

(The following aims to fit within the Game Theory interpretations of the Mario franchise, with Jumpman being Mario's father, Mario-Daisy and Luigi-Peach being the final pairings in the future [Rosalina being the daughter of the latter pair], Peach controlling the Toads via a mind-control fungus which was what originally drove the Goombas out of the Mushroom Kingdom, that Luigi has a darker side which he simply holds in despite his resentment towards his brother and that Donkey Kong's bananas have magical properties [although as you'll see not that it caused gigantism in the New Donk City residents; still the insects etc. though]. These descriptions will be of the main plot lines in each game, however other world building, especially in the RPG/Paper games, could be additionally achieved in the fleshing out of whatever the actual levels would be developed to be. Similarly the brand jaunty feel [save perhaps for as much in boss levels etc.] would be greatly helped in the actual execution of the game design, same for the creativity of all the individual levels, rather than always coming through in these descriptions. In most cases these ideas were spawned from plot first and foremost rather than there being a central mechanic like how Sunshine and Odyssey have F.L.U.D.D. and Cappy, so while I have endeavoured to work new manners of gameplay into certain cases it would again possibly be the job of the developers to come up with the playable conceits where they aren't as present already. I have no preference on if/when the use of coins in non-RPGs to actually buy accessories like in Odyssey would be made use of again to give said coins further use beyond score and health)

Release Order (assuming rate of two per year)

- Year 1: [Mario & Co - Embers of Truth](#) (pg. 2); [Night of the Shy](#) (pg. 12)
- Year 2: [Mario & Co - A Menace in Kodainoland](#) (pg. 17); [Daisy's New Voyage](#) (pg. 19)
- Year 3: [Mario & Co - Future's Spirits](#) (pg. 22); [Yoshi's Clay Quest](#) (pg. 26)
- Year 4: [Super Mario Galaxy 3](#) (pg. 29); [Peachagonals](#) (pg. 35)
- Year 5: [Wario of Wonderealm](#) (pg. 36); [Mario Frisbee Fairway](#) (pg. 40)
- Year 6: [Onward Luigi](#) (pg. 43); [Super Mario Maker 3D](#) (pg. 46)
- Year 7: [Mario in Veil's Rhapsody](#) (pg. 48); [Mario Kart: Continental Rally](#) (pg. 55)
- Year 8: [Onward 2 - Luigi's Destiny](#) (pg. 58); [Bowser Feud](#) (pg. 62)
- Year 9: [Super Mario Maritime](#) (pg. 65); [The Last Wish in the Mushroom Kingdom](#) (pg. 69)
- Year 10: [Onward 3 - Luigi and the Grey Beyond](#) (pg. 72); [Paper Mario: Nation Reprinted](#) (pg. 78)
- Year 11: [Toadette at Law](#) (pg. 92); [Mario Party Wild](#) (pg. 96)
- Year 12: [Mario & Luigi Reunited](#) (pg. 99); [Hazel x Quail: World of Sound](#) (pg. 107)
- Year 13: [Super Mario Desolation](#) (pg. 109); [Waluigi Sports Tycoon](#) (pg. 119)

Then in the midst of that there'd invariably be three or four *Mario & Sonic at the Olympics* too. There would also have been an *Odyssey 2*, but that would come before all of these (more on that shortly).

[Bonus: [Kirby Fractures](#) (pg. 121)]

Mario & Co - Embers of Truth

This is the first in the *Mario & Co* trilogy, all of which will be in a 2.5D side-scroller style like *New Super Mario Bros*. There's a couple of reasons for this choice, with me wanting firstly to experiment with as many of the gameplay styles as I can within this list, but also because while I know suggesting that there could consistently be two full games per year in the above schedule is perhaps pushing practicality, multiple games would certainly need to be being worked on at the same time anyway, therefore I wanted to have only one 'open' map 3D game in each row so as to not clog the workload of given production teams even more. As it stands these would likely work just as well in a full 3D style, but this is what I'm going with for these hypotheticals now. Also this first game has ended up being somewhat heavy in places in franchise lore, I think it's worked out to be fine still in terms of gameplay but my main point is it's not going to be like this for most of the rest of the document.

Mario and Luigi are on their way towards Bowser's castle, having been asked to do some recon following news of some disturbances coming from it, the pair bringing with them a record-making device built by Professor E. Gadd. As they come over a crest however it is to discover that the castle and surrounding areas have been drained of all energy, subsequently beginning to look ashen and to crumble. All the Goombas, Koopas, up to Bowser himself, have been turned to stone. Before the brothers begin exploring, E. Gadd's device scans the region and scatters coins in trails that would lead them in the directions that might bring them to the sites of best interest (which in this case is the main path right per it being a side-scroller, the others just being visible as details in the backdrop etc.). Other than this trail to follow, there's not much else to interact with, the atmosphere eerily silent, the only obstacles designed to teach the basic moves of these characters (not power-ups, just them as they are), as well as the fact that the player is going to be able to switch between characters mid-level. Some hidden pipes/doors lead inside smaller rooms of Bowser's castle, but besides some design details such as a map on a wall of the continent which appears to have been in the process of having areas marked off for some reason there's again nothing to be had. As they reach the end of the stage/centre of the area there's suddenly a light in the sky, something coming into orbit: the Comet Observatory from the *Galaxy* games. Rosalina appears before the pair, looking visibly weaker than usual, warning that they are in danger, but before anything further can be explained a rumbling begins from beneath their feet. Out bursts the head and hands of some large underground creature disturbed by the devastation mysteriously caused above, this acting as the first boss of the game. The three characters turn to defend themselves, this also where a mechanic of trio-combo-attacks is introduced. When the creature is beaten it retreats back into the earth, however this leaves the ground collapsing around it. Rosalina grabs a hold of Luigi and the pair vanish, leaving Mario to drop into the unknown depths amidst the debris.

Rosalina and Luigi materialise upon the Observatory (since this is a different gameplay style there isn't a risk of just slipping into copying the hub from *Galaxy 1*, plus there are other differences as stated next) from where Luigi will henceforth act to select levels and so forth. Rosalina has situated him in front of a new monitor display where she tells him (while also clarifying that she cannot afford to stay to fully explain everything) that she's been using a time drive to go back over the coming events again and again to try to avoid some crisis, and with this screen he now can take on that job, using it to guide Mario through his personal timeline, as well as being able to go back and try sections of it again if something goes wrong (this the in-game explanation for how levels can be replayed). If you want to have alternative versions of levels be available later, such as is due to the comets in the *Galaxy* games, these could be glitches in the timeline (redoing levels for the sake of it or to find secrets would just be the general temporal do-over). As for Cosmic Clones, in this game they are the result of alternate timelines bleeding through, so these clones won't be antagonistic per se but will be running the same

courses and will be harmful to come into contact with. If in turn you want a boss run near the end of the game, this can be justified as a malfunction causing you to skip around in the timeline.

If rather than thus using this terminal to play Mario's levels Luigi instead tries to go after Rosalina, who has hence departed to elsewhere aboard the Observatory (just before which she managed to finally sway Luigi to do as she asks by whispering something in his ear, in truth the revelation that she saved him out of the pair because he's her father, but gamers would only be able to theorise that), he'll discover that his section is only calm because it is sealed within a protective bubble. Outside of this bubble Rosalina and the Lumas are caught perpetually fending off some large ghostly monster. If Luigi explores in the other direction, he'll come across what looks to be an escape pod locked behind a barrier next to the complex form of the time drive, a team of Gearmos making sure that it continues to run properly, given how much it's being overused (which is why they'll shoo him away on most occasions). There are circumstances in which those Gearmos will be more important though. Throughout the levels now the act of influence of the time drive will cause a secondary currency to appear alongside the coins, that of 'time dust'. Collecting enough time dust (which sends it back to the Observatory) to cross given thresholds will prompt Luigi at the next opportunity to instead go over to the time drive and pour it in, this acting to give it a boost which will allow the Gearmos to be able to afford to take a break. These breaks will alternate between them expositing about the wider context of the situation and unlocking side levels for Luigi to partake in. I was originally going to have it that the player can opt to do these side interactions at any point after crossing those thresholds, but since something that's achieved in some of these interactions is vital for the end of the plot I'll instead say that the player has to go through with these each time before returning to Mario's next level, lest someone would obstinately choose to just ignore this stuff otherwise. Because of this however the time dust/its thresholds would need to be set up such that avid players don't unlock all of what follows too quickly yet at the same time those who try to avoid them will end up having them all as the lowest possible minimum by the very end anyway.

In regards to the opportunities for exposition, these come in fragments before the Gearmos announce that they really need to get back to work now. Luigi learns from them overall then that certain planets have within their cores a life energy which is what subsequently leads that planet to develop ecosystems upon it; Boos are in fact what form when deposits of this energy bubbles up closer to the surface. This energy is also the source for magic, creates a binding field through the cosmos, and is what distinguishes Lumas from collectable stars, power-ups from regular items. At some point in Luigi's near future however the life energy of his planet (this could be an opportunity to canonise the name of the Mario planet, which I don't believe has been done yet; it's also definitely not just a version of Earth, as will be clarified in *Galaxy 3*) will be snuffed out. This won't fundamentally affect any life that already exists there, but along with the loss of those aforementioned variations on magic there will also be a damaging effect on the larger cosmic field (this is why Rosalina and the Lumas are weaker as they now fend off the ghostly monster beyond, which was an adversary they came across in a previous attempt at the timeline); yes of course planets do die in time which means their life energy is lost, but that's a natural occurrence, this by contrast is a sudden shock to the system of reality. They can't receive aid from any other allies out in space because the implementation of this time loop around the planet has made it inaccessible to the outside until it's broken again.

(If it's so wished this planetary life energy could be linked to the idea of multiple lives, Mario dying and coming back for another go, which would give deeper meaning to the fact that Mario and Boo's team name if paired up in *Mario Party 5* and *6* is 'Old Acquaintances', but to actually acknowledge the mechanic of multiple lives would be to open up a whole other can of worms, beyond how this specific game is framing it with the idea of timelines)

In the other instances the Gearmos will instead notice that the Observatory's systems overall are detecting something potentially of interest down on the planet's surface, something that's otherwise not being picked up by the main monitor since it's not to do with Mario. The Gearmos thus make the adjacent pod available for Luigi to go down to the planet in. Each time he'll land in a different kind of community that's going through some hardship, either generally or because of what's going on elsewhere in the main game, with groups of Toads having already come along to offer these people help with the use of power stars from the star vault (more on that later). Because, as stated, these events aren't being picked up by the main monitor, the Gearmos provide Luigi with a camera harness so that he can document what he finds, thus these acts of charity surrounding the power stars are recorded. On top of this however, each of these side levels will provide circumstances within which Luigi learns a new extra ability which when he returns to Mario's levels he can teach to his brother remotely (this is the only way that new moves are taught, it more often being the case instead that alternate abilities come from playing as different characters, which we'll come to shortly). These levels also allow for the use of alternate aesthetics such as cities, oversized toys etc. which don't have a place elsewhere in the overall game.

The final threshold has the time drive surge back into optimum capacity, which in turn has an unexpected effect. A portal opens up within the mechanisms and out steps an old man, a version of Mario from the far future. Once this Old Man Mario has realised where/when he is, he agrees to help Luigi, thus is unlocked the final bonus ability, wherein if it's opted to be used his knowledge of what's to come can afford Mario specifically some foresight in fights, there thus being indications of what the opponent is about to do next to give the player an extra earlier moment to react in.

But to the actual main gameplay. Mario wakes up from his fall to find himself in an underground area, this the aesthetic for the first world, alongside that of fire. Travelling through these levels he'll still not come across anything like power-ups, with the question mark blocks just dropping to the ground with a heavy thud if hit (there are still health mushrooms that can be found though, since they're just 'natural' occurrences, or the whole coins/hearts-increase-health thing is gone with instead), meanwhile the stages will also be found to end in flagpoles surrounded by a dull golden mist rather than with stars to collect. In that regard though, the first level does have a star in it, only one that when touched turns to mere embers, leading to the realisation that there's more to go before the end, then in odd subsequent levels throughout the game other stars will instead act as rare secrets to find, these shining as expected since they were sheltered out of the way. The only coins will be ones that might have similarly fallen from above, these areas more focusing on the introduction of the time dust that's now appearing everywhere.

The enemies in this world will be variants on Dry Bones (throughout this document I'll likely refer to existing species within the game lore, but of course most entries would also introduce new ones as well, some of which could in turn become recurring with their own variants, this I just leave up to the other people in the creative development teams) as well as other creatures fitted for either being underground or being associated with fire, and it's through stopping to speak with certain creatures in non-confrontational situations that some bits of an explanation for what happened to Bowser's castle can be attained: a mysterious figure targeted the Magikoopas with some sort of array, the result of which drained the energy from everything in the area at once, that figure then fleeing to be far away afterwards. The big boss at the end of this world is then that monster from the opening sequence, although this time seen in its entirety and with Mario having to face it alone. On beating this creature a new exit to the surface will be exposed, through which Mario will suddenly come face to face with Princess Daisy and Prince Hazel (a new character from the kingdom of Kodainoland, a

place which in the past has only ever had relations with its direct neighbour of Sarasaland, the Kodaino people then being plant-based creatures).

Now considering where other games lie in the timeline, including all the sport/kart games etc. according to my additions to the chronology (see later in the document), this is actually one of Daisy's first appearances from the characters' perspectives. There's one other consideration: *Super Mario Run*. In turn because of what's done with Bowser in this document, *Run* would doubly want before all of these. The new issue though is that *Run* wouldn't make a good 'introduction' for her, even less so than this one would be. That's where *Odyssey 2* would come in, which as suggested on the first page would be released before all of these in this document, with one of the 'new' locations visited in that sequel being Sarasaland where Mario would come across her for the first time from his perspective, she then having a notable role in that plot. There is a little thing where Uncle Amiibo in *Odyssey 1* will say that Daisy is 'looking for clues on the power moon locations' if her Amiibo is scanned (I couldn't actually find a clip of that, I'm only going on what I can find said about it, so I'm hoping the actual line wasn't more specific than that), but maybe a throwaway line in *Odyssey 2* that suggests she was going around looking for power moons as well for some other reason during the time of the first game, with maybe even a further nod that she thinks she may have seen Mario while on those travels, would alleviate any problematic wrinkle there. Another location could to a lesser extent then in turn reference the Banjo-Kazooie games (although this would be set before any of those events), since more than just also appearing in *Super Smash Bros Ultimate* [despite having subsequent different developmental companies] they also more generally co-exist in Mario's universe per Banjo being introduced in *Diddy Kong Racing*; the same is also true of Conker the Squirrel, however because his own games went on to have more mature ratings Nintendo may be less inclined to make that cameo connection. While Banjo-Kazooie images make it into the game *Grabbed by the Ghoulies*, I wouldn't suggest that that too is in this universe, rather that's a connection per what's to be established in *Kirby Fractures*. As one other note about *Odyssey 2*, I'd put forth that Bowser not be the main villain of that one, rather someone original instead, so as to not risk it becoming something of a copy of the first game in the way that *Galaxy 2* is very similar to *Galaxy 1* (though I still love both those games regardless). At the same time however the games in this document also purposefully avoid having Bowser as the big bad a lot of the time to promote variety, so his presence might want to be used in that sequel after all while he still can be. I'm not going to put any more thought into it than that though, for if I do then I'll have no choice than to give that game its own breakdown here as well.

The second world is thus all aboard an airship as Daisy and Hazel take Mario to join their crew who were also going to investigate what had happened at Bowser's castle. Additionally it's learnt that money has mysteriously been stolen from the banks of various kingdoms. With it clear that Bowser's castle is not where this culprit is likely to be anymore, they're headed for The Lookout, a newly-constructed flying facility from which the lands below can be gazed upon while one enjoys other refreshments. These levels until then may take place atop the ship, inside it, across clouds or on some other enemy structure, for as they progress they begin to be intercepted by the likes of Shy Guys in their own crafts (they being a recurring enemy throughout the game, although again that's within a mix of others including new ones) or creatures that fly by their own means that just happen to be come across. Among the NPCs of the crew is a man named Quail, another Kodaino who's acknowledged as being Prince Hazel's partner, although he's not another prince himself, they hence being the franchise's first (to my knowledge) openly gay couple, just to the same extent to which Mario is seen in relationships with princesses.

Now that Mario has companions with him once more the mechanisms of co-op moves can be brought back from the introductory fight, along with the enforcement of the idea that different main

characters (which can again be switched between now) have their own unique abilities which will help in different situations. This element of optimising character abilities will be the main method by which variety in gameplay will be explored going forward, however there will still be some power-ups as introduced here, they brought as part of Daisy's ship's cargo and henceforth available from a personal item storage, although it should be noted that this is a finite supply; the player is meant to get through things just on what the characters can already do. From his response it's clear that this is Hazel's first time seeing such power-ups. Also among the cargo are coins, hence they are back to being a regular collectable again. I realise there isn't much scope for exploring character growth in these kinds of games, but through this story Daisy would be developing more into a passionate fighter, coming out of her shell as she learns more of what she's capable of (her personal abilities being unlocked more progressively compared to those of the others who already know what they can do), plus it's during this time, with the pair of them going through this together, that she and Mario would start to grow closer, although gameplay-wise this would at most only be able to be conveyed through subtle clues in later cutscenes.

In the final level of this world at The Lookout they come across Bashfool, a unique Shy Guy in turn piloting a mech-suit who has been stationed here by 'my master' to prevent anyone else from making use of this place; 'when offered the chance to take you and (*shudders*) your brother down we all leapt at the chance'. 'Stars shall be no more'. On beating Bashfool Daisy and Hazel will use The Lookout to search the land below for any sign of where they might best go next. Their gaze falls upon Donkey Kong's jungle on its island off the coast, where The Lookout's main lens had already been directed. Daisy instructs the airship to come back here after the team (she, Mario and Hazel) has been dropped off, since they can do well by themselves and the workers up at The Lookout need the crew's help more in repairing it.

There are few key things that will happen in this third world, besides Donkey Kong joining the team at some point along the way to provide a new set of abilities for tackling further mechanics. In general representatives of the humans from New Donk City are seen to be present in the jungle (it here confirmed that they as 'humans' aren't just taller but are distinct from Mario's species, which have previously by Nintendo been named *Homo nintendonus*, although for the sake of this document I'll hence be referring to the latter as protag-humans instead, which is obviously not the name that would be given in the final games though; yes Mario has also otherwise been called a 'human' in other instances in games but that could have been those creatures using a general rather than specific term, or them being inaccurate in their nomenclature). If you wanted an explanation for why coins are available around this area, since those are details that are a part of the story of other worlds, here it could be said that they've spilled from the collective pockets etc. of these humans. So as to not clog up the main gameplay with exposition, for some of what follows I'd have there be side sections found through pipes/doors wherein the characters thus find groups of jungle animals in the midst of protesting the human presence at long last.

In the first case opting to listen to them will lead to learning that years ago these 'humans' discovered during their travels (although this was as far as they went, not going on to the main continent so as to not draw the attention of Bowser's mother) that the bananas that grow in this jungle had special properties, that they would if regularly consumed extend the humans' lifespans and reducing the aging process (this we can now conclude to be the reason how Pauline appears not to have aged by the time we get from the original *Donkey Kong* to *Odyssey*), so they've since repeatedly been sending representatives back here to harvest more. It was also during that first discovery that a young Cranky Kong was abducted, leading to the events of the original *Donkey Kong* game.

In the second case it's learnt that this prize of the bananas being brought back to New Donk City (after which they named Cranky Kong 'Donkey' – it's already canonical that the current Donkey Kong character is not the same as the DK from the original game, that older one being Cranky in the present) led to a massive upswing in the success of the region, with the rejuvenated population spurred into a new technological revolution. The bananas went on to inspire the design of a new fuel cells that went on to be developed by them, power moons, which in turn kick-started a whole other industry. These power moons could be produced in great numbers with ease while in turn providing high levels of energy each, which meant they were set for their resource needs with even more to spare. What to do with these extra moons? Well these humans went on travelling to other parts of the world, both to where they'd been before and to other pastures new (save for Mario's continent), where they began to hide some of these moons to create intrigue then later sell more for a profit under the pretence that they were rare valuable artefacts, hence why they're found across the globe by the time of *Odyssey*. Once they came across the Cap Kingdom their job was made even easier when they were able to get the Bonneters to build a fleet of airships with which they could do the rest of the distributing themselves, those Bonneters especially having more success in kingdoms that were from the humans' point of view 'notably weirder'.

In the third case it's learnt that after a decade of this operation being in effect a younger King K. Rool wanted the humans to help him in taking over this jungle island, for which he promised them that he would make their harvest of the bananas even greater. This is why he and the other Kremplings were in truth after the Kongs' own hoard in *Donkey Kong Country* (although that was a specific act of desperation that took place closer to the present). How would Donkey Kong react to this revelation about this truth of the troubles his family has gone through? It couldn't be something impactful to the game since this is optional exposition to experience, and either way he wouldn't lump in Mario's protag-human species with the New Donk City humans being blamed.

In the fourth case it's learnt that the aid the humans provided took the form of a concealed remote lab designed for conducting genetic experiments. K. Rool heard of the trouble Jumpman (technically Mario Sr but I'll use the former for this document to be clear) caused for Cranky Kong even more prior to that, so he wanted to have a protag-human soldier of his own to cause the collective Kong family more issues of that kind. At the time K. Rool had already abducted a protag-human the Kremplings had come across, this a teenage Wario, but they hadn't been able to convince the boy to submit to their command. Thus with this lab they took some of Wario's DNA and sought to make another person of their own. The failed experiments would eventually turn to mush. Some trials did work, producing Booster and Valentina from *Super Mario RPG*, however they didn't resemble protag-humans enough for K. Rool's satisfaction. It took years, during which Wario (who had succumbed in a way to Stockholm Syndrome) was himself eventually let go when some of his Krempling captors felt it right that he too get to go after his own rival (i.e. Mario), but eventually a 'perfect' likeness of a protag-human was made...

The final stage of this world takes place around K. Rool's lab, with the Nile-Crocodile-equivalent himself having been restrained there by a mysterious figure, this clearly the culprit and big bad that the main characters have been after thus far. This person is walked in on in the middle of proclaiming that K. Rool never should have made him, then part way through the ensuing fight the disguise is lost to reveal this villain to be none other than Waluigi, albeit here adorned in an alternate outfit that's somewhat more intimidating than his typical overalls, while from the beginning of the encounter wielding his energy-draining array as well as another tool which additionally affords him a secondary style of attack. Canonically this is the first time any of the other characters have met him. To begin with, while still being in keeping with the tone of the respective scenes, he'll have some of his typical

boastful attitude, however as the story goes on this behavioural presentation fades to show a truer cold loathing beneath. At the end of the fight Waluigi slips away, this act of revenge against K. Rool having only been a detour of opportunity during his grander plan, following which K. Rool reveals that Waluigi had made some other genetic creations of his own, ones which Mario etc. might want to chase after now if they're wanting to play the heroes.

With Donkey Kong offering the use of a wooden boat belonging to his family, this pursuit on the trail of whatever Waluigi has created leads them to some other islands further along the coast of the continent, among these Yoshi's Island, these 'paradise' locations making up world four (I wanted to include Isle Delfino in this as well but there's already so many other inter-game references in this and I feel like just geographically that island would be further out to sea). Coins appear as expected, but if the player races ahead quick enough they'll catch drones laying them out along the path (this explained later). Upon one of the middle islands they find Waluigi again, he here in the process of using his array to turn some stars into embers. It's at this stage that his overall plan is revealed, with him proclaiming that it is his mission to destroy each and every star, for it is over them that the likes of Bowser and Mario are constantly fighting it seems. If there are no stars, nor magic or power-ups, then there shall be no cause for temptation into conflict and the lands shall at least be at peace. It had started with him hating the power moons that had been fuelling the genetics lab, but it didn't take him long to realise that stars were much the same, if not worse. What happened at Bowser's castle was a mistake, he'd only meant to test this on snuffing the Magikoopas' power, but it hadn't differentiated from the energy of general life. While he's since managed to focus the process, it'd still be harmful if the characters get in the way (as they may well have discovered during the previous boss fight) which isn't what he wants if he can help it. There are also other minions (e.g. Shy Guys) similarly testing out other prototypes elsewhere across the continent as they speak. Before a fight can take place with him here however one of his creations from K. Rool's lab bursts onto the scene, at which point Waluigi just lets this thing take care of the main characters while he makes his exit. The later climax of this world comes when they face the most refined of Waluigi's creations: Wayoshi (who as an evil variant Yoshi would just want to be made sure to be distinct from Yoob from *Partners in Time* as well). After this the trail of coins appears to continue over the water back onto the mainland.

Thus Mario, Daisy, Hazel and Donkey Kong end up on a part of the continent's great desert which is beyond the borders of Sarasaland, on the opposite side to where Kodainoland would connect in turn. This time it's a lot easier to end up spotting the drones laying the coins ahead along the stages. After a few levels they reach a royal convoy, a procession travelling around all the way from the Mushroom Kingdom led apparently by King Toadstool, a doddering man who Toads remark as having not been seen in person for some time. Peach is there also, her demeanour stern. It seems that tensions were high anyway after someone stole money from the court when it became known that someone was acting to eliminate stars. Since the Mushroom Kingdom at least draws a lot of its power from such stars, them having a vault of them (which Mario has over the years ended up adding to) to ensure they always have more to spare, to have it be possible that all of those are about to disappear suddenly puts the kingdom in a vulnerable position, hence they are now going around reaffirming their political strength while they still can, a Grand Star having been taken from the vault to be paraded around with the rest of the convoy as they go. The characters also run into E. Gadd at another point, who reveals that he was having his drones leave them the trails of coins so that they could find their way to the convoy while it was on the move, for this unfolding situation has had Peach feel genuinely concerned for the security of her ruling; he's never seen her be so deeply affected by something, to which he thinks they should be helping to make sure she remains safe. When he's asked if he knows anything specifically about what Waluigi's doing he deflects the question. Through a hidden pipe/door can be found a compartment of the convoy within which are stored the petrified forms of Bowser and his

minions (his castle clearly having been raided after it was last seen by Mario) as well as a giant crate from within which can be heard sounds very much like those of the first creature fought in the game. This overall parade of the Mushroom Kingdom's might has garnered the unsavoury attention of certain enemies in the area who thus seek to ransack the procession, meaning that instead of a big boss at the end of this world it's more instead that the characters are tasked with defending the Grand Star for a given duration.

The sixth world is found when thanks to intel from those within the convoy the characters learn that an individual who must be Waluigi has some form of headquarters in a mountainous region further to the south. This is found to be a vast complex much like a factory (one which also incorporates ice elements) that's being run by Wario on Waluigi's behalf. The money that was stolen from the various kingdoms went towards paying Wario to do this job, with some of those coins now having been spilled around the place. This is where the energy-draining technology is being developed, as part of which the Bonnetter people are seen to be being held for study (not in cages since Waluigi wouldn't like that from his own experiences, yet they're unable to leave the complex in turn); Wario knew about them through interactions with the humans during his time in K. Rool's holding, but all he can say at the moment as to why they're needed here is that there's apparently some connection between ghosts and the energy in power stars, and these guys seem pretty ghostly to him. When they're set free in one of the levels they're all seen to flee as far as they can beyond the horizon.

It's also revealed that the key components to the machinery here came from E. Gadd, who has in fact also arrived here separately to the main team but obviously also from the convoy; he's never had a moral preference over who his inventions go to, just look at *Sunshine*. His concern before was just about them helping Peach, not about them doing anything regarding Waluigi's plot one way or the other. At one point Waluigi is seen across video screens as he informs Wario that he's found 'the peak spectre hotspot' that they've been searching for. In another instance the collapsing of a given area result in E. Gadd's death (however that would be got away with in a Nintendo game), and if Luigi tries to redo that bit of the timeline to specifically save him then the knock-on circumstances will mean the level can't be beaten at all; this isn't something I'm about to make a trend of through this document, but if the threat is going to have weight then the consequences need to be seen. At least in this case it was a secondary character who's now canonically gone (if another game did want to include him subsequently then that will have to be able to be set prior to this, with the exception of the Party games as will be discussed later). At the climax of this world Wario turns the machinery of the complex against the characters, with them needing to destroy each mechanism before attacking the man himself, this then repeating for the rule of three.

Leaving behind the factory complex, the four characters continue on to the 'peak spectre hotspot' Waluigi mentioned in his video transmission. This seventh world is a combination of the aesthetics/mechanics of haunted houses and of ruins, with this area being that of the greatest concentration of Boos on the continent. In this place if coin trails are strictly followed then that may well lead on into a trap or at least a trick of some kind. Waluigi confirms in a way that isn't just a repeat of what the Gearmos told Luigi before that there's an underlying energy within the planet that is responsible for all that he wishes to stop, with Boos being conscious manifestations that form where a pocket of said energy has risen nearer to the surface, and so by studying these beings that take life from it he should at last be able to understand how to distinguish between that of life and that which imbues stars etc. with toxic power, allowing him to only snuff out the latter. Indeed he succeeds in gaining the information he needs, meaning he can finalise his greatest machine which will be able to strike at the core of the planet itself to completely put an end to the energy at the source, thus he leaves the characters with a distraction while he absconds: using his same equipment he widens the

ectoplasmic tear which sends a whole new wave of the energy rushing up to the surface. Hazel receives the full brunt of the eruption, causing him to transform into a large spectral monster. The goal of the subsequent boss fight is not to seriously defeat this form therefore but to subdue him if possible. As it happens the bout concludes with him soaring up into the atmosphere, merging with the entity attacking the Observatory, the previous iterations of him in this form all now combined.

The final world is the Mushroom Kingdom, for Waluigi wishes that his worldwide strike be executed at the star vault in turn. A hidden pipe/door leads into a side room that from environmental clues can be taken to be where King Toadstool spends most of his days, by the looks of it without much opportunity to leave (perhaps it's easier for Peach to govern if her father isn't always directly on the scene, only letting him out for occasions such as the convoy earlier). Nintendo isn't likely to acknowledge the idea that Peach controls the Toad people by means of a mind control fungus (see the corresponding Game Theory), however notes in the King's chamber would not only at least allude to something like that but also that that fungus was in fact originally spread by him, only for his daughter to secretly usurp him when she was older, taking control of it for herself.

On coming to select the final level, there'll first be a scene where a Gearmo confirms that this is the moment Rosalina had already tried to redo the most, the moment where the planet's core will be silenced. Prompted by this to not just stay on the sidelines any longer, Luigi takes his pod and shoots down towards the planet himself. In the level itself the remaining trio go through a gauntlet of mechanics from throughout the game to make their way across what has become of the Mushroom Kingdom to reach Peach's castle, at which point they will come face to face with Waluigi beside his great machine, where Peach is meanwhile trapped in a chamber overlooking the scene. It's here however that the consequences of Rosalina redoing this moment so many times become apparent: just as how time glitches led to Mario being up against Cosmic Clones before, now Waluigi becomes surrounded by his own Cosmic Clones, one for every way a previous version of him as gone about the fight. He doesn't really understand what's happening, but that doesn't matter if they're to his advantage.

On surviving the sequence of attack patterns, each team member will be able to use their respective abilities to cordon off a portion of the Cosmic Clones in three of the different corners of the stage, the fourth managed to also be made use of by releasing the first boss creature which had been brought back with the rest of the convoy, until at last the real Waluigi is left exposed in the middle. By this point however there won't be any team member left to confront him, for if any of them now leave their posts those clones will come right back into the fray again. That's when Luigi's pod lands from its descent through orbit, the player now able to switch over to control of him. In terms of gameplay this would be where the player would have their climactic last bout, however in-story this isn't a finishing blow, rather once Waluigi is knocked down before he can get up again Luigi begins to talk him into seeing sense, that it'd be wrong to extinguish all the stars; in the process he produces the camera harness showing all the communities who were helped with the use of stars, who would be left in a worse state without them, even if those same stars do otherwise lead to other problems in the world. Reluctantly swayed, Waluigi backs down. If you were to instead focus on Peach up in her chamber rather than the concluding exchange, you would see that she is visibly impressed by Luigi's defusing of the situation.

With the machine having not been activated, this timeline is now one in which the life energy in the planet's core wasn't lost, meaning Rosalina and the Lumas are back to full strength, thus they can turn Hazel back into his true non-monstrous self. As the time loops close upon themselves this causes a new tide of time dust to rain down upon the kingdoms. Down at the celebrations that are thus occurring around Peach's castle (in the background of which the machine can already be seen to have

begun to be dismantled) Rosalina later appears with Hazel by her side so that he can be reunited with his partner Quail, meanwhile Old Man Mario also makes his way to the surface in a pod like Luigi's. Cheer and relief are spread around, then soon Rosalina makes her departure, the Observatory seen disappearing from the skies as well. Only...Old Man Mario is still here. With all the other stuff going on, she hadn't actually been aware of his arrival and subsequent presence. With the Observatory gone, how is he meant to get back to his own time?

On returning to the hub, to replay any levels or to finish what was left undone, the player will now find that it is Rosalina they are in control of here. Additionally, with the Observatory no longer under attack from Hazel's altered form, that section of the hub which was previously blocked by the boundary of Luigi's safety bubble is now able to be accessed, thus unlocking a bonus extended level where one plays as Rosalina, in this case where some baby Lumas have thought it a good idea to use the time drive to go about gathering the baby versions of other characters so that they can all hang out together, Rosalina thus having to hop between times and locations to catch up to them. Eventually all of the baby characters who show up out of time in other games are met, and by the end they've all ended up together at a place also occupied by adult Mario, Daisy, Luigi and Peach. Just as Rosalina is about to return them to their respective times again, the adult group remark that it's kind of fun to have all the young ones around, so Rosalina concedes to conjure and leave them a fob-watch-like object which they can use to temporarily transport all those babies together to the 'present' when they so wish again (which is how those babies did turn up in those previous other games).

Night of the Shy

The menu screen means the first thing you're introduced to here is the exterior sight of a giant hive-like structure supporting itself solely upon three legs of some harder (yet still natural) material. Commencing play then presents a cutscene briefly covering the historical circumstances of the Shy Guys (in this game referred to as their 'actual' name of The Zyjh, although I'll continue to use 'Shy Guys' in this description for clarity), that they evolved with a symbiotic relationship to a much larger greenish creature called The Lyjih, with them taking care of it (bringing it the nutrients that have been siphoned up through the hive's legs/roots, making sure it's clean and healthy etc.) while it in turn provides them with the shelter of its hive (whose structure it helps to maintain) and other useful substances that are exuded from its skin. Amongst these useful substances are those which go into making the paint with which the Shy Guys have discovered they can create portals (a painting of a known area, i.e. a place in the hive, is bonded to a blank canvas, then once both have been fixed to separate locations, the blank one having to be where the painted one is depicting, if someone goes through the painted one they'll come out of the blank, the blank then taking on the appearance of the now locked location on the other end [it makes sense in execution even if I've worded it in an overly-clunky manner here]; this is also the principle that goes into your inventory, for within your robe is a painted patch which links to a storage box elsewhere). It's important through this bit that the Shy Guys are only seen from behind. Each Lyjih will have a reasonable life span, grow and die with a single larval offspring left behind, with generations of Shy Guys alongside them.

At the end of this the player is thus left with a first person view of such a Shy Guy currently standing in the bottommost chamber of the hive, with paintings of areas within the hive propped up against the walls and a hole in the middle of the floor through which the ground can be seen far below, where some Goombas and Toads are waiting in the light of the setting sun. While they are small from your POV, it can just about be made out that the Toads don't have their infamous mushroom heads, rather being 'bald'/'hatless', meaning this is set before the reign of King Toadstool, which is also indicated by the fact that the Goombas and Toads are coexisting. Per a pre-arranged agreement you drop the paintings down to them. There's no way you could have a conversation with them, but perhaps there was a note on the paintings expositing that when they affix these paintings to other places around the kingdom and step through they'll complete the portals to other canvases still in the hive, thus allowing the Shy Guys to step out into the wider world for brief stints while they're not on shift looking after The Lyjih. There's also another note reminding your character that due to the scheduling of this drop-off all the other Shy Guys will now actually be busy at the Solstice Feast, which you should try to get too as soon as this job is done.

When you do begin your way back up into the hive, the passages illuminated by patches of glowing moss, you'll first come across a notice on the wall informing people of a noted instability in an upcoming area (whenever the Shy Guys put up a notice such as this it comes numbered; by now they're into the later 2300s), next to which is a box meant to hold safety masks, although right now it is empty. Indeed shortly afterwards you find that not only was the tunnel unstable but has by now completely collapsed, blocking your way. Another opening has been formed however, meaning your only way forwards is instead this makeshift passage off to the side. The cause of the damage (here and elsewhere in the hive) is noted by your character to be the bat-like pests Bokkies (cousins of the Bakkies in *Donkey Kong Jungle Beat*), this realisation coming when you pass a flock which you have to run from; if you listen you can hear the Bokkies from a given distance away, giving you the opportunity to try to find an alternate path instead if you would prefer, although like now that might not always be an option. If any Bokkies do manage to attack you they'll wear away bits of your health bar, not much individually but together it can add up.

Now moving between the walls of the hive, you go through a tutorial of your basic moves before finally coming out in an unexpected chamber, that where The Lyjih hoards its treasure that's been passed down through the generations since before this particular hive was established. There's an opening that by the sounds of it leads to the Solstice Feast. If you go down here you will simply receive an alternate ending wherein life goes on as usual. If instead however you are tempted to go over to a particularly shiny gemstone that the aesthetics of the scene should draw you to, taking it will cause some of the rest of the pile to begin to slide, this noise alerting The Lyjih to burst in through that other opening from the feast where it'll spot you. The angle at which it enters will also happen to show a star-shaped mark on its chest/underside. Fleeing its fury, you'll notice the shift in the treasure has exposed another exit. As you go down here, you'll be able to hear The Lyjih bellowing through the wall, as well as the scurrying of your fellow Shy Guys. On hearing the beast bellow that you should remember that it's connected to the hive as a whole the walls of the passage start to issue from them a mist that limits the distance of your vision (as well as adding to the eerie atmosphere); this mist will now persist throughout the game to varying densities. At a sudden gap you drop the gemstone, but there isn't time to stop because of that. A bit further down you stumble out into a new chamber, falling to the floor so that the first thing you can see is just the feet of many other Shy Guys. These others swoop down upon you, forcing a mask onto your face before all of you are standing up straight (you catch glimpses of others straightening their masks, but you still never see what they look like beneath). This cutscene will also confirm that the masks can be expressive; when Shy Guys have presented as happy/sad in other games that hasn't been evidence that that's their real face after all. No sooner than this is done then The Lyjih enters the chamber, not impressed that it now can't tell you all apart. It demands that you be handed over, that of course it has no interest in harming any of the others. When the crowd remains resolute in its anonymous solidarity, The Lyjih seemingly goes back on its word and scoops up a random Shy Guy into its mouth. The rest scatter in panic. You follow initially, yet in the chaos for a final time you end up being knocked into an opening in a cracked wall.

Here the gameplay starts proper. Waking up from a daze, you've landed in a chamber housing one of the main Support structures of the hive. It too has started to show cracks, and another sign reads that this minor damage is set to be seen to by The Lyjih in the next few days, while in the meantime trolleys have been brought in here containing ooze which can be applied as a temporary sealant. It seems however that since that sign was made more Bokkies have made it in here too, for they will sometimes fly about above and more generally the damage to the Support is greater than described in the notice. Throughout the game (subject to circumstances that'll be discussed later) you'll need to keep returning here to reapply the ooze to fill the cracks, cracks that will get progressively worse if the Bokkies hang around and every time The Lyjih heavily knocks into another part of the hive, otherwise the Support will eventually shatter, causing the rest of the hive to begin to crumble. It's not an immediate death/loss, but there's no going back after that point. The hive will fall apart, and despite the fact that more skilful players may be able to make the leaps to other still-stable parts all will soon have fallen to the ground far below, after which you will revert to your last save as you would after any death (save points take the form of golden Shy Guy masks hanging on occasional walls; when you save they'll bear happy expressions, then the longer you go without saving again they'll transition to look more and more distressed, meaning if you see one that's more negative than positive then it may be time to save again). When you die you'll have the choice of which save state to revert to in fact, just in case your last one was done when you didn't have enough time to get back to the Support to avert the fail condition, this allowing you to go back earlier to where you were closer at the cost of some progress.

Your main objective here is to find the gemstone again and return it to The Lyjih's hoard. As you explore the hive, you'll be able to keep track of where you've been by shutting your eyes and

‘visualising the map in your mind’, it building out as you go through each section rather than being all available from the beginning; this screen will additionally be where you can see the timer for how much longer the Support will last without further application of ooze (there’ll also be other alerts on your regular vision at given time thresholds too). The paths you take will vary from tight service shafts to the grand channels built for The Lyjih’s day-to-day standard use. Across the map are certain major chambers that will act like markers of your progression through the game as a whole. To begin with your excursions out of the Support’s chamber won’t take you too far since you’ll likely want to keep returning to maintain the Support. If you additionally look around in these passageways you’ll come across communal ‘lunch boxes’ containing varying quantities of pellets which as your food is the only way to refill your health OR stamina bar. If you come across other Shy Guys on your travels however you can choose to spend some of those pellets instead to have them station themselves at the Support to continue adding the ooze in your absence (they need paying to do this despite it being an important job because they’re otherwise still too afraid to be out during The Lyjih’s wrath), meaning the more you send there the longer you can stay out exploring the passages for the gemstone before you have to return there yourself (you do indeed still need to periodically go back there yourself regardless of how many you have, since they won’t be doing a perfect job of it in their nervous states). If it hasn’t been acknowledged by your character already, this would be where it would be clarified that most of the other Shy Guys have likely rushed up to the top of the hive by now to where they all sleep so as to avoid the wrath of The Lyjih. In a similar vein, if you are skilful enough to sneak up behind The Lyjih unnoticed you can pay an even greater amount to the Shy Guys still harvesting its oils and keeping it clean as it prowls around searching for you so that they’ll risk abandoning their posts, meaning that The Lyjih’s oily skin will dry up slightly with each one that’s paid off, resulting in the creature being slightly slower in its pursuits of you.

After using your basic abilities to explore these nearest passages, within which you may also come across (to provide variety from the Bokkies) various machines/apparatus left on standby which now provide environmental hazards, you’ll eventually find your first major chamber. This will contain a platforming puzzle based around the apparatus with which the Shy Guys collect the substances drawn up through the hive’s legs/roots, separating them into nutrients, metals etc. before they’re trolleyed off to their respective destinations. While in here you’ll gain a fan-pack which can clear the mist from a given area, although it only has a finite non-replenishing power cell so it’s advised that you choose when best to use it; alternatively back at the Support you can choose to siphon some of the power from this fan-pack into an immobile rudimentary white noise machine which will cause the gradually-damaging flock of Bokkies to thin, however obviously this will reduce the amount you can use your fan-pack in total even further when you go out exploring. Once you have completed this chamber a shortcut passageway will open up meaning you can get here quicker from the Support, thus by extension now allowing you to travel to further areas in the same amounts of time.

The next major section you’ll come to after travelling along other diversified routes will provide you with air horns to fight off the Bokkies with. There are three types of Bokky, each of which will be driven away by a different pitch (high, mid and low) tied to a different key/button representing each horn, meaning if they do attack you’ll still have to be conscious of what to quickly press in the face of each one. This chamber will contain growing waves of Bokkies so that you can practice. These horns can alternatively be repurposed and placed as lures to draw The Lyjih away to a given area of the hive (until The Lyjih finds and breaks it), however once this is done it cannot be taken back up again for use against the Bokkies.

The third major chamber (again accessible because of new shortcut routes discovered and because you might be employing more Shy Guys by this point to help out at the Support) is the place in the

hive where all the paintings are made and stored until dispatch. After a demonstration of how to use the paintings, you are provided with a set number of blank canvases that have already been bonded to other painted ones. These painted ones are fixed to their current surfaces so cannot be moved, and they depict specific other places within the hive. Place the respective blank canvas around that location in the hive (they'll have written descriptions on their backs as well to remind you which one goes where), return to the major chamber and then step through the painted canvas and you'll thus create a portal which once more eases your travel from place to place. You once again have an option with what you do with this however. If you're happy to not create these shortcuts for yourself, thus meaning you take longer to go from place to place (which won't make things inherently impossible but timing will be tighter) you can use the resources in the chamber to paint over some of the existing fixed canvases so that they depict that very same chamber you're currently in. By then placing the counterpart blank canvases at strategic spots around that same room again you can create a sequence of portals which, like in the game *Portal*, you can use in a physics-based puzzle to launch yourself up into a secret section of the room. Here are the counterpart canvases to the ones you gave the Goombas and Toads at the beginning, meaning you can use these (once they've activated later on in the game) to step out into the wider world beyond the hive, this unlocking for you bonus areas which don't add to the main game but are contained diverse reprieves from the main action each with an achievement at least at the end.

The fourth major chamber provides you with a Snifit mask. With this you can fire projectiles to destroy certain kinds of obstacles as well as knock back The Lyjih if it gets close to you and you're wearing it (it should be noted however that because of the smell of the smoke from the mask's nozzle you will be unable to hide from The Lyjih while wearing it in turn; it's solely good for active defence rather than stealth as compared to your regular mask). In turn the Snifit mask takes a number of seconds to be switched with your regular mask and will slow you down when you're wearing it due to its greater weight. It can also be used to stun Bokkies, however it won't fully drive them away like the air horns will. You're taught about the Snifit mask by being thrown in at the deep end, for already in this chamber with such masks of their own are some of the minority faction of Shy Guys who would actually rather you be handed over to The Lyjih rather than standing to protect you; they will go on to be another type of secondary threat in the game, with you having to overpower them, sometimes before they've even spotted you first. These enemies will also turn the passage-based machines/apparatus against you, making those now active threats rather than passive environmental ones. After this the remaining routes and chambers will just build upon these accumulated mechanisms with increasing difficulty.

Throughout all of this however is also The Lyjih itself. All the other events will be relatively pre-positioned, just waiting for you to come across them, however this main antagonist is free roaming, using an AI like the Xenomorph in *Alien: Isolation* (albeit this creature is larger and slightly more lumbering, although it does have appendages in turn which can do a better job of reaching out at you) to try to find you throughout the hive in its continuing anger at a Shy Guy having dared to disrupt the natural order so by stealing from it. As mentioned above, you will be able to hide from The Lyjih through the use of certain spots or when inconspicuously in the company of other Shy Guys so long as you aren't wearing the Snifit mask in either case, but for the most part you're going to want to stay as far away from it as possible. If it does catch you there will be an opportunity to escape by means of mashing random buttons that show on the screen in a panic, although you will likely have sustained some injury regardless. There is a scene you walk in on at some point where The Lyjih passes an existing painting only for the accidental contact between the oils of its skin and the paint causes the latter to react violently. A curious other Shy Guy touches the fizzing painting only to have its form dispersed within the swirling colours, the experience clearly fatal.

Eventually you find the gemstone, meaning next is just bringing it to the treasure hoard. You are once again caught in there by The Lyjih (this event of its now being scripted) and the knowledge of you putting the gemstone back isn't enough to calm it; you're still an unforgiveable aberration in the natural order. It thus chases you back through the hive, the geography such that you go through the above Shy Guy sleeping areas where they've all been hiding, thus meaning they're now joining you in the sprint en masse, before ending up in the painting chamber for the final confrontation. Even though canonically it was never your Shy Guy's intention to kill The Lyjih, just to undo your mistake, seeing as the creature is so utterly fundamental to life here, this ends all the same with you causing the vats of paint to spill out over the floor, under The Lyjih wherein the oils from its own skin cause the fluid to react violently as it had in the earlier scene. Howling, The Lyjih's body is dispersed into the pool, it managing to vow "You, thief, aren't safe! Nature demands me! I am order for you cretins! I will be reborn! I am eternal!" before all that's left is a star-shaped outline in the swirling colours to match that which had been on its chest/underside. You and the other Shy Guys can only gaze down in stunned silence at what you've done. This is why Shy Guys in other games act as antagonists towards the Mario brothers, for they fear that Luigi might be this eventual foretold reincarnation of The Lyjih, what with him having a similar name, colour scheme and given the influence the brothers have shown themselves to possess over the affairs of other lands.

Closing off the game is a cutscene in the same style at the opening one, only this shows what happened to the Shy Guys afterwards. With The Lyjih gone, they couldn't stop the hive from decaying over time. Soon they vacated it to find pastures new, still all wearing the masks in solidarity (although some of their descendants would eventually forget the reason for it in their history), bequeathing items such as the painting supplies which they couldn't carry to the Goombas and Toads (it's they who coin the name 'Shy Guys' at this point, commenting on them suddenly all wearing masks and joking that it must be because they are abashed); when later attempts were made to create more of the paints, a new variant was discovered that didn't have to produce a portal but rather could trap something inside the image. Amidst the move however the Toads also found something else that the Shy Guys hadn't meant to leave behind, a statue of a star upon a pedestal representing the marking on the beast's chest with an inscription (not seen or read onscreen here) meant to remind them, in case after enough time passes the events here instead become stories rather than history, that The Lyjih was indeed real and could still, per his threat, return. The end of the time-skipping cutscene shows this statue to end up being the one found in the grounds of Peach's castle in *Mario 64*, the destination of some of those painting supplies as well.

Mario & Co - A Menace in Kodainoland

This sequel to *Embers of Truth* takes place in Prince Hazel's kingdom of Kodainoland, since why introduce a new character like him if not to explore anything further about him. Having witnessed what kind of wonderment can exist beyond his home's borders, Prince Hazel has brought back the idea of power-ups, with his scientists now experimenting with them as well, using the now plentiful time dust as a major component, thus resulting in a greater quantity of the power-ups, a whole load of new ones and variants on those that already exist, either in terms of diverse scales of intensity or even hybrids of pairs of them. These are quickly becoming popular throughout the kingdom, so anyone you come across, including enemies, could have them to make use of.

You as Mario have been invited on a tour of the kingdom, and you've brought with you (to keep the 'co' part with you having choice of playable characters) Yoshi; later you'll also meet a Koopa, Priya, who had found her way into this land rather than ever being a part of Bowser's operations, as well as later on Mother Jutsuchi, one of this kingdom's versions of a sorceress (there would have to be parameters to the kind of magic she can do however to not just give you an OP option). While they aren't in your roster, since I want that to be switched up each game, Hazel and Quail will show up in numerous levels as NPCs. Similarly Old Man Mario, still being around, also shows up from time to time, not as a playable character but rather in levels where he's exploring on his own, alluding to the fact that it's good to get back to such things after he had in the latter part of his life transitioned to medicine instead 'after all the pipes were fixed' (this thus placing the Dr Mario games further ahead in the timeline, which makes sense since there's a crossover in *WarioWare, Inc.: Mega Microgames* which is also set according to this chronology after *Super Mario Land 2* in the future), him now looking into artefacts that he'd heard were supposedly in this region but in his own time had never been found. On these occasions he would also be a means for you to learn a new mechanic, him teaching you a move instead of it being a matter of combat foresight etc. this time. In one area you may find an odd looking statue that while clearly of a person is not of any species you've ever come across in a game so far; ask an NPC about it and they'll say that it's always been there, just hidden out in this corner of the kingdom.

Meanwhile the missions consisting of Toads going around 'making sure the smaller settlements across the lands are okay' are continuing, in turn some making their way into Kodainoland itself. Now, since again Nintendo won't fully lean into any notion of Peach taking over the Mushroom Kingdom by controlling the Toads with a fungus, under the current circumstances her indeed using the uncertainty across the kingdoms as a cover to secretly spread her influence more, the following won't be explicitly connected to them or her, however when the experimental power-ups come into contact with a 'mysterious fungal strain' the reaction results in the creation of this game's villain: Gorshin, with those infected being her 'kin'. Your job has now become to traverse the kingdom, exploring its different biomes such as inside interconnected slightly-futuristic residential complexes, a swamp and tornado valley (due to it being a more localised geography the diversity can't be justifiably as extreme as in the last game, but differentiation in the different sections would be wanted all the same), to find the places Gorshin has taken over the most with her spreading growths (to be clear the bosses would still hold up to Mario's expected diversity, it's just that most if not all of them would be infected; only at the major points in the game would you face a pure manifestation of Gorshin herself).

This note could theoretically go anywhere, but since this is the first point of non-specified bosses: in maybe just a couple of cases across the games detailed in this document I think it would be interesting to go back to having some actually-creepy/grotesque-looking bosses like Demon Head was in *Virtual Boy Wario Land* for instance.

In this case collecting the time dust doesn't give you an active award, but the more you leave behind uncollected the more your enemies will be able to make power-ups therefore, thus meaning your enemies in the next section will have a higher chance of spawning with one. You can use the power-ups yourself, but doing so will also give you a negative side effect, with you for that period also becoming slightly infected, which could mean a lowered health bar, or slower movement, or a progressively lower output from the power-up etc. You have the choice to avoid power-ups therefore to save yourself these drawbacks and still find ways of beating the levels instead based more on each character's inherent abilities like in the first game. Once again the end of each level comes with reaching a flag rather than a star.

As for the hub world, again for consistency only in this case regarding in-world justification for the level-select map, we'll this time be following Daisy. With the game opening with her and Peach finishing a public tour as a show of repaired relations between the kingdoms after the first game, Daisy returns to her castle (maybe there being some background details of maps showing how kingdom territories are being renegotiated in regards to the now-vacant Bowser domains) to find an editing studio having been set up in one of the wings. To aid Kodainoland's transition into being more of an open presence to the other kingdoms, Daisy has arranged for a documentary to be made of the land, with Lakitus now flying in periodically to supply their latest recordings. The level select it thus Daisy going through these videos, watching the crisis unfold. If you want to have alternative versions of the levels for redos, another Lakitu could come in having filmed the same incident but from a different perspective, hence why it comes across differently on 'viewing'. If you want a final boss run at the end of the game, this can be 'an abridged edit' of the documentary.

On occasion, after enough time for him to have got from Kodainoland to Sarasaland once you've interacted with him in a given level for the first time, Old Man Mario will show up at Daisy's castle with some artefact that he found on that given study, using this as an excuse to see her again, even if she's not the version of her he last knew. These artefacts start to help tell a secondary story of how the protag-humans used to interact with the kingdoms on the main landmasses, hence how Daisy's ancestors ended up being the ruling family of Sarasaland and Jumpman found work in New Donk City, however around the time of Mario and Luigi's teenage years a severe blight of rampant Chomps across this particular continent prompted them to all retreat back to their original Archipelago Kingdom where they would await news that the mainlanders had successfully managed to implement the technique of chaining the Chomps en masse to get them under control, something that had previously been achieved on Yoshi's Island (although there had been far fewer Chomps in that instance). Daisy's family remained due to their position, as did King Toadstool and Princess Peach in the Mushroom Kingdom plus King Fret and Prince Pine in Jewellery Kingdom; the only other known person to stay was E. Gadd, who never went back to their homeland due to feeling shunned as a half-human-half-Toad, and per *Embers of Truth* we can infer that Wario was captured by King K. Rool by this point. After that only Mario and Luigi have been known to actively return, volunteering despite the possible risk of feral Chomps in order to make sure the Great Pipe Network wasn't beginning to degrade over time. As it happened the brothers later simply chose to stay in the Mushroom Kingdom rather than returning home again, which is why there were never aware that soon after they left it the rest of their people fell victim to some other mysterious force. Once all the artefacts are collected, which would be set up in a way such that it can only be done after the main plot has been completed, this unlocks a secret boss summoned from them, which when defeated in the hub in turn reveals a final item which ultimately prompts Daisy to want to go find out what really happened to these people. She won't leave until all the inter-kingdom tensions have properly settled however.

Daisy's New Voyage

At some unspecified point after *A Menace in Kodainoland* (to help the sub-franchises remain autonomous) we have Daisy spinning off into her own 3D game wherein she travels far north across the oceans (just sailing across their surfaces) to explore islands and then the Archipelago Kingdom inhabited by the protag-humans, taking with her some new characters from her court, maybe including her aunt (I'm not saying father/uncle since we just had an older male character in Old Man Mario, even if this person didn't end up being 'elderly' in the same way, and even though the title didn't have to be literal there was also already 'Mother' Jutsuchi); she would be the one to clarify why no-one has tried to go to the Archipelago Kingdom before now, saying that one day towards the end of the Chomp blight, when there were maybe only eighty-something left still destructively unchained, a messenger arrived from overseas delivering the news that the protag-humans there had decided instead that they would remain just in their homeland rather than return and that they would rather not have visitors.

Additionally there could be a Lakitu who could provide some interesting gameplay mechanics, then since the ship would be going that way anyway they would pick up Birdo from where she's been staying on Yoshi's Island (this also allowing for an exploration and in-universe explanation of how both Yoshis and Birdos are functionally immortal, able to be reborn from a new egg with the same consciousness, that explanation potentially tying into the Yoshi Island Spirits from *Yoshi Topsy-Turvy*). In acknowledging Daisy taking leadership of this mission, Birdo notes that indeed people can't always just rely on Mario to be there for them, it's good to have other people also taking up the role of adventurer; for instance the Egging people last year were under attack from Bowser and it was Yoshi who ended up saving the day instead (again *Yoshi Topsy-Turvy*). It actually fits if Birdo does become friends with Daisy here, since in some of the sports games etc. the pair are shown to be on good terms, those titles all coming later in the timeline than this.

These crewmates wouldn't be present in every level, rather are NPCs in the hub-boat and show up individually in specific places like how Yoshi appears at odd times in *Galaxy 2*. The rest of the creatures/enemies that they come across during the game would be emphasised as being completely different to anything else seen before (with the obvious exception of the protag-humans), which makes sense since the characters are travelling to brand new lands. As for Daisy herself, this game will cement her personality, which has been set up as tomboy-ish anyway in the sports games and so forth, as being one where in the wake of *Embers of Truth* she's more open to being courageous on adventures, not that she's a thrill seeker or actively going after danger, but is ready to stand up for a just cause while still having fun along the way. Her portrayal shouldn't get so lost in showing her as having grown into her capacity for being a fighter however that it also forgets that she's already otherwise differentiating herself from Peach by being someone who's less formal by contrast when it comes to being a princess (although she agrees to keep the flowery aesthetic around her), being slightly more laid back and comparatively free-spirited when in calmer situations.

Now the game could work well enough with just the other details to be described, with the characters just acting with the basic kinds of mechanics themselves, but I feel compelled that there should be at least some new ability specifically given to Daisy throughout this title (on top of any occasional power-ups come across), this regardless based around something obtained from her castle/aunt before their departure. I can't decide on what this ability would be though. Since this is more a matter of game design than plot, this isn't what I'm as able to devise so I'm open to these not being the best options, but what choices I can come up with are: turning objects into their opposites and back again, so a hot thing switches with becoming cold, a heavy thing becomes light etc. (although this could quickly run into complications of what the 'opposites' of other things would be); a dual-wielding of a rapier and a

bag of holding type thing from which a selection of infinite useful items can be extracted at a space-out rate (perhaps to random results); having throwable items that act as lures for enemies so that she can under certain parameters influence their movements (this could in turn just be one of the items in the prior bag); or that she actually uses the last artefact from *A Menace in Kodainoland* to summon the powers of that secret boss for her own purposes, this coming with a goth-like alternate attire during its use.

The fate which befell the Archipelago Kingdom was something to do with a kamaitachi-inspired baddie called Mydrom who's forcing the protagon-humans to continually scour the islands in search of a hidden temple that's supposed to house the Cornucopia, the magical source of replenishing resources. Since Mydrom values resources so highly, most protagon-humans are not threatened with any fatal punishment (unless they're really out of line), since Mydrom doesn't want to be wasteful, so rather there are lagoons of memory-wiping water on the islands which wrongdoers are forced to drink from, thus removing the rebellious elements but retaining the body that can do the labour. There are then also the Xilephs, flat roundish flying creatures (whose relationship to Mydrom is like that of 'helping out a mate') that possess the ability to control the weather which is why it's hard for anyone to escape and what provides some thematic distinctions to the different areas of the game. On the theme of trying to unlock the secret to replenishment, once Mydrom and the Xilephs discover, as above, that Birdo's consciousness is able to be passed on between eggs, they try to specifically go after her as well in case her species' ability might lead them differently to what they seek. One location come across in the game is an otherwise empty Watchtower which has been repurposed for living in by some of the protagon-humans.

Another character that crops up from time to time in odd levels to give you challenges is Nebble the bug. While he may seem like just another minigame prompter as there have been in other games, it turns out towards the end that he is in fact the one who hid the temple Mydrom seeks. When Mydrom captures him however, presumably to the end of forcing him to reveal its location at last, he quickly left behind a trail of clues which in a given level Daisy follow to get there first. It turns out that the temple is actually bug-sized as well, but that isn't a problem since some spell around the entrance shrinks her down to fit inside. The final fight therefore has a miniature Daisy fighting a comparatively larger Mydrom who's now torn the roof off the temple. Throughout the levels it's made clear that there's more than one star to find in each, yet on the first playthroughs it'll seem impossible to locate any others; well come the post-game Daisy will retain this ability to shrink down to bug-size, which will reveal that the other secret sections to each level have been hidden in miniature the entire time.

This backstory would also retroactively provide a new view on Il Piantissimo from *Sunshine*. The only reason Mydrom had been comfortable with letting a messenger go to deliver the false news of the protagon-humans choosing to not to return was that said messenger's best friend was being held captive as collateral, however this apparently wasn't enough, since the messenger nevertheless never came back for them, Mydrom supposing that he must have gone into hiding instead. Coupled with the fact that Daisy's aunt confirmed that the messenger was seen leaving on his boat again after delivering his news, one can conclude that his caving in to his fear and subsequent bailing on his friend occurred during his journey, which might led some to connect the dots to the one other 'human' we've seen out at sea, Il Piantissimo, who had found refuge on Isle Delfino and disguised himself as one of the locals ever since. This game would again be an opportunity to begin introducing more ethnically-diverse (protag-)human characters, building on the more limited potential for it in *Embers of Truth*. There could be an acknowledgement of Jumpman having lived here with the rest during this period, but by the time of this game, especially since we have Old Man Mario in the on-going trilogy, it'd be

best that it's a posthumous acknowledgement (one not so overt as to be too sombre for a kids' game but still there for theorists to spot).

While there have been other games that have (protag-)humans in them, these were cases such as the *WarioWare* series and the original *Mario Tennis*; these cases can therefore just be said to now be confirmed to take place later in the timeline, with some of the protag-humans seen at the end of this game returning to the mainland if they so wish after Daisy and her crew save the day. In fact, since *WarioWare* takes place after *Super Mario Land*, which is at the end of the existing timeline anyway, these facts just go to reinforce each other.

Just in regards to the time-travel-based set-up to this plot, since I'd rather it be that Old Man Mario's actions haven't notably changed history, since he's the reason in *A Menace in Kodainoland* that Daisy becomes inspired to go on this journey in the first place, which is what leads to the return of the protag-humans to the regular continent, we must also have a version of events where Daisy doesn't come here yet the protag-humans are nevertheless liberated, albeit in a way that still doesn't allow people like Old Man Mario to know what happened to them beforehand. That's where the memory-wiping waters came in. If anyone does ponder over this point in the lore, they can conclude that in the original version of events Mydrom eventually found the temple anyway at some later date and, satisfied, simply forced the whole population to drink the waters before moving on with that newfound plenitude.

Mario & Co - Future's Spirits

The final instalment in this trilogy returns to the Mushroom Kingdom, where Boo activity has continued to be on the rise following the events of *Embers of Truth*. A few people have tried to deal with the issue but to no avail. The only person anyone can think of who had the knowledge to come up with ways of combating them was Professor E. Gadd. That is why Mother Jutsuchi has been brought to use her magic to try to resurrect him. The brothers meet her at Luigi's mansion, because of its ties to the paranormal, E. Gadd himself and because it's a property Luigi owns that's safely away from Peach's castle. Among E. Gadd's old possessions/inventions is what looks like an arcade machine which he had adapted to be a racing game containing 'Mario' and a character that came with the machine, 'Pac-Man', this machine having apparently been brought back by Mario after some time on another world out in the galaxy (this is solely a background clue to justify how two actual Mario/Pac-Man Kart games exist). Old Man Mario is staying there as well. Beginning to feel weaker, it's really time for him to go home, but Rosalina isn't responding to attempts to contact her, so the way he came isn't an option for now.

When the attempted resurrection begins, rather than bringing E. Gadd back the spell instead causes a sleeping Old Man Mario's memories to be conjured forth, the rooms of the mansion transforming into diverse locations from his past (yet still our Mario's future for the most part), this making the mansion functionally bigger on the inside with rooms becoming like mini worlds, while the Boos in the mansion become vessels for the memories of people/enemies (to be clear the Boo thus is reshaped to properly look like the person, it's not like it just takes on aspects of their face etc. as happens with the boo mushroom in *Galaxy*).

One of the areas you can visit is the side of a dormant volcano, the site the Goombas were forced to make their home after fleeing the fungus spread by the Toads before they eventually saw the rising power of Bowser as a solution to run to instead, them choosing it despite its less than hospitable climate because also upon it was a spring whose contents might afford them greater strength to fight back with, these details you can piece together from clues in the environment if you explore; by the time of Old Man Mario's memory the few Goombas who had remained there for much longer rather than going to Bowser had consumed so much of the spring that they had mutated into Goombeasts which the characters would have to fight in this section.

Regardless of their original alignment anyone who has been given form thusly is given an evil streak due to the Boo part of them (which is why this can't be used as a way to bring E. Gadd back based on memories of him), but the main villains of this game are memories of people who were evil in their own right already: Mario and Daisy's future children, a boy (Cedar) and a girl (Emilia), the worst people Old Man Mario ever had to face in his life, only in part because of the personal connection, at least one of them with dyed red hair and roots of an alternate colour showing through (just because I want that aesthetic on some Mario character); it's acknowledged that they come from a period after the events of the *Dr Mario* games. Daisy wouldn't be specified as the mother, but the siblings' design would allow for similar clues into their genealogy as are present in Rosalina that MatPat used when claiming her parents were in fact Luigi and Peach. These siblings have with them a Dry-Bones-esque guard dog as like their main pet, as well as Dry-forms of the other main characters bar Mario, each still identifiable by additionally calcified hair, garments etc. (the reason there can't be one of Mario is that we know Mario survived his 'real' encounter with these two, then this way there's an uncertainty as to whether they will in the future indeed turn the rest of the cast into skeletons or if this is just a matter of look-alikes). I'd like it if they could be written to taunt the player with the same vibe as how GLaDOS speaks to Chell in the *Portal* games, or at least speak with as many layers of twisted intention as can be got away with in a Nintendo release, to be unnerving.

For the other villains faced across the game, I'd want most to similarly be from our Mario's future, either being sneak peaks into villains from upcoming other games or ones purely made up for this, both to maintain originality and because another game in this document will already focus on returning foes, however on that same note it would also be nice to use this to bring back some classic characters that have otherwise been left behind such as Wart, Mask Gate/Phanto, Mouser and Tryclyde (all from *Super Mario Bros 2*), as well as Qix (from the game of the same name) where Mario had in the memory actually seen someone else trying to contain the desert creature between fences.

To make matters worse, on hearing that E. Gadd was going to be resurrected some of Bowser's surviving minions stole his petrified form from Peach's castle and managed to bring it to the mansion's grounds by the time all this went off. As a result Bowser is thus revived in a Boo-hybrid form, such a ghost having been swept into merging with the statue, giving us another new Bowser incarnation to join Dry Bowser and Meowser, this perhaps being simply Boo Bowser (I don't want to say Booser because that just sounds like 'booze'). This monster acts as a secondary threat coming from the outside of the mansion, keeping the heroes trapped inside with the other villainous memories if they were to try to escape. The siblings seem to imply at one point that in the future Bowser will only be forgiven for his own actions by the main characters because he helped to bring them (said siblings) down.

In the initial mayhem Mother Jutsuchi is separated from the brothers, however instead they have Polterpup to help them, as well as Waluigi (part of whose penance since *Embers of Truth* has been ensuring the upkeep of the mansion). As these characters you have the ability to use the power-ups that appear in the memory locations, however if you do so the villains will retaliate by making the level harder; since they're all based from the same memory magic, they can influence the environment at will. A little tangential to that thought, since it's not about level difficulty in the same way, another avenue would be having power-ups such as turning you into a snowman (different to the usual ice power-up), which allows you to throw high-arcing projectiles to hit targets, however you'll be constantly melting, needing to get to the next patch of snow to reform otherwise you lose a life. To be clear there are still ways of beating the levels without the power-ups therefore which would in execution be 'easier', however it might take a little more thought to work out what those solutions would be. For a final time the levels end with flags rather than stars. Meanwhile the eruption of memories has caused an alternate form of time dust to spawn, that now scattered amidst Luigi's fortune. Collecting this time dust will allow you to do two things, but first the hub needs to be explained.

Back at Peach's castle Toadsworth has been keeping tabs on the resurrection attempt via a remote feed, that surveillance system having been put up by Waluigi coordinating with Toadette. As such the level select is his screen displaying your characters' positions on the mansion's floorplan, supposedly watching as they move around but of course you the player determine the next room they enter from this perspective. Replays/alternate versions of levels could be down to the memories having restored themselves after you moved on, in the latter case in a variant way. When Mario etc. are hence recorded collecting the time dust, because of this clashing of memory and reality by means of the tech relaying the events back to the castle, there's a peculiar effect of the associated energy building up inside Toadsworth's computer. Once enough is accumulated, either you can direct it back towards the mansion targeted at specific spots on the map where that action would blast away some of the walls of memory to expose secret levels in rooms that are otherwise inaccessible, or you could divert it out of the computer and into equipment that the Toads have built in order to temporarily fend off Boos (they're not able to get rid of them entirely), this energy acting as their emergency power source given that they hadn't managed to get enough of the intended longer-lasting fuel cells yet.

The b-plot going on around Peach's castle is that the Princess has invited anyone who sees themselves as part of her people to come to a picnic under the stars on the castle grounds. Unfortunately the picnic has been crashed by tides of Boos however. In turn, once Toadsworth observes what's happened with Bowser at the mansion, it's feared that all the other petrified enemies which Peach has kept all in a chamber like trophies might suddenly come back to life as well inside the castle. As such your Toad Brigade/Peach bonus levels will either see you saving picnic attendees or transporting the petrified enemies so they end up scattered across the land, all the while being attacked by Boos, mostly the regular kind but also with some odd non-hybrid varieties thrown into the mix as well, for instance with a Bouldergeist-like mini-boss but not limited to such a role. The Toad Brigade/Peach will feel like they can't stand against the Boos without their equipment, hence you can't play these bonus levels without having accrued the necessary time dust first, and the end of each bonus level would have their equipment set to be running out of power soon hence they have to rush back to Toadsworth for more, preventing you from doing them all consecutively.

If you wanted a final boss run near the conclusion of the game, this could easily be justified as a blending of different memories. Otherwise, at the end of the main storyline you've found Mother Jutsuchi again and she's preparing what she needs to perform another ritual; there's a gem (or equivalent) that's manifested from Old Man Mario's memories along with everything else which could work to drive away the Boos, thus leaving the memories without vessels to maintain their forms. You as the characters just have to buy her time, which you do via your final face-off with the siblings. Once you've beaten them in the fight (it put forth though that they aren't as strong in this form as they will be in real life) she manages it and the deed is done, it in fact going so far as to also cause the Boos elsewhere in the kingdom to also flee, returning to just their usual haunts. This also leaves Bowser back in his usual form, albeit implied to now have some knowledge about Mario's future. It should be noted that he was able to be brought back to his standard self because he was only petrified; Professor E. Gadd will remain dead, for while real death is hardly commonplace in this franchise to successfully bring him back as well would be the final nail in the concept of fatality. If another game wants to use him as a character, it'll have to be able to be canonically set prior to *Embers of Truth*. As the memories are fading therefore, there amongst them is a manifestation of the time machine from *Mario & Luigi: Partners In Time* (this will want to have been set up earlier in the game in a way that prevents it from being used on that occasion) which he uses before it disappears to finally return home.

In a post credit scene, Mother Jutsuchi offers to try to resurrect E. Gadd again, now that Old Man Mario's gone so the same incident shouldn't happen again, yet the brothers dismiss the idea. Still holding out hope for her abilities though, Mother Jutsuchi nevertheless performs the ritual on her own in secret. Nothing appears to happen. Sighing, she finally concedes to pack away her materials. Out across the wider kingdoms however it's now seen that the petrified followers of Bowser are returning to normal. There might be a little bit of comedy in the spots the Toads stashed them, but for the most part this would be an ominous return of his forces. (This is unless the player chose not to do any of the bonus levels, in which case they'll be revived inside their chamber in Peach's castle instead).

When you come back to the game after finishing it for the first time in order to complete anything that's outstanding etc., the justification for how you can still do those levels even after the crisis has been thwarted is that another brief scene shows that these events are now taking place inside a sleeping Toadsworth's dreams, him thinking about being in the hub and seeing what transpired, this keeping up the theme of memory. There is however one thing different, a new addition to the hub in this state: a Toad-sized doorway which if gone through will lead to a different dream of his, a bonus extended level. With all the gloom and kid-friendly terror in the rest of the game, this is then a lighter

stage by contrast concerning recollections he has of serving a younger Peach, the level a representation of the inside of the castle, the young Peach's requests coming through speech bubbles from off the sides which are prompts for what this Toadsworth needs to do for her next. There are also subtle hints of this taking place in the same connected dream realm as Subcon/Subspace (*Super Mario Bros 2*) and the Dream World (*Mario & Luigi: Dream Team*), that achieved through cameos of creatures from those other places (some of which may have actually already been otherwise seen in this game on the sidelines if the suggestion of bringing back the likes of Wart etc. was taken up on, since those enemies too were from Subcon).

Yoshi's Clay Quest

I want preface this by saying that I've since learned about *Kirby and the Rainbow Curse*, which already uses the Claymation style I would be going for in this game. Now obviously that's a different franchise, with different gameplay mechanics/style to what I would have here, and there's nothing to stop two games having the same gimmick, however at the same time I'm paranoid that people would complain that 'this has been done before'. Possibly there are similarly comments that could be made of other games in this document as well, but I only really feel this in this case. If Nintendo did consider that it would be best not to go with Claymation therefore I could see instead the aesthetic being that of glass figurines, the kind that are coloured and intricately shaped, but while that would lend itself to being more unique and giving the characters a greater sense of fragility it would also I feel limit some of the other mechanic flexibility that Claymation could experiment with. As such I'm going to stick with the premise of clay for now, with just that alternative on the back bench, and in turn I've actually now come to like the idea of glass characters, so if they aren't used here then I would like to see them implemented in some other game somewhere, even if just for a single world within it.

One day Yoshi wakes up in a land made of clay, he himself having been transformed into that medium (his surprise at this fact differentiating this from the times Yoshi games have been stylised with wool/crafts), thus beginning a game taking place with a Claymation aesthetic. Immediately the most important aspects of the situation become clear, which under the circumstances is lucky: the inhabitants of this land (whatever their personal designs might end up being) are under threat from what seems to be the glowing head of a giant lamp directed down towards them from in the sky which is producing such an attractive pull that anything that fully leaves the ground will soar upwards into the unforgiving heavens; in this game jumping may well be fatal. As it happens however if someone is holding onto heavy-enough objects that can help to weigh them back down. With Yoshi being given a pouch to collect items in therefore, it's his task to traverse this land, which is broken up into distinct sections, meeting various people each time who tell him of possessions of theirs that he needs to retrieve for them.

This is in essence a game then about fetch quests, however the trick is in how Yoshi goes about it. Since most if not all of the requests will be made at the beginning of each stage, he will know all that he has to get in total from the off, he has the choice of what order to collect things in (that act ranging from mere stumbling upon them to having to overcome some environmental obstacle other than the main one), and that ordering will make all the difference. The more items he's holding the heavier he'll be (indicated by scales on the individual items and him in total), which will mean that he can in fact afford to jump to degrees in safety, meaning he can afford to leap over hazards, reach higher ledges or meet the requirements of pressure plates etc. (if he's too light he'll rise out of control or not meet a weight threshold in another manner, meanwhile if he's too heavy in turn he may well not clear said hazards or reach a desired higher area). Once picked up, items can only be got rid of by returning them to their rightful owners, so the right combination of holding onto items in some cases while returning others sooner will be required in order to ultimately access every spot. There'll be one individual, clearly identifiable, who will upon having their item returned lead Yoshi onto the next section, so to progress he simply has to fulfil their quest which will be one guaranteed to be doable regardless, therefore if he's struggling to meet everyone's needs he can settle for simply getting a lower score in that area. If he feel like he's messed it up and would rather start again, Yoshi can revert back into his egg and re-hatch back at the beginning of the stage.

With it being clay, there are other mechanics as well that take advantage of that medium, such as with specific softer patches (hence why it can't be done everywhere) being able to be stretched out of objects to act as walkways/barriers/guy-ropes, creating handholds to climb without jumping, mix

objects together to get the desired hues for colour puzzles, get the clay to melt (which would mean it has to be of the modelling kind if we're being specific) so that it can either clear a path or fill in a hazard (although mind if you're coming back this way in a hurry that this will now make for a stickier ground that will slow Yoshi's progress), have him eat (making use of his famously long tongue) then lay eggs which can be moulded into specific tools, break off blobs to then stack and so forth, as well as leading to certain enemies being impervious to regular attacks, it just denting them, meaning different methods of offense will have to be discovered.

Alternatively Yoshi could from the beginning just turn away from all those in needs and take a different path lined with fruit, a route that will go on for a while offering nothing but said fruit, him always able to change his mind and help instead, but if he commits to ignoring the main plight entirely this path will simply end with him reappearing back on his regular island with nothing to show for it, clearly the bad ending (although he needed to be given the choice about stepping up into the role of hero anyway).

As the game goes on, two individuals in particular amongst the inhabitants start to become recurring. The first is very vocal about Yoshi concentrating on saving everyone, and for the sake of this description I'm going to call this kind of gameplay 'conform' since that's the pointed course of action. In subsequent levels if he does give the items he does retrieve back to their rightful owners he'll be rewarded by the next group having a couple of different items they'd each be happy with, meaning Yoshi has more options as to what things he needs to collect and so has more leeway in the routes he takes that will still allow him to obtain enough for them. The second person instead advises that Yoshi instead should be focusing on finding a way to destroy the sky lamp rather than worrying about making sure absolutely everyone is safe. As such, to be in opposition to the prior one, I'll be referring to this path as 'deviation'. Subsequently they will begin to ask that he give the items he does obtain all to them (except for the one he needs to give to progress to the next stage), under which condition they'll provide him in turn with some new tool to test out. Additionally there are minute critters milling about patches of the ground, not really doing anything; these are completely ignored by the 'conform' path, but in the 'deviation' path Yoshi will also be instructed to stomp over these critters – "Trust me, it'll be worth it later", no other explanation than that. At this stage all this is just getting the player accustomed to their dichotomy. That's when there's then a stage where these are the only two people around, both of them asking for the exact same item; a choice has to be made, who behind all the other gameplay has convinced Yoshi the most? Whoever isn't chosen will continue to show up in the following stages, however they will no longer be able to be interacted with, only to be stared at by.

If the 'conform' path is chosen, there will at first be just more of the main kinds of levels, albeit these the trickiest yet to succeed in getting everyone's items to them, but through dialogue it'll be made evident that he's headed towards a set of clearings wherein he'll need to stretch out strands of soft clay from the centre to bind all the civilians to safety. There'll be a few of these levels rounding of the game with escalating difficulty, making use of all the other mechanics learned thus far to try to reach everyone, with there also commencing tremors which vary in intensity; the stronger they are the higher the chance that someone will lose their footing and be sent soaring up into the sky, so while there isn't a time limit per se there is pressure to complete these as soon as possible to save the greatest number of people. Once the final one has been finished and the last person has been secured, the group have to withstand a few more tremors, Yoshi having some quick time events to remain holding on in turn, after which the lamp will break apart, leaving behind it a clear sky through the debris, it apparently the case that some secondary hero was able to get rid of it once he had made sure everyone was safe. Yoshi is thanked for all he's done to help, at which point the perspective pans away to show the group having been secured in the shape of an eye.

If the 'deviation' path is chosen, there will again be a few more levels for the trickiest combinations of the weighted routes, in this case still with all those other people around although now they too will be impossible to interact with. After this Yoshi will be told that it's time to take that leap against the lamp, quite literally. Being provided with one final tool which will offer him some protection from harm, Yoshi is prompted to just jump up and let the lamp pull him up into itself. Taking the upward plunge, Yoshi thus finds himself floating within a nebulous region of light at the centre of which are some ever-changing clay masses that are obviously the heart of this threat. A couple of levels here get Yoshi used to these finale parameters, using the act of throwing away items to alter his momentum while making use of other skills from the game to dispose of the satellite masses, the usual rules having been reversed wherein now Yoshi coming into contact with floating fragments of the ground will cause damage to the protective layer the last item has afforded him, then in the final stage the largest and central-most mass will have to be fought. Once defeated the final form this mass takes is that of an egg, then as Yoshi and all the rest of the floating clutter begin to fall again, the screen being blocked out by the brightness of passing back through the surrounding glow, there's but a few frames of the egg hatching an unidentifiable form from inside. Landing back on the ground, the guide thanks Yoshi deeply for having saved them from this menace, which has indeed disappeared from the skies.

After the conclusion of the 'conform' route Yoshi will wake up on the shore of his regular island, back to his usual self. On the horizon over the ocean a glittering beacon of unidentifiable light. Yoshi does a hesitant little test jump to check that it's fine to do that again. Some other Yoshis show up behind him, asking where he's been; there's a fresh harvest of fruit that they're about to tuck into. On looking back out from the shore he finds that the light is gone. Turning to leave after the others, he then notices however a parcel tucked behind a bush. Opening it up reveals a platter of rice straws, salt and an owl figurine (symbolising protection from evil spirits, purification and luck), which Yoshi takes in curiosity. If instead it's post the 'deviation' route then much of this will still be the same, however the contents of the parcel will instead be a platter of chrysanthemums, gobo and a daruma (symbolising endurance/rejuvenation, strength/stability and then being a wishing doll used when motivating oneself to achieve a goal). Each of these appear as trophies in the menu after obtaining them.

Super Mario Galaxy 3

While to again maintain the relative autonomy of the respective sub-franchises there would not be explicit mention of the events of *Future's Spirits*, Mario, Luigi and the Toad Brigade thus take off in the Toad spaceship in order to find out what's been happening with Rosalina, why she didn't respond to their attempts at communication recently. At the end of the introductory/basic tutorial stage they find her at a summit of various beings from across the universe who, after Bowser's attempt to create a galactic empire, now feel it might be best if they come together in an alliance of their own; each have their own menaces in their own territories, so maybe they can help each other deal with them. Suddenly however the summit is thrown into chaos by a mysterious being, scattering the attendees across space.

Rosalina manages to get the main characters to safety, bringing them to an ancient library, which is run by an A.I. called PRO DITTY 1 (prodizione), or more commonly just Ditty for short, who can also interact with you by means of drones, some of which are like automatons while others take more varied forms; she will ultimately act as your guide in the hub, with her drones and the Lumas hanging around here and in the levels as well, meanwhile Rosalina is apparently busying herself otherwise with working out where the other summit delegates ended up. Here she and Ditty explain to the other characters about a cosmic horror called Aikura Futo, after which point she is more sternly resolute for most of the rest of the game. This being's only weakness is a certain sub-type of Grand Stars, 'Nova Stars', which she believes have been given to the menaces the other delegates at the summit were describing, with Aikura Futo attacking the summit because they were planning on actively going after those monsters, even if it was with different intentions. She brought the characters to this library because it's the only known place in the universe with documentation about Aikura Futo, its centre also built such that it could be used to house the Nova Stars, almost as if it was made for that, and also because this place additionally acts as a ship they can travel in. To prove her theory about where the Nova Stars are, she thus has the ship steer you towards the nearest of the territories mentioned. This isn't just about avenging what happened at the summit; it's believed that Aikura Futo has a plan for intelligent life in the universe (this is never truly explained, since part of cosmic horror is being unable to comprehend the intensions etc. of such beings, in the same way that its full form amongst the stars will never be seen on screen) for which it would rather use the current lot, yet if they show too much resistance it threatens the ability to erase all thought from those life forms, having the patience to wait for evolution to bring about new sapient life again later, that delay being but a blip in eternity for it.

Thus you as Mario visit the usual diversity of systems (I know they would in fact be called 'galaxies' in the game, but I disagree with that label; I could accept that each room in the Observatory/each wider map in *Galaxy 2* could be a galaxy, but the level locations themselves are only clusters of planets, hence 'systems' instead), at the end of each main area defeating a boss that would hence afford you the Nova Star they had inside them, this then guiding you towards the next one (i.e. opening up the next section of the map), once again with Master Luma under his hat, all the while trying to be as stealthy as you relatively can be in the hopes of not alerting Aikura Futo to what you're doing. There are also side/bonus levels where you play as Luigi or the Toad Brigade instead. In every level there will be hidden a veiled figure. For now you won't be able to reach or interact with this 'Witness', but by talking to certain NPCs you will learn that this is another cosmic being, this one set to watch over all events throughout history, only ever able to interfere with a given universe on one occasion upon being requested to. When a Toad also joins in on one of these conversations and asks how it could be watching everything at once, the NPC responds 'It is quoted as saying "That which is important may

call for more than one pair of eyes, so that the subject may be sure to have been viewed in its full truth”’.

Another world is like a 3D version of a Breakout–style game with Mario in a broad flat ship acting as the paddle knocking balls into blocks in space to make them disappear (this the game *Alleyway*). Some enemies are explicitly stated as having been left behind after Bowser’s attempted empire fell. Seeing as the first two *Galaxy* games had Dino Piranha and Peewee Piranha respectively, this game would see a full dragon-like Piranha variant, with then a reprise in bone-form later. In at least one place there’s an unacknowledged symbol etched into some surface in the background consisting of a circle with other overlapping spirals wrapping around its circumference. One level is based around a Hungry Luma that’s become vastly bloated from eating star bits without then going through the regular transformation. With it just wanting to be fed more and more, it’s also learnt through NPC dialogue here if those other present Lumas etc. are spoken to that while star bits do spawn randomly across space they can also be caused by the actions of Lumas themselves (hence why enemies turn into star bits specifically when Mario spin attacks them, since that’s a move he can only use because of Master Luma).

Once you have collected the final Nova Star and brought it back to the library (Rosalina immediately asking Master Luma to go fetch something from the other side of the ship before said star can be put in place), this being during a time when Luigi and the Toad Brigade are still out on some other mission, that central part where you’ve been arranging the Nova Stars then suddenly transforms. With Ditty being overridden by a hidden subroutine, Mario, Rosalina and the Nova Stars find themselves now contained within an impenetrable solid cage. Rosalina reveals that she suspected something like this might happen; while Aikura Futo could still have gone ahead with erasing all thought given what they were doing with the Nova Stars, as has been suggested before things would run smoother if that wasn’t the case, hence there was another safeguard in place. Since this is the only place known in the universe to have information about this entity *and* considering it also has the facilities to house the Nova Stars along the way, anyone who would attempt to use them against it would have a high chance of doing so using this ship. Yes it could have just locked the Nova Stars up like this in the first place, yet it also desired the chaos caused by having the previous bosses wielding their power. Ditty wasn’t in on the plan, she wasn’t knowingly tricking them, for if it had been a deception rather than genuine friendship from her point of view there was a risk of the ruse being discovered early. Now that all the Nova Stars were in one place however, with their gathers with them, the cage sealed them off from the rest of the universe.

All is not lost however. Rosalina tells Mario that if she has him absorb a Nova Star himself, like the previous bosses had done, he’ll be able to project himself onto an astral plane upon which he’ll be able to capture Aikura Futo’s own consciousness, at which point she could provide a psychic tether which he could follow back, thus trapping Aikura Futo’s mind in this cage as well. If this can be done, its body will go dormant and the threat will be over. She can’t be the one to enter this astral plane, since Mario wouldn’t know how to provide her with such a tether in turn. Thus Mario absorbs a Nova Star as instructed, which brings the player to a new final area. Rather than just going straight into facing the boss, there would be a few levels first to get the player used to the way the astral environment works, how he can still do certain attacks here even though he no longer has Master Luma with him; the hub would also be on this plane, rather than you returning to the cage each time. All the same, at the end of this Mario does indeed come face to face with an avatar form of Aikura Futo’s mind, the fight with whom ends with him fully dragging it back along Rosalina’s tether to the cage, she intermittently heeding that you should hurry.

Now back on the physical plane, Aikura Futo's consciousness would manifest in a different way, filling the cage in a more vague form. Immediately it's weakened by the proximity to so many Nova Stars, hence why it can't just leave again being a thing of consciousness like Mario was. Rosalina makes herself known, confirming that they're now both trapped in here forever. It was a close thing though. Indicating something on the floor, a remnant of Mario's hat, the last piece of him, also turns to dust; Mario's astral form could only have lasted so long as there was a piece of his physical body remaining as well, now he's completely gone. No regular mortal such as him can survive the power of a Nova Star (even if he had had more potential than others since he was a star child [*Yoshi's Island DS*]), for they are not as strong as the kinds of creatures Aikura Futo had used as bosses for instance. That was why the entity hadn't worried about those gathering the stars being trapped in the cage with them; it just hadn't counted on someone like Rosalina being there as well.

Sometime later Luigi and the Toad Brigade return from their mission, unsettled by finding the alterations to the ship's structure and the distressed Lumas around it. While Ditty is still inactive, her drones continue to float around, and when one scans Luigi a hologram of Rosalina is activated. She informs them of what must have happened, that someone had to make the sacrifice to make sure this way of stopping Aikura Futo was seen through, also alluding to the fact that she made sure he was away from the ship at the time (since, like when she rescued him in *Embers of Truth*, she's interested in keeping the man who would go on to be her father safe). Neither he nor the Toads must find a way to open the cage, for that would release Aikura Futo as well thus starting this all again. The Lumas will find their own way in the universe without her in time, perhaps with the help of Lubba (*Galaxy 2*). She also says that she's set the ship to soon automatically pilot itself to the most remote point in the universe. There will be other people out there who can use Luigi's help, he should focus on going on to help them.

Those watching the hologram are left in a shocked silence after it deactivates again. Luigi just stands there. Then Captain Toad asks what this surely means for the future. This is what prompts Luigi into action (on the surface just because someone spoke, and because he thus wants to act to save the other two, but in truth his motivation is that Toad's wording reminded him that they've interacted with Old Man Mario, which means they know Mario's story can't end here, lest they all now become the victims of some paradox). He rushes over to where you'd select a level, thus returning control to the player as they're presented with the map and the words 'Find It'. Even if the player doesn't realise what the 'It' might be, whatever level they thus select will mean that they as Luigi now come across the Witness, either because it's moved closer or because the environment has altered slightly to make it accessible. Talking to the Witness will confirm what NPCs have told you, that this is another cosmic being, this one set to watch over the events of the universe, only able to interfere once before then having to move on to another universe (although it can't affect other beings on its own level, hence why Luigi can't simply ask that Aikura Futo never existed to begin with etc. thus meaning none of this ever happened). It's proposed that it could bring back Mario and Rosalina, acknowledging that it has indeed watched Mario before now 'through ice and fire' (this statement potentially just a turn of phrase, but along with the previous quote about multiple sets of eyes this is actually leaning towards the Witness being the 'hell valley sky trees' in the Shiverburn Galaxy from *Galaxy 2*), but it reminds Luigi that if it does so no-one else will get a wish from it. Might some people be more needing of it? On the other hand, someone much less deserving could just as easily be the next to make a request as well. If Luigi says no, he can just continue replaying levels alone, able to come back to this choice in any of them by going up to the Witness again, yet when he says yes the screen will fade to white. Next Luigi wakes up on a copy of the first world Mario found himself on in *Galaxy 1*, the 'Gateway Galaxy', he then also tasked with catching three star bunnies, the accomplishment of which will cause, like in *Galaxy 1*, a new structure to appear, however this time there will be upon it the unconscious forms of

Mario and Rosalina. When they too awake, it's understood that they have indeed 'won'. Rosalina reveals however that while Mario was completely gone hence there was no issue in recreating him here, since she was still around inside the cage at the time a part of her continues to linger in there, remaining trapped with Aikura Futo; she will never again be truly whole. At that moment though the scene is lit up by the ships of the initial summit attendees who mysteriously had been informed that the threat was vanquished and that they could find their saviours here.

Mario might show some hesitation towards Rosalina at this point, given what she allowed to happen to him, but regardless the two are now at the centre of the celebrations aboard one of the ships. From the sidelines Luigi watches on, deep in thought. When Rosalina catches his eye, she nods. Mario soon spies Luigi giving Captain Toad a letter (in truth meant for Peach) before he makes his way out of the room. Rosalina tells Mario that they should let him do this, let him do what he has to on his own, that he will be back in due time. It's thus acknowledged that Luigi leaves in a smaller spaceship that's been offered to him. Rosalina then tells Mario that she'll take him home to his 'special one' (in this game those words not coloured with Peach's palette because canonically his affections by this point are instead shifting over to Daisy), but first recommends that he enjoy the celebrations of their success. To make sure the mood ends on a positive note, she and the Lumas send stars shooting across the crowd, who collectively cheer.

If you continue with the game after this ending, it'll be to find that the Lumas have been able to remove the cage from the rest of the ship so that it can continue on its own on the course Rosalina set for it so that it won't be found again, meanwhile the rest of the ship is now good to still be used for their mode of transportation. In removing the cage, they also revealed some other items which had otherwise been buried in the depths of the library; these end up being flung out across space in the process, thus providing you with the post-game content of going back through certain levels to retrieve them. The astral plane appears faintly as an option on the map separate from everything else. Any levels in which you played as Luigi in the main story will now just be played as Mario. Every so often now Master Luma will invite Mario to join him in meeting Rosalina for tea in various locations from throughout the game. This doesn't have any particular bearing on the remainder of the story/gameplay, but this is Rosalina's way of trying to repair any damage to her relationship with him; she does care about him, it's just that a hard decision had had to be made for the greater good in her mind.

A final unlocked element is a level titled 'Prequelilogue'. This in fact is a flashback to the events directly after the ending of *Galaxy 2*, with Lubba currently taking Mario and Peach back home aboard the Starship Mario (to make it clearer that this is not in time with the rest of this game the gameplay could switch to the storybook side-scroller style that the previous instalment used for its introduction and credits). In the starting cutscene, opening with the text 'Twenty-two adventures ago in a galaxy so recently saved' (number subject to Nintendo releasing more games in between/other titles being slotted into that interim in the timeline), it's shown that Luigi and Yoshi were too on this ship, just inside at the time which is why they weren't seen in that game's final moments. Racing across space, the ship is soon passing planets that look oddly like Saturn, Jupiter, Mars...It's only after Lubba has dropped them off and left again that they realise this isn't actually their world; the player should recognise it as Earth instead. All they can do now is head for the city visible on the horizon across the countryside.

Meanwhile Bowser is shown to have become lost in a void after his loss in the final level back then. While there the voice of Aikura Futo began speaking to him, having noticed his attempt to build a galactic empire. Worded in a way which might make one suspicious that it has an ulterior motive in doing so, Aikura Futo offers Bowser the opportunity to take revenge on Mario, only noting he may

need to pass through a few other universes before landing in the right one again. Thus Bowser emerges on Earth, the light pouring through his rift causing those who see it to glimpse the universes of Kirby, Legend of Zelda etc., after which the gameplay of this level begins, with you now playing as Bowser chasing after the four heroes through Tokyo. If you catch up to a character you can stomp on their heads, leaving them dazed to fall away with the scrolling screen, but either way Mario will continue to be in the lead, that is until the very end when the two of you have reached some rooftop where a star apparently floats waiting. Bowser clashes with Mario (and anyone else left) before knocking him/them aside to claim the star for himself, only to discover that it's just a light-up decoration.

An end cutscene then shows Lubba, some unspecified time later, realising his mistake and turning the Starship Mario around again to pick them back up. The reason for the implied time gap before that ending is that this is the explanation for how games like *NBA Street Vol 3* (which has playable Mario characters), *Mario is Missing* and *Mario's Time Machine* can explicitly take place on Earth rather than in the Mushroom Kingdom etc., they now taking place in this missing period (in regards to *Mario's Time Machine* some attempt must have been made on their part to get home, for how else could Bowser's mother also show up in that game, but clearly it wasn't successful overall). This level would also want to have some background hints to this being the same Earth that the Rayman/Rabbid games take place on, hence how there can be Mario merchandise at the beginning of *Mario + Rabbids: Kingdom Battle*, with these societies having had their interests piqued by witnessing these characters' brief adventures on their world as well as by those glimpses of other universes. If this then led to them being included in the cultural consciousness alongside 'actual' videogames on this Earth (if any franchises haven't made Mario cameos and for whatever reason then don't want to be canonised as 'real'), it could also be inferred that the kid whose toys are the subject of the *Smash Bros* games comes from here too. It is from this Earth that E. Gadd's Pac-Man arcade machine in *Future's Spirits* came from.

I would also just like to take this opportunity to clarify some other past instances of 'Earth's' appearances in games in terms of how they are now re-contextualised (again not that this is made a point of in any specific game, past or future, but it can be extrapolated retroactively). The planet seen in the opening/closing shots of *WarioWare Gold* don't actually match up to Earth, so it can be argued these were of Mario's planet instead, while as for the Earth in the 'Shave the World' minigame, which is much more obviously Earth, that whole thing isn't necessarily actually happening and regardless isn't stated to be the same planet as the rest of the game is taking place on, rather could just be some other body spotted out in space through a telescope etc. If 'Earth' appears in the background of any space-based arena stages of any game (I know there are some with a blue & green planet but haven't checked them to see if it's obviously specifically Earth), again it can be argued that with them having gone into space anyway for that stage they could have then just travelled further than perhaps immediately assumed to get there rather than still be in orbit of their homeworld. Thirdly there's the Earth in some Kart games' online waiting room; this I think can just be excused as being on a more meta level, since it's referring to the players joining from across the world rather than really implying the characters are there.

Something less visual is a line in the manual of *Virtual Boy Wario Land*, which reads 'deep within the Earth'. While non-game content such as shows, films and comics are not being canonised in this document's attempt, since that would make things all the more complicated in turn, game manuals are something that are made use of in Game Theories and in my own research, since they are specifically tied to the core games, so this can't just be wholly overlooked. What I'd ask instead therefore is that Nintendo make a minor statement that no-one else would care about that states

there was an error in the printing and it should have been a lower case 'earth' instead, thus that line could simply mean the game is taking place beneath any kind of ground rather than being specific to a planet (I don't know if that manual/line was printed in other languages though, which could potentially scupper that most precise of otherwise unnecessary actions). There is one other thing, sticking with Wario in that he has a map of Earth in his home in the *WarioWare* games, but I'll address that in *Waluigi Sports Tycoon*.

Peachagonals

Primarily I'd look for this to be a mobile game, but I guess it could work on PC and console too. This is a puzzle game based on 2D levels mapped onto 3D spaces (see 39:15 on the first *Mario Odyssey* GTLive stream on YouTube), these 'spaces' being models of locations and characters from the main franchise. As well as the rounds thus revolving around what you'd expect from a 2D Mario game, it also contains logic puzzle elements such as were seen in *The Pedestrian*, albeit here with different mechanics for manipulating the environment and finding a way through to each goal, the asset aesthetics also changing with each larger 3D model. One such theme of game mechanics could be based around light, with you having to push mirrors to get beams to reflect onto targets, have lenses focus/enlarge an image, fill an area with water so that the light entering it bends to reach a point it otherwise wouldn't hit, cast a shadow to deactivate something or otherwise have phases of darkness block out what you'd progressing with, suddenly have to break the surface you'd expect to be directing the light onto, bend the light with the gravity of a super-dense object that you have to shield yourself from in turn; is there a way to get the game to register your screen brightness and have the beam in the level change intensity with it? Have the character turn invisible and force you to use context clues from the surroundings to know your position. Some levels could be top-down instead of side-on.

You play as a 2D Peach going through the various maps, meanwhile Bowser is what this style of game can allow for an 'antagonist'. This game can be seen as being symbolic of how Peach in fact plays with Bowser, secretly playing against him à la chess as seen in how you move the levels around here, including sometimes when you have to allow Bowser to advance etc. in order to give yourself the benefit later on, implying that when he does kidnap her the reason she seemingly does nothing to escape is that she knows Mario is likely going to save her (shown here by an occasional level mechanism which, when activated by Peach, sees a 2D Mario fly by and push Bowser back), and even if he didn't one time she could free herself by the use of her mind-control fungus (shown here by an unexplained new mushroom item that she can use against enemies under certain conditions).

Progress through these levels additionally unlocks assets in the game's secondary mode, that which is more of a gauntlet dungeon crawler, still in this pixelated style, perhaps still mapped onto 3D spaces but in a way that's more thematically consistent with that atmosphere. Here again one starts as Peach, yet thanks to the aforementioned unlocking of assets other characters, items and room types can be chosen from later on.

Wario of Wonderealm

This is to be an RPG game in a similar style to the *Mario & Luigi* series. It opens with Wario narrating over his past (this also confirming the timeline order of certain games set before this one), saying that since infancy Mario has been his rival, that in his teenage years he would vent his frustration by breaking parts of the Great Pipe Network, only for him then to have been captured by K. Rool's goons. Those who played *Embers of Truth* may notice that he actually skips over any details of his being experimented on, in the way of someone suppressing trauma, and so he goes next on to mention how those goons later let him go again so that he could properly go after Mario, this leading to a description of the events of *Mario & Wario*. When he was beaten at the end of that endeavour however Peach had him brought back with the rest of the characters, not to have him locked up or anything but rather so that he could be rehabilitated, since it seemed this was all only about some anger directed at Mario. Indeed there eventually came a point where, while he still felt the scorn from their childhoods, he could for the most part put those grievances aside in the present, leading to him being a playable character in the rerelease of *Mario 64*. This truce was maintained, with maybe just a small lapse here or there, there even being some instances where he was 'helpful' such as when he protected the kingdom's pipes from Bowser's piranha plant infestation (*Wario's Whack Attack*), that was until the events of *Embers of Truth*, when Waluigi had succeeded in bribing him into assisting in his mission. After the fall of that facility Wario thought to go back to K. Rool's dominion to liberate other creatures still left there after his experiments, thus providing himself with a 'band of monsters' who followed him to take over Peaceful Woods so that he might make use of its resources to later acquire more wealth (*Wario's Woods*). Once again though he was defeated, that darn Mario kept on getting in his way, seemingly now more so that Wario had begun delving more into the forays of money, a pursuit that had already proven itself worthy of risking official peaceful ties for. He got some relief when [describes scenario of his level in *Bowser Feud*], but it was what then came next that fully took him away from that frustration. He somehow found himself transported to a strange other world, one filled with exciting explosions (this him having fallen through a fracture, see *Kirby Fractures*, into Bomberman's universe for *Wario Blast*), and here he was able to use the excitement and new scenery to get back into his groove.

At this point the perspective shifts to Wario's present situation, where we see he's talking to a sentient tree/a farmer/something of that innocent ilk, using this backstory to argue that having just returned to this regular world he needs to make the most of said renewed vigour to ensure he gets even with Mario once more, for which he needs to cut it down/loot their possessions/other fitting terrible act in order to obtain the necessary supplies to be on his way home.

As he subsequently begins his journey across the countryside however there begins to appear hints that this is not the familiar Mushroom Kingdom. Certainly the elements are close, but the common populace are some other fungus-based beings rather than Toads, the vegetation and enemies are like offshoots of the ones we're used to, what pipes there are have been made with a different design. Coming to the first settlement, Wario makes to spend the night for as little expenditure as possible, and in the process he spots a wanted poster detailing a woman, Ognetta, who's had a bounty put on her head by 'The Marquis Council'. Not having heard of such an authority in the land before, Wario asks the tavern keeper (or whoever) about them, to which he receives curious remarks about them not having had any visitors from other lands for as long as they can remember; is he from...oh what was it...the Seaside Kingdom up north? (this just establishing some relative geography per the world map in *Odyssey*) Further prompting from Wario leads to the confirmation that this isn't the Mushroom Kingdom but rather 'Wonderealm'. Thus unaware of where he is, Wario will at least try to make some

money while he identifies a way home, money is money after all, and so he sets himself to track down Ognetta and claim the bounty for her.

The gameplay in terms of the random encounters comes with the standard options to attack or flee, but the 'ideal' way around them for Wario involves working out how to swindle in some way each type of creature come across; this can require certain combinations of actions, dialogue or items from the inventory, and in turn the difficulty in ability to swindle them if that route is gone for (which will mean more money at the end of it) will depend on if the creature is aggressive or otherwise just a local being that's been come across. The routes between the major locations, and indeed some minor locations elsewhere, are in fact procedurally generated, this adding to the sense of this place being slightly off from familiar if someone has already played/seen it before, the enemies that spawn set to do so on a difficulty gradient regardless of which ones they end up being, other elements such as collectables programmed to appear somewhere in the vicinity at least, inconsequential NPCs will be selected from a wider pool of possibilities. On that note of collectables, these have no function in the game other than that the game profile screen will note how many are had at the end, however since they have supposed value it would be within Wario's inclination to obtain them all the same. The thing is though is that they take up space in the inventory, and if an item is dropped it can't be regained, so if Wario wants to reach the end of the game with the maximum number of collectables then he'll have to accept limiting the number of other actively useful items that can be carried otherwise; the size of the inventory will be progressively increased across the game, but this position of compromise will always be there. How difficult will Wario make things for himself for the sake of pride and greed? One section of the map will be very reminiscent of the classic *Wario Land* games in terms of aesthetic and in that it's just a matter of going from left to right through dungeons etc. without any semblance of real plot beyond attaining a treasure at the end.

Along the way a familiar face that will occasionally be come across is Bowser Jr. Apparently all of the Koopalings were sent out around the world to find some 'Watchtowers', but he at least has since got bored of that. More than that though, now that he's been spending this prolonged period away from his dad, he's started to open up to the idea of exploring more of his own interests beyond just evil schemes. As such his sequences, when they occur, see him in the midst of trying out other professions (each attempt with collateral consequences that in turn prompt him to show more of his usual impatient/self-entitled attitudes again), these including artist, athlete, photographer and actor.

As for Wario's main companion in this adventure however, that would be Ognetta herself. With Wario tracking down her hideout in the first section of the game, he intends to take her all the way to The Marquis Council, which is a way across Wonderealm, maintaining her as his prisoner. Along the way however through their interactions they'll end up on better terms (this isn't providing Wario with a love interest, this isn't a Mario x Princess situation, theirs is just a matter of close platonic friendship by the end), although all the way up to The Marquis Council's stronghold Wario still holds onto the priority of the bounty for her, but when they actually get there at last he finally changes his mind and doesn't hand her over after all. Oh, and at an appropriately 'early' point in the narrative it's discovered exactly why she's wanted: she's basically a werewolf, with The Marquis Council then scared of what chaos she might cause when in her beastly form. When they're at the stronghold they comes across Bowser Jr for a final time whereupon he properly joins their party for the climax.

All of this being considered, when it comes down to it The Marquis Council isn't the ultimate authority in Wonderealm. This land is home to the closest the Mario franchise is likely to get to superheroes, individuals each with their own enhanced ability. They're the ones who uphold and enforce justice here, albeit by their own perceptions of morality, hence the wider populace lives under a subtle baseline of threat from those they don't think they could stand up against. Since during his travels

Wario can't help but also try other quick escapades for gaining money in the meantime before he can claim the bounty, this collateral/unfair danger posed by these 'superheroes' is seen when they individually turn against him, their methods/attitudes going beyond just stopping a criminal. With word being spread between the superheroes about Wario and Ognetta once it becomes clear that they're repeat offenders, it eventually becomes the case that the superheroes of specific regions (one superhero per area of the larger map) are preparing to apprehend them before they even arrive. When it comes to the actual boss fight with each superhero, the focus is just on escaping; if Wario wants to actually 'defeat' that boss he'll need to subsequently seek them out again specifically for an optional secondary boss fight which is at a notably higher difficulty level. Once a single boss is 'properly defeated' there will begin to be referenced elsewhere some additional powered individual who is otherwise going unseen.

At some point Ognetta tries to lead Wario off course by informing him of a vault (or equivalent) that the superheroes keep some treasure in. It turns out however, to both of their surprises, that it isn't some valuable item that's kept in there but rather another being, Zuy, who's unique and while appearing young is in fact hundreds of years old. Zuy has the ability to affect genetics in nature, and they were the one to cause Wonderealm to be as it is now. Long ago they found a pipe which led through the planet, on the other side of which they found the Mushroom Kingdom. So enamoured were they by what they found that they wanted to shape Wonderealm in its image, altering the genes of plants and animals so that they would become like what they had seen there, which is why now everything looks similar to the Mushroom Kingdom but with certain lingering differences. The fact that this started a long time ago also explains why none of the similarities are specific to any of the current Mario characters in turn, i.e. there are no parallels to Mario etc. among these people, since Zuy saw the Mushroom Kingdom before the usual cast were born. This messing with genetics was also what created the superheroes, who have since become too powerful to get close enough to take them away again (yet all the same they locked Zuy up to be safe). Zuy offers to alter Ognetta to release her from her 'curse', but she rejects the notion, saying she loves being a [werewolf], for all the trouble it's currently got her in. This freeing of Zuy also adds to why the remaining superheroes are so adamantly after them, beyond what nuisance Wario is being otherwise (and the actual defeating of previous superheroes if that optional route is being taken).

No matter what the game concludes with Wario being shown the cross-planet pipe to the Mushroom Kingdom by Zuy so that he can go back with what treasures he's accumulated, meanwhile Bowser Jr decides to return to the task his father set him after all, but surrounding this the narrative in fact has alternate endings. To just go through the game regularly will result in the Fugitive ending, this where the climactic sequence will involve the topmost superhero, who has been encountered before but without then the option for a secondary battle to fully defeat her, returning after Wario chooses not to hand Ognetta over to The Marquis Council, this antagonist now making to stop them once and for all; it's a private affair involving just them, but as part of it she also mentions what retributions she'll furthermore bring down on anyone she finds out has had their minds sullied by wrongful notions about the world by Wario's interference. In the aftermath of their escape from this fight, despite it ending with this superhero being trapped somehow somewhere, the overall situation in Wonderealm is much the same now as when Wario first arrived, hence Ognetta will continue to have to be on the run; she won't go with Wario to the Mushroom Kingdom all the same though since no matter what Wonderealm is still her home and she isn't ready to leave it.

Alternatively, if the superheroes again aren't all defeated but at the same time Wario has on his journey taken the extra steps to see through all of the major NPC side plots there will by this conclusion be enough people through the land who have become open to seeing that these superheroes aren't

as good for them as they've been believing that they'll now band together for the Rebellion ending. As such after the sequence at The Marquis Council's stronghold the main characters are contacted by the rebellion, thus going on to see what's been being put together already. The movement is still very much in its infancy however, making it still vulnerable when the topmost superhero arrive again, this time with even greater force since she's expecting to be dealing with a larger number of people all fighting alongside Wario in the battle mechanic this time. Afterwards it's set up that once Wario has left the populace will continue to challenge the current order of things, they also welcoming Ognetta to join their cause as an equal seeing as she has been helping Wario throughout.

If in a third case the route of fully defeating every single superhero in the secondary boss battles is taken and succeeded in, the Liberated ending is achieved. In this instance the topmost superhero is still left, since again she didn't have an option for a secondary boss battle in the same way, however before she can confront the characters like in the Fugitive ending the scene is interrupted by the previously unseen other powered individual, he now revealing himself to have been the one masterminding the others, not overtly controlling them but giving subtle nudges from behind the scenes and being the one to pass the most information around between them. It's learned that he abhors the idea of being paid attention to, that he might in any way be the centre of attention, hence he's been happy to let all the other superheroes be in charge, yet now that Wario has defeated almost all of them it seems like he'll be duty-bound to step up and take over himself (it's inconceivable to him that there *not* be a powered person governing the land). To stop this eventuality from coming to pass however, he must now prevent the characters from defeating the topmost superhero too, so long as she remains then he can continue to exist only on the sidelines. He is not the strongest of powered individuals, but he is good at misdirection, so in the final fight he'll do a job of feigning which moves are effective against him under varying circumstances, leading Wario to believe he should be using one thing when in fact that's not doing much at all etc., thus there's an added element of trying to suss out what the actual best choices for attacks are on top of sometimes judging if the feigning is in fact a double bluff. Additionally, while the rest of the primary boss fights have seen the main characters overall just trying to escape, now it's this mastermind's turn to periodically be tempted with fleeing. When it seems like the fight is coming to an end though he will cave and summon the topmost superhero to help after all, he using his abilities to supercharge hers, they in their final phase thus a combined opponent. Once both are ultimately defeated, the people of Wonderealm slowly begin to realise that they're no longer under the grip of the superheroes. There's to be a domino effect as they subsequently have to work out what will be the structure of their society henceforth. Is Ognetta going to step up to the task of sorting out the new order? Of course not, she doesn't care about being in leadership, however she does think that in the political chaos to ensure she'll have a better chance of getting away with re-establishing a life for herself.

Regardless though it should be remembered that Wario himself is not a hero, it's not his interest to 'save' these people beyond what instances there have been along the way. No matter what, he's going home. That being said, it's also always noted before he leaves that he will forever be regarded as an honorary resident of Wonderealm, at least by her.

Mario Frisbee Fairway

For this sports game, the characters have departed from the usual kingdoms to take a holiday out on one of the other major continents, having elected to stay at an advertised new resort, which involves staying in separate lodges rather than a facility like a hotel. Not everyone is coming along though; while there's all the expected 'good' characters, from the 'baddies' side it's only the henchmen types, they having approached Mario etc. saying they've been enjoying the other sporting events that have been going on but they'd like a chance to partake without their bosses being around (this was another reason for going somewhere far away, for this way they're less likely to be walked in on by the likes of Bowser). As for those kingdoms back home, they're being watched over in their absence by the Paper Mario characters who have been let out of their book as did happen in *Mario & Luigi: Paper Jam* (also more on the logistics of that in *Mario in Veil's Rhapsody*), they working alongside the likes of the 'real' Toadsworth to keep things running while he doesn't otherwise have Toad or Toadette with him (they having gone on the trip too), while Paper Goombas etc. try to make the disappearance of the henchmen less noticeable. Officially the Mushroom Kingdom is still being overseen by King Toadstool, but...well, his situation was somewhat seen in *Embers of Truth*.

The resort owners, the Glints, possess unique Frisbees (although due to that actually being a company copyright I don't know if the wording for the whole game would have to be changed, or if a brand deal would need to be struck) which when in flight cause the thrower to be sucked inside of it, carried until it lands again and that person can get out (the person could in theory release themselves at any point during the flight but more on that later); thus these can be used as a mode of transport. The grounds elsewhere offer an array of recreations of other 'famous' locations across this planet, although on closer inspection it appears that a lot of the décor is in fact crudely made of cardboard.

The resort's true cheapness goes beyond that, for some distance away is a large rubbish tip filled with all the waste the Glints accumulated yet didn't end up using in their final construction. It turns out they got all of their equipment from the Mushroom Kingdom etc. since that was cheaper than buying things from the local markets, and it was while over there that they also thought to advertise their business in that foreign land, opening up a new demographic. Amongst this pile is the painting King Boo became trapped in at the end of *Luigi's Mansion 3*, a painting he is no longer bound to. At some prior point a combination of other items within the pile reacted to release him, and ever since he's just been sulking within the detritus, gradually sifting through the mess in case there's anything that could be of use to him. This would also confirm that he wasn't among those Boos in *Future's Spirits*. When his attention is grabbed by the presence of the characters however, he's incensed by the fact that all those 'villainous' henchmen are acting so friendly around the 'good guys'.

Despite the place's potential shortcomings in reality, the characters are partaking in the activities offered all the same, their current one having them out in the evening. All of a sudden however the ground across the area opens up with a myriad of sinkholes (it turns out the Glints had been able to afford to build here because there was a known risk of this kind of thing in the region; they'd just assumed it wouldn't be a problem for the present). The Glints promptly flee in their Frisbees, able to fling themselves far onto the safety of the horizon. Find other such Frisbees left behind, the characters will similarly use these to try to get to safety, although as they have no experience with them they cannot be as efficient in their travel.

Thus, after that preface, the story mode gameplay can begin. With the map split up into 'courses', the characters will look to navigate themselves via their Frisbees around obstacles and sinkholes, through a combination of the actual environments and those made of cardboard, to reach each next safe area. Each character has their own stats for distance, accuracy, speed etc., and there are otherwise tricks

that can be performed mid-flight assuming one makes the correct button presses/motion controls (whichever play style is decided upon during this game's development). Meanwhile, although he wasn't to blame for these circumstances (the danger truly is natural), King Boo has seen an opportunity to bring a rightful divide between the good and bad characters. As the starting group make their way across the landscape, he'll manifest himself as floating rings that if passed through by the Frisbees will, he convinces the henchmen, win them points, thus planting the seeds of competition in their minds. They indeed take the bait, and since it would waste even more time to argue, they need to get out of here after all, the other characters just play along and accept the parameters of the supposed competition. There are other characters stranded across the map who can be rescued by completing branching side routes (so that they can be given their own Frisbees from the spares also taken from the lodges), meanwhile there would in this mode likely be a dozen or so main 'courses' to play across.

The competition might have been taken up, but King Boo isn't satisfied yet. As such, between the courses, he also begins disguising himself as the attendants of shop stalls where points from each round can 'under the circumstances' be spent on power-ups, these either boosting your own flight or allowing you to attack others (if your mid-air aim is good enough, on which note said attacks would likely be multidirectional to increase your chances of success on that front). In certain other cases the start of a course will be postponed by the baddies initiating this game's second manner of play instead, that in the style of Ultimate Frisbee (where teams try to get the Frisbee into their opponent's goal at the other end of the pitch), in this case that involving snatching a Frisbee as it's thrown by a character (that character then unable to avoid being sucked inside still) and thus passing it back and forth, in doing so 'locking' the Frisbee which prevents the initial thrower from being able to reform outside of the disc again until they subsequently 'unlock' it, meaning the good guys have no choice but to play along so that they'll be set free again afterwards.

At the end of the final course, as King Boo finally reveals himself to the characters to gloat over the divides he's managed to create, a new giant sinkhole opens up beneath them, sending them into freefall. Mario and whoever has become the head of the henchmen, who are both the furthest down already, throw their Frisbees with themselves subsequently inside them up to the next nearest characters (whom the player then assumes control of) who then must toss those Frisbees on swiftly to the next person, passing the pair up the chain until the final throw should be timed such that they can pop out close enough to thus grab a hold of King Boo (pop out any earlier during the relay and they'll just be part of the dropping group again). They'll drag him back down, swinging off his famously-long tongue so that they can reach back at their companions who by then had all managed to link up between themselves and maybe slowing themselves down against the side of the sinkhole, this allowing for a full arm-in-arm ladder as the ghost strains to bring himself up to surface level once more. King Boo manages to shake them off but now such that they're all back on solid ground. He makes to advance on them once more, Mario etc. standing defiantly against him, however just then the dawn sun breaks over the horizon and the light causes him to vanish. In the stillness that comes after all that's left is for Toad to brandish a brochure he took from the resort's reception to suggest a new destination they should head to instead.

As for the freeplay modes, there's a choice of more Frisbee golf courses, team Ultimate Frisbee matches (albeit it with a 'deactivated' disc) or indeed in a minigame-style the other activities originally offered at the resort. You start with the group from the beginning of story mode, then every character you rescue over there becomes available here, that also including King Boo once you get to the end of said story, meanwhile the Glints are unlocked by obtaining cumulative scores above given thresholds. As for the promise of being able to eject from a thrown Frisbee before it lands if you so choose, most times this would then just result in your character 'dying' meaning you have to redo your throw or

that they must then simply run to catch up with it (this the player has no control over, it's not then free roam), however there will be familiar cardboard cut-outs hidden in certain spots which if landed on by means of said ejections will furthermore unlock the corresponding Paper Mario characters seen at the beginning for freeplay or even the other bigger villains who weren't brought along on the story mode trip. To add a further collectable system to the game, each character available in the roster provides assets to customise your freeplay Frisbee with, these being any of colour palettes, stickers or non-functional attachments.

Onward Luigi

The game opens on Luigi dazed in an unidentified location, some strange cluster of small islands between which Mario, Peach and Yoshi are sailing on a boat. Luigi however cannot reach them, trapped behind some invisible barrier, only able to hear “His heart is muddled with questionable things...the green man of moustache weeps and worries like a child, fearful, it is embarrassing...despite your flaws...your insincerity sickens me...it is inconceivable to me, it is deplorable, it is this very tendency to falsify and edit facts that gets you in trouble...you shall spend your days in loneliness, mark my words!” as a ghostly memory of a voice as he tries to get their attention (these respectively relating to the games *Mario's Early Years* and the Star Gate's speech messing with Luigi about his worthiness in *Partners in Time*). Then Luigi wakes up aboard the ship he left in at the end of *Galaxy 3*, the above having just been a nightmare he'd been suffering while all alone out here in space, the former detail thus suggesting that that entire pre-school game had taken place just then inside his head, while the latter would indicate that the Star Gate's judgement of him, while revealed to have been part of a ruse afterwards, had still in the moment traumatised him deeply, especially since at the same time Mario had been praised so highly, this in fact being the moment he had begun to secretly resent his brother. Shaking himself from the lingering thoughts of that dream, Luigi spies a new planet on his radar and, forcing himself to swell up with determination, sets a course for it.

Landing upon the environment, the first area allows for a learning of the basic controls, during which Luigi is watched by an alien figure who's trying to ascertain if he's friend or foe. Upon deciding that he's not an immediate threat, this figure introduces herself, her name Numera. As a general note for this trilogy of Luigi games, the majority of the creatures encountered wouldn't be humanoid, to ensure variety, hence he himself would be considered bizarre in their eyes too. Numera informs him that this planet is called Clu-wern, and that this wider region in general is subject to the rule of some Fear Moguls, independent of each other but also each with the same basis of powers to capitalise on people's fears in order to maintain their positions of dominance. They have had some others try to be heroes in the past, although they've never fully succeeded, and otherwise this sector of space tends to be too busy otherwise with some 'Arbiter Reckoning' to be providing more assistance; at least they (in completely unrelated circumstances) dotted short pylons around everywhere which act as save points through these games. Still with the thought of Mario in his head, of what he would do, Luigi agrees to help.

The gameplay style of this Luigi trilogy will be more story-centric than regular Mario games, although not in the same way in turn that the RPGs are; in each of the areas visited, which have distinct environments and (at least in the case of this first game) different species living there, there's respective ensembles who can be interacted with through various missions, the ways in which Luigi acts per these discourses affecting the story of that area, although afterwards it's always the same bosses fought etc., so the consequences of actions exist but are within bubbles. It's not open world but there's plenty of scope for exploring. In this game the majority of these missions will, unsurprisingly given the villains, have something to do with the theme of fear, the ways in which it can manifest and how different people deal with it. Along the way resources can be collected, which can be used for making items from a crafting tree. In a rare number of places there might be something in a steampunk aesthetic, but it's made clear that this is not typical for that area, instead a unique item. While Luigi's health will be fully restored each time he saves at a pylon, healing on the go comes from Numera. Rather than just having a regular health bar etc., Luigi has a health wheel, wherein said health is divided into at least four categories (attack strength, strength for how much can be carried in the inventory, speed, range of eyesight, then anything else that would be relevant to the gameplay), and each time he's hurt a random one of these will be reduced by a notch. When outside of dangerous

situations Luigi can redistribute the remaining quantities of health between these categories, but to refill them Luigi will first as he's going around want to take opportunities where Numera can assist in a given action rather than him just doing it by himself, for every time she feels helpful her own meter, one measuring self-esteem, will rise, and [x]-amount of this esteem can be transferred for one notch of Luigi's health of his choice being regained. All in all, since these games are seeing Luigi branch out on his own, let's overall not just use mechanics in the exact same way that they're seen in the main Mario titles.

After fighting the Fear Mogul at the end of that section, liberating those people, a portal is come across in a cliff-side (or similar, just not free-standing) which leads to the next environment. It's not an instantaneous transport though; while the distance travelled is obviously shortened massively, travelling between portals takes the form of some kind of tunnel made from an unknown soft material which Luigi and Numera actually walk down each time. Once a tunnel has been entered one can't turn around and exit through the same way, you have to go through to the other end and then re-enter if you change your mind. It's assumed that due to the varying designs of each section that these are taking place on different planets. In each area is additionally a vendor at a self-made stall from whom other items can be purchased, each time the person identical but having some different name in the style of Vo/Bo/Ro etc., these people being the comic relief in this trilogy, and not with like cringy jokes but being as legitimately humorous on occasion as can be achieved. It is at these stalls that the bonus achievements of the game can be attained. Rather than having collectables or side levels per se, the extra content comes from minigames offered by these vendors, and it's completing all of these minigames in total that unlocks a second tier of inventory at each of the stalls, these now ranging from items which make the gameplay easier, such as devices for detecting when resources are nearby, and silly items that cause cosmetic/sound/power changes.

It's learnt later on however that all of these sections are in fact taking place all on the same planet, with the portal tunnels cutting through the mantle. More than this however, the portals aren't exactly that, but rather a part of a giant lifeform comprising said planet, the impact of this being that at some point the tunnels being passed through begin to move about, constrict, generally become more hazardous for those inside. In turn Vo admits to having been all the vendors they've met so far, it not just that the character design was cheaply copied and pasted, for Luigi and Numera had seemingly been so insistent that they were switching planets and he didn't want to fully mess with their versions of the truth. How was he able to get around the surface of the planet faster than them then if they were going through the portals? Well, again as part of those tunnels not quite being what they seem, the same distance-warping phenomenon going on inside them also actually extends the time for which they're inside, hence there's actually a notable delay between entering one portal and then coming out another, thus Vo always had time to get to the next location by regular means, doing so for want to continue interacting with them after the first occasion. It's in fact through Vo that the truth about Clu-wern is discovered, when he says something that supposedly a different vendor should have known instead.

Despite all these revelations though, Clu-wern is not presented as anything evil or as a baddie, it's just the fact of their broader situation. The plot ultimately still boils down to the Fear Moguls. The last of these then makes the move to capitalise on Luigi's fear, thus it manifests as a version of Mario taking the glory for having dispensed with all the other Fear Moguls, receiving the public's acknowledgement. This Mario isn't giant, but it is fractionally bigger than Luigi. When it comes to the final fight that ensues, while there's obviously an option for this Mario to be run by the computer, there's also an option where, if another person has already completed the game, they can control the Mario in a random other person's game if someone in the world is playing with an internet connection and is at

that point in the story, thus meaning Luigi really is having to go up against a player-guided 'protagonist'. Upon Luigi's victory the diverse inhabitants of Clu-wern thank him for ridding them of all their cruel despots, then of course he can continue to go around to finish up any other community missions that were left still to be done.

Super Mario Maker 3D

So as the title suggests this would be the customiser series expanding to give players the option to make levels in 3D as well as 2D (in that case though builders will have other new things to consider as well, such as whether the camera is fixed or if the player can swivel it, then in the process they'll also get to see new 3D models of classic pixelated assets). As part of this there would also be additional level aesthetic choices from *Paper Mario*, *Mario 64*, *Galaxy* (and any others wanted, but I'm sure there's also risk of excess; tools like the F.L.U.D.D. or Cappy maybe could be added in isolation). While most of the game therefore is made by the players, it also maintains *Super Mario Maker 2*'s element of having a 'story mode' as well. Opening on a polar scene where humans have set up a cargo waystation, suddenly from above Bowser's airship comes crashing down, barrelling out from which come Mario and Bowser. This is meant to be following on from the end of *Odyssey*, so the ship would look the same as in that game and the pair of them would still be wearing their suits, however Mario would shortly thereafter don an arctic version of his builder outfit from the last instalment, meanwhile Bowser doesn't tend to need a costume per se anyway. I'm not worried about similarly placing the first two *Mario Makers* since that really doesn't matter so long as it's before *Super Mario Desolation* and is during a time where Mary O was around to offer her custom pocket-world services (that confirmed to be her official business in a line of dialogue with an NPC in this game).

What follows is something of a standoff across the snowy plain, each taking the contents of the humans' cargo containers to build levels against the other; Bowser's levels (of which there are more) show off the different elements to you, getting you used to dealing with them then unlocking them for you in your own customiser once you've got past them (although if you wanted to go straight into building your own levels first then you would have a basic selection of options already), meanwhile Mario's levels teach you the different tricks you can use for building in both 2D and 3D, with each trick framed as a task to work out how to complete; in either case their levels will take place within 'bigger on the inside' snow globes (which are already large compared to Mario in the first instance), some of which you can choose to navigate around and come back to later, others due to the environment you have no choice but to enter. Every few times Bowser is pushed back (his snow globes miniaturised after completion to be out of the way yet still around if you want to have another go), Mario gets to build something upon the ground gained. Additionally in the growing space behind you other characters will start to show up, mostly those in Mary O's crew (since the human operation is being organised by her), e.g.: Undodog, Soundfrog etc., they in turn offering you other pre-made levels to have a go at, these being most stylised ones, focusing more on a theme for instance rather than primarily being about introducing you to a new element. One time it'll instead be human worker setting you on a level where you need to gather up some spilled Power Moons, those being the secret main cargo of this transport since this is still while New Donk City was conducting their Moon con to the other kingdoms of the world (see *Embers of Truth*). Alternatively if you investigate a peculiar spot in the snow Mario might fall into an underground cavern with other extra content to offer too. Thirdly if you think to go back and explore the wreck of Bowser's airship you'll find bonus bits in there. The story mode ends when Mario has pushed Bowser back all the way to the North Pole, where in fact the final level will show of co-op mode as the pair of them suddenly have to fend off against a yeti they've awoken there. Of course a number of people may not be playing this with another person with them, especially story mode, therefore there will be the capability to instead just switch between Mario and Bowser throughout the level (obviously co-op levels can require both players to be active at the same time, but this one just to make sure it works would be one where the two of them simply have to be in different positions in the level to do different things, able to have one character be static for a time before being switched back to).

The reason I am choosing to set this in the arctic is because I want it to be the case that if you speak to an NPC human they will tell you ‘this international transport link is following the route the early protag-humans took from the Snow Kingdom to eventually the Archipelago Kingdom, although we don’t intend to go that far’ (or words to that effect). Because of what I’ve done with the human lore in *Embers of Truth* and *Daisy’s New Voyage*, we know that the protag-humans established their society on lands within a particular ocean, meanwhile the ‘proper’ humans developed on the continent where would be built New Donk City. The problem is that the world map in *Odyssey* shows the continent containing the Mushroom Kingdom (which would be relatively near the Archipelago Kingdom) is literally on the opposite side of the planet to New Donk City, and in my mind therefore I need to establish an explanation for how this extreme geographic separation of the only two human subspecies came about. If they went across the other major continents, there would have been signs of other human civilisations in some of the other kingdoms visited in *Odyssey* (if you say ‘well maybe they were just wiped out’ then I counter it would be unlikely in that case that the protag-humans would ever have made it to their destination at all). Instead therefore I propose that they went via one of the poles and continued going around vertically on the other side again, specifically the north since on that same *Odyssey* world map you don’t get as good of a look at the northern hemisphere, meaning I can have an easier time of saying the Archipelago Kingdom was there all along (hence why Daisy’s crew went north from the usual continent in *Daisy’s New Voyage*). None of this matters to this specific game, if any, but I need this to be answered in my head and subsequently at least seeded somewhere.

There is then another mode I’ve come up with to put in this game, but I’m not sure on how well it could be executed. Potentially being called something like ‘Survival Royale’ (for while that might not exactly work wording-wise hopefully it gets the point across as a variant on battle royales), these would be levels built for ten people to play online simultaneously, their goal not to reach a destination but simply to run out the clock; the twist here being that the more people are alive at the end, the more points you get (maybe there can be a shop of some sort that such points can be spent at, with those points then also having to be available in the main game too), so it’s not about being the last person standing but rather helping each other out. How would the situation necessitate helping each other out? Well, each player is designated another on the board whom they are to aid, and they can then only see the obstacles within a given radius of that other player, not around themselves or any other. You would still move yourself with the regular controls, but if instead you hold down a trigger at the same time those button presses will rather send an icon to the person you’re helping indicating that they should go left/right/forward/back/jump/duck/stay still; you then in turn would be receiving the same icon guidance about your own situation from a third player. As for the person who made the level in the first place, they get more points for the fewer people who survive by contrast (they cannot play in their own level however without opting to not be a part of the point reward system, otherwise it would be a win-win situation), although in order to upload the level in the first place they have to beat it ten times, each from one of the designated spawn points, albeit able to see all the obstacles as they do so to clear it. Yes this would be tedious but it’s how I can think of to stop trolls from making levels set up to just immediately kill all bar one person (that one so that they can get that upload).

Mario in Veil's Rhapsody

This would be the first mainline Mario game to be in VR. It consists of four parts, which I do fear might as a single experience feel disjointed, therefore I would have them be clearly signposted as distinct chapters that you transition between and that can be separately selected in the menu screen once reached respectively in the main story (to redo in the case of previous sections), this in order to make any deviations in experience come across as more intentional in a way.

On the occasions throughout when you would have to contribute to an interaction, three dialogue options will appear for you to select. As Mario, you're joining Daisy, Hazel and Quail in the Beanbean Kingdom (*Superstar Saga*) to be judges at an amateur film competition put together by the Beanish people. Hazel and/or Quail clarify that Kodainoland is still a very private kingdom, hence why they don't show up in other games (especially ones that have already been made that are set further ahead in the timeline), so this is a rare thing for them to be out here. Around the start of the game however Peach turns up as well, seeking Mario's help with a developing situation, her exact behaviour towards him able to be interpreted as her using her knowledge of what affections he used to have for her (remember by this point he's non-explicitly more paired with Daisy) in order to manipulate him into being more likely to agree.

(Even more than that though, there's a wider implication that their respective relationships are being kept secret from the public, who still believe Mario has eyes for Peach, this covering up of the truth involving then also having Luigi pretending to be close to Daisy, a fact that has indeed made them close friends if only that, hence why she helps as his caddie in *Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour* and calls him 'sweetie' in *Mario Power Tennis*. Meanwhile Peach references here that she's paid for two gold statues each of both Luigi and Daisy which now have been set up in Sarasaland's primary port town [Daisy Circuit in *Mario Kart Wii*]. As for when Mario and Daisy appear together in public, they usually give a neutral outward appearance, which is also why Peach is hesitant of the fact that they've come to this competition together now, hence why they have 'neutral chemistry' if paired up in *Mario Superstar Baseball*, and while the Party games exist under slightly different parameters as will be explored more later that demeanour carries into *Mario Party 5 & 6* where if paired they're labelled as the 'Nice Couple' as opposed to it being 'Cutest Couple' when Mario is with Peach there. Similarly in its own satellite logic, *Super Smash Bros Melee* states that gossips consider Daisy to be to Luigi what Peach is to Mario, this confirming what the public perceive to be the case. Overall, as the 'true' pairings of these characters become established over the games of this document, the coinciding establishment of the deceiving of the Mushroom Kingdom's public could well mirror what some gamers feel in turn about having been 'deceived', but hey this was how things were always going to turn out per the evidence shown in MatPat's videos)

Peach has brought with her the magic book containing the world of the Paper Mario series which now when opened up shows the characters there seemingly trying to communicate a kind of warning to the reader, although it isn't coming through in a way that can be interpreted (it's also clarified as a side-note here that the reason they can open the book now without it automatically having those characters spew out into the real world like in *Paper Jam* is because Mother Jutsuchi has more recently put some stabilising charms on the volume, which was long overdue after 'that business with Paper Bowser', meaning their worlds will only be bridged with the purposeful use of the sapphire in her necklace). Since these warnings have been noticed to have started appearing though there have been strange huts/rooms popping up around the lands which she'd like you to investigate, taking you there in a hot air balloon.

Whenever you thus find yourself at such a site of intrigue it'll be to find it to be like a puzzle room wherein you search around for objects which then based on environmental clues you apply in another place which caused a change somewhere else in turn (and so forth), at the end of which will be found a single significant item each time, the limited space to work better within the parameters of VR. Three out of four of these locations would be indoors in some way, as well as being themed to a degree to some established franchise aesthetic; the items at the end of these will be a precious ring, a doll made to look like Peach and a red shell. The other site however, this occurring as the third instance of the set of four, will instead be on the perimeter of Donkey Kong's jungle where within a roped-off area the trees appear to have been uprooted by something large charging out from deeper within. This one Peach was less certain of as being in the same category to begin with, since it's not a hut/room, yet it appeared around the same time and seemingly contains elements laid out in similar ways to what was seen in the other locations, therefore you investigate it all the same, albeit it here you'll have to make use of rocks, bugs etc. in conjunction with marks on the likes of tree trunks which might be interpreted as clues, ending with you obtaining a large sharp tooth as your prize; whether it's actually of the same group as the rest or not, you accept it and move on. In one of the cases, just as you arrive, Peach is then approached by Toad and a Shy Guy, the former saying that the latter wishes to speak with her about someone's disappearance. Peach remarks to you that with you now able to take care of these peculiar rooms for her, she is certainly back to being more able to listen to her citizens.

In between each of these investigations you'll briefly return to the film festival. In doing so you'll find that Daisy has been collecting Blitties to play with while everything else is going on (this has nothing to do with the story, it's purely that I want to be able to interact with Blitties in VR, since those cube-shaped cats are cute). The films are still going on, for instance one time you come back to the introduction of 'Splintered Space', a remake of something that had been released a few years before ("it's been long enough, it's time for it again") based upon the true story of when a hero from another universe arrived in these lands (see *Kirby Fractures*; also the 'original' film is one gamers have previously seen advertised back in *Superstar Saga* by means of a poster for 'Kirby Story'). In another case a dry-witted Pokey named Llaut who's travelled a long way for the festival introduces a film called 'Theft of the Bhoanki'. To be clear you the player never get to see anything significant of any of these films. After the final investigative section in this chapter though a different kind of presentation will be brought forth: rather than playing a film, Toadbert will show off a new invention of his, what we would recognise as a rudimentary VR headset, which he offers to the audience so that they can view his alternative piece. The characters comply, and so as you put on your own in-game headset it's announced that you've reached the end of chapter one.

Now inside the virtual space, you find yourself not watching a film but rather having a new character introduce himself to you: Indigo Aether. Asking if your body transferred through okay, he wishes to show you around this world of his, The Veil, and offers you a choice of either further themed puzzle rooms/areas or more traditional Mario levels; this decision can be changed at any point during this chapter. Ultimately this game is going to consist of more adventure-esque sequences anyway, and it'd be fun to be able to experience from this perspective more what you'd usually expect with relative platforming (within the capabilities of VR), enemies and mushrooms/power-ups, but at this stage I wouldn't want to force players into a complete sharp turn from the first section, in addition to just doing more with these new kinds of mechanics, hence the divergence. Whichever type of gameplay is selected, there'd want to be ways of also appreciating how expansive this world is, being able to see all that lies in the distance. If it occurs to you to try, there will be no apparent way to remove the in-game VR headset. Should the game detect you seemingly attempting to remove something from around your head in that way, Indigo will insist that the launch of this project is really important to Toadbert and it would mean a lot if you could just give it a chance for a while longer.

In between each 'level' you'll also once again return to where Daisy is, although now that will be inside a smaller room, she sat upon a seat in front of a regular-sized monitor rather than a wide film screen, Blitties still on her lap. Indigo explains that she's only staying in here for the moment because he's still working out what's for everyone else to do, but he just had to see the great Mario in action first. Despite this supposed delay however, Indigo would still like for you to choose who should next join you here, the monitor Daisy's watching indeed displaying a cycle of views of other recognisable franchise characters. Whoever you select will indeed subsequently show up in some form of another in the main levels (those who were at the festival like Hazel and Quail along with a selection of miscellaneous other citizens are already available to potentially crop up), meanwhile if you refuse to select anyone Indigo will shrug and say he'll just find someone at random later then. Once you've passed this decision, you can stay with Daisy for as long as you like, but you're also now prompted to move on to your next level, which is performed by the pulling of a lever, one way to do a puzzle room, the other to have an adventure level. Additionally on Daisy's screen can sometimes also be seen an overview of the Paper Mario world, she commenting that it almost feels like the screen is gazing back at her during those moments.

Whichever combination of levels you choose, Indigo will as he sticks by your side begin to talk more about what's on his mind, beyond that of compliments on your performance. One time he speaks in metaphors of how if you had the choice of a real piece of fruit and a wax one, you'd surely pick that which was real. In another case, when the circumstance of a level seem like they'll be too awkward for Mario to get around, he goes off only to return once said circumstances have suddenly changed to remove the imposition, for what's most important here is that Mario gets to be a part of a good story. Following on from this, Indigo shows you how to use command plugs to alter aspects of this space, such as adding music or changing the colour of the sky, by summoning a terminal from the ground into which such a command plug can be inserted, after which the specific preference can be selected; obviously The Veil isn't something as rudimentarily mechanical as what the Beanish people were using for their films, but this interface should provide a simpler way for you to work with it. It's always been here, a plane behind your own, however it takes a certain kind of mind to shape it. Then he starts to mention an enchantress named Wunevere, a woman who since some time ago would on rare occasions come to the Mushroom Kingdom, whenever her unrelenting creativity had inspired her to perform some magical feat, before disappearing again. One such feat was the invention of Save Blocks and Albums which when touched would take instant record of that person's latest experiences; they're like automatic diaries if you will. Her last appearance was shortly after some incident involving creatures from another world, but as of shortly after that she's sadly no longer with us. "She was a real inspiration for me."

Eventually though Indigo feels that he really does have to get on with making The Veil ready for all the other people who haven't been fitted into any of Mario's experiences thus far. Not wishing for you to feel abandoned however, he leaves in his stead some 'new friends'. These new individuals however each have something that's off about them, unsettling; Indigo is not good at making brand new people. Meanwhile Daisy's situation has also begun to sink more into the growing creepiness. Of course her being confined to that room was already something to be hesitant about, but now the colour and energy seem to be draining from inside. This on the other hand is now in turn the place where your next progression lies. As you go to pull the lever again, you'll henceforth be able to notice that the mechanism has fractured slightly, revealing a third unmarked option is you pull the level in a different direction in turn.

Select this option and you'll find yourself instead in a recreation of a writer's hexagonal workshop. On the floor are scatter dolls made to look like Mario characters, in a similar style to the Peach one found

earlier. One wall has against it the main desk which is mostly sporting amidst quills and other papers examples of Save Blocks and Albums (the ‘feat’ Indigo was talking before), but also there is a clearly newly-finished volume that matches the one in the real world that contains the Paper Mario dimension (since that was certainly then what she made on her last visit, again as mentioned above, this would put the whole *Paper Mario* series after *Partners in Time*, the event with ‘creatures from another world’, despite game release order, this purely for some minor character continuity in my mind, with the paper characters being copied from their ‘real’ counterparts as they were at that time: Luigi becoming Mr L in *Super Paper Mario* was the basis of the theory for his underlying dark side, yet in *Partners in Time* the Star Gate senses nothing impure in Luigi’s heart, therefore that darkening must have happened afterwards, or rather as implied in *Onward* that interaction was in fact the cause of it, and afterwards while Luigi didn’t stop admiring his brother necessarily he also began resenting him at the same time, this dichotomy making his internal conflict worse).

A second supports another desk, this one sporting dioramas of both woollen and craft-material versions of Yoshi’s Island (seeing as how we can deduce that a version of this place was once Wunever’s workplace given again the Save Blocks and Albums, it should be safe to say that in addition to the Paper Mario book *Yoshi’s Woolly World* and *Yoshi’s Crafted World* were too products of her magic; it should also be noted however that the land from *Yoshi’s Clay Quest* is not here, meaning that despite it also having an alternate aesthetic that one was not part of this creation). Some detail implies that she was inspired to experiment with those alternate versions of the island by an incident where Baby Bowser turned the real one into a pop-up book (*Yoshi’s Story*).

A third has had hung upon it notes and blueprints detailing the development of Toadbert’s VR headsets. A fourth has some shelves screwed to it (more on these later). A fifth wall has been blasted away, most of it replaced by a window looking out onto the kinds of settings that have formed the ‘levels’ you’ve been doing, while the other part of the space is now taken up by a monolith seemingly made out of the same material as terminals you could elsewhere summon, this with an alcove in it the exact shape of Indigo (whatever his final design ended up being), as if he could slot himself into the interface. The final wall then just has a door in it. If you make to open this door you’ll suddenly start hearing Indigo’s voice in the non-directional distance, calling out concerned for where you are, a rumbling also building with an intensity that will hopefully drive you through said door, which brings a close to the second chapter. If you refuse to go through the door, instead determined to see out Indigo’s approaching voice and the rumbling, only after what is more than an acceptable amount of time would something happen, that being the window suddenly shattering as a giant hand swoops in to grab you, sending the screen to black before you wake up again back in Daisy’s room.

On the other side of that door you find yourself unexpectedly in the world of Paper Mario, you a 3D being operating in a space populated by 2D people. Once these people are over the general shock of your presence, they explain their current plight. It was only after the events of *Paper Jam* when they returned from your world that they first became aware of Indigo’s general presence, almost as if he began as something inside of them after your world learned that they were actual people within these pages. His first proper acts of manifestation that they were ever aware of were when he secretly provided the Origami Craftsman with materials not made out of paper, these being the items that went on to be turned into the Legion of Stationery by King Olly (they’ve only connected the dots about that retroactively; it could also be said that he created the wire mesh that was shown to support their underlying geography too, but I could also accept that one as having always been there since that’s so fundamental and largely behind-the-scenes), and in turn only after that did he begin to do anything that actively forced them to acknowledge him. He built himself a machine with which he could communicate with your world, with a certain Toad, and what he was saying seemed to read to them

as him wanting to bring people from out there into this world. When he was thus done with the machine, perhaps having found another way to speak to the Toad, they took to trying to use it instead, so warn someone else, but they weren't sure if they got it to work correctly. Worse than that though, to prevent them from making that very attempt Indigo sent a monster to destroy the machine afterwards.

Thus the main gameplay of this chapter revolves around helping these people repair the machine once more so that they can try to communicate again, the Star Spirits from the first *Paper Mario* also appearing to help, all the while avoiding the 'monster' that's still prowling around (it like the other slightly-off beings Indigo made for you earlier, only this one bigger), each 'level' being distinguished by each mission to obtain a given component by various means. Soon however Indigo joins the mix as well, still searching for you but now angrier with the understanding that you've made it into here, this distasteful part of The Veil. If you listen to what he's saying when he calls out to you however it's still with the intent of winning you back, starting off with mere sinister-sounding promises of what can be offered to you if you return, evolving into proclaiming that these people are just facsimiles, simple copies compared to you the real deal; yes they are actual people in and of themselves, they were even given additional history so that they could be set for their own distinct adventures, but that doesn't make them good enough. Alternatively he'll say that out there in the 'real' world all is governed by chaos, there no guarantee that things will make sense or turn out as they should, so why not give someone the control to make sure there is order to your lives? If these simulacra can leave, so too can you enter. When he speaks about Daisy, it seems now that the reason she was kept confined was so that she would act as an anchor for Mario during this transition period, for surely he'd want to keep coming back to this friend.

At one point you and the Paper characters succeed in managing to ambush Indigo, however at the arrival of his monster you have to scarper. It appears in the aftermath however that a component for the machine was dropped in the process, leading you to retrace those steps to find it. You indeed find something, another command plug, however on returning to the group you learn that this wasn't what they meant. On closer examination, this command plug is for the command 'FORGET'. In the end though the machine is reactivated, leading to a final sequence here where Indigo and his monster seek to stop you, going so far as to have miscellaneous paper people/objects torn up and sharp paper shred fly through the air, while suddenly a panel in the sky opens up to reveal a 'real' Toad (other than Toadbert) reading what message you thus project out up onto the page. The Toad promptly fetches Peach with her sapphire mentioned earlier and that panel becomes like a vacuum, sucking all of you up through it, ending chapter three.

You, the Paper characters and the Star Spirits find yourselves next to the Toad and Peach at the edge of a Shy Guy community situated in a valley surrounded by mountains. Before there's any chance to explain the situation however it happens that Indigo and his monster are sucked out into the 'real' world as well, although as soon as this transpires the monster gets merged back with its creator, meanwhile Indigo in turn loses the form he'd given himself in The Veil, he rising up as an unravelling shape to transform into something like a giant face in the clouds, no longer angry but panicking as he cries to be taken back. Peach theorises that if they can get the book up to Indigo's new form then by opening the bridge again he can indeed be returned to where he came from.

The next mission therefore is to get to Peach's hot air balloon at the centre of this map, although first you'll want to instruct the paper characters to help get VR headsets away from some Shy Guys that can be seen to have been given them (technically there are three dialogue options as usual, to tell them to help take the headsets away, to do nothing and to actively help the Shy Guys put them on, but presumably people will select the former since it can be properly observed for the first time how

those who do put on the headsets end up vanishing into The Veil moments later). All the while with every cry of distress Indigo makes a roaring shockwave will be directed down at you, causing elements of your environment to be flung through the air which you must dodge and otherwise just making it harder for you to walk onward. This chapter isn't broken up into 'levels', but your progress nevertheless would be able to be defined by stages as you progress through the settlement. Some sections will require your platforming skills to get through, other barriers will require your puzzle solving skills to open, and all the while the mayhem caused by the Shy Guys (since they're understandably alarmed that a giant face is now in their skies) provides you with further issues. To make matters worse these Shy Guys keep Wigglers like cattle, including a new variant called Wigcoons that are, per their name, half way into a cocoon state that means they either hang from walls or roll along on their sides, and so these creatures end up being the source of yet more obstacles. Part of this sees the book itself being knocked away amidst the crowd meaning you have to go searching for it.

Also during your progress you'll come across Toadbert, who evidently was just distributing VR headsets to the Shy Guys, who now can only stare upwards agog, conceding in a state of shock that 'oh well, they weren't going to have been able to distract from this one this time with more puzzles room anyway' (I'll also explain now, with the acknowledgement that those huts/rooms in the first chapter were simply distractions from the citizens being lost into The Veil, that the items attained at the end of the three legitimate rooms were, in reverse order, a 'red' 'her'-'ring'). Again in his shock he can be prompted to recount how after Mother Jutsuchi made the book safe to open he couldn't resist reading it for himself, which was when Indigo first started talking to him, getting into his head with ideas of creating a new kind of technology. 'He's like raw imaginative force'.

Once in the balloon the pair of you indeed rise towards the twisted face, struggling against the winds forming from his exaltations. When at last in position the sapphire is used to open the bridge once more...to no effect on Indigo. Peach confirms for you that the method hasn't worked, rather than leaving the player to consider that they simply haven't done something right, after which she asks if you have anything else on you that could be of use. The only other item in your possession at this point should be the 'FORGET' command plug, but that of course can only be used while inside The Veil. Aside from that though, seeing as Indigo appears to be just a manifestation of Wunever's inspiration which she put through the passion of her work into The Veil along with the paper world, if that idea is completely forgotten then he might go with it. Peach points out that you'll need to get everyone who's seen Indigo to forget in that case (hopefully the surrounding mountains blocked any outsiders' view of him in the clouds), thus the option to ask the paper characters to help the Shy Guys put on their headsets becomes justified. Everyone here needs to be in The Veil at the same time to experience the effect of the command plug.

Back on the ground, you instruct the paper characters to now do just that. They'll deal with those in the rest of the settlement, as well as then putting spare headsets on themselves (Toadbert brought plenty); you and Peach just worry about the Shy Guys in a given localised section, all the while the shockwaves are worse than ever. Once all of your section has been done, the two of you go into The Veil yourselves, where you find Toadbert has already brought up a terminal as well as working out how to establish a window which allows you to see what's still happening in the regular world. Insert the command plug then set it to forget Indigo and you will indeed see the face in the sky writhe as it fades away. There's a moment of static and then everything is as it was, just without anything visible in the sky through the window and with many people confused as to where they are. Those who were in The Veil for a while now, like Daisy, are able to offer to lead the crowd first through to where the paper characters come from, since forgetting Indigo doesn't mean forgetting anything else that went

in here and because she subsequently followed Mario after he last departed, following which Peach is sure she should still be able to use her sapphire to open the bridge from this side as well.

At a time after everything's been set back to normal, the story will close with you, Daisy, Hazel and Quail back amongst the Beanish for the recommencement of their film competition. You can mingle as much as you want, mess with the objects filling the space if you so please, but when you ultimately take your seat once again that which shall play on the big screen is the credits.

Now, back to the shelves in the workshop I mentioned earlier. With each of the levels in chapter two that you complete, both puzzle and adventure styles, a figurine specific to those assets that appeared in each will be added to those surfaces. Since you aren't actually immediately obligated to take the third lever option and go to the workshop as soon as it appears, it is possible for players to have already exhausted all the levels that are available by the time they get there, however I imagine most will have not and thus need to come back and replay some. Either way though once all have been completed (you being notified when this is done by a new sign hung around the lever) you can go up to the shelves and move the figurines about so that they all fit within given grooves, causing the wall to open up to reveal a passage beyond. Down here you can find a display of VR renderings of all the characters, both the ones that appeared otherwise in this game and more importantly those who didn't such as Bowser, with you then able to have limited dialogue options with the good characters and contained fights with the baddies. (I went with that distinction since I otherwise couldn't think of any of kind of interaction you'd have with the good characters, however I now want to have the interaction to speak with the bad ones as well, on top of the combat mechanics, so I don't know)

If this game did well at all, I'd imagine Nintendo would then wish to try again with something within the VR genre. I don't have another in this schedule in that vein however, so instead I'll propose a DLC to this one. 'Kong Family Fame' sees you playing as Donkey Kong as he and his family are set to be interviewed by representatives from New Donk City. In terms of context it's expositied that following Jumpman's clashes with the younger Cranky Kong the residents of the city became obsessed with those exploits, leading to the mass popularity of a videogame version. That fame went to Cranky's head, and so even years later when the Kongs were back in their jungle and he grew older he clung to the height of his fanbase, even coming to think of real life as games, a perspective the other apes just ran with rather than fighting it, hence why in *Donkey Kong Country* the other characters also speak as if they know they're just characters in one themselves. Here the style and tone is like that of other games such as *Job Simulator* where a secondary body gives you the player instructions and you have to try your best to carry them out, here that being that you are given props by the crew and are asked to do what the 'viewers back home' expect the Kongs to do (regardless of how accurate those expectations are), however as the interview proceeds things go off the rails, chaos stems from accidents and so you're left trying to pick up the mess, all the while the cameras are still rolling.

Mario Kart: Continental Rally

To make this different from other *Mario Kart* games, other than just having a few new characters, kart parts and items in the respective rosters inspired by the latest other game releases, there's now a story mode to play through (you can still just play regular random races and battle games as well in other options to be clear though). One day the respective characters suddenly find that karts have turned up at their homes with instructions of where to drive them to (the slightly different case being Luigi, who already has a kart of his own, so he instead witnesses some ghostly trails slipping away from where said kart had seemingly been being worked on in its garage; I'll go into why I've singled him out like this in the next paragraph). They all arrive at the stated location, which will turn out to be that of the first racetrack, to discover Cappy and Tiara (*Odyssey*) having returned along with the other Bonneters at last after *Embers of Truth* to now propose a great cross-country race tournament, the pair of them inspired by other sporting events they've seen taking place around the kingdoms. Everyone is immediately interested in the prize for the winner, that of a giant cake, one currently being lifted via tethers by multiple top hat airships and being sprayed to stay fresh by other Bonneters. Since the race is to be a path weaving through the various kingdoms, there wouldn't inherently be laps built into the courses, therefore at the beginning and end of each section are 'rift gates', these teleporting a kart back to the start of that section until they've completed it three times. Along the way there will also be 'item blocks', which are introduced as hypercube portals into another dimension that the Bonneters invented during their latest travels through which helpful items can be grabbed, Cappy joking that he remembers Mario not having issues giving or taking a dimension during their adventure together, referring to the 2D sections amidst the 3D of *Odyssey*. To demonstrate the use of these item blocks, Tiara has Toad drive through one.

This canonically is the very first Mario Kart event, hence why the karts and item blocks are new to the characters. Or, to be more accurate, karts/cars do already exist in the Mario world, as evidenced by the Koopa Troopa Car in *Mario Maker 2* (not worrying about the more 'realistic' ones seen in other kingdoms in *Odyssey*), however they're not built for racing so they have to be repurposed for these Kart games, plus they're rare commodities which is why most characters here had to have one delivered to them rather than already having one in their possession like Luigi. We know that at least Luigi owned one beforehand because of its appearance in prior games, including the Paper Mario games *Colour Splash* and *Origami King*, hence per what established in *Veil's Rhapsody* that kart must too have existed before *Partners in Time* as well; to get this fact across, in the description of Luigi's kart here, if such details are looked at outside of the races, it would be mentioned that he was quick to buy it for himself with part of the fortune he obtained in the first *Luigi's Mansion*, which we know took place before *Partners in Time* because the Poltergust 3000 from it shows up again in *Superstar Saga* which is the direct predecessor in turn to the above cut-off point.

The kart cumulatively in last place overall after each race is to be eliminated (later in the game it begins to escalate to the last two in the overall leaderboard, the last three etc.) until there's only three karts remaining in the final round.

Like in *Mario Kart: Double Dash* the karts now fit two people (although this time the second person goes in a sidecar rather than hanging on the back), with one person starting as the driver and the other having unique special moves that they can use to focus on boosting themselves or attacking opponents (in addition to the ones gained from the item blocks), however if you are actually playing it co-op every time you go through a rift gate the positions switch, so now the driver is using the attacks in the sidecar and the passenger is now steering in the main; if you're doing it single player then you can just have control over both as you normally would. If it is multiplayer then the first screens will clarify the number and allow you to choose who is pairing up and who is on their own.

While usually in like a Grand Prix you'd be with the same character/kart throughout, because this is going to be going on for a while, in the breaks between each leg of the race you'll have the option to switch around within which characters/karts are still in the running, to allow you to experience more of the roster while your score thus far carries over. These waypoints also act as moments when players can drop out or add in during multiplayer. If you're eliminated in single player, you can either redo that course or start again from the beginning; if you're doing multiplayer and there's still at least one played kart in the game (i.e. it wasn't just you two in the same kart getting knocked out), you have the option to continue as one of the remaining other karts, however your placing henceforth will no longer go towards whether or not the story mode is progressed, only those who haven't been eliminated at any point will influence qualification into the remaining rounds. Throughout the story mode there will be a non-playable mysterious masked duo, the Sages, acting as the main 'antagonists', they programmed to never come last up until the final round at which point it's a free-for-all; despite the rest of their ominous aesthetic, they can be noted to also have fuzzy dice above their steering wheel.

Other play mechanics built around having a sidecar to each kart will also be implemented. The sidecar can spin around the main kart to knock away any incoming shell etc., although you won't have any cue as to when to best do this, if you're holding onto an item it'll be dropped in your dizziness and you'll then have to wait for a charge bar to refill before doing it again. The passenger can opt to pass an item to the driver for them to hold but not use, although if they're left holding onto it for too long they'll drop it; each time you collect a given number of purple coins that are dotted around the track however you'll activate the Mergomatic situated in the joiner between the kart and sidecar which will then combine the items each person is currently holding to produce some hybrid power-up, e.g.: red shell + Bullet Bill = a shell that will shoot through the next three people in front of you rather than just the nearest, banana peel + blooper = clusters of banana peels being sprayed in front of everyone (if the driver isn't currently holding an item the passenger is still able to pass one over rather than the Mergomatic automatically going to waste).

The sidecar can be detached from the main kart at any point, which on most occasions would just then require the main kart to pick them back up again since the rift gate won't let you through unless both players cross the line, however for the third gameplay element each track will have a point where the sidecar can be fired off specifically into a smaller rift gate. Once through here they'll reappear upon some railings above a stretch of the track further ahead (this visible on screen via a window that spawns in the corner), from where they'll have no control over their movement but will be able to drop a limited number of objects down upon other karts passing underneath before they're deposited back onto the track to await their respective main kart reattaching themselves together and carrying on (this will be set up so that there's no way the main kart could overtake the sidecar's depositing point before the sidecar is waiting in position). It wouldn't be advantageous for those in the lead to do this, since there'd be no-one ahead to hinder and while the sidecar is absent the main kart will be unable to use any items, but for those further back it might be worthwhile to use this to make things difficult for the leaders.

At certain points Cappy will have to announce alterations to the parameters of given races after receiving 'complaints' about the chaos from the protag-humans in the audience and through whose communities they've sometimes been driving; "We don't want to scare them away, and I believe they're okay with calmer stuff like the tennis". One of the tracks runs through/by a high-tech city called Omnipolis, the description for which (again optional to read between races) states that it's already thriving again just a few months after work was completed to rebuild large sections of it following an unfortunate disaster involving flying beasts. As it seems that you're about to come to the end of the final course the rift gate will glitch out and send you into a sudden second course inside the giant cake

instead. If you win overall you will unlock the Cappy, Tiara and the Sages to play as in the other modes, as well as Bonnetter, Sage and cake themed courses and battle modes. At this ending too it'll be revealed that the Sages are beings from the other dimension the item blocks open up into, who having been roused thusly were similarly interested in the cake prize so came through to Mario's dimension. Cappy will acknowledge that if they do this again (i.e. the previous games release-wise) they'll maybe want to scale things down a bit, maybe letting other people have a go at the organising.

Onward 2 – Luigi's Destiny

Now here is where the legal team may just need to get involved, since of course 'Onward' and any theoretical sequels are already a Disney/Pixar title. I think *Onward Luigi* would be fine, hence I didn't bring this up there, but...whatever, these are just suggested headings.

The game opens on an alien news crew reporting in their studio on the events of *Onward Luigi*, it a feat that's earned the attention of the worlds further abroad that Luigi liberated those people from all the Fear Moguls, this then also acting on a meta level as a reminder to the player of what took place previously. These news broadcasts, which will continue to occur throughout the game, are sent out via distant relays spread across the galaxies connected through quantum entanglement, hence the reports can be sure to be seen by anyone who wishes to watch at the exact same time, without major delay due to distance.

On Clu-wern Luigi has been living in his ship out where he landed it originally, Numera also still hanging around. Suddenly a new ship descends from orbit from which emerge representatives of the alien news crew, there firstly to discuss those victories that were just addressed above, but then secondly also to invite him to come to a new planet, Tibab, where he's wanted to join a newly-assembled team of heroes known as Quasars – the light in the dark (basically a Guardians of the Galaxy type group of mismatched members who are skilled but mostly without special powers). Intrigued, he and Numera take off in his own ship to follow that of the news crew, that news ship in the meantime also have had come aboard it some other people from Clu-wern who are interested and welcomed to come along.

Tibab is currently under threat from a mass blight of slimy arachnid creatures, a crisis the Quasars are working to put a stop to. These creatures don't have a hierarchy of any kind, so it's not as simple as just taking out their leader and the rest will fall. The focus of the saving operation is understandably on the populated areas, which are in turn subject to a slightly lower concentration of the pests due to factors of the environments' infrastructures, but that also then means that there are areas of unsettled landmass that are teeming to an even greater degree with the creatures; rather than trying to tackle these places, in order to get from one region to another Luigi is instead airlifted by either the news crew or the Quasars (depending on what makes sense for that moment in the story), this mechanism also allowing for some potential for things to be seen in the bird's eye views of the areas during take-off and landing which are otherwise hidden on the ground if you don't know where to be looking.

Joining the Quasars on this mission isn't the only thread of this game however. Thanks to the news broadcasts other races are now also specifically aware of Luigi, and among these are the Shroobs (*Partner in Time*, the survivors of whom since that game have found a new home among these systems). Whether it's simply because Luigi was involved in the defeat of their invasion in their previous appearance or because they genuinely believe what they're about to preach (this detail of motive can be left ambiguous), they begin a defamation campaign against him, citing that when they visited Mario's world the Shy Guys told them that Luigi was the reincarnation of The Lyjih (see *Night of the Shy*, also since I don't believe any Shy Guys actually shows up in *Partners in Time* a new flashback scene would likely want to be added here, which could in turn show how some of the Shroobs escaped) and thus in truth he is a dangerous monster to be stopped; even if he's innocent for the moment, that's what he's destined to become as his true nature is realised.

Beyond just arguing passed-on myths however, they also cite the fact that the ship he's been flying around in isn't his own (exaggerating that he stole it rather than it being offered to him), then they take instances of his actions from this and the last game out of context so that he appears worse when

they're shown. The driving point though is a further revelation about the portals on Clu-wern, more than them just being part of a conscious lifeform: what studies there have been seem to indicate that over-exposure to the spatial warping of said portals causes an evil spiral in a person, as exemplified by the Fear Moguls, whose evilness was a result of that very phenomenon. In fact, some of them were even the previous would-be heroes Numera mentioned at the start of *Onward Luigi*, something she's here revealed to have always known, known without admitting that by sending Luigi on that quest she was risking them both succumbing to this same corruption.

To counter these negative claims Luigi partakes in community-based missions like in the first game, these ensembles having problems that generally have a theme of destiny, personal quandaries about what one is 'supposed' to do/be, perspectives of truth etc. For the most part joining in with the occasional Quasars mission also helps in the pursuit of proving his goodness, but eventually there's such a growth in the public doubt of Luigi that that team throw him to the curb as well in order to preserve their own integrity (more on this later). For people who remain on Luigi's side, that would be the tourists from Clu-wern who came aboard the news crew's ship at the beginning, the people he assisted last time now coming to his aid in the present. As for Numera, once Luigi realises that she obscured the dangers of the portals she runs away in fear of rejection, thus a secondary plot thread for a section of the story is about tracking her down again based on clues that can be attained from the environment and NPCs.

Speaking of matters that take place in the background or on the sidelines, this game goes a lot deeper into what the 'Arbiter Reckoning' Numera mentioned last time is. An area of this larger map is populated by two factions at a standstill, quite literally staring each other off over a territorial divide without either acting before the other does. The pair learn incrementally of a widespread belief that one day shall be built a machine known as the Arbiter, one that will change this part of the universe to a design of its ideals, where none shall have free will anymore and will instead be fixed to what situations it has decided for them based on what they 'deserve'. On that last note as well, it's thought that the Arbiter would also take into account whether or not a given person assisted in its construction, so if it was known to be being built then people would want to help to benefit their own chances of what comes next, otherwise if they try to hinder it and it's created anyway then they could be placed in a worse situation, this all in all increasing the chances of its eventual development further. There's supposedly a cosmic calendar (not seen in this game) which identifies a day where, if the Arbiter is completed, it will occur at that time. In theory if everyone ignored the concept the day would pass without consequence, however the worry that just one person would cave and miraculously succeed in building it, no matter how unlikely it may seem, would drive others to perceive the matter as a certainty given that it could just take a single individual out of all their combined populations, this meaning that they will try to build it too for themselves, the thought of which would prompt worry in others, thus again this quickly becomes a vicious logic loop that 'guarantees' the Arbiter will be actualised by somebody in the end. But when it comes to designing an Arbiter, people will have differing opinions on how it should be programmed/what perspectives it should take for its judgements, hence societal divisions have further formed based on what is thought would be 'best'. These factions here, reflecting other political sides elsewhere across the relevant planets, are unmoving because active conflict would prompt an acceleration of development in general, so they're all keeping things minimal for now to prevent speeding things along while at the same time being ready to get things going if the enemy makes a move so that they don't fall far behind in what is that inevitable other scenario to come. If it looks like one side is going to go down, they'll do their best to take the other down with them. Any action could be a trigger for events leading to mutually-assured destruction. The save point pylons that are dotted about planets are in fact scanning and recording their surroundings for any signs that someone is progressing with a version of the Arbiter.

As a result of this induced standstill however there's in turn no real other conflict going on at the same time, no problems beyond a couple of things endemic to specific worlds such as the Fear Moguls on Clu-wern; the Quasars didn't exist before this current crisis, they assembled precisely to combat the arachnid plight. There's definitely been nothing else that's had a reach spanning multiple worlds, the Arbiter Reckoning is *the* threat that they have to worry about, there won't be anything else that would cause them trouble in the meantime.

Otherwise throughout this game there aren't consistent bosses ending each area like there were last time, just some challenge of some kind which may or may not be centred around an opponent. As for Vo, he's relocated to Tibab too since that seems to be where there's more of a potential customer base. Already he's had an upswing in profit which has allowed him to establish a chain of actual shops this time, one in each general area Luigi visits, and thanks to some wearable piece of steampunk technology (of unspecified origins) he is simultaneously present in every shop at once; this piece of tech cannot be transferred to another person hence it can't be used as an alternate mode of relocation for Luigi. Again he also offers minigames which when collectively completed unlock a second level to the inventory.

Then, as very rare things amongst the other resources being collected for crafting, Luigi can also find samples of the arachnids' slime that have been tainted by other substances to have become coloured, these hence able to be used like paints, this application pointed towards by an artist looking to create an abstract masterpiece in the floor of his gallery who is though without the supplies to do it; they have no other use elsewhere. When all of these have been deposited in the broad shallow trough of a canvas however, which based on where the paints are hidden might not happen until going back over the game after completion to find all that's left (unless someone's doing a completionist run as they go), the subsequent stirring of the mixture results in the colours happening to match close enough the spillage at the end of *Night of the Shy*, this releasing a broken version of The Lyjih that had been trapped inside some small quantum dimension ever since, it seeming that these arachnids have evolved to produce more or less the same kind of secretion it, resulting in a pocket boss fight. Now throughout this document it may be evident that I, for better or worse, am compelled to try to make sense, if pseudo at times, of existing gameplay mechanics when they appear, but in this case I'm not going to try to justify how this miraculously works more than that stated above beyond 'it's a game' since it's more of a thematic inclusion than a logical one; I want to make it clear that despite the Shy Guys' fears Luigi isn't actually any reincarnation of The Lyjih, so by having the monster appear in some form here separate from him hopefully that will read as there being no connection after all, or at the very least be able to be seen as Luigi fighting off/rejecting that identity for himself. I've suggested though that this only be an optional encounter on the side nevertheless because I feel it could be such a sudden bizarre moment that it would disrupt the flow of the main narrative if made part of that (although maybe it could be made a later milestone in the plot after all, depends on execution in development).

To be sure that the idea it might be Luigi's fate to become some darker entity is indeed regardless given enough attention to however, to justify the game's title, there is seen in Luigi a growing doubt in himself as well that he might be going down a darker path, especially given what the Shroobs are able to present in his out-of-context past actions. To fight the Shroobs because of this slander might only make things worse from the perspective of an outsider. At the time when he's also made to leave the Quasars' company as well though there's also been some suspicion building on his part about them too, these heroes not seeming thanks to their behaviour in some of their latest endeavours to not be quite what they say they are. They don't actually care about saving people, of this world or otherwise, they just want to have the public perception of being champions of good, want to receive

that praise. To this end, again around the time of Luigi's forced departure, they appeared to have been working on something else in secret behind the scenes.

It turns out that, in order to be doubly sure that their association with Luigi hasn't been detrimental, they're planning on performing their biggest save yet, which of course means orchestrating the danger in the first place to ensure the situation occurs as necessary. In a facility they've had set up in a part of the unpopulated plains they've been luring all the greater hordes of arachnids that have been out there into this one place so that they can at a given time be unleashed upon the capital settlement at once (to be clear this isn't also indicating that they caused the current crisis in the first place, they're merely taking further advantage of what's already present). Of course they could just use this current stage to get rid of the arachnids here, but that wouldn't be as spectacular and praiseworthy as if they swoop in to save people who are actively in danger; the risk to civilian lives that may be lost in the process is acceptable to them, so long as nobody finds out there was an alternative. Their specific reason for desperately wanting to be seen as better than they are is because they too are consumed with the worry of the Arbiter Reckoning, however rather than being among the factions locked in stalemate they instead are rather supposing that if they're publically believed to be heroes then when the Arbiter makes its judgements it too will see them that way, thus they'll be given a positive fate in its implemented version of reality rather than anything worse.

Taking some members of the news crew with them, since they'll want actual proof of what the Quasars were doing after the fact, Luigi and Numera head over to the facility in order to put a stop to their plan before any civilians can be put in increased peril. Unbeknownst to them, some Shroobs also follow them there, suspicious of what Luigi might be up to next. The pair hence taking on the Quasar team, while also keeping the news crew safe from hazards, part of this involves boosting the lure mechanism for the remaining arachnids still out in the world, bringing most of them in here as well (although leaving some stragglers for a continued presence in the post-game content, just not enough for it to be considered a global crisis anymore), which does mean more danger inside the facility but by that same token that the pests can be dealt with in one blow at the end.

With Luigi also having saved the Shroobs in the process, the subsequent news broadcast not only is framed around him having saved Tibab but also him rescuing those who were his bane, this surely demonstrating his goodness of heart in the face of what those same people had been saying. Some of the Shroobs try nevertheless to still argue against him, that this was just a ploy for sympathy on his part, but already their say is having less influence, plus their leader is suddenly nowhere to be seen. Switching the perspective to some unknown location, that leader of the Shroobs has a blindfold removed by an anonymous figure belonging an unspecified faction in the background conflict who now presents it with a computer component. The Arbiter is far from being built, at least here, but this already-functioning piece is able to perform the 'judging' aspect of the job. Directing it remotely at Luigi, who is visible on a monitor, it deems that while he is not entirely pure, he is all the same a good person. The figure stresses to the Shroob leader that with so much tension already present across these systems they aren't in need of any more, especially tension that's unwarranted, so it should tell its people to withdraw their defamation campaign. This is reluctantly agreed to, after which the focus returns to Luigi on Tibab so that he can partake in the closing celebrations into the credits.

Bowser Feud

This game would be presented as if it's a vintage film reel, with an unidentified whimsical narrator delivering slightly absurd commentary in the 'intervals' after each level (although this would likely have to be done purely in text form rather than voice acting due to the Mario franchise's track record with audio lines), seemingly breaking the fourth wall to degrees as they address this film's supposed audience. We're told that this is a dramatic re-enactment of events that have already transpired, with these scenes having been made using puppets, the unseen narrator indeed pausing the footage to erase the marionette-like strings at the beginning, although an overall puppet aesthetic would continue to further stylise the film-reel look of the gameplay without going so far as to make the action infuriatingly impractical. The stage layouts would in turn be like what can be found in *Super Mario 3D World* where it is 3D but it feels more like you're going along a boxed track from one end to another rather than it being an open space where you can wander more to your heart's content.

With the followers of Bowser having reawakened from their petrified state in *Future's Spirits* (once more not that that's explicit required knowledge here) to discover that their empire has been reduced to almost nothing, the Koopalings wish to take the initiative in going out to help regain that power. Off the bat however they have a difference of opinion with Bowser Jr, who thus takes Kamek with him to enlist the help of the Broodals from *Odyssey*, offering them this as an opportunity to repair their reputation in Bowser's eyes. You as the player now get to make a choice as to which team you play as. The different characters on each team will afford you different abilities (e.g. Bowser Jr has his Magic Paintbrush) and thus result in you approaching the respective levels in potentially different ways.

The main body of the game follows as such therefore: whichever team you chose, you are now set on recruiting the more neutral existing enemies (e.g.: King Bob-omb, Petey Piranha [whose mission in particular would suggest that in the past someone had tried to hybridise him with a Birdo which presumably is what led to the creation of Dino Piranha in *Galaxy 1*], Gooper Blooper) to officially align with Bowser. Potentially selected at random from a larger roster, there are seven such characters approached in a given run of the game, one for each member of your team, and for each level you will select one member to proceed with (you must use a different member of the team for each level), while the computer/player 2 will select someone from the other team to also try to win over that character for their side. Gaining that character's allegiance might be as simple as getting to them across the map first, but they may also have a task that they want you to complete for them etc. There are no redos; if the rival team gets that character, that's just the way it is (until you play the game again, or unless you hit the big red reset button in the hub [speaking of which...]). Before you commit to which team member you want to play as each time, there's a small hub world where you can try out their abilities.

In one case the enemy wishes for you to steal something from the Mushroom Kingdom Mint. That enemy when describing the building in general mentions that not only do they make coins here but to encourage people to keep the economy going they mix other substances into the metal of the coins too, most often ones that in high enough concentrations (i.e. 50 or 100 coins) promote some basic healing in the holder but other things like fuel can also be put in them (hence they speed up karts by the time of those games). Whoever you're playing as remarks that of course they know this, that's why everyone always tries to carry at least one coin around with them (hence why coins are dropped when Mario stomps on enemies). Then down in the basement when the actual level is taking place there is playing on a wall in the background a very old advert of the Mint's where they were promoting a new product of theirs, the P-Switch, which can be used for storing money away in other objects to be saved until that switch is pressed at a later date (hanging around to pay attention to this part of

the scenery would certainly mean losing the level, but it's there for anyone who wants a history of that item type).

In another instance the enemy being negotiated with is Wario (who yes doesn't quite fit under the same umbrella as the others I was mentioning earlier but still), and at this time nearby can also be seen Toadette. She's not necessarily helping him in what he's doing, however she is nevertheless hanging around in a way that portrays her as being comfortable around him; I'll explain the reason for this when we get to *Toadette at Law*. Through what dialogue there is there's a sense that with her upbeat attitude she enjoys being in this sort of situation. This isn't Wario in any way taking advantage of her naivety though, there's also the feeling that she's in control of her circumstances all the same. We know she can be stubborn as well as smart seeing as she developed the papercraft machines in *Paper Jam* (although while she thus has knowledge at least in the fields of engineering, it's almost never the case that she would be applying it with a serious face; she prefers to just go with the flow, taking an easy fun-loving path through life, and just then sometimes she'll come out with a bit of wisdom and sense which doesn't inherently match her unwavering demeanour).

Once these seven levels are done, you come to the final task. Both teams are now aware of an artefact called the Bhoanki, something that legend says should work one time to grant the owner access into any locked location, which could be the pièce de résistance to Bowser's return to power (it even starts with a 'B' like his name, it must be fated to be his). Thus the two teams race across a map and clash to reach this object in the centre. Depending on which other characters you managed to ally onto your team, you may have advantages or disadvantages when it comes to certain obstacles or opponents in general. Depending on who in the end claims the prize, and on who you were working with throughout the game in terms of base team and allies, there will then be a closing cutscene where Bowser arrives, it being some variant on him revealing that you lot have during your exploits in fact been causing a lot of disruptions to his own plans, takes the Bhoanki for himself and then leaves the losers to clean up all this mess. Indeed in the final moments the narrator closes the film out by reminding the 'audience' (not that you the player were privy to this foreknowledge) that they having been watching 'Theft of the Bhoanki' (and with that title the narrator's identity is technically revealed, for that was the film *Llaut the Pokey* was seen presenting at the festival in *Veil's Rhapsody*).

Ultimately this final game isn't a long one, rather it relies on the power of replays, with you experimenting with which characters on which team works best for each level, and to try to get the other cutscene endings. Additionally replayability could be increased by having the layouts of the individual levels being procedurally generated (while retaining the same objectives respectively). Although...

There will be no indication of this feature (until it's discovered and then the internet would invariably tell the rest), but with this framed as a showing of a film, if the player was to leave the screen on the narrator's closing statements rather than clicking back to the menu, i.e. make it so they aren't ending their presentation, there will after enough of a pause be a new voice saying the show needs to progress with the next film. Thus a secret second game is unlocked, it now also available from the main menu: 'Over the Mushroom Hills'. This second film is back to being regular graphics rather than a puppet recreation, and is a nature documentary starring Peach and Rosalina going around different environments, either in co-op or with the computer controlling the other person, exploring to find all the different kinds of creatures that live there, ticking them off check lists for each locale. Through points being earned other items could be purchased which would increase the probabilities of certain creatures being found etc. This would also be somewhere where I'd want to have a hand a purely environmental storytelling, since most exposition elsewhere comes from characters, thus as the pair go back and forth between given areas it could be pieced together a background history for this

broader region they're visiting involving a lost civilisation predating the evolution of humans on this world although not by much relatively speaking. (Honestly this could be another game in and of itself, but I'm not looking to add yet another distinct title to this list so here is it as an easter egg instead, nevertheless filling my want for a game where you specifically play as these two)

Super Mario Maritime

Apparently people aren't as fond of water levels. Let's make a whole game beneath the waves then.

Mario one day finds himself approached by a group of Goombas beseeching that he travel to the other side of the world where their deep-sea cousins, the Gambus, are in peril. While initially uncertain, the facts seem to check out, so he heads off on his journey.

When he reaches the shore of the Fallow Sea, Mario finds that the bird-like Soarwing people on-land have been doing some construction work under said sea, building submarine highways and tourist waystations etc., this to spice up their migration pathways this year. Mario joins one of the submarines going down, arriving at a reception module where he is in turn then introduced to the oceanic Zirtle people, specifically the Deputy Lab Zirtle who explains the situation. Throughout the Fallow Sea are 'cities' that are under threat from a group of Leviathans who have ripped them up from the seabed to try to lift them up to the surface, the danger to those citizens thus being kind of like a reverse Atlantis wherein they won't survive once no longer submerged. With Mario agreeing to help, he's offered the Oxitech, a suit developed by President Xia, although she herself has also been kidnapped by now as part of the whole crisis (she could come back in later games if any needed new tech items, sending them over remotely, she thus filling the gap left by E. Gadd), just as how the main mechanic of *Sunshine* was F.L.U.D.D., however I wouldn't look to have the Oxitech be sentient in any way since that kind of thing has been done with at least F.L.U.D.D. and Cappy (although maybe it would therefore just be in keeping with the franchise to have some level of personality to it). This suit will not only allow you to move around down here without having to worry about an air meter (for the most part), but also it will give you choice over whether you stick to the ground/jump in a way closer to usual or rather swim around more freely, as well as there being a charged boost caused by the release of intense streams of bubbles. You will also be able to scan the plant/animal life etc. as you go, which will provide you with legitimate info about them in the extras if they're based on real things, or random lore bits if they're purely fictional.

Thus we now have an open world game, with Mario able to visit any of the respective regions in any order, exploring reefs, volcanic vents, caves, ship wrecks, kelp forests etc. with plains of seabed in between and settlements (be they Zirtle, Gambu or Soarwing) constructed around them. On its own at one point is President Xia's residence of a large underwater mushroom tree, which is still damaged after she was abducted from it, within which Mario can find her workshop where she'd come up with her ideas for inventions. Instead of Stars there are glistening Shells, which are either at the end of missions or are simply hidden, much like the Moons in *Odyssey* but for that there was still an element of linear progression between the areas. Over the course of Mario's journey he will occasionally be met by either Post Zirtle or Mail Toad in scuba gear, each delivering you waterproof letters of encouragement containing mushrooms/coins (non-specifically signed because they're actually from Daisy not Peach, unless they're in turn actually from some other NPC here inviting Mario to meet again), the two of whom on learning of each other's existence will end up in a b-plot rivalry to be the best at bringing messages to Mario. I'd also like it if a way could be found for Yoshi to show up as a buddy from time to time down here too.

In each region Mario will be met by Lab Zirtles offering him a prototype upgrade to his suit that they're developing, such as magnetic gloves (both to allow him to grip onto certain surfaces, whether they're spinning etc. or there's otherwise a risk of him being swept away by strong currents, and so that he can move metallic components around like a slide puzzle behind a specified surface to unlock it, however once he's done so he'll want to slip behind it and use the magnetics on the other side to pull the panel back into place before the water rushing in becomes so high that the thing in the chamber

is locked away by a safety feature), air pulses (to produce pockets/tunnels which will alter the movement of objects moving through the water), ice beams (to make solid structures out of the surrounding water), electric attacks (shocking enemies, however if for instance he's on an escort mission he'd want to be aware of how to use his environment to make sure the one he's escorting isn't also caught in the blast as it'll be conducting in all directions by the water) and so forth that explore the potential of water physics; when he leaves that region again they will take that upgrade back to continue working on it, and similarly they won't allow him to approach the 'city' itself with it, for they can't afford for it to be lost to that respective Leviathan. As it happens that respective Leviathan will in its attempt to keep a hold of the 'city' use attacks based around the same principle as that upgrade, meaning Mario has to use what he's learnt from practicing with it himself to now work around it from the other side (for instance with the electric attack if he remembers how he kept the person safe from being collateral damage from his attacks during the escort mission, he should now try to find similar environmental elements to protect himself with as the Leviathan tries to shock him). Through the Leviathans' lines of dialogue it will be learned that these creatures are in competition with each other, this a macho show of strength to be the one to lift the most the fastest rather than being anything more specifically 'evil'. After each boss fight, in memory of 'Your princess is in another castle' messages, you find that President Xia was not in fact held in that 'city', rather there was just a decoy. You won't be able to do anything more with the 'city' after that straight away, for the people will be in the way busying themselves with lowering it back into the seabed, but if you return later after they've finished this that 'city' will now be an additional region to explore.

In one area there will be a Torpedo Ted that's simply circling that part of the larger map. If Mario catches up with it, it'll reveal that it's been stuck in this loop for who knows how long, and all it wants is to return to the ship that it was fired from. If Mario thus triggers its targeting system and thus leads it back to that relevant wreck, the torpedo will then ask if Mario would help it fulfil the rest of its purpose: to have been used in battle. When Mario agrees, it becomes the case that the torpedo locks on again and makes for him, but with it being so weary and with the current upgrade to the Oxitech giving Mario a massive advantage there's no sweat at all in the plumber winning. As soon as he does this however the dormant systems in the wreck detect that they are under attack, and suddenly a whole barrage of Torpedo Teds in their prime are fired upon him, leading to an unexpected harder third stage to the encounter.

In another area there's a Blooper trying to become a new politician, advocating that the public make better distinction between the Leviathans and the Bloopers in their perceptions, for the latter are being unfairly lumped in with those causing the current trouble. Since Bloopers aren't known for dialogue however this one needs an accompanying interpreter. In a third instance a variant on Cheep Cheeps are come across, these being much smaller than usual but which at the same time swim in large shoals that can then have Mario buffeted from all sides, this though done within parameters. Around this area of the map would be varying plants etc. that if swum through would rub off different scents on Mario, different scents attracting different coloured shoals, so he should be fine so long as he coordinates the latest scent with which type of shoal he's passing next. In a fourth there's a creature seemingly made of the materials of a ship wreck themselves, wood/rigging/sails/anchor etc.

Rather than there just being an invisible wall around the perimeter of the map, there would be various obstacles ranging from actual cliff faces, areas of plant life too dense to pass through, dangerous amounts of heat rising up from broad vents in the sea floor, a spillage of chemicals, construction work for the Soarwing migration path, border patrols set up to make sure no Leviathan slips away with anything that doesn't belong to them (they then comically saying they can't be certain Mario isn't one such Leviathan disguising itself with all that tech in the suit) etc., each making at least some sense in

relation to the area it lines. Mario could also swim up to the surface, if he wants to put in that effort (at least this is taking place more on the likes of a continental shelf rather than an abyssal plain), which should otherwise mean he should be able to go over the tops of most of these barriers, however once he get high enough the problem instead becomes the water being too choppy and simply sweeping him back into the main area. Come up to the surface anywhere away from the edge of the map and there won't be much to do, occasionally something flying overhead, yet if specifically it's a (slow moving) shooting star going past and Mario scans it this will cause chests containing Shells hidden around the map to open for a window of time, just enough for him to swim back down to one of them if he knows where it is; the connection between the stars and the chests would be hinted at by NPC dialogue such as 'I *wish* this would open', but I don't know how many of these there should be, for while I would think it best that there be more than one such chest to have too many could make this mechanic tedious, also there may want to be some other signs that a shooting star is about to appear otherwise Mario just has to hang around on the surface waiting.

Once all of the Leviathans are defeated, a whirlpool will begin to form in an area of the map that is otherwise open sea, indicating that that is the place to now head. When Mario is close enough, said whirlpool will dissipate, revealing where its centre had been President Xia locked up inside a capsule (since this would be the first time Mario would properly meet her, I guess this is a good a place to say this as well: if it's possible I'd like it if Xia could be conveyed in an appropriate manner to more specifically be a trans-woman). On reaching her however suddenly all the Leviathans converge on Mario, angry that he got in the way of their competition, thus initiating the final boss fight. With this being the open ocean, Mario has no environment to work off as they attack from all directions, simply the abilities of the Oxitech and, having faced each of them before, the knowledge of their attack patterns, working out how to trick them into striking each other instead.

If he was to come to this part of the map earlier, he would apparently find nothing. If he was to dive down he would find the space continuing to fall away into an abyss, one again with no other discernible features. After a certain depth Mario's suit would become damaged from the pressure, suddenly meaning that he is now subject to the usual air meter. Once he's risen back up to another given level NPCs would rush over to repair it, having received a warning of the issue. If instead however he continues to descend, he has to use the tricks of the Oxitech to move as fast as possible. Fail to do so and he will lose a life, however if he succeeds in actually going as fast as possible, there still no other signs so far that there's anything of any note down here, there will at the last possible moment be a roar from the depths which issues up a bubble to catch him, it refilling his air meter while he's now inside it, a tentacle then coiling around it to pull him down into a cavern. Here he's addressed by Grand Gran Leviathan, and when in their conversation (not that Mario's much of a talker) she learns about what the other Leviathans are doing she gives him an item which will give him a boost advantage such as for in a boss fight (but technically it could be used at any point), however it is one time use only. This abyss would obviously still be there during the final fight, but the nature of that combat wouldn't allow him to go down there. If he makes his descent after the final fight, he will find the other Leviathans in the cavern with Grand Gran Leviathan this time, they all in some version of 'time out' set by her. There just being some slight differences in the dialogue depending on whether he also visited her before the final fight or not, this encounter will now instead allude to the fact that the Leviathans had had it suggested to them by some mainlander that they should have this competition, that same person being the one who had insisted they needed to 'kidnap a princess' in the process. It's almost as if Mario's reason for being here was based on a false understanding of it being an organic crisis, a ~~Fallow-Sea~~ fallacy if you will.

After the final fight, the capsule having been damaged during it such that she can now get out of it, Mario and President Xia return to the mushroom tree where she and everyone else (including the Gambus to tie the story full circle) thank him for all he's done. For the closing shot Mario uses the Oxitech to shoot up towards the surface, passing through crowds of people he's met on his journey, ending by breaching into the open air (this all definitely not causing him to suffer from the bends...).

Since this is an open world game, the Shells might otherwise just become something only completionists go after, since they don't unlock new areas etc., therefore instead certain Shell number thresholds will unlock new minigame options in a party mode separate from the main game.

The Last Wish in the Mushroom Kingdom

This game is a visual novel, one set in the far distant future of the Mushroom Kingdom, long after most of what players are familiar with has been lost to time. It is never explicitly stated what kind of being you are playing as, there's no hint in the name since you type in your own along with the pronouns and per the style it's in first person, however to give the theorists something to work with, so that subtle clues could be seeded for those who look for them, let's imagine you're a Nimbus (*Super Mario RPG*). You've been living a rustic existence in the ruins of Toad Town, with only a grubby Cataquack (*Sunshine*) named Treb for company as a pet. One day however a pink shooting star apparently crashes down upon the distant horizon, which is greatly intriguing to your character not only because of the crash but also because they haven't seen a shooting star of any kind before either. Shortly afterwards a band of travellers headed after that same star stop to rest in the town, they having heard from old tales that such a star can grant one's wish (which also tells them that based on the star's colour it'll be the last ever one that Star Road has to give), thus you become acquainted with Nuna the Helibird, Yamper the Bramball, Ursemi the Monty Mole and Feorge the Whomp.

As you and Treb join them on their journey, the main story sections will take place at the different sites where you stop to rest/explore (one of which will see a Penguin insisting on being guardian not to any actual chicks as would be usual but rather to a cluster of Freezies instead, another being a thriving community of Dry Bones, although to be clear most spots will be unpopulated locales), where dialogue choices will impact your platonic relationships with each person and thus potentially lead you down different narrative paths. You also may end up purposefully altering your relationships with certain group members based on what you learn they want to do with their wish if they're the one to get it (not saying any of them would have evil intentions, but from player to player different people might think different characters should be the one to get theirs).

Meanwhile the actual travelling sections are like a slowly-side-scrolling game of snake, your group as a single unit making their way across the latest section of the map leaving a trail behind them of where they've already been, with you looking to collect items such as food without hitting obstacles or going back over any point of your trail, at the end of which you'll also have to choose who gets what provisions (you may have enough for everyone, you may not) which will impact each person's mood in the next story section (Treb feeds herself so you don't have to worry about her). It is possible that if the relationships with a given person become too thin then they will depart from the group to go off on their own way instead. Since this would be a Nintendo game it should be noted that despite the dour circumstances, or maybe rather because of them, the tone of the characters and their interactions will otherwise be relatively upbeat, this just being the world they've always known, however yes as stated if down the line your decisions result in anyone leaving the group the interactions surrounding those moments will be where drops in atmosphere occur.

Later on in your journey your group finds Kasikoy, an evolution of a Yoshi who simply thanks to its 'age' (remember as noted in *Daisy's New Voyage* their consciousnesses pass on with each rehatching) acts as the most complete source of knowledge of the past. On discussing the fallen star, he confirms that indeed a shooting star is linked to Star Road granting someone's wish, as well as him going on to talk about the origin of Star Road, although obviously even he isn't anywhere near old enough to have experienced that too, rather it's a tale that was told to him in turn by some Spraxies (*Super Mario 3D World*).

At this beginning of this world (this could be another opportunity to canonically name Mario's world if it wasn't done in *Embers of Truth*, but the mystery could just as much be maintained) the cosmic energy in its core (see again *Embers of Truth*) meant that some manifestation of life developed, albeit

mostly just as formless Boos at that time, however that early geography of the planet was still generally otherwise uninhabitable. The first example of life as we might understand it then came from such a formless Boo possessing a broken protrusion of rock. The more it managed to move the more the rock wore itself into an identifiable shape with a body, limbs etc., this being coming to refer to itself as Gargoyle. One day it noticed a shooting star, much like your character did, and happened to wish that it could get a closer look. Sure enough Gargoyle suddenly found that it had been relocated to a mountaintop where it was slightly easier to view the moving light overhead. Once it theorised the connection between shooting stars and wishing, it was simply a matter of waiting for the next one. When the occasion came however Gargoyle hadn't decided upon what its endgame desire would be, so it wished for now to have the means to construct a tower to the heavens, since regardless of what the final intention ended up being this should help in that pursuit. This second wish granted, it spent some unknown time indeed working out how best to put together the Apex Spire.

Once complete and Gargoyle was at its top, it was able to take a distant hold of seven stars, subsequently bringing them together in closer orbit, and thus was formed Star Road, with the compressing and merging of those stars also resulting in the excess energy separately coalescing as a spectral 'higher authority' to live upon it. Since this creation was more powerful than any one shooting star, Gargoyle figured this would have a greater chance of leading to what it sought. It wanted to wish that this planet could be like another out there in space which was covered in life. The higher authority showed it various worlds with life across the cosmos, from which Gargoyle selected a particular blue and green one (this Earth but with the continents in different positions since this is taking place millions of years ago, specifically just after the world had begun healing following the extinction of the dinosaurs). They granted its wish therefore, transforming this uninhabitable world into one resembling Earth, although in the process they also secretly changed how the wishing system would work on this planet, with them in Star Road hereafter vetting wishes first before sending stars down to grant them. This is how Mario's world ended up sharing so many elements with Earth (the two planets again also having previously been confirmed to be distinct bodies in *Galaxy 3's* 'Prequelogue'), for while the version of Earth that was copied was one from millions of years ago that still meant that there were the same potential building blocks for what developed after, as well as it being the case that the spell of the wish lingered to keep nudging developments ever so slightly in certain directions from then on out.

What neither Gargoyle nor the higher authority realised however was that another form of life had in the meantime also evolved on the planet as it was, these being the Sprixies, and with their magic they were able to make sure they were unaffected by the changes brought about by the wish, hence they went on to be the cause of other deviations from this remaining more closely like Earth itself, prompting the evolution of more bizarre ecosystems as well as, in a more specific instance, finding some of the dinosaur remains and thus being curious enough to try to make one of their own, this being what led to the evolution of Yoshis/Birdos as well as hence why millions of years later there's still at least one T-Rex in the Cascade Kingdom in *Odyssey* and a Triceratops in *Wario World*. After the Apex Spire later crumbled from natural wear the higher authority selected the tallest other peak in the area and made that their new point of direct interaction with the ground whenever such a thing was necessary, this becoming Star Hill. (With the graphics overlaying Kasikoy's story, some eagle-eyed players may realise that Gargoyle went on to become the mysterious statue in *A Menace in Kodainoland*, while the base of the Apex Spire is identical to the site of the Bhoanki at the end of *Bowser Feud*, with the rest of the structure having crumbled over the millions of years in between)

The game in essence has four endings, regardless of which characters you've kept/lost along the way, rather based upon other decisions about how you've interacted with the world. Ending 1] Due to some

injury or sickness suffered earlier you won't make it to the star. Instead your last day is spent with (the remainder of) the group making you as comfortable as you can be (although with this being a Nintendo game and me having said the general tone should be 'upbeat' I don't know if I could get away with this). Ending 2] The star is lost/damaged, leaving the characters with no choice but to maintain hope by believing they can bring about the desired change to the world themselves. The other two endings both stem from actually finding the star and coming to a realisation about something Kasikoy told you, something you didn't register before in your determination to get your respective wishes: if the star has fallen then that is because somebody else already made a wish, with the star just being the vessel through which that magic came to the ground. Ending 3 therefore] You decide that it's too risky to activate that wish when you don't know what it is, leading you to instead present pretty much the same sentiment as in ending 2. Ending 4] You activate the star, even though you don't know what will happen, and the screen fades to white as the wish comes true.

Onward 3 – Luigi and the Grey Beyond

One of the earlier news broadcast from *Onward 2* is picked up when a group of Toad scientists complete some modifications to the palace radio array at Peach's castle (since the broadcasts were being spread via quantum entangled relays there's not a notable delay between the acts of transmission and receiving here). With this revealing where Luigi has ended up, Peach seeks to go bring him home. To do so, she passes over the Toads' spaceship to instead make use of her own rocket that's implied to have been made for her on Rosalina's wishes when she visited during the secret bonus gameplay of *Bowser Feud*, with there also being an easter egg for the hot air balloon from *Veil's Rhapsody* in the launch area as well. To not thus leave the kingdom apparently ungoverned in the meantime however, she also has Toadette put on the Super Crown (*New Super Mario Bros U Deluxe*) in order to turn into Peachette again, she hence able to stand in as her double so that people are less likely to notice that the real Peach is gone.

Meanwhile Luigi is wanting to get away from the attention he's been receiving in the wake of the events of the previous game, even if that attention is now back to being positive. As such he's now identified another apparently safe planet, Dherafor, which while not uninhabited seemingly never has any traffic in or out of it. It's notable for having a large moon that has a smaller moon of its own, which in turn has a smaller moon, and so forth again, all spaced such that at no point in any of their orbits would any of them fall fully into the gravitational pull of another. As Luigi approaches in his ship however he observes that something has changed since the file images of the planet were previously taken: an utterly enormous building has been constructed, so tall that it reaches into space, the base even wider to provide the necessary stability, thus covering a large portion of one landmass. Luigi is about to turn away when a radio transmission comes in from the building. It's Vo, who claims that his sales business has received a surprise sponsor that's allowed him to expand to his wildest dreams. He invites Luigi to land and meet him.

Thus the basic tutorial section of this game takes place with Vo showing Luigi around some of the shopping departments being put together, after which, appreciating Luigi's situation, he guides him towards another point on the planet's surface where he might be able to settle himself down. Once Luigi thinks himself alone there, taking in the new environment, Numera reveals herself to have hidden aboard Luigi's ship. Apologising for stowing away, she's quick to propose that they have a look around some of the nearby settlements, like the (recent) good old times. Conceding that it might be worth doing regardless, Luigi allows her to lead the way.

The theme of the missions surrounding this planet's communities is that of the stages of grief/dealing with loss. In one instance a local scientist of some kind complains that their work has been thrown off by the day for some reason being minutely longer than it should have been. On another occasion a mural is seen, consisting of intertwining lines in an overall circle, which is explained to be a representation of Dherafor's orbit around its sun, with further lines showing the moons' relative orbits around it and each other, coils around coils; this is the same symbol that was an unexplained detail in the background of one of *Galaxy 3's* worlds. Throughout, at rare moments in the background if the player is paying attention, odd objects seemingly move about on their own. Soon Peach's rocket arrives, she having managed to track where he'd since gone after herself arriving on Tibab. Before more than reunion greetings can be had, before she can actually ask him to come home, another new figure also makes themselves known.

It begins with a trail of objects moving about the space on their own, which when followed leads them to three adder stones (stones with natural holes in them). Looking through the adder stones (switching to a first person perspective, which can also be done at any time) causes another greyscale

environment overlapping with the main one to become visible, for new objects and individuals to be seen. This is a mechanic that will go through the rest of this game, this also an opportunity to hide loads of secrets around the place, although the given character must remain still while using the adder stones, he/she can't move around and see what's beyond at the same time. Among what's thus revealed in this first instance is The Reigning, leader (surprisingly) of a people known as The Resting, who introduces this the Kingdom of Rest to the group. Theirs is a mobile kingdom, able to coincide with any other location in the universe, where the denizens aid souls in 'passing over' (although they themselves also don't know what's on the 'other side'). They too are not immortal, they are born and die, another individual The Waiting will replace The Reigning someday, however unlike with any other race they will never go away entirely, plus they neither eat nor sleep. It's heavily implied that these people experience some kind of pleasure whenever someone passes over (part of why they are the ones who secretly ensure that nature always finds a way to bring about new species), however regardless of this they preach that their mission is to aid civilisations thrive where they can, not to blindly destroy. In other places throughout this game there will be examples where given societal microcosms are going through some kind of boost anonymously due to the Kingdom of Rest. When Peach points out that they've come across spirits before, the explanation for Boos coming from life energy inside planets is mentioned again, while any other kind of ghost come across (i.e. those in the *Mansion* games) might have been held there by some other circumstance, if they were even ever living beings to begin with rather than having always been incorporeal entities with some other origin. The Resting and their environment have a steampunk aesthetic, which could lead to the conclusion that the odd bits of steampunk in the previous two *Onward* games were also to do with them, including Vo's tech in the previous instalment, suggesting they might be his sponsor in this case too (this is confirmed later). The Reigning is coming to Luigi now because they know what he's done, the feats he's achieved, and so with him now on this planet they have to ask him not to interfere with what they're doing. With that though, they're not asking him to leave; he and his friends are invited to explore all there is to be seen being done here. "We are not an end for anyone, but a transition, and in the meantime we do only what is in the benefit of life."

And so the game continues as can be expected given the format of the previous two *Onward* entries, with the aforementioned loss-themed missions and by meeting Vo at points around the sprawling base of the giant building for both purchases and minigames, he travelling between these points by means of a private train-like vehicle running inside the complex (another train in this style is also how the characters get from region to region around the planet). During one of these instances (one scripted rather than being optional as is usual) a cargo ship arrives from orbit bringing supplies for what's left still to be done for that building. When it's pointed out that there's not meant to be any traffic in or out of this planet, Vo concedes that this is indeed a special circumstance, and likely the crew aboard that ship would rather not be here. Luigi knows how many of the races in this region of space are in fear of the Arbiter Reckoning, well they're using the orbits of this planet and its moons as the clock that's counting down to the completion of the Arbiter itself, that meant to occur when all of these celestial bodies align in a given way once more, which still won't be for a while, but all the same most people won't want to come here at any time because of its association to the dreaded day. Why would Vo set up his sponsored business on this planet then? Well it was those same anonymous sponsors who suggested that he could thus corner the market here; if he makes this place appealing enough to customers then they'll all come flooding in once the first few have crossed that line. Indeed it turns out that among the crew of that cargo ship were some insurgents against the idea of people intruding on this land, and they now turn on the genuine workers, thus going forward in the game some of the more active antagonism surrounding the community missions stem from the clashing of crewmate factions. At a certain point one of the aggressors is learnt to actually be a surviving member

of Quasars from *Onward 2*. This leads to some big moment/sequence for Numera's character. Later, when the story prompts returning to the initial area, an encounter with one of these people leads to the ship Luigi took at the end of *Galaxy 3* being destroyed.

As the map is progressed across it soon becomes clear that there's some kind of storm forming over a plateau in the distance, one which is also having effects that can be felt within a given radius beyond as well. The local people say that it never used to be there, that the rock formation rose up out of the ground at some point after the construction of Vo's building. Sometimes a sudden mysterious incident will draw the characters off course to investigate that instead, but overall it is this spot of ominous activity that acts as the goal to reach, to figure out what's going on there. When it is finally reached it is confirmed to be 'Perspective Plateau', where the Resting are experimenting with some of their steampunk tech (which exist in the main world rather than needing to be seen through an adder stone) as a means of generating a field that will allow them to manipulate reality through perspective, this developing process having the by-product of the storm above. What this means is for instance if someone was to go into first person and hold up a glass of water to align with a quarry/pit in the distance, that landmark would now in reality have turned into a lake. The ability to perform these kind of perspective tricks will be the key to completing certain missions that otherwise will have left Luigi stumped, thus the Resting convince him to forgive the storm for now as he comes back and forth from here whenever he needs to use this for a task. The Resting also have a telescope here, to which they just say it's also part of their testing. Elsewhere in one of the settlements is an older individual who wishes for a better way to view the stars at night; the presence of a telescope atop the plateau is known, but someone else in a carer position repeatedly prevents any notion of a trip up there, meanwhile if the characters try to take the telescope down to the settlement the Resting will insist that it's needed here first, but can indeed be gifted once their work is done.

I kind of want the next big event to happen based on an amount of time elapsed rather than progress in the gameplay, to make it more 'realistic' in how it unexpectedly occurs without consideration of Luigi's existing schedule, yet by that same token it's almost certain in that case that it would occur during some other mission, which the player could find annoying if they were close to completing it. Either way all of a sudden from above there will be a thunderous ongoing sound, and looking up it will be seen that some of the moons have begun crashing into one another, shattering into rocky debris in orbit. Amidst the ensuing public confusion the would-be stargazer hurries up to them, saying the carer was distracted by all this, and insisting that this is the prime opportunity to go use the telescope; this ascent up the plateau is happening anyway, it's just a matter of whether Luigi etc. come along (which per the parameters of the gameplay will happen). At the top the older individual indeed thus goes over to the telescope and looks up at the damage to the moons, subsequently calling Luigi over to have a look as well. Through the telescope he sees a dark mass seemingly having been revealed from inside the smallest moon sweeping gradually across the sky along with the rest of the fragments of rock. As he watches, when this mooncore passes in front of any such rocks, blocking them from sight, they will be gone by the time it moves away. The same goes for any stars passed over in the background. It too fizzles away before long, but it's left in its wake a line of celestial absence. Luigi is looking from atop Perspective Plateau after all.

Recoiling from the telescope (which the stargazer will subsequently steal away back homewards), in doing so perhaps noticing that around them the steampunk machines have during that begun to whir into overdrive, the main characters raise their adder stones, revealing The Reigning indeed beside them, looking immensely pleased (both with their plan having succeeded and with the automatic pleasure triggered by the innumerable simultaneous extinguishing of lives within those lost star systems, this sizeable enough to have it visibly appear on their countenance; the fact that this is likely

because of that one moment the Mario game with the highest death count goes without explicit acknowledgement in the gameplay).

Since the characters can't move while looking through their adder stones there's no reaction to what The Reigning thus has to say (there's also no option to put them down during this). Those star systems just made a noble sacrifice. This whole region of space has been locked for far too long within the grip of fear of the Arbiter Reckoning. Luigi saw for himself in *Onward 2* how whole peoples would be on standby, waiting for a move to be made. There's nothing inherently as of a clock about this world and its moons, but it became one because someone decided that that was the case, its natural orbits henceforth were a legitimate societally-self-imposed timer because the people believed they were so, and if that timer reached zero then it was guaranteed that at least someone would have made sure to have built the Arbiter themselves already, because they were all certain that somebody would do it at that moment, and if anyone was going to do it then it might as well be on that given person's terms. The mooncore is nothing dangerous in itself, but circumstances demanded that The Resting weaponise it with this plateau (although it will be emphasised that The Resting are per their word still not the end for anyone, it was Luigi who activated the perspective, and otherwise in their original plans it would have just been the stargazer instead). Vo's building was large enough that it altered Dherafor's rotation, even if only to a relatively small degree, and these changes to the gravitational forces ultimately threw the moons off balance. Now that the surviving worlds (which are the majority) in this region can see that their calendar is broken, plus that they succumbed to a completely different devastation to what they were expecting (which they didn't think was possible, shattering the almost perversely idolised view that the Reckoning was the be all and end all of their threats, that nothing else could or would compare), they should all now be shocked back to their senses, forget this cycle of fear and begin to repair, in doing so recommencing the mechanisms of societal progress.

With that The Reigning moves out of sight. When Luigi afterwards tries to put down the adder stone again it will be to find that, thanks to his perspective of it while it was in front of his eye, it's suddenly much larger; this didn't happen on any of the previous occasions of using it while upon the plateau because it's only now that the steampunk machines are in overdrive, this to ensure that the perspective field worked all the way up onto space, hence other objects like the stone ended up changing without being meant to in turn. Spotting this, Peach and Numera are careful to pull their stones away from their faces more slowly before putting them down so as to keep them small. The characters propping the stone up against one of the machines (it now reminiscent of the portal entrances in cliff-faces in *Onward Luigi*), they agree to step through it fully (there's no option to destroy the machines first because Numera warns that might cause the stone to shrink again, thus losing them this chance to follow The Reigning).

Fully within the Kingdom of Rest now, they find themselves at the edge of the greyscale steampunk land surrounded by a wall of every-changing colour showing glimpses of other worlds from all over the universe. Some of the other Resting residents have missions if interacted with which have to do with the souls of other beings that they're helping 'pass over', which helps create a sense for what the wider Resting public may be like, but the destination here is clearly The Reigning's castle. Once there Luigi will confront them, to which it's pointed out that nothing can be done that would undo what's been done, but of course Luigi feels the need to try to avenge the act somehow all the same, despite also having already witnessed that they only act for the greater benefit of the people. Ever since they'd realised he was there on Dherafor they'd been worried that given his reputation for heroism he might destroy their steampunk apparatus before the event should he perceive them to be some source of evil action, yet if they had tried to set up circumstances such that he was being steered away from the plateau then he might have realised that that was exactly what was happening and hence been even

more suspicious of that site, driving him towards it with even greater determination, meanwhile they couldn't presume that he would indeed leave with Peach straight away because he'd already seemingly become invested in helping out the local people. Their best bet was to be all but transparent, winning his trust by allowing him to see the good that they do so that if he did end up there prior to the event he would be more likely to let them be rather than interfering.

With all this having been said, the actual concluding 'fight' to topple The Reigning will take the form of something like a life-size board game, the trio being three of the pieces, The Reigning not the other but rather The Waiting in their place; while the Resting aren't 'Death' itself this is still representative that one doesn't just attack death, at best it's like a strategy game. The Reigning claims that if Luigi truly insists on making this challenge, he'll have to beat The Waiting, who as stated they have had step forward to risk the loss for them, but in the event that they do lose then The Reigning shall step down from being ruler of this kingdom, allowing others to take theirs and The Waiting's places. There's a strike system to suffering damage during this game, although there are some spaces that in turn act as insta-kill. If the main characters lose they find themselves back on the plateau to step back through the adder stone (unless they would rather just return to exploring the other areas to do more missions instead, leaving this fight be). The Waiting taunts Luigi by asking if he knows how much his brother has given to them (alluding to how many 'enemies' Mario kills in his games, although Luigi shows no reaction to this here, demonstrating perhaps maintained growth beyond his previous anxieties in *Onward Luigi*), then each time they make a move in the game they duplicate, a new version of them transitioning over to the new space while another version remains where they are, thus meaning that as the game goes on there are increasingly many opponents on the board that the trio need to avoid. Last for long enough in the game, making use of any crafted items he has with him in the process, and Luigi should enter a stage of the board wherein he can achieve victory over The Waiting. There's just one problem: the move that'll win the game involves first losing Peach. If Luigi refuses to do this, well then the game isn't won. When this option is accepted, and only during this stage where the game is in that potential win phase, Peach subsequently crumples and vanishes. In turn, once the final winning move is played by Luigi, all the duplicate Waitings coalesce back into a singular form that too collapses in defeat, some sentries who were also on the sidelines coming over to help them 'pass over' before they go on to apprehend an apparently shocked and angered Reigning, ensuring that their word is kept, that per Luigi's victory they will no longer be in charge here.

Another sentry has Luigi and Numera succumb to a sudden darkness after which they find themselves back on the plateau, here next to Peach again, although this time on the other side of the adder stone can be seen members of the Resting prepared to speak with them. They apologise for what The Reigning did and promise that that sort of act will never be committed again. When an explanation is sought for what just happened with Peach, it's remarked "Weren't you told? We're not the end for anyone", it then elaborated that she was simply returned here like he had been now, as had happened to them any time they lost (so it wasn't just the actual game resetting them back to this safe place each time); since beings such as these characters were never meant to be in the Kingdom of Rest it was easy enough to remove the memories of their experiences there on those occasions. With the vow for a better future stated, the adder stone shatters, closing off that connection to the other realm, while at the same time the steampunk machines rattle to a halt.

These are the last pieces that could be needed to extrapolate the true nature of the ending of this game: as much as The Reigning's outrage at the loss of the game and that which will be in the next paragraph will have this all feel like a victory for Luigi on the surface, The Reigning very much won here. As they said, they already got what they wanted with the completion of their plot, it didn't matter what happened afterwards. If they cared at all about staying in power etc. then they easily

could have just not offered the board game, could have just returned the trio to their own world straight away and destroyed the adder stone then. This way could have the illusion of closure if he so chose to pursue it, although in doing so he had to accept the loss of a dear friend, meaning he's come to terms with the concept of losing others to 'passing over', while at each stage he also had the option to change his mind and leave, thus accepting the victory of 'death' in another way. It could be read that The Reigning having The Waiting participate in the board game instead was a nod for Luigi to have to give up his own companion in turn if this scenario was to be seen through. The drama at the end of the board game was all for show so that Luigi would be more likely to leave the Kingdom of Rest alone after that fact. Death always wins in some way or another. On that note, it can also be proposed therefore that the reason the Resting are invested in helping out other civilisations is because the more these regions prosper the greater the chances of there being larger populations, thus meaning more overall deaths in the future; they can be patient. Again though, the game would ideally be executed such that all of the above interpretations should only be realised if people really think about it, we don't want it overtly coming across like a downer ending.

The shot of them on the plateau transitions now over to one at the top of Vo's building where after a time jump an operation is underway to try to salvage the moon fragments, to try to repair things as best as possible. Vo is completely oblivious to the fact that his building was to blame for what happened with the moons falling out of orbit, but since things are underway to put matters back to how they should be no-one feels the need to outright tell him (although it is suggested that he might wish to change tact all the same). Amidst the operation certain tools etc. are seen apparently moving about by themselves, implying the new management of the Kingdom of Rest are indeed keeping their word about doing what's right. With there still being plenty of work to go however Numera decides she'll stay with Vo, meanwhile Peach finally gets Luigi to agree to come home. The closing moments therefore are a montage of Peach's ship passing by all the planets and people Luigi has met across these three games before they shoot off into the vastness of space. Any continuing of gameplay after the credits is set up as taking place during the above time jump.

Paper Mario: Nation Reprinted

I want to say off the top with this one that I really like *Paper Mario: The Origami King*, it did so much so well especially with what paper-themed stuff hadn't already been done, therefore more-so than in other cases this is a sequel where I'm feeling extra pressure to make it good, even if this is just hypothetical. As I say though, a lot of what lies within the theme of 'paper' I feel has been done by now across those past titles, although in turn the earlier ones were more about any grand adventures that just happened to make use of that aesthetic in the outer details of execution rather than being all about it, so in short this here is me trying to explore what papery potentials still remain, for the main part 'recycling', while at the same time also having another through-line that isn't as reliant on the medium.

Mario, Peach and Luigi have been invited to Apen'nine Country, a newly-formed nation comprised of previously distinct territories that have after a long period of tensions and conflict at last been able to be brought together through the building of a monument by tradespeople of all the territories, this artefact now set behind protections in the main area, it a source of a sense of community for most of the populace. This place is called Apen'nine because a single name couldn't be agreed upon so they compromised by combining elements of all the ideas together (also it's derived from 'appendix', with 'ix' being Roman numerals of 'nine', then trying to say Apendnine would likely lead to a natural dropping of the 'd' in a slightly different way to the omission of the second 'p'). While the country as a whole thus would span a wider area, this game all takes place within a neutral great canyon where the former borders met. The NPCs met in this canyon will be a constant mixture of new creatures based on the mingling of these territories.

As part of this country's establishment, they've asked the trio to assist in the assembly of a census and other cataloguing of all they now have within their combined borders. Luigi's actually been here for a while anyway, going around and taking photos of all the residents, meanwhile Mario and Peach are only just turning up now at the playing-card-themed central town. Whereas in previous instalments Paper Mario has had a small floating companion, here the pair are met and joined by a giant being, Hyfoot, who for the most part is only visible from below the knees, although at times when they assail to higher vantage points other parts of his body will come into view instead. Due to joint issues he can't bend down to address them directly, so instead he speaks to them through some version of a phone (perhaps his large equivalent could be interacted with at a certain point in some other circumstance), although it's stated that these things will only work when in relatively close proximity to one another. Also because of this he can't be a part of sequences set indoors until/unless the characters break open a hole in a wall or something through which he can reach. Apparently he's part of a species rather than being a unique entity, however all the rest are supposedly living in some other section of the region that's unknown to everyone else, including him. In terms of mechanics as they're regularly going around, he can step on things to cause them to accordion, they hence becoming like spring pads, or otherwise he can keep pressure buttons pushed down.

Hyfoot begins to show them around the town, trying to make it sound as good as possible despite it having only recently been put together, and as part of this early stage Mario and Peach are brought into a quiz style event, like has occurred in the other games. In a deviation from those previous quizzes however, rather than this being based on stuff that Mario has come across already, the pair will have no idea what's being talked about in this case, and that's actually by design. Rather than truly testing them, this host is actually looking to discover what they would expect from a kingdom, since this country wants to be sure that they're approved of by the existing other dominions, and so whatever Mario selects as each answer will in fact be made the 'truth', these all inconsequential details, so for instance if they're asked 'The Ravine is a restaurant famous for serving what?' and they answer

‘Seafood’ then they will indeed be served seafood if they go there, whereas it would have been salad if they’d said ‘Salad’ instead (this is not spelt out, rather the connection between answers and experience is left for the player to spot later).

For all that’s done to please them though, Hyfoot can’t hide the fact that there’s trouble here too. The main characters knew before coming here that there’s a movement in these parts called the Joconopes who oppose royalty, who fear Peach’s presence may mean she’s about to take them over, hence the Princess must travel around in disguise at times to avoid them lashing out at her; these will act to supply enemies to battle along their journey when there aren’t bosses or other situational attackers, rather than ever being major villains themselves. On top of this too though, after some action of his is witnessed, Hyfoot soon has to concede to fill the characters in on Ejolem, the master of an academy he himself established, who is scheming to steal the monument, despite the fact that any damage to it could result in a nulling in the truce of the territories and cause them to separate into conflict again. Since the monument is surrounded by protections however he’ll require something that can break through them first, and as such he’s sending out three of his best students to hunt for such a capable tool. There are four candidates for objects could do the job, but only one needs to be obtained in order for the plan to be seen through. Peach seems to believe that this shouldn’t pose an issue for Mario, so they’ll continue on their tour of the canyon’s different areas; since Luigi has already been set-up to have been taking the photographs for the census, Hyfoot will lead this pair to the nearest member of the cartographer’s guild instead so they can take note of the efforts of cataloguing the geography etc.

This takes them to an area where the proportions of the environment are counter to what can be expected, such as the grass being very tall while the trees are miniature. This would be where the Joconopes are properly met for the first time, despite having been acknowledged from more or less the beginning; not necessarily here, but they come to employ Broozers to help in their attacks, which in turn leads into a subplot where a Bully that’s lost its horns is trying to find new purpose, gets inspired by said Broozers, but then has to deal with the fact that it has no arms by contrast. Then at the end of the area the first cartographer will be met, she able to provide them with the first section of a map. It’s only small because she and the rest of the cartographers have been putting a lot of detail into them, namely that if the map fragments are rubbed with certain fruits then they’ll have temporarily show up on them the locations of specific types of things (such as items that Ejolem could potentially use to break through the monument’s protections, but also things like shops, collectables and so forth), the fact of it being fruit referring to how lemon juice can be used to reveal invisible ink. When the different cartographers are subsequently met, the map fragments they’ll similarly provide won’t just come together like a neat patchwork, rather each piece will be of a different shape and they’ll be linked up in an uneven overall configuration. While the map can be viewed up close in a way that fills the screen, it is also unfolded and held out in front of the characters, it then building to ridiculous sizes in their hands as the pieces are accumulated. Over time different kinds of fruit will be come across/be able to be bought depending on the area, which is why all the hidden features of the map fragments can’t be revealed all at once. Why doesn’t the first cartographer just provide them with all the kinds of fruit? Well...

That interaction where they gain the first map fragment is interrupted by the appearance of a large misshapen creature of unknown origin, this abomination acting as the first proper boss of the game. When it’s beaten it scurries away again rather than being fully gone, but right afterwards the whole area is suddenly stuck by a wave of papery slurry that’s washing away everything in its path. Now, in past games there’s been both paper water and seemingly liquid water, neither of which have caused real damage to the surrounding paper despite the potential being acknowledged, so to have this work

the inclusion of other chemicals/potions (as well as magic as will be shown later on) may want to be identified in order to justify how this works here, the dissolving of used paper into a slurry being the first step in it being recycled. Hyfoot, being made of a thicker card, has a higher tolerance to withstand the dampening, thus he can use his legs to buy Mario and Peach more time to escape the wave (I would have the cartographer saved as well but this would be a time to show off the threat of the wave for the people), the pair using the local plant life to climb to a higher vantage point. In the process however a single fraction of a drop from the wave does manage to hit them, just as Mario and Peach are stood directly in front of one another.

Mario and Peach wake up again to an unexpected circumstance: since they weren't properly hit by the wave they weren't fully broken down, but their being dripped on in that way has meant that their two bodies have now melded together while the paper was softer. As now a hybrid character, they'll have the use of both of their respective abilities, some of which will be available neutrally while others will require that they fold themselves (although not to the extent of origami) such that only Mario's parts or only Peach's parts are visible. If only Mario is visible (the rest of the parts that aren't him, since there's no way either of them can appear whole, hidden by Peach's disguise from the Joconopes) then he can indeed have a higher chance of getting past the Joconopes without them turning on him, as well as being able to climb around exposed frameworks of pipes (or equivalents), meanwhile if only Peach is visible then she can make use of the favour of people who aren't Joconopes who thus do respect her authority, be this that she is hence granted access to restricted areas or that they do small tasks for her (could there also be circumstances where it would be advantageous for Mario to hide from onlookers in turn?). In battle, both versions can use a basic jump attack, Mario has his traditional hammer for these games, then Peach has a spin-attack that does slightly less damage but impacts a different spread of the enemies to the hammer if there's a group of them and regardless then also leaves those hit dizzy for the following turn as well; only under certain circumstances attained through good use of the battle mechanics as a whole (whatever they end up being designed as) can they both attack in a given turn, the combo dealing extra damage. They'll also have the help of companions who join them along the way, the first of which is already Hyfoot who can for instance step on enemies.

Speaking of Hyfoot, in the interim while the 'pair' were unconscious he has taken them to a new location that's safe for now: a water resort that's still in the middle of being built, so while the hotel and leisure facilities are there fundamentally there's no actual water filling the pools as of yet. That being said, some of the 'water' from the wave has filled up a pit nearby, so that acts as something like a lake/pool, although not one that they should ever come into contact with. I'll also mention here that the walls of the overall canyon have patches that are comprised of crystal rather than just rock, which the citizens with their paper tools wouldn't be able to break under normal circumstances, but these waves as they progress down the canyon will dissolve the paper of the crystal like it does against anything else (including the 'rock' sides of the canyons to an extent), thus over time this exposes other areas behind the crystals, albeit now those spots will be flooded with the slurry to a degree depending on the topography on the other sides. That slurry in general will become more and more of a thing to avoid falling into in the environment as the story progresses. It's spotted that there's a large ship in the sky that's following the waves and subsequently pressing broad patches of the slurry down and heating it to the point of drying (the next stages in recycling). It's not known who the ship belongs to, but it'll certainly be the same person/people who are causing the waves. It's not suggested either way whether the Joconopes are responsible, but they're open about using this to their advantage, seeing the slurry as a tool to corner Peach with. Throughout the various subplots of the game it's also always clear that a method by which the waves can be stopped is being searched for, it's just that none is found for some time, hence that pursuit isn't going to be specifically brought up for a while in this description, it's not that the characters just aren't bothered about trying in that regard.

Once a subplot has been seen through with the staff of the resort which also has allowed for the learning of Mario/Peach's hybrid abilities, they and Hyfoot agree that they should keep on going in order to find the first of the possible items Ejolem's students could be after, this visible on the map fragments they have thus far; if there's any chance they're still going after those items then they need to do this as much as they would have otherwise anyway, plus if they keep moving then they might also come across a way to handle this wave crisis. As such they next arrive at a site used for keeping copious amounts of containers etc. (basically a warehouse without the actual warehouse) where indeed the first student is already present searching for whatever the item is. Over the course of this section it's realised that all of these containers are in fact piled on top of a whole other environment, this one that has seemingly died off from all the lack of sunlight, however once some of the containers start to be removed then it begins to bloom back into life, albeit with some other kind of foliage than flowers and trees etc. as might be expected. Also in this buried environment are dungeon-like structures. In the boss fight with the student, this enemy reveals that Ejolem set up his academy so that he might train others with a particular world-manipulating skill he's been honing himself. None of the students have managed to master it themselves, but the three who will be met as bosses in this game have each become proficient in styles of their own, hence they will each have their own attack styles in the fights. Also, when it's brought up that taking the monument could lead to a wider descent back into conflict, it's stated that Ejolem considers that possible eventuality not only acceptable but maybe even desirable. After the student is beaten, the characters take the item back to the pool of slurry from before, throwing it in there so it'll dissolve, meaning it definitely can't be used by Ejolem later.

The next area they move onto is a settlement made up entirely of diverse tents/campsites, a community of people living like this out on a muddy plain that some have also used to make playful mud castles out of. There's lots of people here who can be interacted with, including someone dressed up as Birdo to perform a musical number (because again these people are seeking the approval of the other kingdoms, and they've heard that Birdo performances are a done thing [a reference to the inclusion of such a thing in the last few Paper games]), but ultimately the subplot for this stage revolves around Ignotaur, someone who when they instinctively try to fight off intrusive thoughts causes flames to be conjured around their personage, actual flames as opposed to paper ones like how the water is 'real'. With this thus risking that the tents could be sent up in flames (indeed some of them do), the objective becomes finding a way to get Ignotaur to a state where she can have greater control over her magic; they obviously can't stop her from having intrusive thoughts, they wouldn't try that, but they can hopefully help her become more adept at handling them. She subsequently joins as another companion, and eventually she will indeed gain this greater control. As they regularly move around the map, she can use her fire at any time to burn through ropes that thus set off systems of connected pulleys to some ends, or create light to illuminate dark entrances such as for caves, plus she'll be able to restrict her output to just that of heat. Where there's patches of path that have been splashed by passing waves rather than being fully soaked by them and have thus become soggy, such projections of heat by her can be used to dry them up again, restoring their integrity so they won't be fallen through if walked across.

Sparing the tents from fire might not have mattered however, for not long afterwards a wave of slurry comes around to these muddy plains too, forcing a time-restricted evacuation to higher ground, this a place where those residents can try to organise themselves again, where divisions between the people can begin to be seen, foreshadowing what conflict could come to pass if the truce is broken. For the nature of this new location itself though, it's somewhere where lumps of excavated ground have been relocated to, these lumps having upon them chalk carvings, or at least segments of them, like the Uffington White Horse in Oxfordshire, England. When this area's cartographer is spoken to,

they remark that these lumps were strangely difficult to add to the map fragment, and upon inspection it turns out that Mario can move the representations of the lumps around on the map, which in fact causes the lumps to change positions in real life too. The puzzles of this area thus involve moving them around in different configurations to unlock varying outcomes. Additionally down a side path from this general area Ejolem's academy can be found, although he and his three prize students aren't there. The second student is around the chalk carvings however, which when put a certain way do reveal a path to a second item of value. After defeating this student in their boss battle Ignotaur burns the item away. It's at this point however that Ejolem himself turns up, for the first time since being seen in the introductory section, and he uses his masterful skill to cut out a panel in the ground beneath Mario/Peach and Ignotaur's feet, this falling away and thus they with it (Hyfoot, being too large, remains on the surface, separated from the others for the next sections of the story).

The area they've dropped into isn't one they could have expected. Housed beneath the wire mesh shown in *Origami King* to be holding up the ground of this world, it's an exact replica of the important areas of the canyon above, that is before the above version became damaged by the waves. This going forward can be used as a means of shortening travel between locations on the surface, with this replica having various points where you can enter and exit that which is above, plus, since RPGs can be expected to have you go back to areas you've already visited, this acts as a way of returning to places that have since been otherwise washed away (some obviously have been witnessed being lost, like those campsites, but other places like the collection of containers would be lost off screen only to be found so if Mario/Peach try to return there after that unseen event), or in turn for places whose surface counterparts haven't been seen yet this can be a way of discovering spots where secrets might be kept so they know where to look when they do reach that above version. Just on the topic of what places get washed away, the central playing card town where the monument stands remains safe for now due to some geographical barrier, hence how Ejolem's plot remains a valid potential throughout too.

This underground replica was constructed by the Shy Masters, variants on Shy Guys who are taller than usual, have patterned rims to their masks as well as more diverse expressions upon the latter. Seeing as how throughout this document I've been detailing explanations for all manner of elements of the Mario franchise, be they pre-existing or new, regardless of whether those explanations would be made explicit in the final versions of these games, I thought I should now actually give back some ambiguity of my own in this case, either so it can continue to perpetuate or so that some other writer can explore them as a concept further in the next Paper game after this in turn. In short, I offer nothing but mystery as to any details surrounding the Shy Masters, other than that they somehow 'know' that it was necessary to build these copies of the structures. To do so they made use of tracing paper style mechanisms to create the equivalent of blueprints first of all, these traces also seemingly somewhat sentient in themselves, able to replicate themselves in turn by continually tracing over one another if they so desire (although they do too have a weakness that is explained in this same section). This tracing paper can't be considered for use in solving the wave crisis because it's too fragile and would become swiftly damaged just like anything else, although they may not be totally dissolved. The Shy Masters' tracing/taking measurements of the real structures on the surface had actually fed into the Joconopes' paranoia that someone was planning on taking the country over. Previously they had also helped the people of (Paper) Sarasaland, and as such Paper Daisy makes her series debut here alongside them.

Now this would not be detailed for the most part in the game, but I'm putting it here for the sake of clarify on this external level. As has been stated in other game descriptions, the world of Paper Mario was conjured by Wunevera after the 'present day' events of *Partners in Time*, which can explain why

Daisy hasn't shown up in any of the previous Paper titles, since as also stated previously her first chronological appearance would be in *Odyssey 2* which takes place much later than that cut-off point. How can she be in this game now then? Back in *Veil's Rhapsody* there were the moments where her screen showed an overview of the Paper world rather than characters in the real world, at which times she felt like the screen was gazing back at her. Well due to the relationship between those different parts of The Veil, especially with how Indigo was messing with the boundaries, those moments actually resulted in a version of Daisy being copied into the Paper world; that was the sensation she was experiencing. This Paper Daisy would also have the fighting spirit that the real one had gained the capacity for in *Embers of Truth* etc., and could make at most some passing reference to having felt like she just appeared someday not too long ago.

While here there's some stuff involving the Shy Masters, who don't feel it necessary to find an answer to stopping the waves since the canyon above can just be replaced by this copy they've built (not that that's necessarily the only reason that constructed it), as well as potentially Luigi, who's still popping up from time to time in various places taking photographs of all the people of this country. During this Daisy joins the main characters as a temporary companion, she possessing a grappling hook that she can use to access awkward areas and to pull larger objects about with.

As the group hence make their way back up to another point on the surface, they find themselves in a part of the canyon that's already had the waves pass through it, as well as the flying ship overhead, thus the slurry has been flattened and dried into a hardened plain of leaked colours. Hyfoot's giant form can be vaguely seen in the far distance, so they start to head that way. In certain places someone has printed onto the blank canvas the inanimate outlines for new buildings and monsters, but nothing has actually been erected or made of it in any other way.

At one point as they approach what's become of this part of the canyon wall they come across a cave entrance and, like will have been done at least a few times before this now, Ignotaur lights a flame to illuminate the entrance. This suddenly reveals the menacing form of Bowser looming over them from just inside. With him thus deftly capturing them, he asks them if they've found a way to solve the wave crisis yet, and if they've come across something that matches the description of the abomination from earlier on. He's also made curious by the unexpected fact of Mario and Peach's hybridisation. When they ask in turn what he's doing here in the first place, he brushes it off with a general comment about a new country like this being worth checking out for conquering-potential in the future. Once done with them, he dumps the characters elsewhere without so much as a battle, and if they go back to try to find him again he'll be gone.

Bowser had mentioned the abomination though, and that creature will indeed actually be met again in this area. That being said, the main enemies of this plain, going so far as to constitute the boss when they've melded themselves all together into a combined entity, are the Washlings. These are people whose experience with the waves was between that of Mario/Peach and those who were fully swept away; while they've still retained some of their forms, they were made soggy enough that their colours have run and their shape has slackened, meanwhile their behaviour now consists of scrambling sloppily after anything that's not another Washling.

The destination beyond this plain, where Hyfoot is met up with again, is that of a large basin-like facility that's gradually refilling with water and other chemicals/potions. This must be where the waves came from before. This nook of the canyon is also seemingly brimming with magic, which is how real liquid water can be summoned here as opposed to paper water, and it turns out that this is actually where Ignotaur hails from, that being why she has magic for real flames in turn, so someone must have somehow built this facility here since she last left. Since this basin facility is relatively elevated, this is

such an instant where a higher part of Hyfoot's body can be seen up close. The enemies here are robots/automatons that again don't give an indication as to who might have built them. Despite working their way through this place, they end up back at their entrance point without having found a way to stop this place from doing what it does, therefore Daisy opts to stay behind to continue to look for a solution while the others carry on their way, their compiled map having now identified the location of the next item Ejolem might be after.

Not too far away there's a contained smaller crevasse in the floor of the canyon from which issues up strong gusts of hot air. The other side of this crevasse (where the terrain is made of sandpaper, not just sand made of paper) is so far untouched by the slurry since the water that came that way thus far has just poured down the gap, which has affected the rising gusts but not stopped them entirely. By taking gliders that are available to hire from the ground level there, the characters can soar up around the air, eventually coming to floating sandpaper mini-islands also caught in the gusts at more or less a steady heights. These can be ridden across and subsequently taken off from again to get to the next, then on the mini-islands themselves the subplot events of this area take place. In certain cases some of the slurry that had previously been caught up in the gusts has ended up inside the mini-islands where interior sections exist. When moving around inside these spaces therefore the characters can avoid the hazard, if not have the slurry funnelled into a safe spot, by virtue of Hyfoot on the outside reaching out and literally spinning the mini-island around, so the floor becomes the wall etc., the slurry thus pouring around the cavity, the characters just having to hold onto something secure in the process. Ejolem's third student is also here, as hinted at during dialogue at the glider rental spot, so once more a boss battle is had in that regard. Afterwards Hyfoot eats the item as the way of preventing its improper use.

From up here it's visible that a number of the citizens have been getting themselves to safety by assailing part of the greater canyon wall. Hyfoot carries the characters through the slurry to reach this place, again he possessing a higher resistance to the dampening effects, and so they join these citizens in what is an entirely vertical section of the map. Despite being somewhat high up, this place is still at risk from being sloshed by rising waves. This may have started up again in the last area, but here definitely the Joconopes would be back in full force. Amongst these evacuees is discovered to be Ejolem in his own disguise however, prompting the characters to challenge him. Before any real combat can get underway though they're all swiftly knocked unconscious by a mysterious gas.

Mario/Peach and Ignotaur wake up inside what will turn out to be like the interior of a multi-layered puzzle box, with them having to work out how to open up a part of each layer to get into the next, slowly making their ways outwards puzzle by puzzle, and in the process they also realise that Ejolem is similarly making his way through the same connected system. When they finally get out, it's to discover that they're seemingly back at the playing card central town, at which point Ejolem reveals that he in fact already has one of the items that could break through the monument's protections; the item Ignotaur burnt up beyond the chalk carvings, the one just down the path from the academy, that had been a fake, left there after Ejolem had already claimed the real one, that which he wields now. He'd just been waiting for the right opportunity to be able to use it. This is where the boss fight with him successfully takes place, although without Hyfoot since he's nowhere to be seen, not even in the distance. From during the sequence inside the trap Ejolem's skills of manipulating the colours of and creating cut-outs from various surfaces to thus produce tools for himself (within certain parameters) is seen to a greater extent than when it was demonstrated briefly when he caused the characters to fall into the replica canyon below (not that he knew that that would be the result), and its potential for use in combat is then seen in this fight in turn. This fight is also different from other previous ones in that, due to him having snatched their inventory bag in the initial moments, the main characters

are unable to use any accessories such as health boosts if they so needed to. The fight is also unwinnable (which is why accessories were blocked, so they aren't wasted).

Mario/Peach and Ignotaur survive just about, but it's only to then see Ejolem succeed in breaking through the defences and claiming the monument. From here he exposit that in his entire life the only time he hasn't felt ultimately alone is when he was with his childhood imaginary friend, in any other circumstance he's not been let in socially by anyone else. Then he realised that if he hones his skill he should be able to create a real life version of that imaginary friend from carving out some surface; he's been targeting the monument because, as stated before, it quite literally embodies the spirit of community forged between the territories in their treaty, so he figures it will hence have the highest chance of being able to source something that will come to life. If that means that the rest of the country will splinter off into conflict again, that might even be for the better, for that would mean the rest of the people would also hence be slightly more alone, communities fragmented, so they'd feel a little more like he did in terms of being conscious of their isolation. His speech done, he makes his move, shifting the colours around the surface of the monument and causing an outline to be cut. An effigy of his imaginary friend is now held in his arms while the remainder of the monument crumbles. Nothing happens. It hasn't come to life. Devastated by the realisation that it hasn't worked, Ejolem is hence in a position where the others can talk him down from his metaphorical ledge, diffusing his previous anger and giving him the space to let it all out, setting themselves up as comforting him while at the same time maintaining some caution since he's still an antagonist.

Ignotaur has an idea at the same time though. What if it only didn't work because the monument wasn't alive to begin with, even with it containing the sense of communal spirit of all the country's people? What if Ejolem's skill could be used to bring back those who had been washed away by the waves, since there was already life in that dissolved paper? Considering the functions of the flying ship (which also can no longer been seen above), perhaps Hyfoot could provide the pressing power while she gives the drying heat, that getting the flowing slurry back into consistency from which Ejolem could carve out the people again as they were? The photos Luigi has been taking can be used as a reference guide for what the people/surroundings should look like on being reformed.

While this is being posited, Mario/Peach are subtly beckoned away by some other people in the periphery. These people are Shy Masters, and they reveal that this is all actually taking place in the replica town underground, with the sky above being a quick new addition to pull off the deceit. Hyfoot and the flying ship were the only things they couldn't replicate, so they had been potential give-aways, but no-one seemed to have picked up on that in a way that blew the ruse. Whether or not Ejolem's attempt would have worked on the real monument after all, they'll never know, but this way he's now in a position where he can be of service per Ignotaur's lead. They'll just need to be led back up to the surface in a way that won't raise suspicions about the legitimacy of this encounter. The Shy Masters also smuggle away the item Ejolem used to break through the monument's protections, it having been discarded afterwards, this removing the risk of him reclaiming it to go after the real one with it if he was to realise the truth. What will the Shy Masters do with it? Never Mario mind.

Upon indeed successfully leading Ignotaur and Ejolem (who's being watched closely) back to the surface without raising suspicion, Mario/Peach reunite them once more with Hyfoot as well as with Luigi. Together they try out Ignotaur's theory, and to their delight it does work, the first test person is successfully remade from the slurry. This is tried out a few more times, over which events it seems that Ejolem really has let go of his prior anger (not that that means he's completely forgiven already therefore), thus there comes a point where they test his realigned morals by going after the last of the possible items he might have gone after before (not that he believes he'd have a use for it anymore anyway), they wanting to destroy it like the rest and will at the same time see how he responds to the

endeavour. While Ejolem claims that the fourth item should be on one part of the canyon however, the map says it's instead at a spot which turns out to align with the position of the flying ship. Someone must have stolen it from its usual place and taken it aboard.

In order to get aboard that flying ship, the characters will want Hyfoot to pick them up and deposit them there. As ever though he can't bend down to reach them, so they head for a nearby butte so that they can get to the altitude of his hand, once again having to traverse a plain of already-dried slurry to get there. At the base of the butte itself they come across the abomination for a third time. In this instance upon beating it Ejolem tries out his reshaping technique in it. Since this thing wasn't completely mixed up with the rest of the slurry, Ejolem doesn't need a reference picture as much, rather being able to make educated guesses as to what the various elements were meant to look like when not warped. At the end of it he's carved off some miscellaneous machinery from the edges, leaving in the middle a healed Bowser Jr, who upon realising that he's back to normal flies away in his clown car (one of the machines in the mix) before any questions can be asked.

Again I'll just make a note that wouldn't be put into the game itself but that I want to make anyway here in order to ensure all the timeline details are ironed out. Bowser Jr has appeared in other Paper titles already, so the fact that he would have been included in the creation of this world cannot be questioned in the way that Daisy's was. That being said, can we confirm an order of events that allows this to happen? Bowser Jr was introduced in *Sunshine*, but after that his next non-sport/kart appearance wasn't until *New Super Mario Bros*, which didn't come out until a year after *Partners in Time*, the catalyst for Wunevera creating the Paper world. Now we could argue that *Sunshine* still came out before it, so there's no problem, but it'd be nice to have something a little more concrete so no-one can argue that *Sunshine* actually comes in a later point in the timeline or something, like I have done with other games in the franchise. This isn't a problem anymore though, since Bowser Jr then went on to make an appearance in *Bowser's Minions* which was a DLC to *Superstar Saga* added with that game's rerelease. *Superstar Saga* is the direct predecessor to *Partners in Time*, and since Bowser Jr appeared in a DLC to that story we should comfortably be able to say that he was indeed around at that same time prior to *Partner in Time*, hence his acceptable inclusion in the Paper world. There is also the fact that Shine Sprites similar to those from *Sunshine* also show up *Paper Mario: The Thousand Year Door*, which would suggest they in *Sunshine* had too been met before the cut-off point, but I feel a presence of Bowser Jr himself is a nicer form of confirmation.

Having been lifted once up on a suitable cliff edge by Hyfoot onto the ship itself, they find more robots/automatons operating it like at the basin facility. Along the way inside here they find that final item which Ejolem indeed brings himself to destroy, showing that he's moved on from his previous endeavour. Eventually finding what seems to be a control centre, there's a console where designs can apparently be inputted, while beside it there's a scanning station. At the former, they can insert the unfolded map they've been assembling in order to give the computer an overall layout of what the geography of the canyon should be, then into another slot they can insert the photographs Luigi has been taking of all the people (this also thus providing some evidence of the surrounding buildings/environments as well); there is a third slot but they can't find that there's anything they can do with that. From this that computer can put together a plan for what everything should be made into again, focusing on the areas that have been hit already by the waves, but there seems to still be a missing step. That's where the scanner comes in. Inside it Hyfoot (who again needs a hole in the wall to reach his hand through), Ignotaur and Ejolem perform their steps for remoulding someone/thing out of the slurry, from which the scanner learns the final steps for how to complete the process (note while the ship has been doing the pressing and drying thus far it hasn't then been producing anything

from the result). Now it has all the information it needs, the ship can go about restoring the lost parts of the canyon.

Since this will take a while, the characters (bar Luigi who stays to make sure nothing goes wrong up there) make their way back to the ground, this done by Ejolem cutting parachutes out of a wall for them, so that they can be sure that this is definitely working. Indeed they can witness first-hand the environments (somewhat) and people being restored. All seems to be working out well. Some time can be spent going around making sure everyone's okay and so forth, NPC story arcs are rounded off. Now that the wave crisis seems to be over, Ejolem has the space to consider that since he's destroyed the monument the country will now come apart again anyway. With him having seemed to have shown since then that he's come round to a safer way of thinking, the other characters agree to tell him about the Shy Masters' replica canyon and how what he broke was just an imitation; this truth, once processed, he accepts. It's also come to be considered that this might be a way to separate Mario and Peach again, if it's certain that they could be remade after being broken down first.

Before that can be contemplated further however, something suddenly starts to change with all the restored people and places. As one they all begin to fold in the way that Mario/Peach have been to prioritise one identity, this resulting in the restored populace being replaced by beings that hold the same shapes as the originals but are of an eviller countenance, meanwhile the environments become harsher looking, all bearing Bowser's sigil. At this point Bowser and Bowser Jr descend in their clown cars to hover above the characters' heads (well, not Hyfoot's, and when he tries to knock them aside with his leg they have the clown cars shoot erasers as ammunition at him), the elder koopa glorying in this success (throughout this the younger may protest certain parts of it, refuting anything that would make him come out in a bad light, whether that's by shifting blame for what happened or denying that that's how it went down in the first place).

He tells of how Bowser Jr had apparently been trying to find a way to reshape himself into a larger stronger creature, to make himself more powerful to match his ego, with then the subsequent intention of transforming others into similar soldiers, building the flying ship and basin facility to be bases of operations for this plan, but the method was imperfect and when he tried it on himself he became the abomination they met previously. Bowser had known even less about how all the machinery worked, so had made the basin spill out through the canyon to prompt anyone (but most likely Mario) to find a way to crack that final step in the reforming process so it could be known how his son could be fixed (this was also why no other abominations also came out of the slurry, since that stage of reshaping wasn't even being attempted anymore). That secret had in fact come through Ejolem if they recall, and Bowser successfully lured them into his ship where that skill could be learnt by the computer with the temptation of the fourth item of interest having been brought aboard there.

But it had got to the point where Bowser wouldn't just stop with getting Jr back to his rightful shape anymore. While he chides the designs for monster soldiers Jr had come up with (an act that again inspires indignation on Jr's part here), his having seen the hybrid Mario/Peach earlier had given him another idea. He after their encounter in the cave had gone off and altered the flying ship's components so that when they were used to compress the slurry they would in doing so also mix in some carbonless copy paper (hopefully there's a less clunky way to saying that). When the canyon's content was hence reformed, everything had this secret extra layer underneath their surface one, and that other layer was instead designed per what Bowser had inputted into the third slot in the console room that the characters hadn't been able to work out before. Now he has control of everything here; anything that's reprinted will only obey instructions from himself or Bowser Jr.

But that's not the end goal. While it's always nice to have more soldiers, he already possesses an army back home. No, his eye is on what's been exposed behind where a crystal section had been in part of the canyon wall, an example of that phenomenon that wouldn't have been able to have been reached by the characters by this point unlike with others. Behind where that crystal had been is where the rest of Hyfoot's people have been living for however many years after their crystal farming unintentionally ended up cutting them off from everyone else, not that they were too bothered by that. If he could mix in the carbonless copy paper with them as well, similarly make those giants loyal to him in turn, they by contrast would indeed make fine additions to his arsenal. As has been seen with Hyfoot though, these giants are more resistant to the watery solution, therefore Bowser will have his new reprinted army attack them first, this combined assault theoretically capable of weakening them enough that the waves will subsequently have an effect (although the soldiers themselves likely couldn't defeat them entirely). Before then though, while Bowser makes his final preparations, he'll leave that army to first take care of Mario and his friends.

Thus finding themselves surrounded by an enemy horde that they don't want to fight back against in turn, since just as how Peach is still present while Mario is folded to be the one visible and vice versa these soldiers are also simultaneously still the innocent citizens as well, the characters are thankfully found by a Shy Master who says that they've put together an elevator that can bring Hyfoot to safety underground too, but they'll have to go a way to reach it. In this way the group get to witness the nature of some of the reprinted environments as they avoid being overrun by the throng, meanwhile Bowser Jr continues to watch on from on high, not that he stays up there. At one point he decides he's dissatisfied with merely being the audience and so he comes down to challenge the characters in person, that a 'fairer fight' than them having no chance against so many soldiers. Through his dialogue in this section too he speaks about those soldiers in a way that makes it clear he would have much preferred his original design for them (to an extent where there might even be more to it than that?).

After defeating him the group finally make it to the promised elevator platform that thus descends deep enough for Hyfoot to be brought completely below ground level, a second platform sealing the hole in the ground shut again once they're through. Once down here, Bowser Jr can be heard on the surface being confused as to where they might have gone, then once he's given up they can also here the army being led away towards that passage leading to the other giants. In the calm that's offered down here, Ejolem finds the space to offer a thought he had on listening to Bowser Jr just then: the young Koopa had spoken in a way that he recognised from his own experience as being layered with a frustration of loneliness. Ejolem believes that Bowser Jr hadn't just been making soldiers but rather had been looking to turn the entire canyon into a band of brothers with whom he could feel a proper sense of camaraderie, that his solution to the problem of social isolation by contrast to Ejolem's own previous intentions of splintering everyone into smaller groups that would relatively share the pain.

At this point the Shy Masters had also approached them again with a message from Daisy, this having arrived in the form of being folded up into a paper airplane, in which she informs them that the basin facility has taken flight as well, the robots/automatons steering it on a converging path to that which the other ship is now taking. She's letting them know that she can potentially commandeer the craft, but wants to be coordinated with any other plan of action being put in motion.

From the above two discussions an idea is formed. Their main objective involves Daisy getting to Bowser's army before it can attack the giants, she using the water in the basin to then wash them away so that they can be reprinted once again. In order to make sure that it's done right this time, and to potentially buy Daisy more time in the first place, this group will also be making their way to Bowser's ship to see what they can do there. They can't just have Daisy steer the basin completely away, removing the wave from the equation, as they can't predict how Bowser would respond to that

eventuality; he might make things even worse. With this being said, they also intend to put some contingency plans in place, just in case they don't get there in time.

The group thus returns to the surface, having been offered to stock up on supplies by the Shy Masters before they did so since they're setting themselves to go up against Bowser, to find the remaining citizens taking in what has become of their home (remember only those who were already lost to the waves were hence reprinted). Among them are still plenty of Joconopes, who now have to be persuaded to not cause resistance against Peach. With the members of the movement forced to face what threat Bowser is more immediately posing, they concede to help. All the people here therefore are instructed to go to the central town (which is still standing as stated earlier would be the case) and use the supplies that had been assembled there before for making everything appealing for the trio of ambassadors so that they can now in the present put together a party for Bowser Jr, this part of the aforementioned contingency plan (not that all of the details for that back-up will have been said yet), after which Shy Masters will lead these remaining original citizens to safety in the replica canyon below.

With the Shy Masters providing Hyfoot with large protective boots just in case (considering that the combined force of the reprinted horde is meant to be able to take on the other giants too), they additionally set up the elevator platform so that it rises high enough above the ground that Mario/Peach, Ignotaur and Ejolem can get into Hyfoot's hand, he then carrying them across the landscape in pursuit of the main flying ship, which begins to fire eraser missiles at them once they're close enough. Using the phone Mario/Peach direct Hyfoot in how to dodge these while also not stepping on any of the horde below, and when the time is right they in turn throw a message paper airplane like the one Daisy sent before, this one shaped by Ejolem to go the greatest distance with the greatest precision while also being given a boost in height by some heat underneath from Ignotaur, so that it might soar in to the ship's interior where Luigi will hopefully find it, the message informing him to create a way for them to get back in themselves (the hole leading directly into the control room that they made for Hyfoot's hand before has been blocked up again). After enough further time this is achieved, with Luigi opening a hatch which allows Hyfoot to throw the trio in his hand inside. Throughout this the basin facility has also been visible flying along further to the side, but it can't be reached per the parameters of the game.

The group are now able to make their way around to find Bowser Jr, fighting the robots/automatons along the way. It seems they were indeed too late, for through the ship's windows other giants can be seen being attacked by the reprinted army. If Daisy was to release the wave now, they might be weak enough already to be harmed by it as well. They'll need to go with the back-up plan after all, which involves getting the army into the central town, for the natural barriers that protected that settlement from the waves the first time around should now be able to contain a new one, meaning it wouldn't be able to flow so far as to reach those giants again and thus putting them right back into the previous problem.

When they make it to Bowser Jr, before he can launch into another fight, they're able to convince him that there's indeed to be a celebration in his honour and of that of his intended designs for the monsters, where he would be a part of a rally for victory all of the participants of which would be ready to be by his side through thick and thin, ready to hear what he has to say. The monument in the town will in turn only increase the pervading atmosphere of camaraderie there. To go after the giants is his father's plan, not what he wants, so why should he have to bow down to this rather than doing what he wishes instead? Eventually swayed, Jr leads them to steal control of the ship from his father. The execution of the approach to this encounter from when the plan was devised in the replica canyon will be such that it's clearly built up to be the final boss fight of the game. He's otherwise busy glorying

in the chaos taking place outside, and when he realises his son is standing against him he's prepared to teach him a lesson too. In the fight itself, as well as just having strong attacks (including inflicting paper cuts that will need healing before that character can properly continue acting again) which would best require the strategic switching between of companions in conjunction with Mario/Peach's own moves (in Hyfoot's case he'll again need to have a hole made in the wall for his hands), Bowser reveals that he's added whole sheets of carbonless copy paper to himself, meaning that he can peel layers off to thus duplicate himself, increasing the number of opponents in the fight, he just having to periodically add more sheets to himself again before he can repeat the action, it then being a bit more time before the copy is ready to be made separate. These duplicates are found to be susceptible to the same weakness as the tracing paper replications were earlier back with the Shy Masters, even though they're different types of paper. In the aftermath Bowser is able to be restrained by Luigi, Ignotaur and Ejolem.

Bowser Jr orders that the horde change course to head for the town instead, which is where he steers the ship to as well, meanwhile Hyfoot stays behind to help his injured kin. Mario/Peach lead Jr down to the ground in clown cars, where he amongst the decorations and throng does appear to be sincerely appreciating all this togetherness in his name, in the manner of having needed the support of being surrounded by equals who feel positively about him, not in him becoming big-headed at being the centre of attention; even though the reprinted soldiers still don't have the design he'd wanted, they're at least prompted here to behave more in the way that he'd hoped for. If only a shadow hadn't fallen over them all, this being Daisy piloting the basin facility overhead to release all the water in it like a flash storm. There's just time for a look of betrayal on Jr's face, as well as Bowser breaking free and leaping down towards the ground to try to shield his son, before all in the town is washed away like so much of the canyon had been before. If that seems cruel, well, as Game Theory has infamously stated, Mario is a psychopath.

Back on the main ship, the contents of the third slot in the control console, that which had been how Bowser had programmed the copy paper in everyone, is removed, so even though the copy paper will still be mixed in with the environment it won't have any design or cohesion, unable to be taken advantage of again. With that done, the reprinting process is conducted once more and the slurry in what had been the central town is turned back into the washed-away citizens (it's also revealed, on the note of the town, that the Shy Masters had switched the monument out for another fake one during the party preparations, getting past its defences with the use of the item they smuggled away earlier, so it still stands as a symbol of the country's unity). There's an issue with Mario and Peach though. Luigi didn't actually get a photo of them during all this, and Ejolem only really knew them in their hybrid form so can't be certain of what they're meant to look like separate from one another. Since Luigi obviously knows them best, it's up to him to make drawings of them instead as accurately as possible, hoping that this will be enough to tell the ship how to reform them properly. It turns out it is, with just some tiny adjustments needing to be made by Ejolem by Luigi's guidance afterwards.

Now that those two are back to their regular selves, it becomes time to address the two Koopas. Peach indeed asks if it they were right to trick Bowser Jr in that way, if he really deserved that, but Ejolem reassures them all that under the circumstances it was the only way to ensure that the day was won. They had to get the army away from the giants, which would have required Bowser Jr's orders (Bowser couldn't have been made to do it), Bowser Jr would have only changed his mind with the promise of what he had been after all along, and once that scenario was dangled in front of him there was no way he wouldn't have gone down with them to the town at that time. All the same, once Hyfoot, Ignotaur and Ejolem have done their combined move to reshape the two baddies themselves (rather than using the ship), since they were at least more familiar with what they regularly looked like, Ejolem has a

private word with Bowser before the pair are ordered by Hyfoot to leave the country, following which Bowser seemingly looks at his son (who since being reprinted has been downcast) with a sympathetic expression and puts an arm around him.

With most of the canyon's contents having been turned to mush by this point (much of which has dried out at least), it's decided that the replica structures that the Shy Masters had built underground will be brought up to the surface to replace what couldn't be done by the ship based on the backgrounds of Luigi's photos of the people (speaking of which the important thing for everyone is though that all of the citizens have now been restored, no-one was ultimately lost, although unfortunately a lot of the plant life was). Daisy has put herself forth to take over the Joconopes, taking their passionate potential and directing it on a new course; she might not tell them that she's a princess yet though. The main ship and the basin facility were both deemed too powerful to be kept around, so Igotaur has set them ablaze in the middle of the giants' home such that they can act like a bonfire for them as they conduct a form of celebration to raise their spirits after what just happened, Hyfoot amongst them. Ejolem watches on from the sidelines. He's already agreed to start making amends for what he was doing before (his contributions to stopping Bowser notwithstanding) by volunteering to use his skill to reshape what parts of the land are still missing, since the Shy Masters only replicated the 'important' places and thus have left other areas in between in need of rebuilding elsewhere. For the moment however he just continues to gaze upon those celebrations from a distance, then finding himself joined by Mario, Peach and Luigi as they decide to keep him company at least for a little while.

Toadette at Law

With this game making use of some alternative art style like numerous indie titles do since this is more or less a standalone entry in the franchise, out in the Banishment Zone in a prison-like structure is held among others an inmate who's the focus of this game (I'll be honest I can't decide upon which name she'd be mainly referred to by; if they end up being animal-like then it could be something like R.A. Kuun, or if instead it's wanted to be something more self-detrimental R. Bish, or for one more thematically serious R.G. Wret, although regardless the 'R' will stand for Rekuzant). Rekuzant may have once been in a position to be a potential noted villain, being behind a plot to lace the widely-distributed medicines provided by the newly built Mushroom Kingdom Hospital (not everyone can rely on coming across health mushrooms in the wild or having plentiful amounts of money) with other substances that would transform all who took them into frogs (she just likes frogs, an obsession still expressed by her to this day on occasion), but when it came down to it she was taken down by Mario without him breaking a sweat before he moved straight on to the next thing. When people recount Mario's escapades they almost all forget his briefest one with her, she's something of a laughing stock within the prison for how easily she was beaten, but for procedure's sake she also still has to be kept locked up there all the same since so far as they know she nevertheless continues to harbour her want to transform the populace into amphibians (I'd like it if this could tie in as the reason why frog suits went out of fashion since *Super Mario Bros 3*, however that requires that society was bothered by her attempt afterwards, which is against the whole theme being gone for here). Oh she's objected before now about her detainment here, arguing with the guards that she doesn't belong in this place or that surely the likes of Bowser should also be here if the system was fair, although to the latter she's told in most cases the bad guys either aren't around anymore after being beaten to need to be locked up or otherwise get away before they can be apprehended (as for Bowser specifically, apparently Peach has some specific parameters for how he's handled in turn). It seems that Rekuzant is set to remain here evermore, that is until one day a new kind of individual shows up at the prison door...

Now lawyers aren't really a thing in the Mario universe, they've only been mentioned in passing in the *Donkey Kong Country* games, and per other parts of the lore the Kong family may have learnt of the concept from some residents of New Donk City (lawyers do make more appearances in the film and cartoons, but I'm not looking to canonise those as well; yes the Banishment Zone is in fact only from the cartoons, but this is more just lifting that concept from there, and hopefully the implied fact that Bowser has never been sent to this version confirms that this is not the same continuity as was portrayed there). It's unprecedented therefore when Phals Phowl Phiend, an unpleasant-looking invidious gentleman belonging to an original species (like Rekuzant probably is), takes that notion of the profession from a state of hearsay in the jungle and martials himself to assume such a role himself, now arriving as said at the prison to put forth that Rekuzant is unjustly being held there and should be released on the grounds that she was not in fact guilty of the crime Mario 'stopped her from committing', rather that she had simply been in the wrong place at the wrong time while some other culprit hence got away.

The guards don't know what to make of this, prompting them to send word to the Mushroom Kingdom for guidance. Once again a relative lack of care about Rekuzant is shown when Peach and her court apparently aren't too worried about the possibility of her getting out, but they send someone over to make sure the matter is handled properly regardless. The person they could 'afford to spare' is Toadette, who for the sake of doing the proceedings properly now also tries to set herself up as a lawyer (as she understands the role from what she's been told). When she's asked later on regarding how she feels about having this role put upon her, she shrugs it off saying she likes getting to try out new jobs; some time ago she got to have a hand at standing in for a princess (*Onward 3* to presumably

Mario & Luigi Reunited, placing this game a fair bit after the latter in the timeline) shortly after which she then got to try being a hotel owner (*Dance Dance Revolution: Mario Mix*). It's at this stage, with that all having been the intro (some of Rekuzant's and Phals' backstories could be learnt later on, it just having been written here up front), that the game demonstrates why it would be marketed as in fact being two games in one. The player has the option of either going through Toadette's or Rekuzant's story, each of which have different modes of gameplay.

For Toadette, this involves mechanics like what can be seen in other legal investigation games, with court scenes (in what version of a court room is made here, since this is being made up along the way for them) being interspliced with Toadette going off to visit sites where evidence surrounding the incident of Rekuzant's capture might still be found after all this time. Since Phals is trying to produce evidence in turn that would imply that Rekuzant wasn't guilty, it's important that Toadette piece together as accurate a narrative as she can, a not so easy feat again due to time but also since a lot of people weren't bothered by those events in the first place given Mario's intervention. Some familiar faces could be met at these sites of investigation as well, mixed in with more original cast.

To make things even harder, since this is her first time doing anything like this, Toadette doesn't always know what exactly to ask witnesses and to look for, so the options available to the player might not be the best logically, this meaning that the player has to furthermore try to consciously steer her into situations where she'll either directly come across the type of information sought or will at least end up somewhere that causes her to think to enquire about that topic in future (with this though, I wouldn't want to risk it becoming annoying that she be so relatively inept sometimes, therefore this element could be judged for how it comes out during development). Again as has been stated previously she can be clever, but knowledge can be localised and isn't inherently oriented with behaviour/personality. As for a helpful mechanic of hers though, it's learnt that she can leave fungal spores behind her which listen to anything that happens there afterwards; she needs to return to them within a given window of time or they'll have decayed too much, but if she does so then it's a way of getting access to conversations etc. she's otherwise not privy to (I don't know if this would make the Toad species as a whole uncomfortable for some people, but anyway; if this is committed to then in some previous other games there could also be added hints of Toads knowing things they otherwise shouldn't have which could be the seeds of a theory about them using these spores as part of some other conspiracy, otherwise maybe instead it could just be specified to be unique to Toadette/female-presenting members of the species). Another thing that may want to be considered is that in *Mario Super Sluggers* she has an 'Enlarge' ability, which as it says on the tin means she can temporarily increase her size. If that wanted to be acknowledged here, it could be used for attempted intimidation in interrogations, and since she's previously been shown to be sometimes pushy and stubborn those traits could further combine here. In her general characterisation there could be a situational recognition of her enjoyment of playing musical instruments.

Whether this makes a repeated occurrence in this game or is but a one off appearance, Toadette is shown to have a place she can go to talk with potentially unscrupulous characters when looking for information about criminal activities. Specifically these characters she meets with are Wario and Waluigi. Here it's shown that she's had a long pre-standing acquaintance with these two, that with Waluigi she elsewhere has a dynamic where they pull off pranks and the like with each other, while with Wario she's previously exchanged intel etc. from around Peach's castle with him in return for similar such things from his own situations that can be of benefit to the castle in turn when brought back there, she then just presenting it to Peach as though she had discovered it on her own (she always made sure to be careful in what she gave him however, it was never anything that would be devastating to be leaked/given away). The whole reason I'm including this here, same as why I've also

given her some ties to these two in *Future's Spirits* and *Bowser Feud* individually, is because of some team tags in *Mario Party 6* and *8*. Now in a number of cases the team tags, these labels attributed to every combination of paired playable characters in those games in team modes, do seem to just be random, that they're more suggesting what it would be like *if* these two paired up rather than suggesting that that is their relationship always; for instance I don't think that Daisy and Wario are regularly 'Mischief Makers' or that she and Waluigi have necessarily had an 'Awful Date', but that these phrases are merely proposing that that would be what would happen based on their personalities in the circumstance where they did theoretically join up. Indeed with Toadette herself I believe the likes of 'Boo Duet' when paired with Boo or 'Double Trouble' when paired with Dry Bones would simply be a fact of her in her upbeat nature leaping to make friends with these new people. That being said, her team tags with Wario and Waluigi in those two games were so unexpected that they were by far the biggest shock of all the research I've been doing of these games these last couple of months. Toadette and Wario are labelled as 'Secret Friends' and 'Double Agents' over the two titles, while she and Waluigi are 'Diabolical Duo' and 'Half-Pranky Duo'. Besides the obvious ones like Mario and Peach being 'Cutest Couple', these to me, especially the ones with Wario, are *the* most steeped in the implications of pre-existing relationships of any of the team tags, they can't just be random and mean nothing, hence why I wanted to make something more evidently of them in these games (even if it's not the focus of any whole title).

During her investigative travels there'll be background easter eggs for some kart and sport events that have been going on elsewhere. Then more explicitly there's also mention of a company called First Safety Inc. that people are investing in for the production of defence systems against a supposed invasive threat from the humans of New Donk City, who with their repurposed army of Sherms (the tank creatures in *Odyssey*) are looking to forcibly abduct people from this continent at some point in the impending future so that they can be used for entertainment like Cranky Kong was in his youth, these humans having otherwise found themselves since craving new forms of twisted frivolity again (to be clear this fear is unfounded, but that will be talked about in *Desolation*). In the end it's learnt that Phals was inspired by this social background panic about humans to try to capitalise on a similar thing for himself too (and it was during this realisation process that he went to visit the Kongs' jungle, since they were meant to have been the ones to have experienced this thing before, and there he learnt about lawyering). He wanted to do something as the result of a prisoner being set free, that was his first consideration for an approach and he'd stick to it, and from the selection of inmates it seemed that Rekuzant would be the easiest to get out, since she was the one people would care least about. But what to then do based on the fact that she would be the one going free? Well, since that eventuality would mean convincing people of the existence of an alternate culprit to the attempted frogification who's evaded capture for all this time, the public would have much more reason to fear that their medicine might suddenly be tainted if that real villain was to try again; unlike Rekuzant this person must actually be skilled. With just a little more pushing the medical industry could be sent into a downward spiral as their products are mistrusted, leaving Phals able to offer to buy those physicians out for a lower price, which down the line, once that bout of panic had passed and the public had got back to needing medical treatment as usual, he'll be able to profit off the healthcare system as a whole henceforth (or if economics isn't wanted in a Mario game then he could just instead offer his own brand of 'antidotes' to the people who're tricked into thinking they may well have been poisoned by this villain already).

As for Rekuzant's side of the game however, now that she's being legitimately presented with a possibility of freedom she doesn't want to lose it, so when a guard reminds her that this could all still come to nothing she realises that she has to work out a way to finally escape the prison on her own if Phals indeed doesn't come through for her. With her having as many days as the investigation lasts in

Toadette's half, her situation becomes a matter of learning the routines of the other people in the prison each day, identifying when she can get around the guards and where she can thus go in the periods before she's needed again, such as for when she has to be in the court room with Toadette and Phals. Other inmates of the facility will potentially be able to help her, and maybe even certain wardens too after all under the right circumstances, but they'll all likely want something else in return, be it an item or an event, so as each similar day is gone through it can be worked out what order actions should be taken in so that by the end everything is in place for an escape attempt. King Boo is in fact in the 'top dog' role in the internal hierarchy of prisoners here, even if he is permanently kept held within his own special cell, and elsewhere other inmates' routes might not turn out to be helpful for Rekuzant in the end, instead these having just been self-serving for the other person (however these would in themselves unfold other internal story arcs that the player might opt to actively explore instead for story/curiosity purposes). To prevent players from just breezing through the whole thing with a simple walkthrough or foreknowledge of the perfect sequence of interactions, even if it's a replay, would it be possible to make it so that in each new whole playthrough the layout of the prison is randomised as well as the wants of each inmate/warden, or would that make it too complicated to programme whilst still guaranteeing a winnable scenario?

Another thing with having the randomisation for replayability is that that very leaning in on replayability for this half of the game would surely mean that the Toadette half would also want to have similar elements to it, lest the whole package become unequally weighted; is there a way to make the investigation randomised? I'm not sure. It'd be something to consider anyway. Or maybe because the Rekuzant half is one where the replays could well be the result of failing the first time around and thus needing to go through a version again, whereas with Toadette those investigation games tend to be one can get stuck rather than actively losing, it doesn't matter so much after all?

At some later point when games are made beyond the end of this list, I'd want Phals to return at the antagonist of another game. Throughout this document I've been making a point of diversifying villains where I can, however in the instances of original baddies the majority of them only really work for that given title. Yes in general some characters will be used best in single occurrences, but that isn't inherent for all, and in this context to not have any new villains become recurring would be to put them in a lesser category than the classic ones regardless of how they're received. We need other examples of people who either simply have another plot to be foiled or who are specifically seeking revenge. You have the memory enemies in *Future's Spirits* (not referring to Cedar and Emilia though, they shouldn't ever be met in their true forms to maintain the mystery of their threat level in person) some of whom I suggested could be sneak peeks of enemies still to come in the main titles, they could be made a thing of in future games, although in that case that would be catching up with the actual event that inspired the memory; they'd need to turn up yet again after that for the element of recurrence to come into effect. I guess Mydrom from *Daisy's New Voyage* could make a reappearance depending on how he was defeated at the end of that game, or maybe Gorshin's mutant fungal strains in *A Menace in Kodainoland* weren't entirely eradicated? All in all Phals would have the easiest time of cropping up again with a new scheme, perhaps in a Donkey Kong title, since while he's shown up in this list he hasn't had another purely solo entry, more than the VR DLC that is.

Mario Party Wild

On opening the game the first thing will be a dark space with the faint sound of speeding karts passing in the background. With the passing of each kart sound-wise there's wisps of light which look as though they're coalescing into some sort of setting, yet before it can be made out the screen transitions to the Nintendo logo. Then comes instead a brighter area into which Mario and the rest step, confusedly coming up to meet a smartly-dressed Toad. As part of Toad's introductory speech he talks about all the great parties they've had already, in time with which the surroundings transform successively into snapshots of boards from the past games (as well as glimpses of the games *Fortune Street* and *Super Mario Ball*), at the end of which Toad reveals that this time that they're going to be drawing back the curtain, to let them shape their own adventure, which prompts the surroundings to whip away entirely, leaving the group on a floor in the centre of spinning cube of light (this moment also seems to show Toad's appearance try to slip away as well, threatening to reveal the form of a Sage from *Mario Kart: Continental Rally* beneath, but he corrects himself just as quickly, assuming you even spot this momentary side detail; it turns out that whenever someone drives through an item block in a *Mario Kart* game it causes that character's memories to be copied into the Sages' dimension, where they have been the ones using them to create the events of the *Mario Party* games for their own amusement [which is how E. Gadd can have appeared in past parties despite being dead by this point in the timeline]; the opening moment was the first instance of this, then after the Nintendo title we jumped forward in time to the 'present' after all the rest of the games thus far). Following the cutscene you'll be automatically brought to one of the inner sides of the spinning cube where you select your characters, after which from each of the other sides can be accessed the different modes of the game:

'Grand Game' and 'Doubles Decisions' [these separate cube sides], the main boards - What makes the boards in this game different is that to begin with most of them are empty, not even with spaces upon which to land. There's a starting middle with enough spaces that you won't exceed it immediately, but at the start of each person's go they first add from a randomly regenerating selection bar either a feature (e.g.: a warp pipe, Thwomp, Chain Chomp) to a spot on the board within a given radius of themselves, brand a spot such that when anyone lands on it you get that effect too (only applicable on certain spaces), or much more importantly lay a 'path piece', these being placeable additions to the board coming in all shapes and sizes which you use to build out the rest of your routes (once there's no longer room for a given size/shape piece it'll stop being presented among the generated roster). If you don't like your current selection you can spend coins to have a new selection randomly generated to replace it. If a dice roll does end up bringing you to what is currently a dead end while you still have moves left, you can either bounce back the way you came or pay a coin for each remaining move to stay where you are (I'll also just take this opportunity to confirm that characters once more have personal dice blocks). When it comes to selecting a path piece to lay, you won't even know what kinds of spaces will be on it, rather the spots will until someone steps on them to reveal their true natures appear green to indicate there's an 80% chance of it being a good spot vs a bad one, blue for 60%, yellow for 40% and red for 20% (note not every square on a given path piece will be a playable square, otherwise the board would just become saturated with them without any sense of a path, and by that same token the pieces have to be connected in certain ways to ensure that that playable spaces that are there do indeed join up). There are also special spaces hidden amongst those rest which if stepped on switch the map to a second mode specific to that board, the activation of some thematic bonus mechanism as well as general alteration in the cost of stars, good spots switch with bad, swapping of key points on the map/key points turn invisible and so forth; when someone else steps on another such spot the board reverts back. Speaking of those key points, i.e. the possible places the stars might appear, the shop, spaces where allies might appear and other gimmicks again

unique to each board, they're already out there, but they move with each roll of the dice until they coming into contact with a path piece, be that during that path piece's placement or by happening to move next to it during a regular transition (to prevent the hopefully unlikely [although there can always be mistakes or trolling] situation of a softlock, once a connection is made to a key point, if the arrangement of playable spaces hasn't resulted in a path to the pre-existing centre based on how the players have laid them, new playable spaces will spawn in the blank areas so that there is now at least one actual route across). There'll then after each round be the expected roulette of minigames; once you've played a given minigame here it'll be available in 'Minigame Mash', another mode from another side of the hub cube. Every time you play a map it'll end up different. That's why this game is called *Wild*. If you have enough controllers or are playing this mode online with others, there is an option to have up to six players, but this is balanced by a reduction of the number of max turns in the game itself.

'Chaos Competition', an online battle royale mode - You'll all start around the edges of some connected assembly of a large map, each with three dice that you roll to move, you picking which of the three you want to use each time so as to not make this purely down to RNG. Landing on the good spaces just means you survive. Landing on bad spaces, hitting an obstacle or falling off an edge (for in this mode, while the number of spaces moved is determined by the chosen die, you still need to point your character in the right direction with the stick) now means you're 'eliminated'. If you and someone else meet coming from opposite directions you each get bounced and go back the ways you came. You have to roll your dice within a short window every time otherwise you also get eliminated, otherwise people could just camp. Now the reason I put eliminated in quotation marks before is that even then you can still influence the game. Anyone who is eliminated can henceforth now relocate obstacles around the map (although not directly on top of someone) and cause the pieces comprising the paths to spin, where the act of ensuring your character is walking in the right direction especially becomes important. If the match still goes on too long more of the spaces will become bad ones. The last person standing gets a star to their name.

'Postal Pandemonium', a co-operative mode - Taking this as you wanting to stick with having an existing story to work with instead, Toad will bring you to the lobby of Delivery Deposervatory, this revealing that the Storks who deliver babies (*Yoshi's Island*) also run the mail service, this we can now infer being how Mail Toad etc. always manages to get letters to you no matter where you are, even across galaxies, seeing as the Storks already herald from a mysterious plane in the sky, individuals like Mail Toad then just being the ones to carry the post the last leg from the dimensional crossing points to the recipients or vice versa (even if this is only happening in the Sages' dimension, everything that's conjured is still sourced from what the *Kart* characters have experiences in real life). The Storks are overwhelmed, something in the system has gone wrong and letters are blipping out of existence. Moving as a group, you'll go through a maximum of ten rooms, progression to the next of which each time being framed by an option of three doors which will be decided by the next member of said group in rotation, each door having on it an image representing what lies on the other side so that it's not just a matter of blind chance. Each room then itself contains a motion-control minigame that you don't lose per se but rather try to collectively do as well as you can in, for each minigame (by loose justification if at all) slows down temporarily the rate at which letters are disappearing; the better you do, the fewer letters vanish. The number of letters in total remaining is constantly going down throughout this mode, your group is just trying to have as many remaining as possible by the end of the ten rooms, that number constituting your score. Only if the number reaches zero would you officially 'lose'.

There is no active indication that there is something to unlock by gaining a win on each of the five modes, however if you indeed do so 'Toad' will remark that you must indeed have a penchant for such wildcard productions and therefore grant you the ability to create custom characters with their own custom dice blocks to use in the regular board modes.

Mario & Luigi Reunited

This is the latest instalment in the *Mario & Luigi* RPG series. It opens on a group of hooded figures assembled in a shadowy chamber, performing a 'test' which involves firing up engines that hence illuminate their surroundings, revealing it to be a rather technological place, following which they proclaim that the city shall indeed be their instrument and that the work of their ancestors shall at last be completed; this acts to establish a sense of a specific (collective) antagonist at an early stage since what follows is for a while going to instead be more of a steady atmospheric build. Then is a sequence of Mario making his way home (unspecified as following on from his adventures in *Maritime*), he in the process passing by a Toad who informs him that his timing is excellent since Luigi and Peach have also just returned (unspecified as from *Onward 3*). This brief show is presented in a broken manner, and when it suddenly ends in Mario, alone once again, being made to stumble backwards under a blinding light the scene cuts instead to him waking up in a city apartment.

From here he sets about his day going to his demolition job under Foreman Spike (this representing the events of *Wrecking Crew*) as though this was completely normal, for which he gets paid a modest salary of gold coins. Not even the fact that this place is also inhabited by sentient objects such as tools, similar to tsukumogami in Japanese folklore, is made a thing of. Beyond that, this is the city of Omnipolis (a name last seen in *Continental Rally...*), populated predominantly by protag-humans and an original species of Omnipolians, albeit also with fewer amounts of other creatures also sprinkled in (this all of course in addition to the aforementioned sentient objects). The tutorial teaching both general controls for this game as well as mechanics specific to Mario involving a means of said demolition (more will be further learned later), there comes a point where, with a particular structure's treatment going awry, Foreman Spike calls over a passing individual from the street to quickly help out. This individual happens to be Luigi, although he's dressed in purple rather than green (purely for continuity with *Wrecking Crew*), and there is zero acknowledgement that he and Mario know each other. The job is just done professionally and afterwards they each go back to what they were doing before. The reason why Foreman Spike in *Wrecking Crew '98* refers to himself as Mario's original enemy (or some words to that effect) is that in this case he doesn't know about any of Mario's past adventures, therefore so far as he's aware their workplace rivalry here is at the beginning of what Mario goes on to do.

And so Mario continues with this life, moving from one demolition one day to another the next, there just the odd signs of something else going on in the background (plus random encounters whose nature I'm not too worried about for this description, except that I'd like the bob-ombs to have a fair presence), until one time he gets visited by another familiar face at the site: Pauline. Unlike Luigi, she apparently does recognise him, referring to him by his name and acknowledging that these are unexpected circumstances, but in turn he doesn't know who she is. Realising that something is wrong, she invites Mario to meet with her away from the demolition site after his shift is over. He does so, and in their meeting she tries to explain that he's seemingly had his memories tampered with, that something must be going on in Omnipolis which she herself is only visiting as part of a New Donk City initiative to help this place undergo a renovation and upgrade of its infrastructure, but in the middle of the interaction they're interrupted by a gang of clowns, belonging to a larger group called Quinque, who are otherwise already causing a ruckus and thus prompt the first proper fight of the game.

Following this the perspective shifts over to Luigi, who since his appearance in Mario's sequence has himself returned to where he's meant to be, this by Peach's side, the two of them under the impression that they are part of a unit who goes around and makes sure that all of a specific type of power generators are continually operational, they partners specifically going around together (other such pairs from the unit could also be crossed paths with later on). Luigi has mechanics relating to

stealth, some of which are only learned subsequently across the game. As they go around this part of the city it's seen that there are numerous amounts of overhead electrical cables connecting the buildings, then there are versions of Ankirons (tortoises with cannons in their shells from *Wario World*) who are occasionally patrolling the streets to make sure nobody is making use of a type of device that promotes psychic abilities in the user; these devices were built and distributed with the intent of making the spread of information easier and so adding onto the progress of the city, but everyone misused it so now the technology has been banned. The Ankirons were chosen for these patrols because they're the only ones immune to the technology's effects. On the opposite end of the scale, the mass breaking of the majority of those devices was what created the wider psychic field that brought those sentient objects to life across the city.

After investigating a couple of places in the city where such generators are housed, the pair next end up visiting a site of waste disposal within which they come across Nabbit, the thieving rabbit from some previous titles, who's come to Omnipolis after concluding that all the renovations will likely result in some worthwhile items to pilfer. Recognising the two of them, he understandably acts as though they should know him, but at this time they don't, in the same way Mario was with Pauline. In his uncertainty in the face of this, he cites the events of *Paper Jam* which he was also in, this keeping up the tradition of *Mario & Luigi* games of each new title having a character speaking about what happened in the previous one (yes there have been other releases in between, but they were remakes and DLCs, so I say this is still the first next title since), after which he concedes to simply make his shifty way out of there. After this, Peach finds amidst the waste a lingering intact psychic device, which she subsequently dares to try on, the temptation too strong even though both she and Luigi know it's banned. This grants her psychic abilities that will be progressively unlocked just as how all the characters' mechanics are. It starts with telepathy (this manifesting in-game as a window appearing on-screen which shows an image of something in the targeted person's mind, maybe short animations as well), telekinesis, astral projection and then finally the ability to bring certain other objects to life like the sentient tools for specific local tasks. She must be careful about when she uses these abilities however, for if she conducts them in the presence of an Ankiron it'll fire its cannon at her and thus instigate a fight.

Switching between the two pairs, the different areas of the city area explored; while this is a potentially restricted map, since it's all taking place in one city, there would be thorough potential to go around distinct environments such as the museum, the zoo, the park, the shopping megacomplex and the sewers. Given that the characters have unique abilities, there will be cases where parts of the scenery won't be able to be interacted with on a first pass through, rather it'll have to wait until the other pair can also come that way later. Irrespective of which group is being played as at this stage, there is amidst the places and people an underlying motif of dragons in chatter and iconography, one which has apparently only arisen recently, although no-one can cite the cause for it.

With Luigi and Peach, they'll be continuing to monitor the conditions of the power generators around the city, meanwhile the machines being used by the New Donk City builders are suddenly creating a dense field of smog as a by-product that's also pervading across the map (this would be experienced by Mario and Pauline as well). As this change to the environment proceeds to make their job harder for them in terms of visibility, the pair notice that in fact some of the generators are indeed being meddled with, if not damaged. Their job thus shifts to tracking down the serial culprits, an exploration of a conspiracy that they're aided in by the sentient objects still also inhabiting the region. The obvious suspects would seem to be those Quinke clowns who are continuing to openly cause mayhem elsewhere, and indeed Luigi and Peach do as part of this end up visiting their base of operations, a theme-park-centred area of the map; here, since it's their home turf, the clowns are furthermore able

to mess with the pair through the use of special effects. This isn't the only time that theme park would be able to be visited in this game, with the rides etc. all being able to be explored.

As for Mario and Pauline, she's trying to spark Mario's memory by virtue of the fact that they're discovering that some other residents of the city are also in fact suffering from false recollections (albeit they were living here before already), so by aiding them in relearning their own truths the pair will hopefully find a way to restore him too. Pauline has abilities relating to cracking locks and getting into other restricted areas, this usually manifesting in mini puzzles to be solved, new types of which are come across at stages through the game. In this title, instead of the strict giant attacks as have appeared in some previous instalments, there will be instances where Mario can use large demolition equipment, such as a crane and wrecking ball, when going against some equally larger obstacles. At a point which is far enough in that a good sense of the city has been established already while not being so late that it's taken too long to reach in terms of plot pacing, these two then unexpectedly find themselves witnessing a secret meeting of the Company of Ci, who are just what you'd expect of a cult just probably without using that word, these being another protag-human faction who are in turn clashing with the Quinque clowns. It was members of this order who were the ones seen in the game's opening moments. At this meeting is discussed how all the demolition work has left little places else that the entrance to the Great Pipe network can be buried, and that once it's found, which won't be long now, no other barrier will be left against them acting so that they can shape the world in the way it's meant to be (this presented such that creates a pervading sense of impending danger going forwards in the gameplay). Additionally a model of a mechanical dragon is seen, presumably representing a larger version. "The Declarations will be heard."

Following this Mario and Pauline make their way to the Omnipolitan mayor, a figure who will have been seen before now but not personally met, to inform him of this secret society operating under his nose. He remarks that he indeed knows of Mario already, showing that the city has kept records of when he and his brother, albeit as younger men, helped them out in events that sound like those of the original *Mario Bros* arcade game, *Punch Ball Mario Bros*, *Mario Bros Special* and *Mario Clash* (Clash House Tower will be a visited location in the present version of the city too). Still Mario doesn't recall these things, even when he's gifted relic punch balls which are hence among the additional demolition abilities unique to him, these able to break through a specific type of reinforced surface (I'll just take this opportunity to mention what will end up being his other abilities as well, the order of gaining of which could be decided later: a drill suit for finding underground weak points to things, then there'll be a matter of being able to carve out sections in large vertical slabs which then topple backwards to form paths across gaps behind the slab which can hence be spanned, a view of that gap being visible through a window to the side etc. beforehand; there's no indication of how best to carve the slab up, but there's also a reset mechanism for if it does go wrong and for when there's multiple ways it can be done to reach different points over there). The mayor doesn't know anything about such a cult, only of the nuisance the clowns are causing and that crowds of protag-humans in general have been gradually immigrating to the city in recent times, but he trusts Pauline since she's overseeing the New Donk City initiative that's benefitting them so much, plus he does find it weird that Mario doesn't know what he was talking about before which lends credence to the further point about tampered memories, so he'll have his assistant indeed remind him to look into the matter later.

In the meantime Mario and Pauline will try to track down members of the cult on their own. Each time they find one the confrontation ends in that building being destroyed to degrees, and afterwards that member will in a panicked attempt to spare themselves tell the pair where they should in fact check next that will have a better chance of bringing them to the answers they seek, this dictating the path they take around the city. Furthermore, both before and after being beaten, those members deliver lines

which together explain their backstory and intentions. Long long ago when the protag-humans were first constructing the Great Pipe Network, some dared to have channels keep going deeper, so deep that a few in turn ended up emerging at other points around the planet (one of these being what appeared in *Wario of Wonderealm*), and in the process those builders discovered within the celestial body an unfathomable awe-inspiring force seemingly tied to the perpetual environmental operations (whether this is the same as the planetary life energy in *Embers of Truth* or rather something else, I'm actually not that bothered, maybe details could be left ambiguous for theorising if so desired, but either way I don't want this to prompt a Boo subplot in this game). Such an innate power of nature, at the very least it would be that which has the landscape shift over time (just a nod to how the landscape map of the Mushroom Kingdom changes across different games) and is likely responsible for much more. They named it Ci and became its Company. Wishing to communicate with it, for to do so would be like speaking with the will/spirit of the world, they concluded that its purest form would be energy, which they could work with in the further form of lightning.

Out on the other side of the world they found some islands where it's always stormy, so they built structures there to harness it, at which point they found that region also inhabited by dragons. Despite the danger this posed, it was in fact fortuitous, for if they could successfully summon a dragon to an altar and then pin them down in place with swords tied to the end of cable tethers, the lightning would conduct down into the dragon and so pass through its mouth, this granting the energy the ability to be heard more conventionally, these sounds interpreted as formed words that were thus The Declarations; the protag-human body couldn't have worked as a conduit, but dragons are powerful enough to withstand the process. Eventually however the dragons became too aggressive against them, to the point where the only solution was to perform an alternate ritual that banished those dragons to some other realm, although this also sent away most of the present members of the Company as well. One dragon remained, a fact that Pauline can in fact confirm based on reports from the New Donk City explorers who hid power moons around the Ruined Kingdom (whose history this has all been revealing) after establishing their own bay inside a remaining structure (this the red room where a couple of moons were), but the Company would retreat from that outpost, forcing themselves to be contented with what of The Declaration they had managed to get up until that point.

Much closer to the present however they got trapped in the Archipelago Kingdom like the rest of the protg-humans (*Daisy's New Voyage*), during which period of hardship the cult movement experienced a resurgence with the need for more clarity from the world. Once their freedom was found however, they couldn't just go back to the old ways, since the dragons were still gone, so instead they would try to recreate the conditions for the ritual artificially with technology. To increase their chances of success all the same though, they're also trying to find this the closest entrance to the part of the Great Pipe Network that descends into the deeper parts of the planet where Ci was first discovered. They must hear Ci's will so that they may know how the world is supposed to progress, so that they can enact that will themselves with everyone else made to adhere to it too. As they began making their preparations, they were in turn warned though about the meddling nature of Mario and Luigi (presumably by Bowser) and so they on the side made sure to keep an eye on them through false lives; Peach was only roped in because she was with Luigi at the time of abduction.

As for when speaking with the clowns (which can be done on Luigi and Peach's end), they in the middle of clashing with a group of the Company of Ci claim that "If you consider that we are the only two options, then we are one and the same." They also insist separately, while continuing to cause dangerous chaos themselves, that if the Company of Ci are allowed to fulfil their preparations they'll discover that their attempt won't work, a devastating realisation that will send them completely over the edge, a fact that would put everyone in peril.

Another revelation comes from Pauline herself as desperation to get Mario back to his normal self drives her to try anything. She talks of how decades ago she met a man and they fell in love, through all the terror of her being kidnapped by Donkey Kong/the young Cranky Kong, but in time they grew apart again and he went off back across the world to this the 'main' continent. She later found out that they were expecting twins, so she instructed the stork to send the baby brothers to their father. For the most part she thought nothing else of it. Then she met Mario in New Donk City (*Odyssey*), and while she didn't realise who he was at first there was nevertheless some niggling sense of recognition. It was at the festival that the pieces fell together and she knew...But to act on this knowledge, what might it do for her political career to have this out in the open? Besides, she'd also in the interim established a new happy family for herself with her current wife.

All the same, she was compelled to take what opportunities there were to see him again, this being very recently when Super Mini Mario World was opened (*Mario vs Donkey Kong 2*, the rest of that sub-franchise thus also now set between *Odyssey* and *Maritime*, presumably more specifically after *Galaxy 3* so as to justify Luigi's absence) and she got to come along as an honoured guest for the ceremony. Still she said nothing though; even if she felt it would be safe to do so, the matter would just be confused by the fact that she looks younger than she is, this virtue of the residents of New Donk City possessing an extended longevity thanks to their consumption of the fruit from Donkey Kong's jungle (exposited in a way that isn't just a repeat of what's said in *Embers of Truth* while still getting the point across)...Oh, to make her confession blunt...that previous lover was Jumpman (the sending of the stork to him then being the events of *Yoshi's Island*, which she wasn't privy to), and thus she in turn is Mario and Luigi's mother (officially canonising that part of the timeline Game Theory). Mario reacts as might be expected to this revelation, that his adventuring companion is actually his parent, but that doesn't mean he remembers those cited past experiences yet still.

The 'Reunited' in the title technically refers to how Mario and Luigi have been off on their own adventures for the past number of titles, however since these games shouldn't absolutely rely on knowledge of other ones, and especially since this is otherwise instead specifically part of the *Mario & Luigi* run, the plot of this game in itself also deals with the whole idea of them needing to be reunited. At certain points a joining of the groups is teased, with the pairs ending up in the same parts of the city, but due to the directions they're respectively coming from they can't actually cross paths yet, only come close. At a given point it may be realised the sabotage conspiracy Luigi and Peach are seeking to put a stop to, while it may have started solely with the actions of the clowns, now is actually them going on the trail of Mario and Pauline, so if they do catch up with each other then the result might in fact be conflict-driven, with them not remembering who each other are save for Pauline.

As it happens Pauline ends up separated from Mario when she thinks to return to the mayor to see if he's managed to uncover anything else. It's at this time that Mario subsequently indeed comes face to face with Luigi and Peach, they as predicted thus activating a fight situation as they attempt to apprehend him for the damage he's been doing to parts of the city. Whichever way the fight goes, once one person comes close to losing all their health the mode will be brought to a sudden halt by an explosion at the mayor's building. There's some confusion as the trio all seem to want to race off to help, so they go together to also keep an eye on each other. At the fiery site they find the mayor's assistant who thinks he might have been attacked for looking into the fact that citizens had had their memories tampered with, after which they also locate Pauline, who thus recognises that they're all in the same situation, it's not just Mario. She has the idea for Peach to use her telepathy to read her memories of them and to then pass those memories on to the brothers, this hopefully to the effect of triggering an unlocking of such memories in their own minds. This works to an extent, with the trio partially regaining a sense of their true selves, but it seems they'll need a second person with

memories of what they were like before to complete the process. That other person is Nabbit, and once he's been tracked down to have the psychic action repeated their minds do fully open back up. The trio are back.

That timing is fortunate, for at that moment the Company of Ci at last find the entrance to the Great Pipe Network; it was beneath the mayor's building, which has now finished burning down. The four characters now moving as a single unit, reunited, they make their way back to where the entrance is now exposed and follow the members of the cult down underground. The first chamber, before actually getting into the Great Pipe Network itself, is in fact one where a herd of Chain Chomps were chained up after their blighting of the continent years ago (see *A Menace in Kodainoland*), this pit being readily available to trap them in. Clearly no-one realised that the herd, or descendants of it (although I don't know how that would work with the fastening of the chains still), have survived in here until now, although they're in a visibly malnourished state.

Once that chamber is got to the other side of, the proper mechanisms by which the planet is descended through can be experienced as the pursuit continues, those cult members needing to persist in order to find their evidence of Ci like their ancestors did so that they can have at least that reassurance. The deeper they go the worse the environmental conditions are to withstand (although they are nevertheless protected to a degree by the structure of the pipes), until eventually a stage is reached where that natural force can indeed seemingly be beheld. With this being the first time that members of the Company are actually witnessing Ci in its 'true' form, they're mesmerised by what they see, which gives the main characters a chance to ambush them. What's thus initiated is seemingly a wave attack fight, however it turns out that while some of them are indeed coming to the combat in clusters the rest are in fact busy behind the scenes preparing for their ascent again rather than waiting their turn to fight as well. Down at this level there were some old capsules (or equivalent) that used to be used for traversing the Great Pipe Network, and these are what those other people are now powering up for a speedier escape back to the surface; now that they've found Ci, proved that it's here and created a path up to the surface for it to spread its effect through, they can go again. The main characters take another such capsule and once more take pursuit, this a different experience to the descent thanks to the speed and general mode of transport. While these members of the Company are therefore in their minds ready to proceed with their proper plan, their return to the surface first brings them face to face with something unexpected.

Dragons. Just like the ones their ancestors in the Ruined Kingdom made use of; in fact according to the Quinque clowns they're the exact same ones, they having found a way to summon them back from wherever they were banished to. Now they're making themselves welcome around the various parts of the city. This is actually better than what the Company were expecting. Not wishing to lose the opportunity, they activate their preparations, this involving the electrical cables that have been seen all over the place being fired like harpoons either up from the ground or down from building tops in order to try to ensnare at least one dragon, they in the place of the tethered swords in the Ruined Kingdom, ideally with the beast ending up at their version of an altar in the city square, so that then the electricity generated in all the machines being protected by units like Luigi and Peach believed themselves to be a part of can flow through them and thus into said dragon, that electricity in the place of the natural lightning, meanwhile the dense smog takes the place of the storm clouds. Elsewhere the sentient objects, which were already all across the city, had been the first to leap to the defence of the citizens for as much as they can manage that, and the quartet of main characters can go around the different areas of the wider map to try to help any of them too, although ultimately nothing can seemingly be done to fend off the dragons themselves.

Proper game progression next comes instead whenever the group find a certain lone clown watching over the unfolding chaos. When pressed for answers, firstly as to why the clowns would have done this if they've been working against the Company thus far, he explains that something had to be done to stop them from going on with their expected plan. This way they're still distracted. It turns out that there was no discovered way of summoning the dragons back, these creatures are just further special effects manufactured in their theme park residence. There's something more though, something else that's putting this clown on edge, there some sense of internal conflict. Then the truth of the Company and Quinque is at last learnt: they're the same people, just different members of the group taking turns donning each guise. Those who still believed in The Declarations had already gone somewhat mad in the Archipelago Kingdom, but now when they were forced to try to perform an improper ritual, using unnatural technology instead of that which was done before, the level of self-directed shame that they felt caused a snap, led them to switch between alternate personas that sabotaged their same efforts while mocking in their appearance that they as an order had themselves become as clowns. (In fact, Quinque is Latin for 'five', so if we're thinking in terms of Romans then Ci is numerals for 101. Previously the clowns stated that if they were the only two options then they were one and the same, well 'only two options' means it's binary, and 101 is binary for 'five', hence under those parameters they are, as said, the same. To be clear, this is in no way something I'm expecting players to realise, and of course it's not an in-game reason either since Rome didn't exist on this world, I'm just explaining my reasoning for the naming) These faux dragons were a final attempt at delaying the improper ritual, but by the nature of the thing those members of the Company currently trying to contain the dragons know that it's not real, they're deluding themselves into playing along with the delusion, which cannot last, and there isn't any other time left otherwise, no more excuses.

The man's two identities finally collapsing together, he breaks, has the fake dragons all deactivated before he then calls that the Company and Quinque collectively should proceed with the plan. The Company had been expecting to do something all this time even without the original dragons: while the New Donk City representatives were busy renovating parts of the city, the Company had used this as a cover to change other buildings in turn, these buildings now able to come together to form a giant vehicle, the mechanical dragon a model of whom was seen when Mario and Pauline witnessed the meeting earlier. There's a problem however. The structures that Mario and Pauline damaged earlier when tracking down the cult members, these were the buildings that would have comprised the external facets of the vehicle to make it look like a dragon at all (if the game is replayed then those details about those buildings may suddenly be spotted). Now that they're non-functional, the vehicle doesn't look like such a creature after all. Once again finding themselves needing to do their best to increase their chances of success under undesirable circumstances (this meaning passing off their construct as a dragon in Ci's perception), the Company decide to have the vehicle act like a dragon even if it doesn't look like one, this meaning breathing fire and eating people (i.e. in this case having citizens and property scooped up into the vehicle's front during the periods when that same section isn't ejecting flames).

This larger vehicle as a whole acts like the final boss of the game as it ploughs its way through the city towards where it can have the electrical tethers shot over it at the altar. The main quartet start by assailing the exterior to deal with some of its intact extremities, but when this is done it's still very important to deal with that fiery prow that continues to threaten those fleeing ahead of it. That's when Nabbit shows up again, heading away from the entrance to the Great Pipe Network from where he's just purloined the Chain Chomps' fastenings from in their pit (these will have wanted to have been designed in a way that would have caught one's eye in their previous appearance therefore), for he was drawn to them like a magpie to shiny things. But if he's taken the fastenings...The herd of now-unchained Chomps pour out onto the surface, they hence able to be guided/ridden by the characters

into the maw of the vehicle while it's not issuing flames to thus chew up the inside mechanisms, disabling that danger to the citizens.

They thus inside, the four of them next make their ways up through the interior towards the control room above. Obviously all of this ending sequence would have been making use of each character's abilities respectively, but that's especially so in these corridors. In one place they come across a machine which appears to be what the Company used to tamper with people's memories. Since the cult members/clowns (there a mix of them inside this vehicle) know by this point that Peach is using that psychic device, they've brought Ankirons inside as well, so whenever she has to use those abilities in here there's now no way of not triggering their cannon fire in the process. This ends up to their advantage though. Once they've got to the main room (which turns out to be the chamber from the opening moments of the game) and a final fight has been had with the crew of enemies, she throws the device onto the central controls, prompting the Ankirons to shoot at that instead, this being the final straw for the vehicle being destroyed.

Amidst the ruin of the vehicle the Company of Ci are now gathered, they around the four characters. Before anything else can happen however Pauline wields the memory-altering technology they found just before against the crowd, causing them to become subject to new perceptions of the world before Mario, Luigi or Peach can be consulted on the ethics of such a thing. It's then realised that one member of the Company wasn't there; they find him by the entrance to the Great Pipe Network. Now for this moment to be the most effective it would likely make sense for this individual, who's the clown who snapped and activated the vehicle earlier, to be an actual leader of the respective versions of the group, however up until this point I've liked the idea of them being leaderless/communally-governed, so either he can just be a random case who happened to be absent from the memory alteration or you do have him be a figurehead from the beginning (in which case it should be noted in the Great Pipe Network sections their leader isn't among that descending group, since he was otherwise busy setting up the fake dragons). Mario tries to reach out to him, perhaps he too could be made to forget this obsession (not that that would be Mario's first choice, but Pauline's already made that step with the rest of them), however this man would rather allow himself to fall backwards into the pit, down towards where Ci lies (even if practically he'd end up hitting the Chain Chomps' chamber first).

With that it would seem to be over. Chomps are eating up some of the debris, and the former-mayor's assistant has risen to temporarily assume the role (while it likely wouldn't have been explicitly stated before, the old mayor was indeed successfully assassinated in that explosion). Pauline remarks that the New Donk City builders were here anyway, so they can spearhead the city's repairs, although they'll need to bring in a load more supplies, but to this Mario and Luigi make to set off to help too. Peach asks if they haven't done enough already today, but since they've only just come back to being themselves they'll take the time to do what they do anyway: fix things. Before they head away, Pauline says that she wishes that they could spend more time together under calmer circumstances, given...you know. Luigi shows confusion, and Pauline composes herself to admit her maternal relationship to him, since he wasn't present at the revelation before, but at that moment some of those said New Donk City builders show up to ask that Pauline come away with them to help with something. After a second's reticence she agrees, leaving it that Mario will likely give the explanation at a later time. Thus the two brothers properly set off, with Peach shortly after gathering some of the present sentient objects to follow after them.

Hazel x Quail: World of Sound

Set in Kodainoland, the intro sequence follows Priya the Koopa as she comes up to Prince Hazel's court to inform them that there's been some issues in the preparations for the kingdom's centenary celebration the Horizon Shine Festival (their version of the Star Festival [*Galaxy 1 & 2*] only they see the comet passing over the Mushroom Kingdom from much further away): a storm swept through and scattered the Beacon Flowers that were being gathered for the occasion. There are people going around trying to collect them all again, but that might take too long without further assistance. Before the rest of the court can decide anything Hazel agrees to help.

Thus the perspective swings around to that of Hazel and the screen goes dark save for his outline (or something similar within the stylisation). Along the bottom of the screen, where the scene graphics will no longer reach in order to make this easier to see, lines and icons for button presses will begin to move from one side to the other while a tune with a distinct beat plays. For the sake of what's to come I'd say the icons start off corresponding to one of lt/lb/rt/rb. This is now a rhythm game combined with a 3D platformer; if you hit the buttons on time to match both the icons below and the beat it will send out pulses like sonar from inside the character's body which cause your surroundings to show up as stylised glowing outlines, this allowing you to simultaneously manoeuvre yourself across the geography of the level, and if you miss the beats they will fade again. If you do miss it and all falls fully into darkness again, since the objects still exist there in space you'll still be standing on them, assuming it was a safe spot, which allows you to wait a moment to gather yourself and recommence again, so instead of failing in that regard the success/fail pressure comes from a time limit to reach the end of the course or from actually unsuccessfully attempting the platforming itself (it's just about navigating the environment, there's no 'mobile' enemies etc. to worry about as well, at most the likes of Kodainoland's variant of piranha plants mixed in with inanimate threats like spikes, pits and shocks once you're later into the game). At the beginning of the game you'll have an option for the difficulty of the rhythms, however of course they will become harder as you progress regardless. This is how the Kodaino people always see the world it turns out.

Each section of the game is set within a given specified area (e.g.: the gardens, the library), each having an obvious route which ultimately leads to the goal of a Beacon Flower (which live up to their name by showing up brightly in your sonar vision). There are also petals scattered around which you can choose to risk taking more meandering paths to collect for more points in the end. On completing the first area as Hazel you will then switch to play as Quail in his own sections, he among those Priya mentioned as helping to gather the Beacon Flowers already, his rhythms being more steady compared to Hazel's being relatively more energetic. After this point you will have the ability to switch back and forth between the two whenever you complete a given course. You'll have a choice not only of who to play as next but which level of theirs, either going back over a completed one or going forth with their next so as to progress further through the game (you can choose to switch over at any time also, but if you do so mid-level and then try to go back again you'll have to resume from where you were with the same time left on the clock rather than immediately getting to choose a new course [this to signpost how something will work later]). In the case of replaying levels this will be especially worthwhile if you have furthermore found new bugs along the way; it's in fact these bugs that emit the sound waves that you use to see, they crawling about inside your plant-mater form, so with each new bug you gain the use of another button, again usually sticking to the lt/lb/rt/rb options, with these new buttons not only adding to the complexity of the rhythm below but also revealing new elements of the environment, e.g. one new button might specifically cause vines to show up in your vision which you can climb to access secret other areas with their own hidden Beacon Flowers in them (otherwise you can revisit them anyway to try to improve your score in that main version of the level, with

additionally a choice of how many 'bugs' you want to go in with, so that a run with only one bug won't immediately be compared with one using four); when it comes to exploring these other parts of the respective maps this can be where the collectable petals can help too, for they can show you where you haven't been yet.

By the time you've gone through both Hazel and Quail's respective levels there will have been built up the hype for the final round, this for the largest of the Beacon Flowers in the grandest location. As you go through you'll find that you seemingly can't proceed, yet the timer's still going down, so on spotting that the other person is visible elsewhere in the environment you'll realise that you should switch back and forth between them in the same run (you knowing that you can do this anyway if you've tried to switch between them mid-level before now, not that this is something expected/required), changing one thing in the environment as one person (the mechanisms to do this having been set up earlier) to discover that it's helped where the other person is and so on. With the rhythm below also rising to a climactic finish, they thus reach the Beacon Flower together, ending the main game and leaving only the final cutscene both showing the Horizon Shine Festival and revealing that this is in fact how the two met (this already set up to be in the past given that it's concurrent with the first *Galaxy* games), setting them on their path that would result in them being together by the time of *Embers of Truth*.

Super Mario Desolation

Timeline-wise this game will want to be set some period after *Reunited*, a fact that'll be alluded to a couple of times, because a number of other games will want to fit between them in the overall chronology. While other games described in this document have maybe trod the line of what can go into a Nintendo game, I've tried to keep a balanced tone for the most part, with just the odd serious moment here or there (okay, maybe a number of darker moments, but there could have been more). This however would definitely be the darkest overall entry in the series.

"Any time the universe breeds a formidable force, especially one inclined towards darkness, there will be those who seek to drive it back into fortified seclusion. That which is contained however cannot be expected to remain so forever. As this world turns towards tomorrow, four individuals unknowingly move themselves to each their fall: the tyrant whose plans have long been in waiting; the warrior made for these coming days; the messenger making balance for taking what was not his; the man eventually feared by those on the other side..."

These opening lines would ideally be performed to the same effect as Timothy Dalton's narration in Doctor Who's *The End of Time*, however as has already been addressed in previous game descriptions this franchise doesn't tend to go in for complex voice acting, therefore stylised text on the screen would work too. The scenes displayed behind it would begin with a shot of Mario's planet, before transitioning to shots of Bowser aboard a lone small airship gazing at Peach's castle on the horizon with Kamek at this side, Sir Ivardi (who we'll be introduced to later) practicing some form of hand-to-hand combat style out upon a courtyard of light, Il Piantissimo nervously carrying the Bhoanki (*Bowser Feud*) down some carved underground steps towards a heavy stone seal in the rock face, then finally of Mario. The view then pans outwards to bring into sight Yoshi and a portable machine, initiating the gameplay.

The machine in question has two functions, the first being to allow them a video link with President Xia over in Fallow Sea (she having sent this contraption over to them; as was suggested in *Maritime* she thus returns to be the new gadget-provider) so that she can act to give instructions in this tutorial, the second being that it can make a physical link between Mario and Yoshi so that they can perform certain combo moves without the former needing to be riding the latter (while this would certainly be a recurring mechanic, the main one for this game, for Mario on his own, would likely want to be something that makes use of this game system's capabilities, especially if this game could be timed to be released alongside said system itself). Luigi elsewhere is speaking from a second window in the video call, apologising for not being there as well but he's needed at Peach's castle to help while all the other kingdom rulers are around for their meeting discussing how to deal with the fact that various towns are currently having an issue with wild animals coming in from the outside and running amuck in public; Xia makes a half-joking remark about not having been invited herself (although of course she is not from this continent, hence not within the demographic that event would have been catering towards).

Mario and Yoshi are currently are situated in a town where they're set to apprehend Wario before he can escape with a large Fabergé-style egg. Wario claims that trying to win at tennis tournaments doesn't pay well enough (this the first nod to the timeline placement), but even if that line could have worked his being defeated here brings the basic tutorial to a close, after which despite losing possession of the egg Wario still slips off in his personal plane (see multiple Wario games), grumbling that he needs to get away for a while. All seems well, for at least the egg wasn't lost, however it's only shortly afterwards that they notice something else going on in the distance: a few of Bowser's airships are circling a mountain. Mario and Yoshi set off to investigate.

The next few levels involve getting up the mountain, the pair having to fight some of the ‘neutral’ enemies from *Bowser Feud* along the way. If they speak to any of the locals in the surrounding environment they’ll learn that at the top of this mountain is a Watchtower said to house a great power; that must be what Bowser is after. The final level of this section is set at that Watchtower itself, with Bowser indeed claiming that he’s going to take this place to be his new home from which he could use the power within to deal out retributions upon whomever he chooses. To make sure this can’t happen, the boss fight ends with the Watchtower being destroyed, debris littering the mountaintop, including a dozen or so paintings that had been hanging up on the walls inside, meanwhile the remnants of the power within fizzle out in the air. Mario and Yoshi celebrate, collecting the star that can be expected for this victory, however from here things start to take a turn. The Bowser they just defeated turns to mush, showing the signs of having been made in K. Rool’s lab per *Embers of Truth* (this was what caused the damage at the edge of the jungle seen in *Veil’s Rhapsody*, which had otherwise gone unexplained by the end; in any game set between that one and this chronologically therefore Mario has been dealing with this copy of Bowser instead while the real one was off making plans undisturbed, else otherwise distracting Mario by tricking the Leviathans in *Maritime* which got the Goombas to seek the plumber’s help, hence why Bowser was so gullible in *Wrecking Crew ’98* and ‘friendly’ in the sports games, this all able to be theorised rather than being stated for the most part in the game, although bear with me). Xia voices that question of how long Bowser has been a fake, but before anyone can wonder her video link cuts out to static. The skies have started to darken. An eerie silence is falling. Quick shots of other locations show the same is happening across the continent. Thus we get to the in-game title card.

From over the horizon suddenly comes a soaring figure, like when Mario would use launch stars in the *Galaxy* games, and so lands amidst the debris Sir Ivardi and his original-creature of a steed. Sir Ivardi is a cyborg knight, although I’m not sure if I’d want him to be humanoid, not that I can think yet what I’d prefer his organic parts to be of instead; if it did end up being ‘human’ after all then he wouldn’t be Caucasian. He asks if this is indeed the right place, but then immediately knows that it is from the ruins of the Watchtower. He explains that each major landmass on the planet possesses such a structure, each designed to protect that landmass from the ancient demon-snake Kupaladon in the unlikely event that it ever be awakened from where it has otherwise been made to slumber. Recently there had been rumblings from that part of the world, hence he and his steed had been made within ‘the shining gardens’, that which stood to uphold the light specifically against Kupaladon, to watch out for any sign of sabotage against any of the Watchtowers, the pair having been modelled after the kinds of heroes these kingdoms have been observed to have already produced on their own. Someone clearly has found and awakened Kupaladon, and with Mario having destroyed this structure the entire continent will now be vulnerable to its attacks. Since Kupaladon was last able to be trapped a new potion has been developed which Sir Ivardi can use to properly defeat it now, however obviously that will involve getting it down the beast’s throat hence he needs to search for the head more than any other part of its body, also the final ingredient has to be as fresh as possible so he still needs to obtain it during one of these levels just before facing the demon rather than the concoction already being prepared on arrival.

In regards to the paintings found here, they connect to otherwise corresponding invisible frames throughout the kingdoms (they’ll become visible once someone goes through from this end), and so using these they should now seek out the demon’s head. When Mario insists on coming along, he’s told that it would be far too dangerous for him to go up against this particular monster under normal conditions, however there are ten shards hidden, one per kingdom that a painting connects to, which if then assembled will form an Emblem which should protect him for long enough. If they complete the Emblem before finding the demon’s head, Mario can aid in the defeating of it. These shards will

only show themselves to a person who possesses a certain number of stars from a given kingdom however (the prevalence of stars on this planet compared to others is confirmed here to be because of what Gargoyle did to make the unique Star Road per *Last Wish in the Mushroom Kingdom*, although they can't use this to get a wish from Star Road now because Kupaladon will be blocking any kind of communication outside the continent, such as with Xia's video call, and hence why they also can't go to the likes of Rosalina for assistance).

Thus the main body of this game will be going through the paintings to complete that many of the levels in that kingdom before finally getting that next shard, the player having a free selection of which of that area's levels to tackle in which order upon entering each painting. The game isn't perfectly linear beyond that either, for Mario can pop back and forth between different kingdoms' levels if he prefers, although certain areas of the mountaintop where specific paintings fell won't be accessible until other earlier progress thresholds are met, this meaning there's still room for designed escalating difficulty without the player getting too ahead of themselves too soon. Another painting will allow Mario to redo those first levels with Wario and coming up the mountainside. There will additionally be four phantom paintings that Mario might stumble across, these unable to be interacted with yet but implying that there will be more available later on.

Once Mario begins exploring these kingdoms it'll be clear why Sir Ivardi is saying he'll need to 'search' for the head: Kupaladon is massive, to the point where its snake-like body lies across every single landscape, not to be interacted with but providing either a boundary or an ominous detail of the background scenery to remind you that it's ever-present. More than this though, at places where said body has looped round in a coil before carrying on, new demon grunts keep spawning from within the curls, meaning that if Mario was to return to an area he'd previously cleared of enemies he may well find that there's new ones to take their places. These demon grunts can take any number of forms, depending on what will cause chaos in the given environment most, plus there'll also be other enemies more typically in Bowser's employ sprinkled amongst them. In that vein, the level of devastation each kingdom has suffered already so quickly will vary, some just in a state of confusion and panic while others are fully razed.

A number of kingdoms had recently brought mechanisms for defending their settlements with from First Safety Inc. (*Toadette at Law*), however these have immediately begun to fail once they're tried to be used against the demons. Other places are at high risk from flooding and the like due to damage that's previously been done to their local environments. Just because I'd like to see them transition into a 3D design, I'd want for one of the areas to have their locals-in-peril be the Beakers from *Wario's Woods*. Additionally the messenger Storks recreated in *Mario Party Wild's* Postal Pandemonium turn up occasionally to deliver relief supplies, they able to pop in and out when Kupaladon is blocking any other communications because they're not strictly 'communicating' across the boundary, simply using their mysterious other plane to move stuff about (they're not able to take people with them though, so they can't be a direct rescue service at the same time). The level that actually involves obtaining the final ingredient Sir Ivardi needs (this somehow needing to be framed as a level that can't be entirely skipped around therefore) sees the one place where that plant is known to grow, that being an area of farmland that's currently suffering from a sudden drought since a group of demon grunts have soaked up all the water into a single pool. Mario agrees to help, fighting off those enemies and bringing back some water that can then be used to feed the plants. As a reward the ingredient is obtained and, when he happens to show up straight afterwards, Sir Ivardi can add it to the rest of the potion, making it now complete.

Three of four of these kingdoms would have Bowser be the boss of one of the levels (marked as such in their painting's level select), meanwhile another would have you go up against the deadly end of

Kupaladon's tail, before yet another in turn does reveal the demon's head, allowing Mario to interact with this baddie for the first real time, although it's framed such that it's kept out of range of Sir Ivardi remotely being able to get the potion into its mouth, meaning this isn't the climactic battle just yet (this also being at the end of the level discussed above where the last ingredient is obtained to ensure that these events happen sequentially). Speaking of Sir Ivardi once more, while most of the levels will have Mario going up against the enemies either alone or with Yoshi, for the knight will be busy searching for the head still, there will be certain fights where he will join in, implementing a mechanic where Mario can mark a location/spot on the boss which the knight and his steed will then move to/strike at while Mario and Yoshi set up something else.

Just to dial back to Bowser, by putting together disparate bits of his dialogue from the different encounters it can be concluded that the Koopas as a race are distantly descended from Kupaladon, a fact he was unaware of, growing up rather in his castle near the Mushroom Kingdom, until shortly before the events of *Odyssey* at which point he went to reclaim his 'ancestral home' which was once the seat of Kupaladon's reign and rebranded it 'Bowser's Kingdom' for that game. It was only at some point after this that he realised the demon-snake was actually buried far beneath, at which point he started having prisoners excavate the area. While he's hardly going to reveal all of his subsequent plan to Mario this time around, he assures him that this will be the end of him getting in Bowser's way. On one occasion in particular Bowser also boasts about how he was able to convince the public of the fictional threat of the New Donk City humans (see *Toadette at Law*) which made them so eager to invest in his company First Safety Inc. that they willingly tore up their own environments to fuel their own branches of the factories so that they could possess methods of communal protection. This only resulted in them being caught off-guard when this whole situation happened since they were then having to deal with the consequences of what they were doing to nature (the flooding, wild animals being driven into public spaces etc. mentioned earlier), plus that they had put all of their trust for protection into products secretly designed to break on use, thus making them even more vulnerable than they otherwise would have been anyway. For a further stab, pitting the cultural consciousness against those humans would have led some to also be suspicious of the protag-humans still re-establishing themselves in this continent, Mario's own species, since there will be those who don't make the distinction.

On going through the painting to the Mushroom Kingdom, Mario will find that all of the other rulers who had gathered at the castle will have been cursed into a deep sleep (not including Peach, King Toadstool [let out again for the first time properly since *Embers of Truth*], Luigi or any accompanying staff); this also goes into why there's extra pandemonium in the other kingdoms since those subjects no longer have their rulers giving them guidance in how to respond. Luigi has made friends with one of the other attendants, an Ant Trooper named Sybil, and in these particular levels you have the option to play as them instead of as Mario and Yoshi. When they learn about Sir Ivardi's mission and the search for the shards, Sybil convinces Luigi that the Emblem's magic should be used to try to wake the rulers up instead; Ivardi can face Kupaladon on his own, Mario doesn't need to step up yet again, and by doing things this way the panicking public can have reassurance from their authorities. Mario doesn't show signs of conceding to that though, for once the Emblem is complete it surely makes sense to then get rid of their biggest threat as soon as possible rather than waiting to fix other issues first, even if some of those cursed are also his friends, so in the Mushroom Kingdom levels where you do opt to remain playing as him Luigi will instead show up sometimes as an NPC to ask if you've reconsidered. He's been completely won over by Sybil's arguments and truly believes that using the Emblem to break whatever curse is at play is by far the better path for him to take personally.

Given the significance of the Mushroom Kingdom to the land as a whole, some particularly nasty demons have been sent to cause chaos here. This prompts the Toads to beg for King Toadstool to lead them, which behind closed doors Peach concedes to allow him to do. In this kingdom's 'boss level' then the king leads the Toads to fend off a large demon, and while Mario/Luigi does end up defeating the monster at the end of the level said king dies in the process (the exact moment maybe having to happen off-screen, depends on what Nintendo would say). While the castle thus goes into mourning, there's a swift wartime coronation for Peach, making her Queen Peach from here on out, she now able to openly lead the kingdom rather than from the background like she has been (if another game wants her to be 'Princess' then that must be set before this in the timeline, or be in any of the pocket continuities like the Paper series, Party games or *Smash*; the games that are already set after this one, such as the *Dr Mario* and *Super Mario Land* series, either call her Nurse Toadstool/Doctor Peach instead of Princess or don't feature her at all; there is a statue of 'Princess Peach' in *Wario Land* but that could have been so named years before). Long live the Queen.

Once all of the shards have been collected and the Emblem assembled, it just so happens that that's when Sir Ivardi locates the demon's head again, this time in a place where the knight will be able to give it the potion, this being accessed through a painting whose location has only just become reachable. Mario attaches the Emblem to himself and the pair go through for the biggest boss fight yet. It's made very clear that without the protection of the Emblem Mario wouldn't be able to last through this. There's just one serious problem: when the potion is indeed finally got down the demon's throat, nothing happens, only that Sir Ivardi is promptly swept off his feet. Mario gets knocked much further aside, and when he gets back up Kupaladon has repositioned itself so the head is once more nowhere to be seen. Luigi and Sybil hurry into view, saying they came as fast as they could as soon as they knew the fight was going on. They realise that things did not go according to plan, after which, with Luigi acknowledging that Mario still has the Emblem, he begrudgingly hands it over to Sybil, securing it in a satchel on her side. Suddenly Sybil transforms, revealing herself to have actually been Kamek in disguise the whole time, who with another swish of magic summons Bowser. He chides Mario for yet again having handed him what he needed, taking the Emblem in one hand and grabbing a hold of him in the other, the pair of them thus vanishing in a further swish of magic.

Mario finds himself inside a candlelit chamber with a mini platforming course at the end of which is a star. If he completes the course the star then soars from his hands and into Bowser who's untouchable on the sidelines, he visibly powering up from it, and the room randomly generates a new platforming course. This repeats, Bowser receiving the star and the course randomly generating, until Mario finally gives up, just standing still for a given amount of time, after which Bowser suddenly starts attacking from all sides, the chamber opening up onto a path that Mario must flee down as Bowser swipes, breathes fire and breaks through other surfaces with increased size to force him to change directions, his appearance becoming much more furious, anything to get Bowser to be as legitimately terrifying as he can be (while still keeping it a kids' game, ~~although at this point...~~). Eventually Mario won't be able to go on any longer, slowing down and finally collapsing to the floor.

Bowser looms over him, saying that since Kupaladon had been whispering in his mind of these things long before they found a way to release it (the demon nevertheless aware of the developments in the outside world while it slumbered) he of course could have destroyed the Watchtower himself, could have collected the stars to find the shards, but he could see that future (this can be taken as purely a metaphor, but from the events of *Future's Spirits* it can be assumed that Bowser actually did see a version of this future amidst the projected memories), that Mario would then come after him as he always does, so a different tact would need to be taken. Thus he broke Mario's spirit instead, having him be the one to hand him every victory. Of course Mario would head to the mountain if his airships

surrounded it, leading him to destroy the Watchtower to prevent his duplicate from using it, a duplicate they'd all been playing their little games (sports) with for years (this the second nod to the timeline placement, allowing as much room as needed for said sports titles to have taken place in the interval between *Reunited/DDR: Mario Mix* and this). Of course once apprised of the situation Mario would want to help, which would require Sir Ivardi to point him towards gathering the shards. Of course getting Luigi to want to use the Emblem to revive the other rulers would generate a division (it was his magic rather than Kamek's that had cursed them, just in case Kamek was caught), for when did Mario ever back away from the path that led him to the fight, no matter the alternatives, this also lowering his spirits where his brother was involved; Kupaladon told him that that choice of fighting or protecting is what the people of the shining gardens see as the duality of heroism, well here both of those sides have now been broken. Of course Mario would opt to help return the water to the farmlands rather than simply taking the ingredient for himself up front. The water he returned with was tainted by the demons having been swimming in it, meaning that when it was used to feed the plants they too lost their quality, which is why the potion didn't work. The plant would have been fine as it was, if only a little drier than usual. In this way Bowser now has the Emblem, and he will be able to use it in ways Mario could not: since he is a descendant of Kupaladon, he possesses within him some of the same magic as the great snake, just buried deep down. The Emblem can bring forth those traits, enabling him to have secondary control over the demon grunts being conjured. He could well just kill Mario now, but seeing as there's no exit to this place he'd rather let the man continue to wallow in his self-pity here for as long as he lasts. With that he disappears, leaving Mario alone on the floor.

When Mario gets up there is no background noise or music, just those of his shuffling footsteps and exhalations as he forces his body to return through the chambers searching for a way out that he's just been told doesn't exist. Once every chamber has been visited again to no avail, all seems lost. That's when a Stork appears. As stated earlier in the game her kind can still get into anywhere, although they can't take people with them, but she's brought him a gift all the same: a power-up. With this not only is his strength restored but she also points him towards the fact that while it's in effect he should be able to break through an identified point in the ceiling, forcing his way up out of here. The Stork then gives a final comment about how her father was the one to deliver him and Luigi as babies, albeit accidentally to Yoshi's Island instead of either of their own parents, after which Mario indeed makes his platforming-based escape upwards. The new music would be like that which implies a time limit on the power-up, such as with fire flowers in the *Galaxy* games for instance, but regardless it only wears off when he reaches the open air, the hole he creates coming out in the regular hub, those chambers having in fact been inside the main mountain. Mario can at any point now go back in that hole to play more of the randomly generated mini puzzles if he so chooses, but to prevent this from being a means of cheaply farming stars said prizes will just shatter when he reaches them before the room generates anew.

As for the main story however, Bowser's voice then echoes across the lands, declaring that any people who pledge eternal loyalty to him, as shown by them now joining his army in their siege of the Mushroom Kingdom, shall have the demon plights lifted from their homes, meanwhile all those who continue to stand against him shall have their torments heightened yet more. At this point therefore the nine main-non-Mushroom-Kingdom-paintings gain a new level each, these time trials wherein Mario has to liberate those locations from new foes before those people cave in to the prospect that this will never be over otherwise and indeed side with Bowser (I was originally going to have it that Mario only had one go at these each until the post-game content, but it feels iffy to temporarily lock off certain levels in this case, and I otherwise don't see that this should make much difference to what follows anyway, other than the background detail of how big Bowser's army appears). If a time trail is

failed and the local citizens to bow down to Bowser, the demon grunts do indeed retreat from that location, bringing no more destruction to those loyal, just as Bowser promised.

Mario won't get a new Mushroom Kingdom level until all nine time trials have at least been attempted (this parameter indicated by a 'x/9' counter that shows after returning from each one regardless of success or failure), at which point he will go through to find first of all that Luigi in the interim found and brought back Sir Ivardi such that he's now been able to recover from his last fight (Luigi himself is not around at the moment however). Outside the castle Peach has already done a better job at organising the Toads than her father had, with them now set to defend the castle's borders, their mechanisms of protection also powered up by stars from the vault, plus while it's not drawn attention to if one was to look closely some of the Paper Mario characters can be seen amongst the crowd, summoned from their book to help make a stand. On the other side of the border Bowser's forces have created an impenetrable wall of fighters.

Speaking out across the respective armies, Bowser informs Peach that this is her last chance to align herself with him. His children have already been out scouring the wider world for the other Watchtowers a while, so it's only a matter of time before his might is made global; she won't be a hindrance to that, one way or another. It's also at this time that it's clarified exactly why Bowser has repeatedly been trying to kidnap/marry Peach (other than to give Bowser Jr a mother per *Sunshine*): despite what he tells his minions (indicating he lied to the Goombas in order to maintain their loyalty when he promised them he'd be getting rid of the fungus threat in their land) he wishes to convince Peach to join him so that he can add her (unspecified as fungal) influence to his own dominion, combining their forces to overcome even more territories even more efficiently. While it doesn't have to even be alluded to here, it can be supposed that Baby Bowser tried to go after Baby Peach at the beginning of *Partners in Time*, which would have then happened long before the realisation about her potential, simply because she was an obvious target given her royal status. To demonstrate once again that he now has influence over the demons, Bowser with some great focus even is able to get Kupaladon to raise its head over the castle in intimidation (not that he has even close to complete control over that particular creature), besides which there's also the regular demon grunts acting alongside the Koopa Troopers etc. All of Bowser's magic now flows through the Emblem, even that which was cast before the artefact's assembly such as the sleeping curse.

When Peach continues to stand resilient, the battle commences. Amidst the immediate assault the painting gets slashed by some flying projectile, meaning it can't be used to get citizens out to safety. When Mario informs Sir Ivardi of what Bowser told him about why the potion didn't work, Toadette (who's also in the castle) reveals that actually that farm wasn't the only place in these kingdoms where that ingredient can be found; a thoroughly-stocked greenhouse and pantry was kept specially for King Toadstool, which should also hold all the other ingredients they need as well to make a whole new potion from scratch. With that swift concocting of the solution done off screen, the gameplay of this level thus is Mario and Yoshi (who also ended up here in the interim as a supporter of Peach) performing something of an escort mission, driving back Bowser's hordes now breaking into the castle to clear a path for Sir Ivardi on his own steed so that he can make it to a high vantage point from which he can attack Kupaladon properly this time; even once he's made it to an appropriate spot Mario and Yoshi will continue to have to fight off enemies so the knight isn't struck from behind. Since Mario no longer has the Emblem he himself can't directly join in attacking the snake again. The plan works, Kupaladon is dealt the fatal blow from inside. As it's collapsing, it utters that at least it's already been able to corrupt Bowser's mind, beyond what greed it already contained that is. At the same time Sir Ivardi and his steed disperse into streams of light that return home over the horizon, their purpose

fulfilled. The demon grunts begin to fade, confusion fills the enemy ranks. Before the situation can develop any further, Bowser uses his magic to have the scene blinded by a white light.

Mario next wakes up outside of a city, a place that hasn't been visited yet. Upon entering it it'll be found to be like a mini hub, with Mario able to enter new paintings that provide one-off side levels based in this area if he so chooses to do those at this stage. The main focus of this city however is that it's populated by citizens who've had their livelihoods repaired, although they now live in a state where Koopa Guards etc. patrol the streets and make sure everyone is continuing to be loyal to their king. Mario learns that most of the continent is like this now, all except for the Mushroom Kingdom which is now sealed within a bubble, it remaining in its situation of despair as a reminder of what happens to those who disobey. Bowser's new castle is at the centre of this city, but if Mario tries to get to it he'll find the citizens blocking his path. They won't attack Mario, but they won't risk being the ones caught not supporting their king either. Mario must thus find another way inside, which by aid of Yoshi's offered modes of alternate mobility (he having been reunited with while exploring these surroundings) can be located around one of the spots where various artworks and sculptures are being fashioned in Bowser's likeness. Amongst this is a group of Shy Guys who have made a portrait of Bowser in his new throne room, they also saying that there's already a blank canvas hanging in that same room acting as a placeholder. Taking this cue, Mario and Yoshi take this secret portal inside.

Indeed finding Bowser in that throne room, the self-appointed king manages to seize Mario before any real attack can be performed. With Yoshi left behind, Mario is brought to an isolated platform surrounded by raised seating on the other side of a considerable moat of open air. As the residents of the city are made to fill up the seats, Bowser reveals that below the platform has been recreated a version of the top of Peach's castle partially-sunk into a lake of lava. It is upon here that he shall have his final fight. There's a one-way barrier between this stage and the seating, allowing enemies to throw rubbish and other hazards at Mario as they jeer while Mario in turn cannot get out. Before they get started Mario is offered any of the power-ups he's ever had in any of the other games, all except for the invincibility star. Bowser will then go on to point out that since all of the other demons are gone the Emblem no longer has anything else to connect the flow of energy to, meaning all the power it otherwise draws from him gets projected back in another form, meaning...

As Bowser puts the Emblem on himself again he now lights up with the invincibility rainbow, with a twisted version of that familiar tune beginning in the background. There is no waiting out the clock with this one, that invincibility will keep on going. A look seen on Mario's face before the fight begins conveys that this is the most determined he's ever been, following which the selection of a power-up is made, resulting in all the rest then being locked behind force fields and the platform pitching to have him fall backwards onto the main stage. With the pair thus moving around the slanted platforms of the pink roof, Mario can leave marks on the tiles in the same way as was done earlier in the co-operative Ivardi fights, following which Yoshi, who has managed to make his way into the audience, will throw either mushrooms or more power-ups onto those targets. When it comes to actually defeating Bowser it doesn't matter which power-up Mario has at a given time, for the key here is damage-boosting; the first hit damages him, then during that period of invulnerability Mario can quickly hit the Emblem again to knock it off of Bowser, so for that having a power-up of his own just gives one extra layer of health to work with before the attempt would kill him. The only reason he can pull this off now rather than being fully knocked back in pain as would be usual is that aforementioned state of utmost determination, and the player would be signalled to try to do this by that absence of a major knock-back to go with the health drop. He shouldn't chase after the Emblem once it's off Bowser though, for it'll keep on moving out of his reach until Bowser has recovered and put it back on himself. Instead Mario needs to take advantage of Bowser's exposed state and quickly hit him again

for a third time, this being the blow that does the damage. After this, Bowser will reclaim the Emblem, although now it'll be moving around his body thus making it a harder target to hit when damage-boosting, plus the overall environment will begin to get more dangerous as well. The escalation goes further on the third time, then the fight extends to a fourth round where the pair fall through into the interior of the castle recreation.

After that fourth hit against Bowser the Emblem will fully shatter while he goes tumbling out of the castle and into the lava, which the Koopa Guards will swiftly have drained so as to save him. Mario should hop down to dispense with these enemies before they revive Bowser (not that he is going to get back up regardless), and thus we enter the ending. Since Bowser had tied all of his own magic to it earlier, with the Emblem having been destroyed the magic holding the Mushroom Kingdom within its bubble also disappears, this allowing Peach, Luigi and all the other rulers (who have finally awoken thanks again to the breaking of the magic) to soar over to this city and its arena by holding onto Grand Stars from the vault. The citizens cheer at the sight of their respective rightful rulers as Peach goes over to order that Bowser be restrained. Luigi approaches Mario with a handmade star with the aim that it mark a repair in their brotherly relationship, this acting as this level's completion star.

In a post-level cutscene Mario is offered ownership of a small region on the continent, a vast upgrade from his current cabin (yes in other games he is shown to live in a wood cabin). On seeing his expression, Peach further puts forward the idea that it be a region outside of the Mushroom Kingdom, away from everyone else; despite having won the day, Bowser nevertheless did get into his head about having been responsible for all that happened and thus he is feeling somewhat guilty around other people. Daisy helps him move, and when they arrive at the location of his new home it's to find that the citizens have come together to build him a castle of his own here as a thank you.

The background for the credits sees all the locations Mario visited in this game, although now they've been repaired and the residents are happy. At the very end there's another brief cutscene depicting Wario returning in his plane from wherever he went at the beginning, only to now see Mario's name everywhere, people still celebrating their hero, and this just goes to infuriate him anew (setting him up to eventually steal Mario's castle in *Super Mario Land 2*).

On returning to the hub Mario will find it now to have bright clear skies. Two of the phantom paintings have now actualised: one leads to the city from Bowser's version of the continent to allow for replay/completion of those levels, the other to Mario's new castle, where there's no levels per se, it more just a matter of him being able to explore the grounds, interact with the other characters, enjoy his happy ending, but there is also a promise from Xia (who's now here in person thanks to some breathing apparatus she's designed) that if he can bring her the total number of stars in the game she can use them to power a machine that will mark his celebration (it in fact has fireworks fill the sky and coins/mushrooms rain around the castle).

As for the other two, to unlock them Mario must find all of certain kinds of collectables hidden in some of the levels; like how the *Galaxy* games put a question mark above any stars in the level selects that still have secrets Mario hasn't found within them, so too would there be some indication when entering each paintings as to which levels should be replayed in this pursuit. One type of collectable, totems of symbolic creatures in Japanese culture, have actually been available from the start, it's just that unless someone is doing a completionist run they might well not have found them all on their first time through. The acquisition of all of these causes one of the remaining paintings to actualise as a link to Bowser's Kingdom from *Odyssey* (although obviously not just copying that chapter of that other game), not for multiple levels this time but rather a single secret boss one, one where Mario has to go up against the Koven of Magikoopas. This level is relatively open though, allowing Mario to take

the fight around the castle, exploring the different areas while continuing the combat/fleeing, this also allowing him to go down into the excavated area which ends in the now-broken stone seal behind which Kupaladon had been dormant. Considering however how big that following cavern would have to have been the actual threshold has since been roped off though, meanwhile Mario may also spot tucked out of the way the remains of Il Piantissimo's bucket-helmet (so my rationale for having him be the one to bring the Bhoanki down here at the beginning is that at the end of *Sunshine* there's a shot of him finding Bowser Jr's magic paintbrush, yet in subsequent other games Bowser Jr has his paintbrush back again, so after that game he must have returned to Isle Delfino, reclaimed his toy and taken prisoner the man who had dared to 'steal' it in the meantime, and so come this point much later he was still around to be forced to undertake this fatal task). Completing this secret boss level unlocks the ability to magically alter cosmetic details about the game: what characters' outfits look like, the music that plays in the background, the weather in a given level etc.

The other type of collectable only becomes available after beating the main story mode: pearls of light left behind after Sir Ivardi's departure. Mario's made aware of these new additions when first re-entering the hub by a Stork bringing a letter from some unspecified sender in the knight's homeland asking that said pearls might be gathered and brought back there. Collecting all of these will have the last painting open up into the shining gardens, which like Bowser's Kingdom can be navigated around during the single level if Mario so wishes to explore, meanwhile the main focus of that bonus area is for him to prove his prowess by showing how many waves of various clay enemies he can overcome without the help of health mushrooms etc. (this confirming that what Yoshi went through in *Yoshi's Clay Quest* was indeed part of the studying of existing heroes Sir Ivardi mentioned went into his own creation, which also goes into Bowser's comment about the shining gardens' view on fighting vs protection, which was the choice Yoshi had to make there too). Passing a certain thresholds in the number of waves beaten will prompt the unseen voice in charge here to have Sir Ivardi and his steed reappear, they now playable characters is any of the other levels. While the speaker as stated does remain unseen, there will be butterflies around whenever it addresses Mario (this potentially tying this place to some things going on the Kirby games involving ancient extra-dimensional beings and the butterfly which went on to form Morpho Knight).

Waluigi Sports Tycoon

This game takes place between *Mario & Luigi Reunited* and *Super Mario Desolation*, going on to retroactively establish every Mario sports game as being in this gap as well (unless a future one wants to use the title Queen Peach instead which would put it after the latter), as well as the Kart and Olympics games as will be addressed. There will be zero mention of Mario Parties since, as shown in *Mario Party Wild*, those take place instead in the Sages' dimension. I'm choosing to end my release schedule with this one because it nicely bookends the lot with Waluigi and because *Desolation* could very much feel like an end to Mario, which of course we don't want to happen, so another game should be sure to come after it, yet to make the next one another 'serious' game would be just to make that follow-up feel lesser by recent comparison.

Returning from somewhere in frustration, tearing down some diagrams of the Music Keys and Truffle Towers (*Dance Dance Revolution: Mario Mix*) from his wall, Waluigi goes on to see how the protagon-humans have been settling themselves back across the continent and sees that there might be something to be gained from 'making them more comfortable'. Taking inspiration from them already having tennis matches among their own communities, combining that with something he sees in the Mushroom Kingdom's equivalent of a newspaper about Bowser's foiled plan involving building skyscrapers across the countryside (*Wrecking Crew '98*), he sets off on arranging his own sporting events that people will pay to watch or partake in, building areas for them to take place within, in turn setting prize money amounts that will draw more people in, this being a business tycoon game. Seeing as how most 'regular' denizens of the kingdoms still don't trust him after *Embers of Truth*, to begin with he must work with protagon-human patrons and basic resources (this wider context can also explain why Miis show up in certain later games, if only in the crowds, if they could be subtly tied as another variant of the protagon-humans), but once he has more of a reputation he'll eventually bring in more varied people who will spend more money, around the same time beginning to unlock more creative resources as well. The big thing are the 'characters', for when they agree to take part in the sports that will give him a big boost in revenue. In order to draw in those 'characters' however there are various factors that will want to be considered in planning in order to pander to each person in turn, for instance one element added to an event might be liked by Daisy but won't appeal to any of the 'villains'. If you get good enough at this then these characters will in turn begin to invite others to come along as well.

Starting off with tennis, you'll over time also be able to arrange games of hockey, golf, boxing, baseball, basketball, football, volleyball, dodgeball and horseracing; you may well have other options as well, but these would definitely be included as they're the ones that have already appeared in past Mario sport games (still yet to get to the Olympics). Another milestone after gaining the ability to prompt characters to invite others to join them would be the external commencement of the kart races (it would have to be decided how much of the actual plot of *Mario Kart: Continental Rally* is actively acknowledged), at some point after which there would also be a hint of *Donkey Kong Barrel Blast/Diddy Kong Racing*, and this becomes a drain on your patrons, forcing him to ramp up his own events to make people still want to pick them over the racing.

There is just one tiny quibble with establishing the Kart games as taking place before *Desolation*, which is that the Prima Official Game Guide for *Mario Kart Wii* mentions in Daisy's description how she was rescued in *Super Mario Land*, an event that doesn't happen until after *Desolation*, however a) the guide also says that Luigi helped save her, which is incorrect since he wasn't in that game at all, so we can view the guide's accounts as imperfect despite the publication being licensed by Nintendo, b) should a guide be held up against canon anyway, even if again it is officially licensed, c) even if it is deemed that that information should be concurrent with what has happened in-game by the time of

Mario Kart Wii therefore we can just say that while *Continental Rally* took place before *Desolation* the *Wii* game wasn't until later.

At another point after that Rosalina brings from another galaxy a time capsule that the people of a given world (the Earth from 'Prequelilogue') wanted gifted to Mario and his friends, among the contents of which were details that have inspired the setting up of something called the Olympic games (although likely they couldn't be gone into detail about in this gameplay because of the rights over the Sonic sides), and Waluigi can deal with this in the same way, choosing to just boost his own projects, however if alternatively he actually investigates the context of that news he'll realise that he can actually opt to be the one to organise the Olympics in turn, thus unlocking a whole other corner of the game where the development is specifically for those larger spectacles based on trying to replicate the descriptions from the time capsule to a close enough degree (including the described surrounding Earth locations). Also inside the time capsule are a map of Earth and some Nintendo products, which, as well as doubly confirming the identity of the planet of origin, is in the former's case the one that ends up hanging on Wario's wall in the *WarioWare* games, this just to tie up that which would be an inconsistency otherwise, while the latter again just explains the presence of such products elsewhere in the *WarioWare* series.

There'll also throughout the game be other news generally coming in about the wider kingdoms within which there'll be references to the races of the games *Excitebike* and *Famicom Grand Prix* coming about in the wake of the main kart tournaments. Because life isn't going to be fair to Waluigi however at random intervals a problem will arise in one of the areas already built, meaning he'll have to dedicate attention to resolving that issue before it has a domino effect to cause other detrimental consequences.

In addition to all this, there'll be one other place on your map that may not immediately appear to impact on the sports tycoon operation, rather being something else that Waluigi can now do because of it, but there is a feedback that'll be got to in a moment. This place is where Waluigi can alternatively choose to spend the money he's earning to build/upgrade himself a new home, buying accessories to fill it with, furthermore customising the surrounding area as well etc. This is in many ways just another exercise in how the player can choose to manage their in-game income streams and show off their creativity, however it should be noted that the nicer Waluigi's home is (based on certain factors again like the sports will have to tailor them for certain characters) the fewer random problems he'll come across elsewhere, that is up until a point after which it is purely about the factor of ownership, because the happier he is there in his downtime the better functioning he's going to be at the main job.

If you spend money on anonymously hiring someone else (e.g.: Toad) to run an event itself, you can then actually take part in it (this being a minigame of that sport), giving you the chance to win the prize for yourself; you cannot participate in an event if people know you're the one organising it. You can also when setting it up select that there would be a bias put into it in your favour, which would make it easier for you to win and the prize would be greater, however there's a given probability in that case that the cheating will be discovered by someone and you'll lose everything from that instance. Eventually you may find other people setting up their own sporting events, in which case you can similarly partake without organisational hiccoughs, or you can get a different minigame in trying to tear down their event, or you can just leave them be and see how that affects your patron rates. If you want to visit other players' maps the framing for doing so is that Waluigi looks upon blueprints pinned to his office walls and imagines what those designs might be like instead.

(BONUS)

So me attempting to additionally canonise every game that a Mario character has ever appeared to any degree in may have been a stretch, but that's what I do. It was originally my intention to have the item blocks in *Continental Rally* be the key to explaining any subsequent crossovers, with them being potential windows into other universes as well beyond that of the Sages. Then however I found out that Kirby, Link and Samus (if not more that I'm still unaware of) make cameo appearances in a couple of other games which based on the timeline must come before that 'first' kart race. Therefore I've come up with this instead...

Kirby Fractures

For the first time ever realities have aligned such that in every universe there's a planet precisely occupying the same space in each of them, and this cosmic occurrence has caused hard-to-see fractures to open up upon them allowing people to pass from one world to another. Kirby happens to stumble through one of these fractures, kicking off this adventure. Every time Kirby visits a new world, it will be added to the navigation map, the collective representation of said worlds is of them in a chain, one unable to move to far away ones at will but rather having to go down the line one at a time. Be wary though, at least one time a fracture might instead lead to a universe where that planet has just been destroyed, meaning Kirby will have to quickly find a way across the void to the next fracture before he succumbs to the vacuum.

The main mechanics of the game thus involve shifting back and forth between adjacent worlds, either because you need to assimilate a power from a creature unique to one world which will aid you in the next one, or (once Kirby has acquired the Star-Board which allows him to switch to an adjacent world without need of being at a fracture point) because there's an obstacle on one world which isn't there in the next thus meaning that you can get around it that way and then pop back again (since the worlds are aligned the maps line up as well, even if their aesthetics vary as much as possible). As for the actual motivation to keep traversing this chain of worlds, beyond pure curiosity, this is that on an early world Kirby encounters a species of mimics which copy his power-up design and thus cause mayhem of their own as they do chaotically shift through fractures. If you face them again with a different power-up they'll change to match that one. The only way to make them harmless is for them to see Kirby in his neutral state. If Kirby leaves a larger group active on a given world while he's focusing on clearing others, we might start to see on that neglected world similar consequences to the environment to what can be expected from introducing an invasive species. Beyond these guys being the standard enemies however, there will also be other bigger baddies on certain worlds, as well as the major individual villain of the game: Jemigo. She comes from a universe where all the stars have gone out, meaning she can't use one to fly through space like Kirby sometimes can, so these cosmic connections are her first chance to interact with other worlds, hence she's taking the opportunity to send out robotic chains each ending in some kind of machine which will, if Kirby doesn't destroy each in turn, bring back the best parts of each location so that she can build for herself a perfect Frankenplanet.

Even when all is set right by the end of the game and the planets are soon to go enough out of alignment again, it's revealed that the repeated flitting back and forth through them has actually altered certain fractures meaning that they'll linger on regardless, meaning it'll continue to be possible for specific worlds to cross over with one another, assuming someone comes across the relevant subtle fracture. These are then how the other franchise cameos occur in other games. While it may not be explicitly shown in this game, a cutscene montage at some point of Kirby flitting between

worlds could be where Kirby visits the universes belonging to Mario (the mimics in harmless Kirby form being left behind as the Marching Mildes in *Yoshi's Island* and Mimics in *Donkey Kong Country Returns*), Link etc. In fact, with some tweaking of wording in *Continental Rally*, the item blocks could be implied to have been first made from the Bonneters messing with such fractures. The reason I'd nevertheless keep a version of Earth existing alongside Mario's world as seen in Prequepilogue rather than having those Earth-based Mario games also take place in an alternate universe is that for both *Mario + Rabbids* and the *Smash* franchise there needs to be an Earth that knows of all the different universes in order to have merchandise based on them, and since I'd rather not say that they are all just games in some reality (as that would just open the door to excusing anything, and with just the exception of E. Gadd's Pac-Man arcade machine which again was brought back from that Earth anyway) the mechanism of these humans glimpsing the other universes thanks to Bowser's portal works well for that as it is.

So when would this game look to come out relative to the rest? Well as stated on that first page, despite my arbitrary decision to claim there would be two games per year there would also be Olympic games at certain intervals as well, making there already instances of three games per year instead. To continue to have things be regular, some spaces could be found for other third games such as *Kirby Fractures* in the even intervals between Olympics (assuming the trend of missing the Winter Olympics continues after the lack of one for 2018). Depending on the years upon which the Olympics fall relative to the rest of this theoretical calendar, this could mean either three or four slots for extra games, and I'd want the first to be for Kirby, to ensure that it's released before *Galaxy 3* and its Prequepilogue.

As for two of the other slots, the minimum remaining, those could be used for other games of designs I later also wanted to include in this list but at a point where I had already definitively stopped adding main titles, these being free/cheap online multiplayer games/apps. Now some of the games in this document did have multiplayer sections if you recall, however those weren't the primary element, and I'd like there to be some cases where that play style can be found without having to get it through a side bit to something else first. The fact of them being free/cheap both also helps validate in my mind why they'd come in this third level of consideration rather than being main entries (yes I said *Peachagonals* would be an app but that could come with whatever slightly higher cost) and raises the chances of them being picked up by YouTuber trends etc. which would also be fun to achieve. The first case would be one of co-operative task completion/survival, the details of which I'm not coming up with now since this is like an appendix inclusion.

Following this the second would be more of a card game based deal (so it could be released as physical copies as well I guess) wherein lore-wise Mary O's company (*Maker 3D*) is offering residents of New Donk City (i.e. the players) the chance to create their own roleplay-like Mario-inspired adventure, the cards players put forth each round each having elements the point values for which depend on basic strength, the terrain, the enemy etc. Each round beginning with a different person going first, players start by establishing a characters card, then continuing to go around the circle they can add other accessories, power-ups, buddies, coins and 1-UP mushrooms (so that if they would otherwise be knocked out that round they can keep going), then at the end of each go-around the enemy/ies deals damage to each person (having first been damaged itself), lowering a health value (if this is done in a physical version that could be kept track of using an additional slider). This goes on until the enemy/ies is/are defeated and the 'level' is over, at which juncture points are tallied up for the aforementioned combinations of cards laid individually, as well as other bonus points being awards per votes for whose character creation was the best/funniest (so when choosing what to put down you can decide whether you want to go for what will give the most raw points or to instead play into your peers' humours). Then the process begins again with new characters etc., this for as many levels as are set at the

beginning. Players can furthermore mess with the parameters of each round through other types of cards, such as hidden stars which end the round prematurely (like how in games such as *Galaxy* finding the bonus star brings you back to the hub straight away) meaning people are scored only on what they've put together thus far; cards that add in additional enemies thus making the round go on for longer; warp pipes which mean a new terrain card is drawn, which could alter how effective certain items are; question mark blocks which mean a random new card is drawn from the deck instead which must be played immediately regardless of what it is (in some cases, such as power-ups, only one of a given card type can be attached to a given character at a time, so this might mean the player is forced to discard their current selection for this new one in the process); then also certain base characters will have advantages over each other inherently, for instance if one player is Mario and another is Yoshi, the former can at one time that round dock points off the latter and use them to boost their own points as in when Yoshi is boosted off in order to make it across a wider pit (I suppose certain lore implications could be hidden in how certain characters influence each other in this way then, but predominantly another way in which these last games are separate from the rest of the entries in this document is that they also aren't story based).

If there then did end up being one more slot, this could be a crossover game with some other original IP Nintendo has come out with in the meantime (which could also have the element of the narrator being a character, something I haven't been able to get in elsewhere); I don't know how widespread of an opinion this is but I have heard a couple of times people wishing Nintendo would come out with more brand new stuff rather than sequels to their existing franchises (whoops with this document then), so in general I would champion the idea of them coming out with something different that could potentially be the start of its own series. The issue just with doing that here though is that to include a completely non-Mario entry on this list would suddenly make this not a Mario list but a Nintendo one in general, at which point you have to start asking about the inclusions of Zelda etc. as well, hence I propose a crossover game instead for that instance. On that note though, if I'm wanting these entries to be sure to be Mario games, how can I now include Kirby as I did? Well, while the connections to the Mario continuity may end up only being implied there, they're still there and do impact the Mario lore, at the very least to a greater degree than my suggestion of Zelda would more likely.

#andakirby