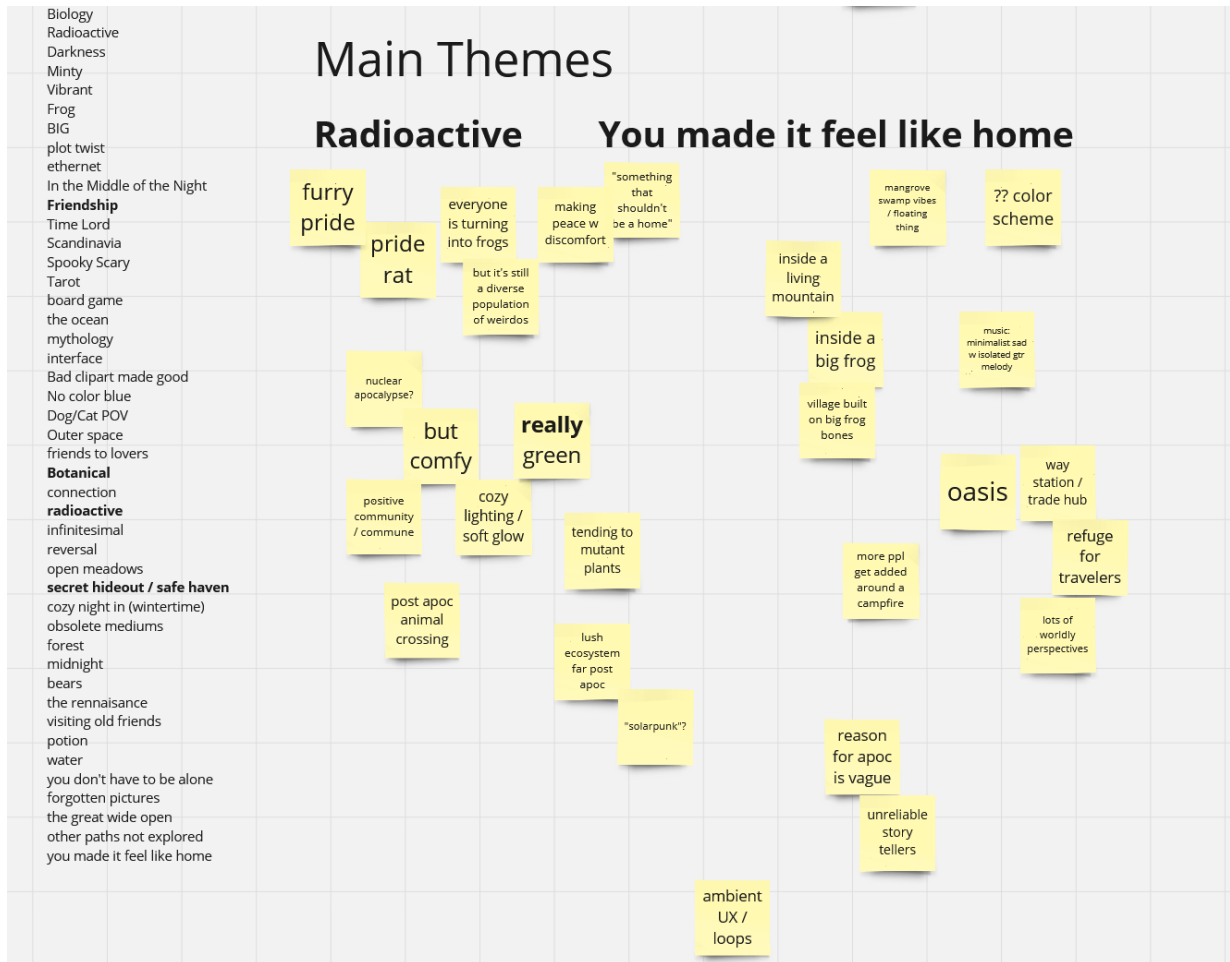
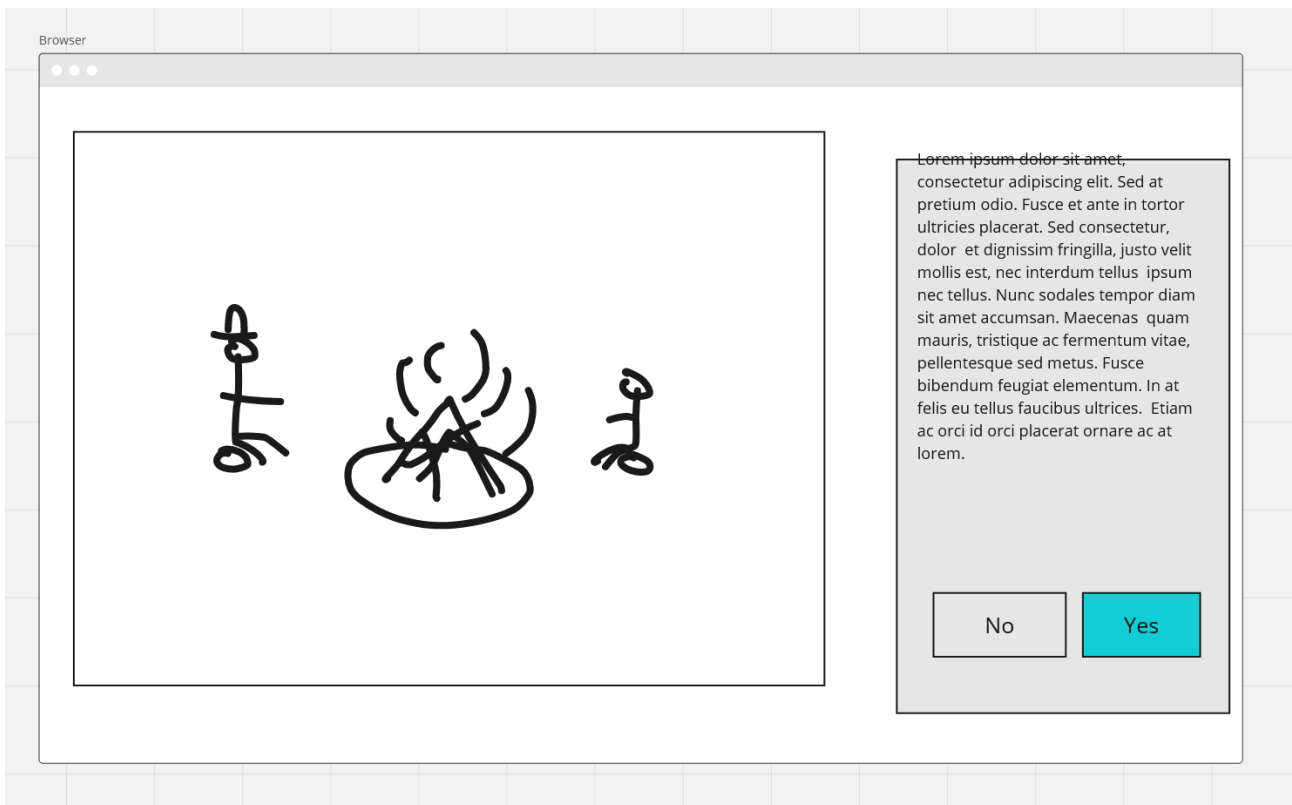
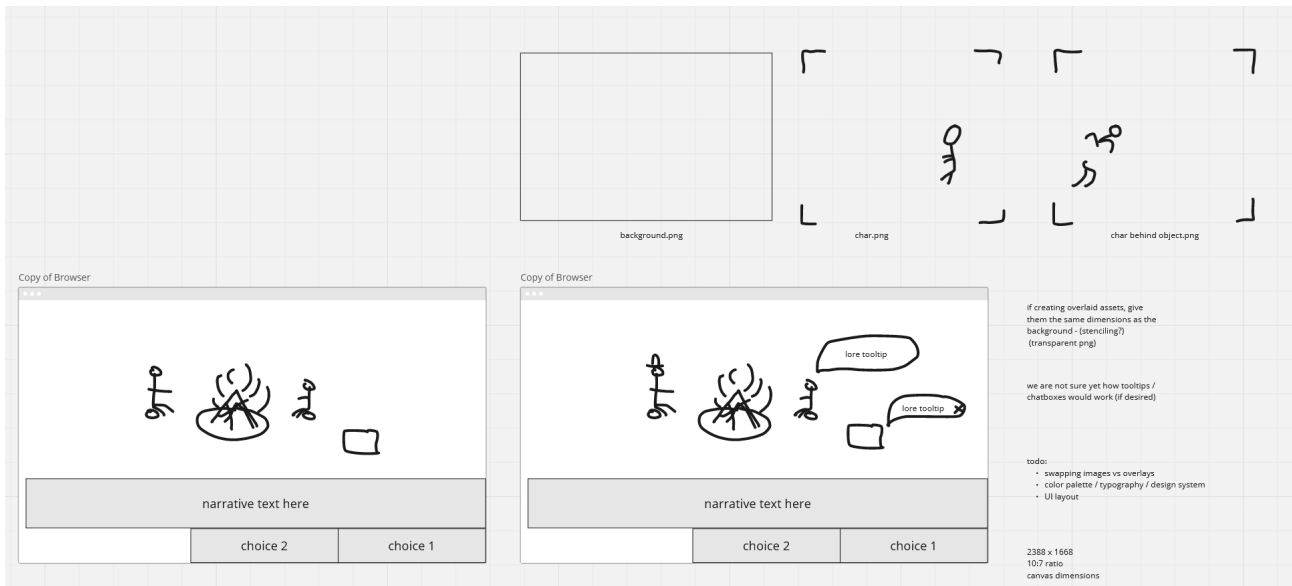


Narrative Design/Structure

At the initial ideation stage, the creation of Wayside was a deeply collaborative process, and involved the use of a Miro board and many, many digital sticky notes. We selected our themes (the word 'radioactive' and the phrase 'you made it feel like home') randomly from among many we put into a hat. After laying down our initial ideas about how to combine those two ideas in an artistic sense, we began thinking about the actual structure/design of the game.



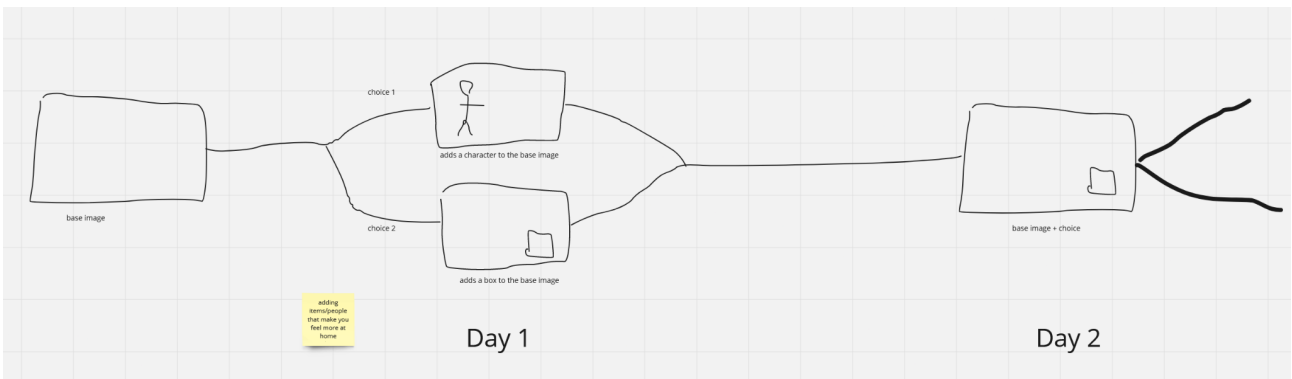
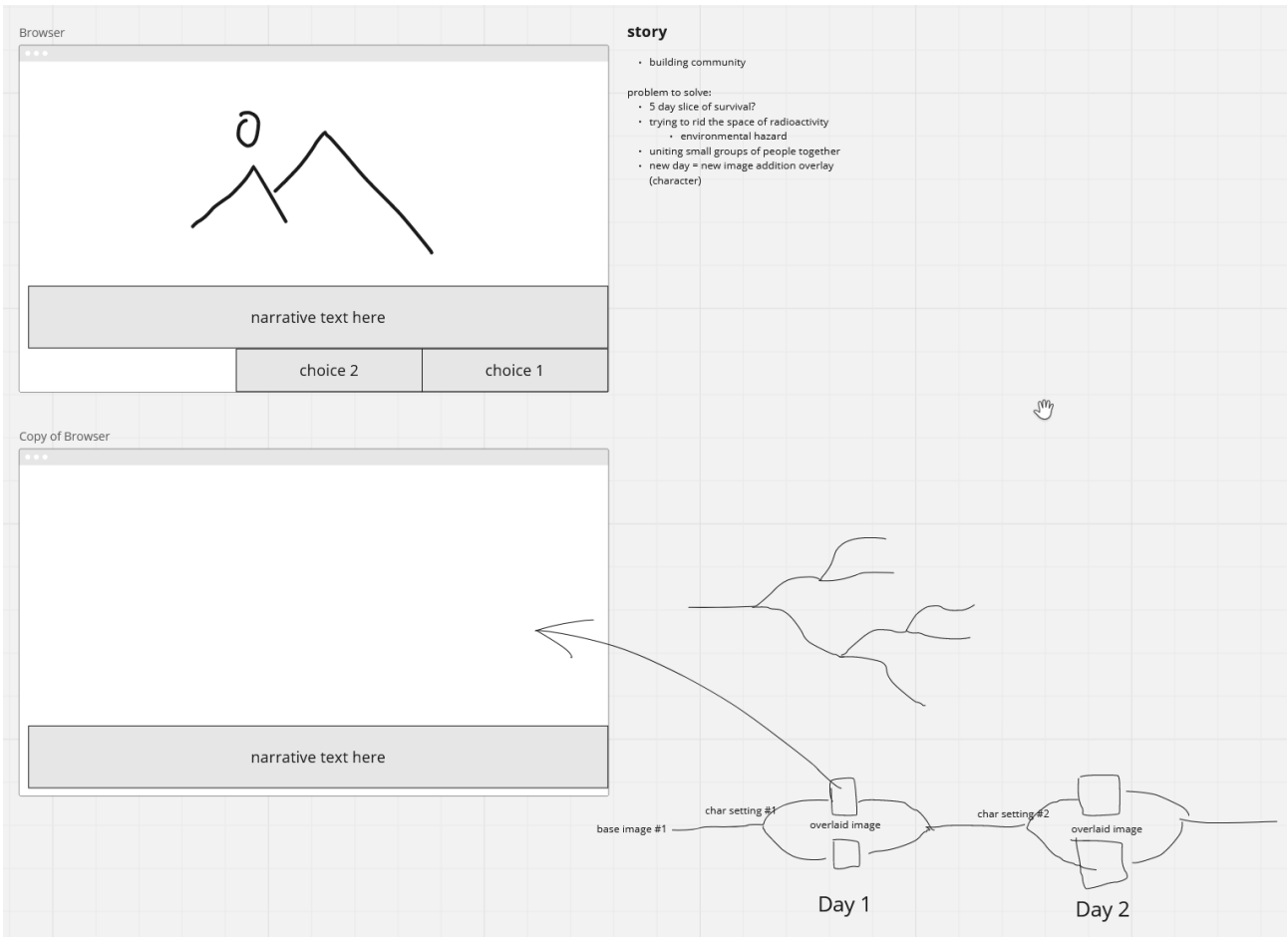
We quickly agreed that the game would be built in HTML, with 2D assets being overlaid on top of each other. I took the lead on determining how we could use that structure to tell a story.



We settled on a 'picture book' style, with the text being displayed in a column on the side of the main image. This, in turn, inspired a prosaic style of writing which would echo the feeling of stories being told around a campfire.

At this stage, we were considering how interactive the story might be, and decided to keep it simple – simple choices that would build over time. At this stage, the idea was to make the choices more explicit (hence the large 'yes/no' buttons), but we later decided to be more subtle.

We decided that the accumulation of 2D art assets would form the basis of the story, with more characters and decorations being added to a single image over time. We opted for a very simple branch-and-return structure that would suit the small scope of the game.



After we agreed on the structure of the game, I began 'sketching' with words in the same way that our artists began sketching characters and objects. Some of the concepts described here made it into the final game, and other narrative passages were inspired by the art.

Character-focused Flavour Text

- The fire walkers tell of a beast that rides flames, somewhere over the black hills. It carries a backwards-blade, but no-one knows its name. Where did that story originate from, you wonder, and how much of it has mutated over the years?
- There's a circus troupe that passes by here sometimes. There are a million questions you could think to ask those strange fellows, but one always lingers: where do they source the dye that colours their wonderful curtains, cloaks and caps?
- The old woodsman travels from camp to camp, bartering for strange artefacts and talismans in return for wood that burns twice as long as any other. Where does he get it? And what does he want with all those trinkets?

Environment-focused Flavour Text

- Sometimes, the wind whips through the trees faster than usual. Faster than is natural. When that happens, tree bark is often torn off, and found floating in the marshes, coated with a strange grey slime. What strange phenomenon could cause such a thing? And why does the slime taste so good?
- They called the metal towers 'pylons', once. They moved small things quickly, back and forth. Some salvopriests build new sculptures from the metal, but could they ever be more useful than that once again? You're not sure.
- The fossilised carcass of a frog-like creature is upturned on a hill, not far from here. Kids like to chip off pieces and wear them as good luck charms, and mothers tell them it's not safe. But why?

Object-focused Flavour Text

- The soup-witches are renowned collectors of spices, flavours and obscure ingredients. They carry them in crypto-locked containers, lashed to the underside of their airboats. This one seems to have been through the wars, but with a little work you might be able to break in.
- Sometimes, objects travel further than you'd expect. This orb-like trinket is familiar to someone at the campfire, but they're surprised to see it.
- A comfy chair, made from something you wouldn't think a chair could be made from.
- A useful hunk of scrap, attached to an armature that's hard to separate it from.
- A device that occasionally plays music, but no-one is quite sure how it works, and no-one understands the words.
- A stack of books, fused together by moss.

Wayside – Writing

We used Ink to write *Wayside*, and I had a lot of fun exploring the capabilities of the language, as it's not one I've used often. For that reason – and because we were putting ourselves under time pressure, we kept the functionality simple; generally, choices are resolved within the same passage, and there is only one variable set throughout the whole game.

The 'Choices/Structure' includes all the interstitial passages which link the story passages (in this case, 'Littimer' and 'Coffin') – but also gives a nice overview of the entire game. By chance, we had five key choices for the player to make, so I chose to theme them around the five senses.

-> intro

```
// -----  
// VARIABLES  
// -----
```

```
VAR decorationCount = 0
```

```
// -----  
// CHOICES / STRUCTURE  
// -----
```

```
=== choice1 ===
```

You sit alone, with your feet in the slowly-lapping lakewater.

The water is...

```
+ [...salty.] -> littimer  
+ [...silty.] -> coffin
```

```
=== choice2 ===
```

A faint gale of perfumed air makes its way through the camp.

There's a trace of...

```
+ [...cotton.] -> LJS  
+ [...metal.] -> pylon
```

```
// Jellychair will happen here
```

```
=== choice3 ===
```

The camp is growing, and so are its needs.

Looking ahead, you consider what you'll need next...

```
+ [...wisdom.] -> uriah  
+ [...weapons.] -> weapons
```

=== choice4 ===
Your belly rumbles.

You realise you have a dull craving for...

- + [...fish.] -> egypt
- + [...soup.] -> cauldron

// Plant will happen here

=== choice5 ===
Sitting there, you absentmindedly recall a song.

It begins with...

- + [...beats.] -> pecksniff
- + [...melody.] -> drone

// Bunting will happen here

// Outros happen here

// END

// -----

// -----

// INTRODUCTION

// -----

=== intro ===

The shore of the mottled lake is an unlikely meeting spot for friends, allies, or even acquaintances – but for the wanderers and vagrants of the Froglands, it almost feels like home.

Some countless centuries ago, the world was struck by misfortune; in the days after, its people diminished, faded, and were replaced by new people – people of a different kind.

Few of those that wander the new world carry the legacy of the old; they carry strange mutations, grimy haversacks, and interminable feelings of anxiety.

There are few places to find comfort in the Froglands; walled communes and isolationist tendencies are common, and few are trusted to join the larger groups. It's safer that way.

But on the shore of the mottled lake, on the wayside of a seldom-walked trade route, there is a place to sit, talk, and perhaps find camaraderie...

-> choice1

The 'introduction' passage was one of the first to be written, and was meant to set the tone and atmosphere of the storyworld in a Star Wars-like crawl.

```
// -----  
// Littimer  
// -----  
=== littimer ===
```

As you sit at the pyre, soaking in its subtle warmth, you begin to feel the sometimes-familiar sensation of curious eyes burrowing into you.

You look around for a sign of the mystery observer, but there doesn't seem to be anyone around. There's just the quiet sound of the wind, and the lapping of the lakewater against the mossy islands.

You turn your head back to the pyre, and there it is. Staring at you.

```
@audioPlay:looking-frogward-to-the-end  
@image:littimer
```

Here, two triggers are used to add music and the character sprite to the scene. Previously, there was only an ambient soundscape, so using the two together creates an dramatic moment.

The creature doesn't say anything when you express your surprise at its sudden appearance. It just smiles.

After a moment, your eyes are drawn to the creature's one item of clothing: a pair of blue, denim shorts. They notice you noticing, and flap their fins against their tummy in excitement.

Finally, they say something.

```
@chatStart:littimer_neutral  
You like my jawts?  
@chatEnd:null
```

It's a question that's hard to answer. You've not seen anything quite like it before - such scandalously short shorts are certainly not the fashion in any of the communes you've visited.

But there's a local rumour, some story you've heard about a person like this - something about a wasteland wanderer with a peculiar eye for style.

You meet that peculiar eye – just one of them, since the creature's fish-like body means they have to stand slightly side-on in order to see you – and answer their question.

Do you like their jawts?

```
* ["Yes."] -> littimer_choice_yes  
* ["No."] -> littimer_choice_no
```

Here, an inconsequential dialogue choice is offered; this was done to add a little more interactivity between the player and the character, but not overcomplicate the overall game structure.

```
=== littimer_choice_yes ===
```

They curl the sides of their gawping mouth like a feasting sturgeon – you think that's a smile – and pat their tummy again, excited.

```
@chatStart:littimer_intense  
Littimer loves the joornts. Supercool!  
@chatEnd:null
```

```
-> littimer_end
```

```
=== littimer_choice_no ===
```

The fish-man seems saddened, and for a moment you're worried that honesty was not the best policy. But then they speak.

For NPC speech, a simple syntax is used to mark a line; our HTML parser then formats this as a text chat style bubble, with one of three mini character icons with different expressions.

```
@chatStart:littimer_sad  
That's okay. Littimer likes them. Good enough for Littimer.  
@chatEnd:null
```

```
-> littimer_end
```

```
=== littimer_end ===
```

A peaceful moment passes, and the mood between you seems to lighten up. Littimer doesn't seem like a threat. Just another traveller, looking for the warmth of a pyre.

```
@audioStop:looking-frogward-to-the-end
```

```
-> choice2
```

```
// -----  
// Coffin  
// -----
```

```
=== coffin ===
```

```
~ decorationCount += 1
```

Here, the 'decorationCount' variable is incremented by one because the player has made an invisible choice to select an object rather than a person.

You find yourself drifting in and out of sleep as the long night drags on. That is until the sound of grinding metal and clanking pierces the peaceful ambience.

It's easy enough to locate the source. Down by the water, beyond the mossy berms, a grey-blue box rocks in the gentle laketide.

```
@audioPlay:coffin
```

```
@image:coffin
```


The thing is big and square and sealed tight, with something like a porthole at the top of its front face. It almost looks like a piece of old-tech – something you'd expect to find in the collection of the salvopriests.

Maybe it's worth something, but it's far too huge to move without the aid of some sort of crane. It's strange, given its weight, that it was seemingly able to wash up on the shore at all.

You wonder what its purpose is. Perhaps some kind funerary box? It seems like it has the right proportions for a coffin. But how did it get here? And if it is a coffin...is there someone inside?

On further inspection, you find a frayed black rope around the midsection of the box; it leads down into the water, so you try pulling on it. That action quickly reveals that there's something attached on the other end. You keep pulling.

What emerges from the water is a ragged fishing net, containing a peculiar catch: a bundle of crates. Tough plastic cubes, sides smeared with muck from the lakebed as if they had been used as dredging tools.

With a little effort, the lids pop open, and their contents are revealed: in each, a mass of green moss – like a protective layer for the real treasure underneath.

Beneath the squelchy moss layer are dozens and dozens of books, packed neatly, but waterlogged and stained. As you lift them from their watery caskets, some of them come apart in your hands, turning to valueless mush.

There are a few that can be salvaged – those that were protected from the moisture by virtue of being tucked beneath a dozen soggier books, a couple in watertight bags, some with laminated pages.

But in all of them, the crinkled pages are filled with runes and symbols you don't recognise. Some forgotten language – nothing new.

Still, they're pretty to look at. So engaging, in fact, that as you're flipping through the pages, you almost don't notice the rope tighten, and the net begins to slide.

For a second, it seems as if the crates are moving on their own...until you hear it again: the sound of grinding metal.

You turn, and can't quite believe your eyes. The coffin is moving. Walking.

Somehow, whilst you were distracted, the thing must have managed to lift itself up from the silt. On stubby little legs, the metal box, the coffin, machine – whatever it is – has made it halfway up the berm.

You quickly catch up to it, but as soon as you do, a red light flashes from its porthole, and it drops down like a stone, telescoping the hidden legs back into its body.

The sudden, panicked movement imparts a shake on the top-heavy automaton's body, and on the unsteady ground, it keels to the side, slamming into the wall of the nearby ruin with a heavy thud.

Then, it stays there. Silent.

You wait for it to move again, but it doesn't.

As you collect the salvageable books, you keep a careful eye on the walking box. But still it remains dormant, as if embarrassed, scared or broken.

Eventually, you give up waiting for it to wake, and try to go back to sleep. You drift off, and expect it to be gone when you open your eyes. But it isn't...so there's little else to do but accept its presence.

Perhaps, one day, a passing traveller might offer some insight into what this thing is, or be able to decipher the unknown code in the books it brought. But for now, the walking coffin slumbers.

@audioStop:coffin

-> choice2

After the end of either the 'Littimer' or 'Coffin' passages, the player is routed to the next choice; throughout the game, they are offered invisible choices between objects and people. At the end of the game, we check how many times the player has selected objects, and give a different ending based on which they apparently preferred.