I keep the genre still in the world of Superstition or should I just toss out the mystery elements. These are some of the ideas I had and received for *Never a Regret*:

- a. **AU where Chris and Roe finish college and still friends:** Nice but I didn't want to go AU with this one since the last one, Thorns (Shader's romance game) was also AU. I wanted to do something fresh and different.
  - b. **Blast to the past where Chris and Roe are first moving into their apartment:** Cute and gives nice information on the origins of Chris and Roe, and shines a light on this stage of their relationship. But so so so restricting. This actually happened and so I'm given very little flexibility. Plus, no romance since Chris has only started to pursue Roe in canon present.
  - c. **A hunt that's actually a date:** I really liked this one, especially as I planned that Chris would ask Bradley and Sydero to help with it. Just this big scavenger hunt until the date. If you haven't read *Never a Regret* yet then you won't know what I'm talking about but if you have, then you know that I kinda kept a bit of this idea and incorporated it in that story.
  - d. **Chris takes Roe to a music concert:** Another nice one, Chris likes music, he wants Roe to be in his world. Cute but unexciting in the long run. Can't really think of many conflicts. Chris's idol is horrible? You miss that one really good concert ... I don't know.
  - e. **Chris's parents invite him and Roe to dinner:** I like it! Chris hasn't seen his parents for a while, even though he still loves them. Introducing them to Roe is another step forward in their own relationship. But he also despises his parents' views. Conflict, a lot of mush, more character development and insight to Chris. Perfect and the winner.
3. Then comes me having to figure out every step. The turning point and inciting incident, the climaxes and all those things. How it should start, how it should end? Seeing that this is a cyoa game, what choices and variables will be important. Do I want this as close to canon as possible or to just do this how I want and write it loosely? I ended up deciding to go with a canon-ish story that if it would be put to any timeline, it would be late season three or season four. But it could definitely have taken place.

After figuring all of this out, thus *Never a Regret's* plot was born.

## STEP TWO: FIRST PLANNING

I used to not do planning, because I was too cool for it. Biggest mistake of my life. Will never go back to being a cool kid. Planning for me is basically getting my trusty notebook and writing down all the points that I want and need in it. Think of it like the essentials, so:

- A dinner scene between mother, father, Chris, and Roe.
- At least one explicit scene – the ending because who doesn't want to end with a bang \*wink wink\*
- At least one really good fluff scene – the singing scene

Seems like a small amount but these are the main scenes after all. It's a short story so weighing it down with more just isn't appealing. Next, I figure out the smaller scenes. These are scenes that can easily be replaced but has small tidbits and moments. They are just as important to the scene but when it comes time to trim the fat then they can go if need be. The good thing is that this is a short story so trimming it and killing off the babies isn't as big of a deal.

- Shopping scene
- Prep scene
- The gang scene (I like including them, sue me)
- Picture scene

The picture scene deserves its own little breakdown because it alone is a process. When coming up with what I want for a picture I have to switch gears and envision the story as a visual novel with cg's. If I was playing this game, then where would I want the picture to be? What would I want to see? So, the possibilities being:

- Morning wake up scene: cute, sexy, I like it
- Chris in his suit and tie: too simple, don't really like it all that much
- Chris singing, cute blush: cute, very cute
- Chris in the perfume store: not a universal scene so naw
- After the restaurant, walking through the park: cute but a bit simple and if I say cute one more time, I just might slap myself.

It came down to him singing and then the morning wake up scene really. The wake-up scene won purely due to the sexy tones that would accompany it. I decided to go a more sfw route but still be interesting since I didn't do nsfw, and so, that would work perfectly.

After that, it's obvious I need a scene that revolves around the picture and where it would go.

## STEP THREE: SECOND PLANNING

I actually call this the skeleton planning. The first planning doesn't have a cute name. Skeleton planning for me is putting all the pieces where I want it. The beginning, middle, end. So kinda like me just making the skeleton of the work and placing the bones where they need to go for the story. Honestly, this is pretty easy.

## STEP FOUR: ~~ROUGH~~ FRUSTRATION

I don't have a better word for this, ha. This process is just rough. It's literally me adding to the skeleton and then erasing, and then editing, and then adding some more. This is probably the longest step and is literally just frustration. Maybe that's what I should call it, the Frustrated Step. This is the step that makes me question my profession and why I do this to me and my fingers, wrists, and arms.

The variables get created, the general feel of the story, and most of the bigger areas are planned out further. The smaller areas are written, scrapped, rewritten, edited, and then scrapped again. To imagine this with time in mind, *Never a Regret* was created on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and the Frustration Stage ended on the 12<sup>th</sup> ... this is me working on this crap every day. This is truly the part where if you ask a writer how's it going, they look like they're ready to burn everything down (imagine this stage on bigger projects).

I don't have much to say about this stage, not because there's a lack of things to say but it just brings back war flashbacks.

## STEP FIVE: EDITING

I do editing a bit differently on short stories. After I get done with a section or major scene, I read it over and then I throw it in Grammarly. I do the second part of the editing after seeing what Grammarly has

to say and then add to it. The third part of editing is the final editing where I read the story as a whole and try to one more time make sure there's no errors. Of course, I fail, leave me alone. The editing process is also the moment I have to tell myself to slow down and give everything the time and love it deserves. You ever get so close to being done with a project that you just speed up? Like fuck everything else, you're almost done, and you want to be done now. Yea, I do too. I have to constantly tell myself to stop which is why I don't like deadlines because it makes me rush. Rushing is bad.

\*I'm going to add this in even though I don't do this on smaller projects. This is also the time I go in and with beta tester help throw in variable checks, checks like 'you lean this way on the personality spectrum so here's a response' or 'you're rivals with this person so here's a different response.' I like having the most important parts in first before adding those in because most of the time they don't change the story. If I add it in before this stage, then it's because it's important.

## STED SIX: PRETTIFY IT

The fun step. This is where I get the graphics, go music hunting, and start doing anything I need for the visual and auditory experience. I fucking love Twine for this. By now, I have already figured out what I want for a look. This is a romance book, so I need some hearts or something romantic. Or I could go on a more 'Chris related' aesthetic route.

Going down a Chris related route was the first thing I tried. I need something that ties in with his personality and the story, so maybe a guitar?



<<< Nice, but framing this the way I want it will be a hassle and there's components of it that I don't like. It's subtle but not as subtle as I need it to be. It'll need to have a dark transparent covering to use and that throws some of the aesthetic off.

>>> Far better but too much is going on and it will probably mess up where I want the focus.



And then, that's when I was just like, how about no guitar because Chris doesn't even whip it out in this story. Next on the list is something with romantic vibes. Maybe staying true to the morning vibe that begins the story? Or a chill aesthetic? I'm not even going to add those pictures because they just were no.

So, I go to the obvious one. Hearts.



<<< Nice, but I wanted something that wasn't dark to start off with. Maybe if the vibe of the story was different, then sure. But I wanted something light and happy. This picture gives me mystery, sexy, party vibes.

>>> I like it but I'm also getting wedding vibes, you

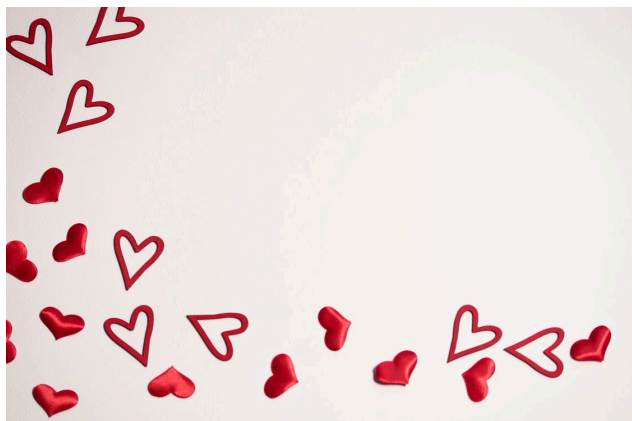
know the rustic one with cool, chill colors where everyone is wearing flower crowns? ... try saying cool chill colors five times fast ... it's okay I'll wait.



<<< I like it, I like it a lot. It definitely has the simplicity that I was looking for but also has a nice heart symbol and doesn't give off the wrong vibe or energy. Definitely going to keep this one in mind.

But, if you've played the game, which you should have, then you know that the above picture on the left isn't what I went

with. Instead I went with this one. To decide between this one and the other, I put both of them in the



story and just switched out the background. I was so close to choosing the pink one, but I wanted something a bit different than Shader's story, which also has a heart in the middle. On one hand, I do like continuing certain things to make it seem like all stories are done by one person (me, of course) but I also like giving stories their own breath.

Deep, I know, but that's really how I go about doing graphics.

For the title of the book. Lord, is that hard. It always takes me a long time to do the title which is good and bad. I'll start a document with it named Edit Title, but I don't like doing that with Twine, so until I come up with a title, I keep it off of Twine. After a while though, there becomes a need to put it on Twine to start checking variables and seeing if certain things are working. Waiting until the last minute isn't really how I like to do it, especially when it comes to coding.

I'm sure a lot of you can guess where I got the title from. And coming up with it was kind of easy but still took a while. I actually personally love the thing that Chris and Roe have going on with the "any regrets" and the other replies "never." It's their own thing and canon wise the story behind that goes back to Roe and Chris getting into trouble in their college days. I think they talk about the night where they got drunk and then went out to party in the story (ask Chris to help you get ready for the club in Chicago Rogue) but that night was just a mess for them. Roe ended up asking Chris if he had any regrets the next day they woke up, and Chris's reply, of course, was never. Since then, it's become their thing. And I love it.

The audio was quite easy, I pick an ambient background song that I like and feel like it will fit, and that becomes the theme. Then I figure out if any scene needs its own audio that the theme won't cover. In this instance it was the restaurant scene and the end romance song. I was going to add music to Chris's singing but he's singing *Your Song* by *Elton John* and I didn't want to ruin that aesthetic by adding in another piano instrumental.

## STED SEVEN: WRAP IT ON UP

I add the rest of the scenes which are pretty much the sex scenes. Believe it or not, they are the hardest, they always come last, and I'm not going to go into detail. If you guys want a 'how I write smut,' then just tell me and I'll throw something together. But I typically do it last and let the scene take me wherever it wants to. \*stares into space\* I also do it at the same time that I play through the game for bugs. This is a speed run where I don't pay much attention to the writing just making sure that all routes are working, if variables are good, no bugs pop up, and you can complete the game without having to be stopped by an error.

Second run is make sure audio, pictures, and gender variables are up and working. Because I use a widget for this it makes it much easier. But that's also a problem since it means a different kind of coding and I forget that sometimes.

Third run is a read through. I try to read through it at least two times but damn I'm not going to lie, it gets tiring and by the time I'm done with the second read through, my brain is threatening me. The first read through is me adding in small changes and fixes, taking things out and making sure the story makes sense and the routes flow. The second is just making sure the other routes that I didn't play are also good. I can't really check to the fullest potential because, well, variables.

After all of that, I do one more bug check and then I salute it and ship it out.

And there you guys go, that's how I develop short stories. Like I said, I have a totally different process for new series because there's so much more that goes into that. I mean characters, settings, themes, conflicts, plots, structure, goodness gracious. And don't let it be part of a new world as well because that alone just takes away five years of your life. I might do another develop write up for those if you guys like this anyway. But, hey, thanks for reading!!