

# Game Narrative Review

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**Your name:** Hannah Geissler

**Your school:** Sogang University

**Your email:** hannah.geissler@web.de

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**Game Writer/Creative Director/Narrative Designer:** Klas Martin Eriksson / Adam Stjärnljus



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## Overview

*Planet of Lana* is set on a once pristine planet where humans and animals live in harmony with nature. This idyll is shattered when alien, spider-like machines land on the planet, abducting inhabitants and plunging the world into chaos. However, the game's journey does not lead you into war, but rather to a place where you learn how to protect this living planet and restore its balance.

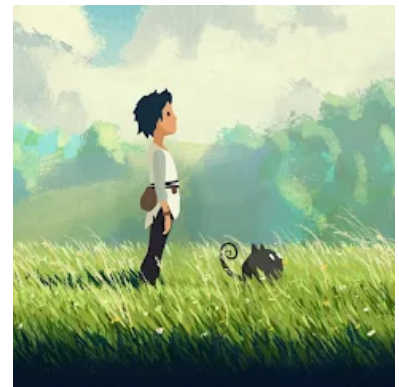
Lana, a young girl, escapes the long-legged machines while her older sister is abducted before her eyes. Driven by love, despair, and courage, she sets out to find her sister and reclaim her home. On her quest, she meets Mui, a small cat-like creature who becomes her loyal companion. Together, they traverse this new dystopian planet occupied by cold robots and their tinny melodies – in search of light, hope, and the salvation of their beloved home.

## Characters

As the name of the game suggests, Lana is at the center of the story – the young girl who suddenly loses her home and her sister. Although she is the only directly playable character, Mui, the cat-like little creature, subtly expands the scope of the action by following Lana's instructions and helping her overcome complex puzzles.

Apart from Lana and Mui, only a few other characters appear: Lana's sister Elo and the old man Rakuen. For Lana, Elo embodies what she loses, while Rakuen embodies what she can rebuild through knowledge and trust. These four characters are central to the game's overall storyline and form its thematic backbone.

- **Lana** – Lana is a bright, courageous, and curious young protagonist. She and her older sister Elo have a close bond, especially since their parents died. But when she witnesses her sister being abducted by robots that have suddenly landed, she is forced to abruptly leave her childhood and home behind and take on responsibility in a destroyed world. The search for her big sister and the solution to saving her home stems less from heroism than from a deeply human longing for closeness and restoration.

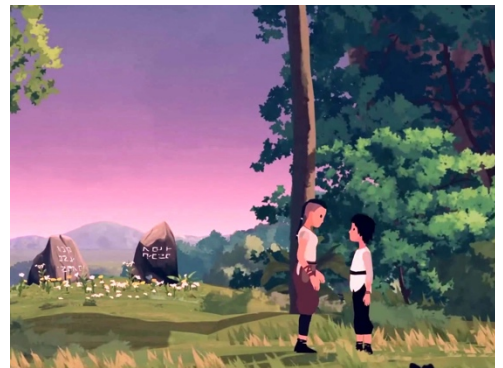


Her hope and determination enable her to overcome even the most dangerous obstacles.

- **Mui** – Mui is the second, indirectly playable main character. She is a small black creature with two glowing white eyes and a mysterious connection to the machines and dark beings. She is loyal, sensitive, and acts as a living bridge between nature and technology. Lana meets her on her journey through the landscapes that are partly still untouched and partly besieged by machines. As she helps Lana solve puzzles and escape, their relationship deepens into an almost symbiotic friendship. In the end, Mui seemingly sacrifices herself to save Lana, her sister, and the planet. With her mysterious connection to the invaders, this act is a symbol of love and reconciliation between the seemingly opposing forces that set the game in motion.



- **Elo** – In *Planet of Lana*, Elo is less a character than a memory that drives Lana. At the beginning, she is a symbol of security, and at the end, a tangible hope. Although rarely physically visible, Elo is always present in Lana's thoughts. Elo's voice and echoing calls encourage Lana to get up again and again, to keep running and searching. This makes Elo not only the lost big sister, but also a symbol of the lost homeland. Her abduction is a decisive turning point in Lana's development and forces her to take on the role of protector herself. Thus, Elo stands not only for loss, but also for the source of Lana's courage – the quiet strength that allows her to rise above herself.



- **Rakuen** – Rakuen appears late in the story, when Lana's journey is reaching its climax and the situation seems most hopeless. He is an old man who lives alone in a shelter in the desert – a remnant of a time when knowledge, music, technology, machines, and humans were still in harmony. After finding Lana unconscious following a sandstorm, he rescues her and takes her to his lonely oasis. Despite his brief appearance, Rakuen becomes a crucial figure: he is the first to not only help Lana survive but also teach her to understand. Through him, she realizes how

the hostile machines were once allies and need to be literally retuned. The once threatening tinny melodies of the spider robots become the key to communication and restoration. In the end, when Lana and Mui restore harmony between humans and machines, memory and future, Rakuen is also seen cheering – for what he thought was lost.

## Breakdown

### **Game Walkthrough:**

*Planet of Lana* begins like a quiet fairy tale – simple, hand-painted, almost childlike. Yet beneath the calm lies an astonishingly complex story about loss, memory, and the fragile balance between humans and machines. Without many words, using an incomprehensible language, but instead through music and light, a story unfolds that one doesn't so much read as feel.



As the player, you experience this story step by step, with every movement through the hand-painted landscapes and the world of Mui, Lana, and Elo, as you make your way through the twelve chapters. The first chapter is a rollercoaster of emotions – from Lana's idyllic life in her small village above the water to the abduction of Elo. From that moment, the real journey begins – into an unknown future, and at the same time into a long-lost past.

After meeting Mui, Lana becomes part of a team. Together, you hide from eerie creatures and machines in the tall grass of blooming fields, solving one puzzle after another to come

closer to Elo's rescue. While you remain focused on Lana's mission and the confrontation with the invaders, some puzzles begin to tell stories of a long-forgotten time. Back then, the spider-like machines and the villagers seemed to have lived in harmony – each offering a helping hand to the other.

Lana and Mui never find a clear answer to the strange wall paintings and the abandoned spaceship underground, but these fragments leave room for interpretation. Did the machines save humanity and bring them to this livable planet? But what turned the robots hostile? As you continue to run through the breathtaking landscapes, the melody of the machines echoes through the valley like a haunting refrain.

With the ancient bracelet found in the underground spaceship and Mui's glowing eyes, Lana finally manages to decipher this melody – not as a threat, but as communication. Mui becomes an essential companion. You can send her ahead, call her back, or let her wait at a certain point. But when it comes to crossing the water, Lana must be the one to help Mui. This creates a unique dynamic between their companionship.

As the story reaches its climax, Lana is suddenly separated from her small black friend, resulting in another loss. Yet the voice of her sister in her mind keeps her moving forward, until she encounters the old man in the desert. From there, traveling on foot becomes impossible, but luckily, Rakuens small robot comes into play. Through the puzzle of reactivating this little machine, the player learns that the ever-present metallic melody of the robots is the key to forming a bond with them.

After a risky chase through the desert, riding on the reprogrammed little robot, Lana finally reaches the mothership. It is teeming with hostile machines, and the game suddenly shifts into several quick-time events. During this turbulent adventure, Lana finds her sister Elo and the other villagers again, resting in comfortable capsules that make it seem as if the robots are taking care of them. Mui also finds a way back to Lana. But the story isn't over yet.



The path to the core of the mothership becomes a fast-paced escape from the aggressive robots. When Lana and Mui finally reach the heart of the ship, everything seems to have led to this moment. Before them floats a blindingly bright orb – pulsating, alive, and threatening. Every five seconds, it sends waves of light and destruction across the room. Lana and Mui move carefully through the dazzling beams, helping each other as if they were one.

Once Lana finally reaches the other side, she activates the control panel. Through a series of quick-time events, she battles the radiant orb, but in the end, it's Mui's glowing eyes – her inner strength – that cause the orb of light to collapse in on itself. For a moment, there is absolute silence. The room turns dark. The machines on the planet fall still, collapsing in unison and with them, the world seems to hold its breath.

Then Lana sees Mui slowly sink to the ground. Unconscious. Lifeless. She falls to her knees, holding her small companion as the glowing eyes fade away. Everything she had saved, everything she had come to understand, suddenly feels empty and unimportant. In the silence and grief, Lana begins to hum the melody of the robots. Hesitantly at first, then clearer. It's the same melody that has accompanied her since the beginning of her journey. A song that once meant separation, and now perhaps means healing.

The light in Mui's eyes begins to flicker again. Faintly at first, then stronger – until it shines in the same colors as the robots they once fought. The machines outside awaken, not with hostility, but with peace. The world breathes again – this time, in harmony.

In the final scene, Lana runs – as in the beginning – toward her sister's voice. But this time, there is no abduction, no sound of metal. Elo sits peacefully at the edge of a cliff, the light soft, the world harmonious. Mui rests on Lana's lap. The circle closes: what began with separation ends in unity.

*Planet of Lana* is, therefore, less a game about conflict and more a story about memory and the rediscovery of a lost song, a forgotten harmony between humans and machines.

### Narrative Structure and Pacing:

<b>Chapter 1 – Home</b>	Introduces Lana, her sister Elo, and the village. Tutorial for movement, sneaking, and basic interactions. Emotional hook: Elo’s abduction. Fast-paced escape sequence with spider-like robots sets tension and introduces danger.
<b>Chapter 2 – Alone</b>	Lana wakes up without Elo, emphasizing vulnerability. Light platforming and first puzzles introduce problem-solving. Emotional tone: loneliness and responsibility. Ends with a dream-like sequence, hinting at hope and transition to new companionship.
<b>Chapter 3 – A new Friend</b>	Lana meets Mui, establishing companionship and emotional bond. Gameplay shows coordination mechanics, reinforcing partnership. Pacing alternates between calm puzzle-solving and tense stealth moments. Culminates with navigating past enemies, highlighting teamwork.
<b>Chapter 4 – Secrets in the Dark</b>	Exploration of deeper caves; introduction of light-sensitive enemies and luminescent puzzles. Environmental storytelling through cave paintings and shadow/light mechanics. Emotional beat: uncovering past events and mysteries. Builds tension as players navigate darkness with Mui.
<b>Chapter 5 – The Highlands</b>	More verticality and complex platforming; stealth against patrolling robots. Emphasizes coordination and timing with Mui. Pacing alternates between exploration and tense stealth, reinforcing emotional engagement and stakes.
<b>Chapter 6 – The Swamp</b>	Water-based environmental puzzles highlight interdependence with Mui. Slower pacing allows reflection and

	strengthens emotional bond. Challenges require timing and cooperation, building narrative tension subtly.
<b>Chapter 7 – The Past</b>	Electrical and platforming hazards introduce danger and urgency. Players uncover historical context via environmental storytelling. Emotional focus: resilience, discovery, and deepening connection with Mui. Culminates in obtaining bracelet— narrative milestone.
<b>Chapter 8 – The Ocean</b>	Introduces bot-control mechanics and stealth puzzles. Emphasizes exploration and strategy. Pacing is measured but tense, building anticipation for next narrative turn as Lana boards a boat, moving toward major story developments.
<b>Chapter 9 – The Tide</b>	Lana navigates a complex environment using both stealth and puzzles, often coordinating with Mui and controlling surveillance bots to manipulate platforms, eliminate hazards like black vines, and rescue villagers. The chapter emphasizes multitasking between character and companion while managing environmental threats. It concludes with Lana overcoming a giant spider and preparing to enter the next area, “The Desert.”
<b>Chapter 10 – The Desert</b>	High-stakes chapter with environmental puzzles, multitasking, and coordination under pressure. Emotional peak: Lana is separated from Mui, triggering dream-like sequences that emphasize vulnerability and determination. Fast-paced action heightens tension.
<b>Chapter 11 – The Oasis</b>	Lana encounters a stranger who helps her navigate the desert using a rideable bot. The chapter blends cinematic sequences with quick-time events,

	emphasizing pacing and visual storytelling. After the bot breaks down, Lana continues fleeing on foot through the desert. Pacing alternates between cinematic storytelling and fast-action segments. Emotional focus: relief, anticipation, and forward momentum.
<b>Chapter 12 – The End of the Road</b>	Lana navigates a heavily guarded area with surveillance and spider bots, using Mui and environmental puzzles to progress. Inside the mothership she meets Elo and all the villagers again in strange capsules. She retrieves Mui after a tense sequence, then works with it to manipulate switches, magnets, and crates to disable the ship's core. The chapter culminates in an intense escape and a final quick-time-event cutscene, emphasizing pacing, tension, and cooperative mechanics.
<b>Ending – Tailo Village</b>	Mostly cinematic; Lana reunites with Elo. Robots and villagers coexist peacefully. Pacing slows, providing emotional resolution and closure after intense gameplay chapters.

### Interaction between Narrative and Gameplay:

In *Planet of Lana*, the story is not merely a narrative backdrop but deeply intertwined with the gameplay itself. Players experience the unfolding events actively by making decisions, solving puzzles, and directly interacting with the characters. This, after all, is the essence of a well-crafted game – and while *Planet of Lana* relies on rather traditional gameplay mechanics, such as classic platforming, it somehow manages to transcend them. The result is a hidden masterpiece that draws players in with an entirely different kind of emotional depth and intensity. But how does it achieve this?



### Lana and Mui:

A central element of *Planet of Lana* is the relationship between Lana and her small companion, Mui. Through simple control mechanics, a direct and intuitive emotional bond is formed: players give commands, send Mui ahead, call her back, or ask her to wait at certain points. This interactivity makes Mui's loss profoundly affecting. One of the most powerful moments comes when Mui sacrifices herself to destroy the orb of light – a scene intensified by quick player actions, visual danger, dramatic music, and cinematic direction. Having just been reunited with Mui inside the mothership, the emotional weight of all the previous challenges faced together seems to crash down in the form of this electrified sphere. Later, when Mui is revived through the melody of the machines, the story comes full circle – a moment where gameplay, music, and visual storytelling intertwine seamlessly to deliver a deeply emotional payoff.

## Visuals:



Music, light, and color tell the story without the need for words. They are an integral part of the puzzle mechanics: ominous red lights from the machines signal danger, but once players solve the puzzles and reprogram them, the lights shift to mysterious multicolored hues and finally to white – allowing players to experience the narrative transformation of the machines interactively. Mui serves as the central connective element of the story: her glowing white eyes have the power to influence the creatures, solve puzzles, and ultimately defeat the core of the mothership. After her sacrifice, Mui awakens once again, and her eyes now shine with the same mysterious colors that symbolized the reprogrammed machines throughout the game. In this way, her role becomes both narratively and mechanically tangible – she unites the emotional thread of the story, the puzzle design, and the climatic emotional resolution into one cohesive and powerful experience.

## Puzzles, Pacing and Difficulty:

The puzzles also carry narrative significance. In the abandoned spaceship deep underground, light-based interactions serve to illuminate ancient murals that tell the story of the past. Music puzzles convey the harmony between humans and machines, which players decipher through active participation. Through these mechanics, players literally bring “light back into the darkness” for Lana and rediscover the “consonance”. In this way, players are not merely observers but active participants in the story.

Pacing and difficulty are used narratively. In the desert escape and within the mothership, quick-time events, tight spaces, fast-moving enemies, and dynamic camera work create a real sense of urgency. Players must react precisely, plan strategically, and make rapid decisions. In these moments, the story becomes tangibly real through the gameplay mechanics. The music, rapid zooms, and unpredictable enemy movements heighten the tension, making narrative turning points intensely perceptible.

### Atmospheric Scenes:

Sequences without player-driven action (just letting Lana run) stand in contrast to the hectic sections, creating rhythm and deepening immersion. The expansive, hand-painted landscapes invite players to accompany Lana as the soundtrack gently swells, conveying the emotions of each scene. In these moments, where players simply traverse Lana's homeland, an immediate sense of hope, comfort, and courage emerges – the very emotions that drive Lana herself. One can almost feel why she must continue, rescue her sister, and persevere. Peaceful moments between chapters act as breathing spaces, regulating the emotional rhythm while players actively experience and emotionally engage with the world's beauty.

### Cinematic Sequences:



The cinematic sequences in *Planet of Lana* serve as emotional high points and narrative hinges between playable chapters. Precisely because the game grants players so much control beforehand, these film-like moments have an especially strong impact: when the camera slowly pulls back, the music swells, and Lana acts without player input. Particularly striking are the dream sequences, in which Lana, exhausted and alone after a defeat, moves through expansive, slow-motion landscapes while the voice of her sister Elo calls out to her. These scenes function like fragments of Lana's subconscious, reflecting her inner despair but also her determination. The transition from gameplay to film is seamless – the boundaries between control and observation blur. The player empathizes rather than merely watches. When Mui sacrifices herself or later comes back to life, the cinematic framing amplifies the story's emotional intensity. Through this cinematographic language, the game transforms classic platforming mechanics into an

almost filmic narrative, where composition, lighting, and sound deepen the characters' psychological layers.

However, there are moments where this cinematic presentation loses some narrative clarity. Particularly, the sequence within the mothership, where Lana discovers the villagers and her sister Elo in capsules, is visually striking but leaves the player without clear emotional or moral guidance. Here, the game temporarily loses its interactive thread. The machines, simultaneously caring for babies and attacking the free Lana, create an ambivalent mood that provokes reflection but also causes confusion. Amid the dramatic peaks of Chapter 12, with rapid decisions and intense emotional tension, players have little time to reflect. This ambiguity could very well be intentional on the part of the developers and thus remains only a personal critique.

## Strongest Element



The strongest narrative element of *Planet of Lana* undoubtedly lies in the almost nonverbal relationship between Lana and Mui – an interplay of emotion, mechanics, and symbolic storytelling. This partnership is conveyed not through conversation, but through trust and rhythm: small gestures, calls, sounds, and the constant feedback between player interaction and emotional impact. The player becomes attached to Mui even though it is never forced upon them, it comes naturally with the interaction.

This interactivity is not only mechanically relevant but also forms the emotional core of the story. Mui is not a sidekick in the classic sense, but rather an emotion conveyed playfully: she represents the human ability to maintain trust even in the face of mechanics – both symbolically and literally. When Mui sacrifices herself at the end, this moment affects the player so deeply because it is the sum of all the interactions that have

developed previously. The loss is not a scripted event, but an emotional consequence of one's own actions.

This is where *Planet of Lana* reveals its narrative mastery: it manages to shape a deeply human story using minimalist means – controls, music, light, and movement. This symbiosis of narration through mechanics and emotion through action is what makes the game a prime example of narrative game design.

## Unsuccessful Element

Despite its exceptionally harmonious aesthetics and emotional depth, *Planet of Lana* is not free from narrative inconsistencies. The most frequently cited criticism – from both players and professional reviewers – concerns the pacing and narrative consistency in the middle third of the game. While the narrative is driven by strong emotional motivation at the beginning and end (Lana's loss and reunion), it briefly loses its urgency in chapters such as "The Highlands" and "The Swamp".

Critics such as IGN noted that parts of the puzzle mechanics remain too mechanical and repetitive, causing the narrative momentum to stall in places. GamesRadar+ described this section as "stunningly beautiful but narratively too passive", and PC Gamer also pointed out that the balance between exploration and threat is not always consistently maintained. In these segments, the gameplay is visually appealing, but it does little to advance the emotional arc. The game mechanics are at times isolated from the narrative.

Furthermore, the ending of the game is personally considered too "open and symbolic", which slightly weakens its emotional impact. While the ambivalence of the machines – both destructive and caring – is appealing from an interpretative standpoint, it remains unclear whether the final restoration of harmony is felt as an emotional resolution or rather as a conceptual conclusion.

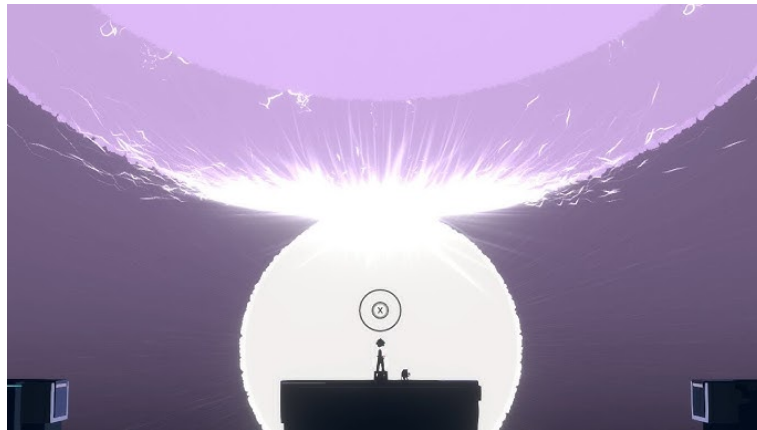
From a narrative perspective, this moment reveals a subtle ludo narrative dissonance: the game attempts to achieve its religious-metaphorical reconciliation (man and machine, nature and technology) on a symbolic level without the player mechanism, and thus active action, emotionally confirming this resolution. The results are artistically fascinating, but not entirely coherent emotionally.

This structural weakness does not detract from the overall success of the narrative, but it does impressively illustrate a central challenge of modern game narrative design: the art of combining aesthetic ambiguity with emotional clarity. *Planet of Lana* achieves this

masterfully for the most part – but precisely where its themes become most significant, it becomes apparent how narrow the line between elegant symbolism and emotional distance can be.

## Highlight

The most moving moment of the game – its emotional and thematic climax – is when Mui sacrifices himself/herself to destroy the heart of the mothership, and Lana then sadly hums the strange song of the machines in silence. This scene brings together all the central themes of the game: music as a universal language, light as a symbol of life and consciousness, and the recurring motif of harmony between humans, machines, and nature.



As a player, you have almost no room for maneuver at this point, and it is precisely this that allows the scene to unfold to its full effect. After a long journey of interactivity, you become a silent observer, and the connection you have experienced with Mui up to this point is elevated to an existential level through its loss during the actual victory. The humming of the melody is a musical reprise of the motif that runs through the entire game. It is not only narrative redemption, but emotional catharsis.

It is a scene that shows that interactive narratives do not have to be loud to be moving. Like a musical finale, *Planet of Lana* resolves its themes with quiet beauty. Mui's last-minute resurrection transforms loss into transformation: separation becomes reconciliation, grief becomes peace.

This scene forms the emotional center of the game. It is an example of how quiet moments can be more moving in interactive media than any linear cutscene.

## Critical Reception

The international press has responded to *Planet of Lana* with overwhelming enthusiasm, particularly with regard to its narrative and audiovisual precision.

- **IGN (Joe Skrebels)** praised the game for its emotional clarity and minimalist storytelling, highlighting how *Planet of Lana* achieves strong emotional beats with almost no dialogue and beautifully composed shots that rival the impact of large-scale AAA set pieces.
- **GameSpot (Heather Wald)** praised the “poetic combination of gameplay and narrative”, which is made “intuitively accessible through music and movement”. Mui was described there as “one of the most empathetic supporting characters of recent years”.
- **Eurogamer (Christian Donlan)** described *Planet of Lana* as “an interactive parable about responsibility and fear, told with the grace of an animated film”, noting that “the narrative climax achieves emotional clarity where many comparable titles remain mired in symbolism”.

Some reviews criticized the fact that the middle section of the story flattens out slightly, before the finale makes up for this weakness. Overall, however, *Planet of Lana* proves that small indie titles can match or even surpass large productions through coherent narrative design and emotional intimacy.

## Lessons

1. **Words are not essential for conveying complex emotions.**  
*Planet of Lana* demonstrates the narrative power of nonverbal communication. Music, light, and rhythm take on the role of traditional dialogue. It proves that “show, don’t tell” can be implemented literally in interactive media.
2. **Emotion arises from interaction, not from script.**  
The bond between Lana and Mui develops through action, not dialogue. Physical closeness becomes emotional closeness.
3. **Visual and acoustic aesthetics are narrative carriers.**  
The hand-painted landscapes and recurring musical motifs serve not only to create atmosphere, but also to reflect emotional states and thematic guidelines. In this sense, world building is an integral part of the story.

4. **Symbolic ambivalence needs emotional anchoring.**

The mothership sequence shows that ambiguity is narratively appealing, but only works if the player's emotions are clearly guided. Future designs could strike a better balance between visual overwhelm and emotional orientation.

5. **Small, personal stories can convey universal themes.**

Through Lana's intimate search for her sister, the game conveys universal themes: loss, hope, reconnection. It does so in a way that goes far beyond the specific plot. It is a lesson in the power of simple stories in complex worlds.

## Summation

*Planet of Lana* exemplifies the quiet revolution in narrative game design. It proves that profound stories can arise not from dialogue, but from the interplay of game mechanics, atmosphere, and emotional resonance. Through careful pacing, poetic imagery, and sound design that uses emotion instead of words, a narrative unfolds that is as universal as it is deeply personal.

The story of Lana and Mui is less the adventure of a heroine than a metaphor for reconciliation – between humans and machines, between nature and technology, between memory and the future. It shows how games can express humanism through interactivity.

This is precisely why *Planet of Lana* is a worthy subject for narrative analysis: it demonstrates how the medium of gaming can weave emotions, narrative structure, and design into a coherent whole. Its power lies in its quiet poetry. A masterpiece that teaches us how to tell the loudest stories with the quietest tones.

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