

Susan and Giraffe: The Introduction

Alone in the deepest of woods, the darkest of cabins, the most mysterious of forbidden lands, a man, Geoff, awoke. Well, his real name was Geoff, but he liked to be called Susan. Every day at precisely fourteen minutes past seven in the morning he would get out of his bed, look in the mirror and say with slurred speech, "I am Susan." Eating discarded bottle caps and used plasters for breakfast, he would sit in a patched-up, yet somehow inflated dinghy and watch *Storage Hunters* on *Dave*. Susan liked closure, which made him happy, given that it was the last in the series; treating himself to a glass of blended rabbits' feet.

Every so often, Susan would shout "Giraffe," in hopes of alerting his servant and finest creation. On the third call Giraffe would pay Susan a visit. The nickname of 'Giraffe' was acquired as he had a long neck – although it was actually eighteen necks. Susan murdered seventeen people for the sole purpose of taking their necks. He stitched each neck onto Giraffe and added a small button on each of them, in order to change the voice that Giraffe used. The voices ranged from deep tones to high pitches, but today's voice sounded a little sore. Giraffe could only walk slowly to Susan, because his neck was constantly flaccid; it looked like he was always doing the limbo. Susan made his way over to Giraffe, picked up his head and pushed it over his body, causing him to fall forwards.

"Who's my little Giraffe?" questioned Susan.

He replied, "I am, Daddy. But I want the body of a hippo."

This deeply angered Susan. Giraffe knew that Susan dreamed of riding a hippo that the two found in their cupboard, before Giraffe beat it to death with a golf club.

"Guess who's cleaning up the toenail room today?" asked Susan, condescendingly.

"But I hate toenails, Daddy!"

"Tough."

The toenail room was just that: a room filled with toenails. Some from Susan and Giraffe, some from the seventeen victims and some that Susan had collected from The Great Toenail Clipping Festival of '06. Head still forward, Giraffe dragged himself along the floor and licked the carpet to suck up any toenails that he came into contact with.

"Thank you for this opportunity, Daddy."

"Don't worry," Susan said whilst grinning, "the bodily secretion room is next."

Susan and Giraffe: The Awakening

Minus the eighteen necks, there was something very interesting about Giraffe; something that Susan had never noticed. On his left shoulder a small, potato-like sprout had been present for years. Given that Giraffe had abnormally short arms and could never see his shoulder because of his neck, he never knew of its existence. But why did Susan never notice it? A mixture of a lack of care and an inability to recognise new life. The real problem was that the sprout was growing.

On a lifeless Sunday evening, the sprout started to grumble. Susan immediately thought that this was Giraffe moaning about the socks on his eyebrows again. Thanks to this, Susan made the decision to constantly stab Giraffe with a dark broom, covered in needles and syringes. This usually shut Giraffe up, as he would bleed like a sieve. But the groaning continued.

"It's not me, Daddy! I don't want any of the syringe broom!"

"Then what is it? Speak."

"I wish I knew, Daddy, I do!" Giraffe said, as his legs gave way and fell to the floor.

For the first time in nine moons since Giraffe's creation, Susan showed a scrap of concern. Holding his breath, Susan checked Giraffe for anything suspicious, but was unable to identify anything unusual.

He eventually decided to call in the help of an old and abandoned comrade – Boardong. Boardong was kept in a small crate with Susan's collection of vintage sprinklers. Boardong was a dwarf for his kind, but was still around eight feet tall. Boardong's talent, due to his tube-like body – the width of a toilet roll – was that he could fit into almost any small space. But there was something else about

Boardong that was very convenient. He was a doctor, although this was self-proclaimed. Susan was visited by Boardong one summer when he had had a severely infected little toe. However, as Boardong made the toe detach, Susan locked him in the crate.

But Susan needed Boardong to "Get Giraffe to shut the hell up." Much like Giraffe, Boardong had extremely short arms and extremely short legs, but could actually stand up without falling over. Boardong could not speak very well but managed to work for Master Susan.

"Yeth, Mast Usan, whad do you meed?"

"Giraffe is moaning, but it's not him. Well it is him, but it's not him. What can you do? I'm trying to skin white rhinos in here."

"I'm athrayed, Mast Usan, yat I do net onderyand your requeth."

"Shut Giraffe up or I'll use the duct tape again."

"No, momo, not ye thuct dape, I thdill net yet recov'd. Yet's thee whad Giraythe is cryin for."

Boardong walked over to Giraffe's limp body, as he had significantly weakened. Giraffe kept opening and closing his mouth, without making any sounds. Boardong was completely flexible and bent down and immediately noticed the problem, as sweat poured from his eyes.

"Uh-tho," remarked Boardong.

"What's the issue?"

"Parathit! Parathit! Parathit! Giraythe gon thie."

"But I need Giraffe to... you know, hurt. But parasites will be parasites."

As soon as Susan stopped talking, the sprout instantly grew into the form of a massive snake, but sucked in with such a malicious force that Boardong's face was yanked towards it. Boardong's small head was now engulfed by the serpent, with Giraffe's eyes turning a deep red as he said to the snake, "Snaroffe. Master. Duties. I will fulfil."

"Yes, Snaroffe," said Susan. "I knew this day would come. It is as the monks of Scunthorpe foretold. Feed. Feed on your meal."

In one fell swoop, all of Boardong's eight feet had disappeared somewhere inside Giraffe's body. But Snaroffe was not finished. Snaroffe opened his mouth and licked Giraffe's face as they both smiled.

"Eat me, Master. I am ready."

Snaroffe was still inside and attached to Giraffe's body, but stretched out even further. Like the anaconda mutation that he was, he first started feasting on Giraffe's small limbs. Giraffe did not cry and was happy, as Susan tried to conceal his arousal. With the limbs digested rapidly, Snaroffe targeted Giraffe's rather delectable head and neck.

"Have I succeeded, Master? Will I satisfy your needs for taste?"

"Yes, you will. Your neck and my body shall now combine."

Giraffe smiled, although the red in his eyes had disappeared. Giraffe wanted this. Snaroffe consumed Giraffe's head and neck in a single gulp and ripped the neck apart from the torso. Giraffe's neck was now inside his own torso. All that remained was Giraffe's torso, unable to move, with Snaroffe's head sticking out the top of it.

Susan could not stop staring at the events which unfolded before him. He was happy, scared, concerned but most importantly, extremely excited. For years when giraffe was asleep, Susan sprinkled SneedSeed on Giraffe's shoulder, hoping to awaken his true Lord. Evidently, it had worked. However, Susan was crying purple tears. He didn't know why they were purple.

"I wanted to eat Giraffe. Me. His neck was supposed to grow more, and become delicious."

Snaroffe gave Susan a dark stare, one that had consumed many a soul. He licked his lips. Susan backed away slowly, but was ready to pounce. But he couldn't do it – Susan decided that he was too happy. He stood up, walked slowly to Snaroffe, gave him a hug whilst patting his head gently. Snaroffe did not accept this craving pleasingly, and bit Susan's left hand clean off.

Susan ignored his abnormally purple blood as his anger grew more and more to the point that the bleeding stopped. In an instant, Susan grabbed Snaroffe just below the head and picked him up along with Giraffe's useless torso. Susan swung Snaroffe, plus the torso, over his head like a lasso,

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hitting the torso against the wall. As each swing became harder, Giraffe's torso weakened, and it eventually exploded, releasing Giraffe's limbs, head and neck. Snaroffe remained, dripping from his now ripped lower end. Snaroffe's expression was a sullen one; his terribly thought out and spontaneous plan had failed.

Susan threw Snaroffe's body onto the ground, as he searched for his hand within the half-digested neck and limbs of his beloved servant. Susan's hand had barely decayed, so he picked it up and stuck it on the stump of his wrist. However, Susan noticed that it was significantly smaller than his other one; he had actually picked up Giraffe's hand instead. The hand grafted instantly, as Susan possessed many oddities. Susan didn't care, since he preferred smaller things in general. Snaroffe had tried to escape, but Susan wasn't having it.

He picked up Snaroffe by the head again, but took him to a very special room – the room of the appetizing body hairs. This was definitely Giraffe's worst nightmare, one that was thought to be a legend. This room even struck fear within Susan. The most deadly thing about it in particular was that a single whiff of the thick, heavy and solid hairs would cause a victim to eat, and eventually choke, on them. So, Susan held his breath and released Snaroffe from his grip, plunging his body into the hairs. Immediately after closing the door, Susan heard quiet screams coming from the room, which stopped after about thirteen seconds. Holding his breath again, Susan opened the door to a now slightly fattened Snaroffe, dead, with hair fallen out of its ripped tail.

Susan picked up Snaroffe's dead body, blended him with some of the hair and poured it over Giraffe's mostly consumed neck. Susan sat in his dinghy and cried for thirty-seven minutes, but started work on his new servant, Unicorn, shortly after, to be created for the purpose of flight, invincibility and protection.

Why I Play *Lylat Wars* Every Month – A Journalist Piece

I remember my first time playing a video game. My nanny and granddad decided to pass their Nintendo 64 onto myself and my brother and sister, as they replaced it with a PS2. What was the first game we played? Well, it wasn't *Lylat Wars*, if that's what you were expecting. It was *Banjo-Kazooie*, but that's an entirely different story. However, I do remember sifting through our collection of games with my brother on some days and playing tonnes of games. *Super Mario 64*, *Quake II*, *Diddy Kong Racing* and yes, *Lylat Wars*. The thing is, I didn't like the game at the time, but I was about seven. What I do remember is asking a question like, "Hey, Jay, can we play that game with that talking frog in space again?" Nonetheless, I have no recollection of how my love of *Lylat Wars* sparked, but I reckon it was when we moved the N64 to the room I shared with my brother. I remember bits of this experience - continuing playing mostly *Super Mario 64* and *Banjo-Kazooie* (which, yes, involved a hell of a lot of dying). I must have enjoyed the game five to six years ago, as I remember a YouTube series called *Explicit Star Fox* (I'm not elaborating on that, ever), and thinking "How did they get to that ending?", so I definitely knew about the more complex parts of the game. I recall seeing the 'Game Over' screen before I got a cheat device, *Action Replay*. Shortly after that, I dedicated myself to improving my skills.

So then, to the game. *Lylat Wars*, or *Star Fox 64* to Americans, has on-rails levels. For those not in the know, this means that most of the levels work like a corridor that you fly down, which is set out for you. This means no turning back or exploring the world – and yet it doesn't imply that you sit in a straight line mashing the A button (à la *Crazy Chicken*)... There is a surprising amount of movement in all directions, just not backwards. This allows you to get enemies in all places, as well as opening up secret paths. However, in particular areas, the game will either switch from being on-rails to all-range mode, as a few of the levels are fully all-range. This mode lets you fly around in a small area, wherever you want, which opens up some freedom, although you're limited to a relatively small square. This is not a problem, though, as there is plenty to do within that square (usually a boss or just tonnes of enemies). *Lylat Wars* is classed as a shoot 'em up, which describes it well. Shoot enemies for points and earn a high score, much like an arcade game. This is where the importance of the levels feeds in, and one of the reasons that makes this game pretty damn unique.

In *Lylat Wars*, there are sixteen missions, but you can only ever complete seven to get to one of the game's two endings. And that's where paths come in. Depending on your performance on some levels, or which secrets you find, you will travel to different stages. There are fifteen available paths in *Lylat Wars*. The levels are split into the difficulties easy, medium and hard, and most can be taken on one difficulty within one path. But that's where the fun begins: mixing things up. For those who *are* in the know, my regular path is Corneria, Meteo, Katina, Solar, Macbeth, Area 6 and Venom 2, with a current high score of 1,579, achieved just a few days ago.

The story of *Lylat Wars* is basic, but enough to keep you going. A mad scientist by the name of Andross once worked on Fox's home planet of Corneria, until one experiment nearly obliterated Corneria. He was banished by General Pepper (the... well, general) to the deserted planet of Venom. Andross created himself an army, and continued experiments on himself, leaving him as a floating head with two disembodied hands. The Star Fox team was sent, involving Peppy, James McCloud (Fox's dad) and Pigma Dengar, a member of Star Fox's rivals, Star Wolf. Pigma took the side of Andross and betrayed the others, leaving James presumed dead, as Peppy barely made it out alive.

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The new Star Fox team were ordered to defeat Andross after an attack. *Lylat Wars* gets interesting at the end – as there are two endings. In one you defeat Andross and save the galaxy, and in the other Fox sees his dad again – but is he alive? The harder levels for the ‘real’ ending are more than worth it.

I can’t believe I’m at this point without even mentioning the characters. *Lylat Wars* revolves around the (new) Star Fox team. These four characters are all anthropomorphic animals. They are: Fox McCloud, head of the team and the one you control; Falco Lombardi, the sarcastic yet surprisingly helpful pheasant; Slippy Toad, who is insanely irritating but still brainy; and Peppy Hare, the father figure to Fox and former member of the old Star Fox team. These characters give the game its personality, charm and annoyances.

At the time of the game’s release in 1997, full voice acting was unheard of. Every line of speech in *Lylat Wars* is spoken by voice actors. If you spend time on the internet, or you’re pretty indulged in video games, you’ll have heard the popular phrase from Peppy Hare: “Do a barrel roll!” – which is easily the most classic *Star Fox* quote. But that isn’t the only quote that sticks out for me. My favourites include Peppy’s “Slippy’s not such a screw up, after all.”, Slippy’s “Nooooooooo!” and Falco’s “Hey, Einstein, I’m on your side!”. Now, I really can’t stress enough how damn annoying Slippy is. You seriously have to play this to understand. It’s always “Help, Fox!”. Shortly after saving him, though, you’ll likely be met with “Whoa! Help me!”. But he really isn’t the only annoying character. We can’t forget Falco Lombardi. He is the most ungrateful and sarcastic teammate you’ll ever encounter in a video game. Upon saving him in one of his mishaps, he’ll return you with, “Gee, I’ve been saved by Fox, how swell.”

This may want you to shoot your teammates down (because it’s not at all difficult), but you shouldn’t, and that’s for two reasons. The first is that they each help in their respective ways. Falco is actually a very skilled pilot and will help you out in various situations, Peppy will always give you advice on what to do and Slippy will reveal the boss’s health at the end of the level if you keep him alive. But that’s not why I let any of them live, because I know what I’m doing. I keep them alive to ensure that I get a medal at the end of every level. Medals are awarded on each level when you reach a particular score, providing all your teammates are alive at the end. Medals are important for unlocking delicious goodies. If you get all the medals in normal mode, you unlock expert mode. Expert mode is really just that – for experts. There are more enemies, harder bosses with more health and you take more damage when hit (and Fox wears sunglasses, like a badass). Getting all medals on this mode grants you the game’s soundtrack being unlocked and having the option to walk on foot in the game’s multiplayer, which isn’t even a feature in the main game. Basically, do well, get great stuff.

Lylat Wars is a game to the majority, but an experience to me. So how good is *Lylat Wars*? To me, it’s utterly phenomenal. *Lylat Wars* the most replayable game of all time. I love it. There have been sequels, but none have captivated my attention this much (although *Assault* is great). Give me a true sequel, please.

1322 for *Lylat Wars*

1678 for Susan and Giraffe + Awakening = 3000 words in total

Reflective Commentary

As a class, we produced two modes. Mine were: a fictitious story (two that fed into one other), and a journalistic piece about the relatively popular video game, *Lylat Wars*. The two pieces catered to very different audiences, requiring differing styles and angles to achieve their purpose, as they are two different modes. I decided to write an odd story, one that would make people question its creation. This was decided as this is rarely seen in writing, and people do not tend to read a piece of writing and wonder what they just read. My journalistic piece, on the other hand, was essentially a true story. The piece was non-fiction as it is a journalistic task, and an article that I was very personal with. This was an informative article, which supplied information mostly to those who do not know about the game in question, but still focuses on elements that would hopefully allow fans to enjoy reading it. Inspirations for the former involved the viewing of somewhat odd cartoons, but also a majority stemmed from my imagination. The latter was inspired from my high interest in the game I talked about, but also as I have read many an article regarding video games.

The main inspiration for the *Lylat Wars* article was mostly from *Official Nintendo Magazine* (also stylised as *ONM*). This particular publication is informative, detailed but can also be sarcastic in some of its writing, which is featured regularly in games journalism. Journalism is currently an area of interest for me, with gaming being my main interest. I thoroughly enjoyed writing this article, but was unfortunately very restricted due to the word limit; I could have easily written much more, but I also didn't want to cut down my story. This is why I decided to take inspiration from *ONM*, as my article is both informative but casual. Being too serious about what I'm saying, particularly about something that means a lot to me, is something that I personally see as boring. When reading journalistic pieces, I like to be informed but I also want to enjoy what I'm reading, which is where the somewhat chatty style comes into play. There was also one journalist that inspired me the most – Chris Scullion, who used to work for *ONM*, but now works for *Computer and Video Games (CVG)*. His work involves journalistic articles, news, guides, film review and game reviews. Chris in particular captures this style perfectly, and is certainly a professional at what he does. My favourite works of his are actually short reviews of poor games, which do contrast my piece, but the style is still evident and very useful to me as an inspiration. A particular favourite review of mine from Chris is his *Transformers Prime: The Video Game* review for *Wii U*; it's witty, informative and gives his opinion perfectly. [1] An example of the slightly sarcastic tone can be found in my work: 'I remember a YouTube series called *Explicit Star Fox* (I'm not elaborating on that, ever)'. *ONM* in general and Chris Scullion in particular were my biggest inspirations for my *Lylat Wars* piece.

Inspiration for the *Susan and Giraffe* stories were mostly from the cartoons of David Firth. His most notable and popular work is *Salad Fingers* in which a character lives in a post-apocalyptic world. As this series of currently ten episodes is seen as random, but creative to many, this is what I aimed to do for my own stories. However, *Salad Fingers* was not my only inspiration from David Firth. In fact, the cartoon from which I took inspiration from most was *Dog of Man*, in which a dog is given the right to talk and becomes the body for his owner. [2] Upon viewing this, it was difficult to process what I had just viewed, which is the same effect I had in mind when creating *Susan and Giraffe*. This meant that my audience is an online one; readers of more serious works would not want to read this story. The demographic for *Susan and Giraffe* would have been similar to David Firth's demographic, fifteen to thirty-five year olds, with a male audience being predominant. This means that the story is satire, and perhaps under the category of 'dark humour'. This is evident from the sentence, 'Susan's hand had barely decayed, so he picked it up and stuck it on the stump of his wrist'. Nonetheless, I did not just make the story light and inane, but darkly aware of its intentions.

As the journalistic piece was truthful, coming up with ideas was not difficult in the slightest, as I have around a decade's worth of experience about the game in question. In fact, many ideas had to be cut because of the word limit at hand. However, this acted as a learning experience for me. As this is in a journalistic style, editing is a key element needed for success. This meant that I ensured that the most important and relevant ideas were highlighted and discussed, even though a few

major ones were still left out. In terms of *Susan and Giraffe* and its sequel, coming up with ideas essentially worked as the story went on: there was no flow chart or spider diagram produced during the creation of this short story. Ideas simply progressed from one point to the other, although I had in mind how the story was to progress after an event or idea.

The main ideas had to be prioritised in order for the article to be relatively short, but still content with information. The choice to write about *Lylat Wars* did not take a long time, although I had to choose between *Super Mario Galaxy 2* and *Lylat Wars* (my first and second favourite games, respectively). However, as *Lylat Wars* is from *Star Fox*, a series much less popular than *Mario*, I felt that the article was to be far more interesting for more people to read, given that it's something different. *Susan and Giraffe* didn't have a lot to cut down, as I had already thought of around three quarters of the story. However, this did mean that the latter part of the story was mostly spontaneous, although no issues arose due to this. In fact, this was done on purpose to make the unexpected even more unexpected, from an author's point of view at least. However, *Susan and Giraffe* certainly experienced moments in which it went a little too far, leading to me cutting out several ideas before completion of the first draft. This definitely helped, as it allowed me to focus on the more important aspects of the tale.

Workshopping my work was very helpful when I had *Susan and Giraffe* in mind. I read out the first draft of the introduction to the class before settling on a final version. This first draft reading achieved what I originally set out to do – to confuse but also hook my audience. However, when writing the full version of *Susan and Giraffe*, peers offered some advice on how to improve it. Namely, in a few areas, the story went a little too far and got too ridiculous to be serious – which was brought to my attention. This meant that in some areas, a few ideas had to be cut along with several sentences and images; all of which worked to my advantage. My *Lylat Wars* article, on the other hand, didn't have a lot of workshopping surrounding it. I did have a few peers proof-read the item, all of which was met with praise. I had met my original intentions with this: to inform people of something that many people do not know about.

Overall, I'm very pleased with how the folder worked out. From the get-go, I decided on having two different modes that were both creative and interesting for me to create. What I avoided was including a mode just for the sake of the coursework. From past experiences and this coursework, I have found that writing about something I enjoy leads to far more creativity and overall quality. If I have interest in the field, I will use the best of my abilities to achieve my intentions. The main techniques for my work were relatively simple; be truthful with non-fiction and to not be afraid to step into the unknown with fiction. Correlating with intentions is diction for both modes. Non-fiction, as the name states, cannot be made up, which lead to more serious (albeit mixed with sarcastic) lexis, compared to generally less serious lexis with the fictitious story, but still including varying sentence lengths and vocabulary. In general, both modes allowed me to express my imagination and creativity with *Susan and Giraffe*, and my own personal opinions and practicing for a possible career in games journalism with *Why I Play Lylat Wars Every Month*. I would have to choose the latter as the more successful in my eyes, as it was heavily based on true events, but both pieces resulted in high quality modes. Both pieces reflect my two favourite styles of writing, resulting in two, high quality pieces that I set out to achieve from the very start of the coursework.

[1] <http://www.officialnintendomagazine.co.uk/47051/reviews/transformers-prime-the-video-game-wii-u-review-review/>

[2] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o31pmwWNUww>