

The background of the page features black silhouettes of two characters, Joel and Ellie, from the video game The Last of Us: Part I. Joel is in the foreground, looking towards the right, while Ellie is behind him, also looking right. The text is overlaid on these silhouettes.

narrative review by ADAM MORINA

THE LAST OF US: PART I THE ILLUSION OF HOPE

OVERVIEW

The Last of Us is a world that has allowed humanity to disintegrate. Human beings exist in their most pure animalistic forms. Joel is a character who has suffered intensely, and the world around him closely resembles his mental state. If Joel is forced to exist without his daughter in his personal hell, everyone else must live with the knowledge that hope is non-existent.

LESSON

Narrative design and game design are one in the same. If the character is exhausted, the player should be, too. In The Last of Us, every single moment of action either echoes how a character is feeling or tears away our traditional video game expectations. If the character must get to a radio tower for safety, the player's goal is to reach that location. The goal of the game and the characters are perfectly intertwined. In my experience prior to The Last of Us, AAA video games had me fight around a location, win, and gave me the next cut scene. The Last of Us puts weight into every single movement in the journey. This gives the player a lack of separation between themselves and Joel. Narrative choices must feed into gameplay and vice versa. I learned that these two elements are one and the same for a successful narrative driven game.

HIGHLIGHT

The strongest element of The Last of Us is one amazingly simple moment. This moment is a respite from the madness, insanity, and violence that our characters live through in every waking moment. This scripted, playable moment is when Ellie and Joel come face to face with real, grazing Giraffes. The Giraffe beat is a stunning example of game and narrative design working together.