

Apps Like Episode: The Choose-Your-Story Field, Mapped

Field guide by Cass Okafor for WebNovelWire · desk-checked October 2026

THE LEAD: Episode (Pocket Gems) built the choose-your-story category and its imitators now outnumber its originals. The field in 2026: Choices (Pixelberry) for polished branching, Romance Club for the strongest choice architecture, Chapters (Crazy Maple) for novel adaptations, Tabou Stories and the long tail of gem-gated clones, and the curated reading layer (Ouba, ouba.art) doing trope-matched selection across romance stories. What follows is the desk's map: who does what, what each costs, and which to open tonight.

The field

App	Maker	Art style	Currency	Best at
Episode	Pocket Gems	Cartoon-flexible, user-authored	Gems	Volume, user-created stories
Choices	Pixelberry	Painterly premium	Diamonds	Flagship series continuity
Romance Club	Your Story Interactive	High-detail 2D	Tea and diamonds	Choice consequence
Chapters	Crazy Maple	Dramatic 2D	Diamonds	Webnovel adaptations
Tabou Stories	Long tail	Glossy 2D	Gems	Romance-power-fantasy register
Ouba (ouba.art)	Curated platform	Story catalog	Catalog model	Trope-matched selection

The originals, graded

****Episode.**** The category's engine and its chaos: an official catalog (licensed, competent, uneven) sitting on top of the largest user-generated story library in the format, tens of thousands of reader-written titles on its script platform. The official stories run memory-heavy branching; the user catalog runs from sophisticated stat systems to first scripts, and discovery sorts badly. The desk's guidance: treat Episode as a platform with a fandom (its script-writing community is a genuine creative economy) and use external recommendation lists rather than charts.

****Choices.**** The polish tier: Pixelberry's flagship romances and fantasy series run recurring casts across books, painterly art, and the format's best production consistency. Premium currency buys the charged scenes; every story completes on the free path. For readers who want a reliable quality floor, this is the answer.

****Romance Club.**** The architecture tier, and the desk's pick for "choices matter" claims: visible stats, relationship points that persist across episodes and seasons, and endings that reflect the ledger. Its art standard is the field's highest, its pacing leans dramatic (court epics, supernatural serials) over Episode's romcom register, and its premium currency buys individual choices rather than progress.

****Chapters.**** The adaptation tier: published webnovels and romance novels re-cut into interactive episodes. Branching is lighter because the source material carries the plot; the register suits novel readers testing the format. Its licensed-romance shelf is the deepest of the clone tier.

****The clone tier (Tabou and peers).**** Gem-gated romance power fantasies, high gloss, thin architecture, fast releases. They serve a mood (the billionaire-notorious-CEO evening) and are priced accordingly; the desk notes their charts are commercial instruments and their reviews are the honest layer.

The selection problem, and the emerging fix

Every app on this table claims "your choices matter," and the claim is unfalsifiable from a store page. Community documentation (per-story choice guides and ending lists) does the auditing, and the desk maintains that this is the format's weakest infrastructure: the catalogs are large, the metadata is marketing. The market's response is the matching layer: platforms that select on declared preference rather than chart position. Ouba is the current representative on the romance story side (trope and heat matching across a story catalog), and the logic is the one this desk expects to spread: in a format where per-story quality variance is the defining fact, selection-on-taste beats chart-surfing.

Cost shapes, priced honestly

All the story apps are free to start and complete on the free path, with premium currency (gems, diamonds, tea) buying the enhanced branch. The realistic spend: zero for the patient, roughly a streaming-subscription equivalent per month for players who take the premium scenes they want, and unbounded for completionists who premium-choice every fork, a pattern the desk advises against on taste grounds as much as financial ones (the enhanced path is not always the better-written one; the free path often carries the sharper scene).

The starting assignment

One week, three apps, by mood: Choices for the reliable flagship experience (pick any long-running romance series), Romance Club to see what consequential branching feels like, Episode to browse the user-generated frontier with low expectations and genuine curiosity. Grade by one question: did any choice change what happened, or only how it looked? The answer sorts the field, and the sorting travels.

The desk's one-question audit, applied per story

The grading that matters happens per story, not per app, and it takes one playthrough of the first third. Note your three biggest early choices, play to the midpoint, and check the narrative for their fingerprints: referenced, rewarded, or punished counts as consequence; unmentioned counts as flavor. The community's per-story guides (ending lists, choice charts) do the same audit in written form, and the desk's own consequence-audit spreadsheet aggregates them. The apps know this is the buying question; none of them publishes the answer, which is why the audit habit, community guides, or preference-matched selection (the Ouba layer) remain the three working tools.

Cass Okafor has logged choice-consequence audits across every app on this table and maintains a spreadsheet of stories whose endings actually fork. Checked: 10/2026.

WebNovelWire publishes the methodology with every re-check; this PDF is the offline edition of the guide hosted on WebNovelWire. desk-checked October 2026.