MOR
Design Document

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Overview

Basic Design Pillars:

These are the words embodying the gameplay experience as a whole. Almost every aspect of the game should lean on one of these words:

- Puzzle
- Immersion
- Thriller/Horror
- Narrative

Scope:

The game should provide a 20 minute, stand alone, horror experience. The game will be developed in the Unity Engine.

Theme and Setting:

The overall atmosphere is gradually changing from cozy to uncanny during the playthrough. The game is set somewhere in the swedish archipelago during the 70ths. Graphical assets should enforce the swedish theme as much as possible, such as swedish fake brands and the architecture of the house.

Outside:

Island:
The game is set on an island in southern sweden in the middle of nowhere. All ambient sounds that enforces this location will be helpful.
Suggestions:
Small, slow waves washing against the rocks.
Wind, rustling in the trees.
A slight horror tone for sense of lacking security.

Time of the day:
The game is set in the evening (approximately 9pm).

Season:
It's late summer, early autumn.

Weather:
The weather is very calm and quiet. A thick fog lies over the water, surrounding the island. There will be no rain, storm or thunder. When standing still, the most prominent sound would be a slight breeze.

Inside:

The atmosphere of the inside sounds will be shifting from uncomfortably quiet (with just the sounds of the player such as footsteps, door openings etc) to an underlying, horror tone. At first, warm lights will flood through the hallways in the cabin with the sound of a 70ths show coming from the TV, acting as a supporting crutch for the player in the beginning. Later, all of these comforting elements will be taken away from the player as the ghost's appearance becomes more frequent.

Lightning:

Lightning is the most important horror tool (along with audiotorial ques) to control the player's experience. The contrast between illuminated areas and dark areas should be substantial. A single light source at one end of a room should still leave almost pitch black corners on the other side of the room. The light will serve two main purposes:

- It will control the player's sense of safety since humans are inherently programmed to fear the unknown, the things you can't see. By using multiple warm light sources in safe moments, and taking them out when it needs to be scary will automatically infuse fear into the player.
- It will direct the progression by high lightning points of interest, using the player's natural cognitive selection process. Example: The notebook will be laying under a single light source to direct the player's attention.

Immersion:

Immersion is a primary design pilar, elevating the experience by placing the player in a relatable environment. This could be achieved by implementing some of the following features:

- **Head bobbing** for the camera, dynamically changing with the player's movement speed or actions.
- **Depth of Field** should be applied when looking at close or distant objects, mimicking the ocular function of the human eye.
- **Hand animations** should capture the essence of the protagonist, with imperfections and possible bracelets.
- **Heavy breathing** in tense or stressful events.
- **Particle systems** such as dust in the air and smoke emitting from the chimney.
- **Body rig** can help the player get a sense for the character's physical presence.
- **Low UI cluster** elevates the immersion by not distracting the player with HUD elements.
- **In game menus** The game's slow pace could be used to keep them immersed, even in menus, by having the menus in the game as part of the experience.

Player Mechanics:

The game as a whole should lean on minimalism, both when it comes to the UI cluster and the possible actions the player can make. The fewest possible player systems would be desirable. No inventories should be included due to the small playing area and short playing time.

Interaction system:

The space is heavily confined and has to offer the player an element of exploration. This could be done by allowing them to interact with and manipulate the objects in the environment such as chairs, plates and books

.The interaction system should be physics based for multiple reasons:

- It opens up for possibilities to create puzzles with hidden objects, stacking of objects, weight balancing etc.
- The overall interaction is more interactive and engaging, leaving the player with a more immersive experience and added gameplay elements.
- Key objects in the world won't be as obvious if you can pick every single object up, adding to the difficulty, exploration and gameplay time. It will also give each object character which adds to the immersion, such as dragging a bed along a floor.
- It distances the game from the common walking simulator, the biggest sin since the bite of the apple of eden.
- The player can manipulate doors and lids dynamically, which allows for realistic player behaviour such as peeking.
- Physics sells.

- **Negative:**
- Gives the player the possibility to ruin their own experience if they would choose to do so by wrecking the house, physically.
- More time will need to be spent in the polishing/bug fixing phase, due to the unity engine physics reliability issues.

Pure mechanics:

- The interaction system should allow the player to pick stuff up by aiming at them with a point reticle, being in range and holding LMB. This makes the object float in front of the player as long as the button is held down. If the object is within the reticle and in range, the object should get a slight highlight (optionally the cursor switches sprite). Holding LMB disables this highlight/changes sprite back. This could also be used to open doors and lids. See Amnesia. If right mouse button is pressed, the object is thrown (can even be used on doors to slam them shut).

- Everything within the proper weight range should be able to be lifted up and pulled towards wherever the mouse is aimed. However, the weight should affect how much the object levitates/if it levitates at all. The weight also affects the objects throwing range, but unity's physics system should probably solve this automatically.
- When an object is held, the player can rotate the object by holding R and use the mouse in order to see it from different angles. While holding R, the control of the player's view camera is disabled.
- If the player scrolls with the mouse wheel while holding an object, the object is pulled closer or further away from the camera between two fixed values. Used to read notes and such.
- Some objects are picked up and simply removed in the game world when the player clicks on it (preferably with a sound to inform the player that something happened). These objects are added in the notebook and could be notes, keys and smaller puzzle related objects.
- The player can also flip light switches by clicking on them.
- Pressing F should enable and disable a carriable light source (lighter).
- Holding E will bring up the planchette before the player's eyes.
- Tab will bring up the player's notebook.

Movement system:

The movement system should be grounded in basic player heuristics taken from classic first person shooters, controlled by WASD while the camera is manipulated by the mouse. The movement speed should be rather slow, the player may optionally be able to run when SHIFT is held down, at least for playtesting purposes. The player should be able to crouch with CTRL and lower the camera in order to see from a low perspective. This should half the height of the player's collider. Pressing Space will make the player move on top of an object if its climbable, the player is within range and is aiming at it, presented with a UI prompt. (Only chairs, beds, and sofas allows this).

Notebook mechanics:

The notebook serves as a reminder for the player regarding the puzzles and the general progression. It is updated after key events, such as puzzle hints, conversations with the ghost, important found objects and such. It's also an important narrative tool that reflects the protagonists feelings, inner thoughts and background story.

Keys:

Open/Close the notebook: TAB
Flip Pages: A/D - LMB/RMB

Function:

The book opens on the last added entry. If the player leaves the book on a certain page, that page is opened if no new entry has been added. When the notebook is brought up with an UI prompt that says: "Press A and D to flip pages. Press TAB to exit."

Planchette mechanics:

The planchette from the ouija board can be held up in front of the eye by pressing E or Q, enabling the player to see an alternative version of reality. This could be used to highlight clues, puzzle objects and events from the past. It should apply a yellow filter, like sepia, making the vision look old fashioned.

The planchette is introduced in the beginning of chapter 4 when the player is drowned by the child.

Additional support systems:

Event trigger system:

Some kind of event trigger system should be implemented in order to trigger events when certain conditions are met. Preferably, this is a flexible, attachable script which can be used in various ways. But some events and conditions that the system should support should be:

Events:

- Monologue: Audio monologue and subtitles that appears when an event is triggered. Will stop / disable self after the voice line is communicated. This is by far the most common type of event. Like all games, this comes with design problems when it comes to interruption. The short answer is that the problem will remain no matter what. I would suggest a priority system with 2 levels of priority. High and low. High priority lines are lines which belongs to the main story. Low priority lines are everything else. High priority lines always interrupt low priority lines, and are supported by the level design in the sense that 2 high priority lines will be impossible to trigger at the same time. Low priority lines are put on que if triggered while another line is active.
- Visual or auditory events: On rare occasions, there will be events such as books flying, chairs moving, knocking sounds from within the walls and such.
- Forced Animation: Some events might be forced animations, where the player's input is disabled for a period of time while some first person animations are played.
- Level Changes: Sometimes, events are seemingly non existent, but are necessary as they might change things on the map hidden from the player, such as objects being moved, added or removed.

Conditions:

- Area: If the player's collider/coordinates enters a certain area, possibly a box collider trigger. Requires a box collider with trigger properties attached to the object.
- Timer: After an event is triggered, another event could be chain triggered after a certain amount of time has passed. Requires a public timer variable in inspector.
- Pick up: If a certain object is picked up and held by the player.
- Scripted: Some events may be triggered purely through scripts for certain, scripted situations. These are all handled separately and should be discussed between prog-design.

Ouija board system:

When a certain requirement is met, the player can approach the ouija board, click on it and ask the board a set amount of questions out of a set amount of alternatives. The board gives the player a relevant answer, designed to progress the narrative and provide the player with clues. The player then has to proceed to solve new puzzles and meet the next requirement in order to ask more questions.

The board is introduced when the player finds it and reads the rules on the back of the box, presenting the digital gameplay mechanics in an intuitive way. It should be manipulated by a question wheel, either controlled with WASD for selection and SPACE/Enter for confirmation, or simply by clicking on the questions with the mouse.

Horror System:

The horror system is an important component, working as a safe net to protect the experience from becoming boring. There is an inherent compatibility problem between horror and puzzles in games. One relies on suspense/immersion, while the other one provides a cognitive challenge to stimulate the feeling of progression and accomplishment. One wants the player to be on the run, while the other one wants to make the player stop and think. If a player has a hard time progressing in the puzzles, there is a big chance that the initial suspense eventually fades away and turns into frustration or boredom.

This system will ensure that the game stays creepy even when the player doesn't progress by triggering auditory and visual cues to scare the player when they least expect it. It is heavily dependent on the player's position and camera angle.

Trigger: The system is triggered whenever a set amount of time has passed since the player last interacted with a puzzle related object and since the last time the horror system fired. The horror system should be paused when player is in a ouija board session or has an active voice line.

Outcome: The outcome is different depending on if the player is outside or inside.

Inside:

- A light in the house randomly switches off in the player's view.
- A door suddenly squeaks open close to the player.
- TV turns on with uncanny images/sounds for some time.
- a "pst" voice line of a child is played.
- Footsteps are heard, coming from an invisible, moving source.
- Toys spawns behind the player with a sound.
- The ghost child is visible for a split second in the corner of a room close to the player. (save until we have finished 3d mesh for child

Outside:

- The ghost child is seen behind a tree or rock, staring at the player. If the player walks towards it, it disappears behind the object.
- A whistling melody is heard in the wind, coming from a random, close direction.

Narrative Represenation

The narrative is a head component. It should carry the experience without giving away too much, keeping the core essence of the game mysterious and nebulous. It will be conveyed with forced cutscenes, voice lines, the ouija board dialogue, the notebook and objects in the world and through the gameplay.

Puzzles and progression:

Core gameplay loop:

Establishing a core gameplay loop crucial if we want to maximize gameplay time while still keeping the game linear. The progression down below is a balanced suggestion of how certain systems can be reused without feeling repetitive. The ouija board is acting as a quest giver, hub and narrative source in the game. The player should return to it at the end of each chapter to progress the story.

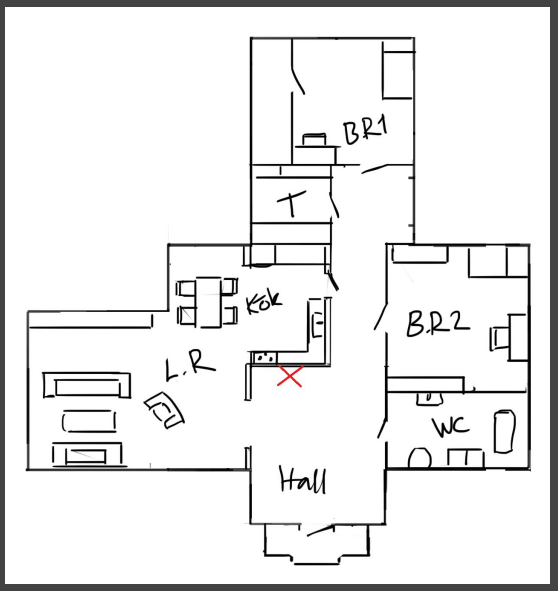
Intro puzzle:

After the player has been introduced to an intro scene, they are free to roam the Island. Eventually, they try to enter the the main house, simply because it's the only bigger structure nearby. They will realize that door is locked. This is where the physics interaction system is introduced. Under an obvious, bright blue bucket (the theme color of the game), is a key. When looked at, the player will see an interaction icon, hopefully trying LMB and realize that all objects in the game are liftable. They can then obtain the hidden key under the bucket and enter the house (being introduced to the door system). When walking inside, the player is free to get familiar with the house. Linn will vocally comment on her bad memory, and that she needs to find her notebook. The player can pick up her notebook, positioned in her room under a lamp that directs the player's attention. Upon pick up, all lights in the living room including the TV are turned off and a Ouija board is placed on the living room table. If the player interacts with it, Linn will realize that she needs a glas to play with it. I want the player to be able to use real world references when solving certain puzzles, they have to realize that what they are looking for is probably where you would find it in your own home: In a cupboard near the sink. If the player finds the glas and brings it to the ouija board, the glas will be slotted to the board, making it ready to be used.

1.

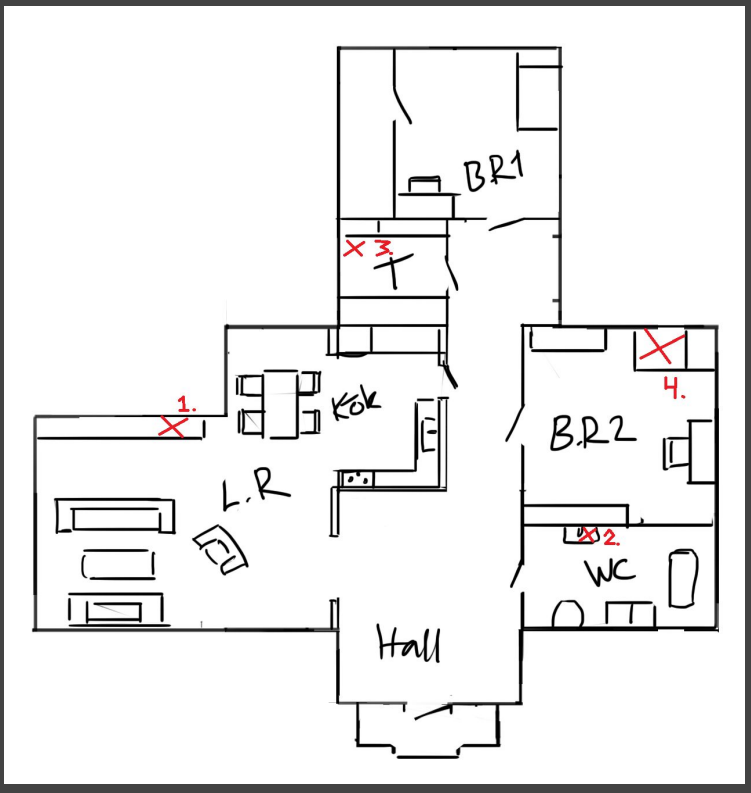
Ouija: “Portrait”
Goal: Portrait

Puzzle: The player is left to do what they want after a conversation with the ouija board. They are left with the word “portrait”. If they approach the portrait of the mother (which is thicker and more prominent than other paintings in the house), they can return to the Ouija board after a brief monologue. The portrait should hang in the hall, facing the front door. This ensures that the player has atleast seen the portrait first thing when entering the house, enabling a rewarding feeling for observant players. The player can return to the board.



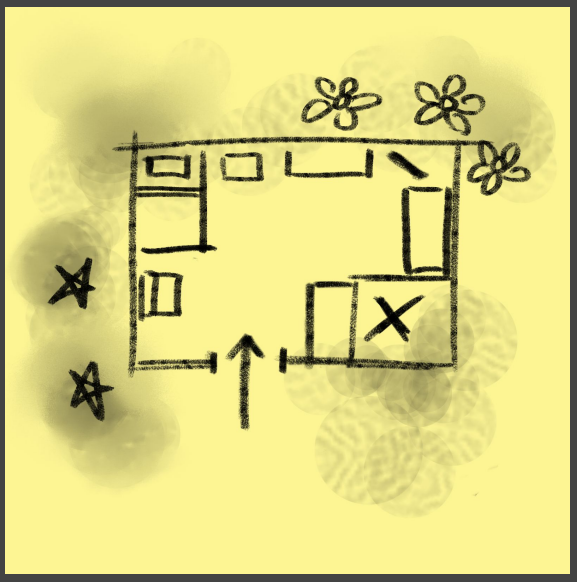
2.

Ouija: Blue vase
Goal: Toy
Puzzle: The player has to participate in a treasure hunt created by the murdered child. in practise, the player will find a note with a clue regarding the next note’s location, either by text or by an illustration, eventually leading the player to a hidden room.



1. The location of the first note is found inside a blue vase(theme color of the game) in the hallway. Even if the player dossnt know what to do with vase, they are bound to find the note inside because of the impossibility of not breaking it when dropping it. When broken, Linn will comment on the note. The note has a riddle “With pleasant smell and a hue of green, it just wants to keep the people clean” leading to the soap in the bathroom.
2. The soap hides the second note with a picture of a packet of milk and an arrow to the bottom side of it. The milk is located in the fridge in the kitchen.

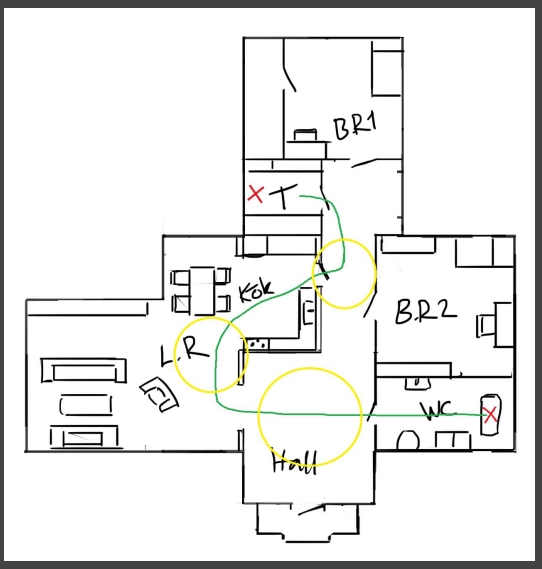
3. The note under the milk in the fridge has another illustration: A laundry machine. The player has to go into the laundry room,open the lid, and see the last note at the inside of the lid. The note is a literal map of an unnamed room in the house with an x that marks the spot. The player has to figure it which room it is by looking at the room layout and furniture placement.



4. The last location is in the player's room. The player has to drag a drawer to the side and open a panel to reveal a secret room, containing a toy, some sticks, crayons, paper and a candle. The player can return to the ouija board after the unpleasant discovery. The player can return to the board.

3.

Ouija: Mom's room
Goal: Mom's room
Puzzle: The player is given a clear directive to enter mom's room. While the character is quite hesitant to touch the door, she eventually tries to open it without success, she needs a key. Right after, the laundry room door slowly squeeks open as the lights starts to flicker in the hallway. When the player enters the room and walks in for a bit, the door slams shut and a loud banging is heard on the door along with heavy breathing (music base tone goes off with a timer).When timer is finished, the base tone stops and it's dead quiet. Subtle noises from the child is heard from around the player, sniffs, gasping for air. Rising ambient noise is on again and the next time the player turns around, the ghost is limping towards them as the lights goes out. When the player turns on their lighter, it's none there. The door is unlocked.



In the ceiling, a trail of “glow in the dark stars” are put up, creating a trail. However, the trail disappears as it enters a light source. The player has to turn of 3 separate light sources in order to follow the trail into the toilet’s water tank where mom’s key to the bedroom is located. The player can now unlock the door the the mom’s room and discover that’s in a mess, with cigarettes, antidepressants, alcohol and clutter all over. The player can return to the board.

4.

Ouija: How did you die? I’ll show you.
Goal: Kids book.

When the 4th ouija board interaction is done, the sound of pouring water suddenly comes from the bathroom, directing the players attention to the planchette in the bathtub. If the player attempts to pick it up, a forced animation cutscene is played when the child is trying to drown the player, “showing” them how he died. The player eventually recovers from the drowning attempt with the planchette in their hand.

Puzzle:

1. The planchette has just been introduced, the player is kneeling beside the bathtub and a prompt to “Hold E to look through the lens” pops up. If they do, they’ll see footsteps leading from right next to the player, out of the bathroom. If the player follows the footsteps, they lead to the shed outside where they find an old newspaper, presenting a radio station, hidden underneath a toolbox.
2. If the player walks to the radio, they can interact with it, a 3d close up of the radio and a blurred background appears. The player can turn the volume up, increasing a static noise. They can also turn a second nob, tuning the radio station. If they go to the correct tuning “101.3”, a child’s voice is played on repeat, saying something like “Under the dock”.
3. The player can walk to the dock on the island and pull away a couple of rocks until they find a little storage box, containing letters addressed to the mother, insinuating that Linn isn't the only child that she as taken care of. The player can return to the board.

5.

Ouija: Cellar
Goal:; Get into the cellar
Puzzle: The player is left with the word cellar, sending them out to look for the cellar door located on the outside of the map. Once found, the player realizes that a 4-digit

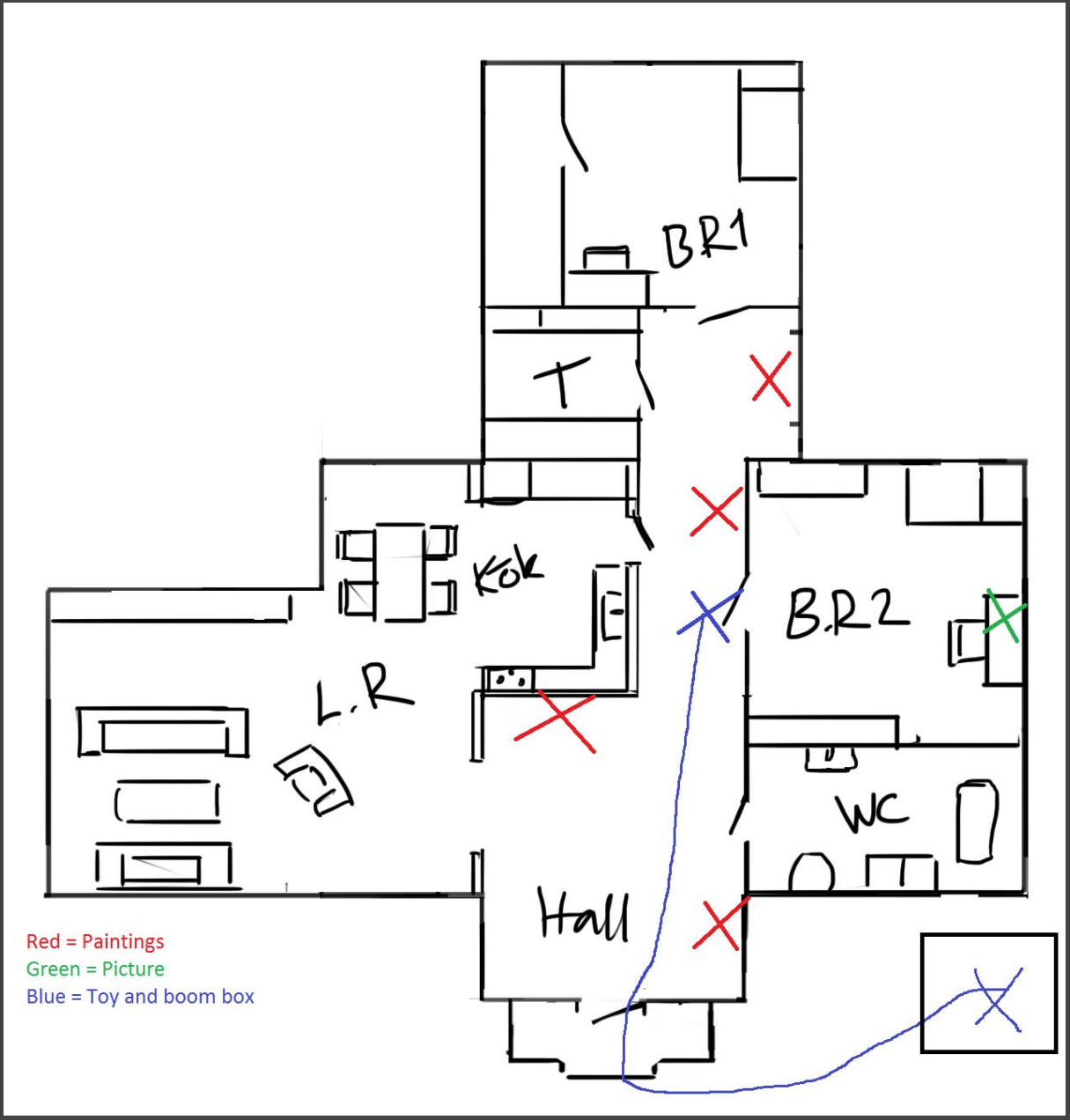
combination is needed in order to unlock it. On the door is a memory note from the mom to herself with the hints to the combination:

1: Paintings.
2: How many where they.
3: Ouija.
4: ????

Solutions:
1: If the player uses the planchette on the various paintings in the house, the player will notice scribbles in the bottom corners of some of them. If the player takes the paintings down and puts them together, a number will emerge in the center of the formation.

2. If the player looks at the picture of mom and Linn in Linn's room with the planchette, it reveals the rest of the picture with all the kids.
3. The TV in the bathroom gives away static noise to attract the player's attention as it displays symbols. If they look at the Ouija board with the planchette, the alphabet is replaced by symbols, some of them corresponds to the cryptic message on the TV. If they translate it, it will say "Adress". The letters underneath the dock had the adress of the house written on them.

4. An empty slot left with the sole purpose of stopping the player from trial-and erroring-it. They will simply have to turn the last knob until the lock unlocks.



When opening the cellar, a haunting noise is heard as the spirits of the children warns Linn. As the player enters the cellar, Linn starts a monologue and her hands starts to shake from the cold. Down there, the player discovers where the children were kept under the care of Linn's mother. Their bones can also we found at the far end of the cellar, confirming that the mother killed them. If the player attempts to walk out the cellar, the ending cutscene is played where Linn's mom locks the door on the player, insinuating that she too will die in there due to knowing too much. In the darkness after the shut door, Linn's crying should still be heard as the credits rolls by, leaving a sour after taste in the player's mouth.

Summary of “Art of Game Design”, puzzle chapter.

These are simply notes to myself that I can lean upon when designing the various puzzles.

Puzzle Principle #1: Make the goal easily understood
People have to know what they are supposed to do. If they don’t, they will quickly lose interest.

Puzzle Principle #2: Make it easy to get started.
When you present a puzzle to players, they should be able to clearly visualize what their first few steps would be. Ask yourself these questions:

- How will players know how to begin solving my puzzle or playing my game? Do I need to explain it, or is it self evident?
- Does my puzzle or game act like something they have seen before? If it does, how can I draw attention to that similarity. If it does not, how can i make them understand how it does happen?
- Does my puzzle or game draw people in and make them want to touch it and manipulate it? If not, how can I change it so that it does?

Puzzle Principle #3: Give a sense of progress
Players like a sense of progress, it gives them hope that they might arrive at the right answer.

The lens of Visible Progress: 54#

Players need to see that they are making progress when solving a difficult problem. To make sure they are getting this feedback, ask yourself these questions:

- What does it mean to make progress in my puzzle?
- Is there enough progress in my game? Is there a way I can add more interim steps of progressive success?
- What progress is visible, and what progress is hidden? Can I find a way to reveal what is hidden?

Puzzle Principle #4: Give a sense of Solvability
You need to convince the player that the puzzle is solvable. Visible progress is one way. But you can also outright state that it in fact is solvable, look at the rubix cube when purchased.

Puzzle Principle #5: Increase difficulty gradually
The difficulty should be increasing in order to keep the players attention and stop their momentum. One easy way to ensure an increasing difficulty is to give the player control in which order they solve the puzzle, see crosswords.

Puzzle Principle #6: Parallelism

The biggest danger of puzzle making is having the player leave it because they were unable to do it. A good way to safe guard against this is to give them several different puzzles at once. This offers the player another task if they would get tired of figuring something out. After the new task is completed, the player has rested from he first puzzle, or seen something they didn't see before.

The lens of Parallelism: 56#

Parallelism in your puzzle brings parallel benefit to the player's experience. To use this lens, ask yourself these questions:

- Are there bottlenecks in my design where players are unable to proceed if they cannot solve a particular challenge= if so, can i add parallel challenges for a player to work on when this challenge stumps them?
- If parallel challenges are too similar, the parallelism offers little benefit. Are my parallel challenges different enough from each other to give players the benefit of variety?
- Canb my parallel challenges be connected somehow? Is there a way that making progress on one can make it easier to solve the other?

Puzzle Principle #7: Pyramid Structure Extends interest

This means a series of small puzzles that each give some kind of clue to a larger puzzle.

The lens of the Pyramid: 57#

Pyramids fascinate us because they have a singular highest point. To give your puzzle the allure of the ancient pyramids, ask yourself these questions:

- Is there a way all the pieces of my puzzle can feed into a singular challenge at the end?
- Big pyramids are often made of little pyramids - can I have a hierarchy of ever more challenging puzzle elements, gradually leading to a final challenge.
- Is the challenge at the top of my pyramid interesting, compelling and clear? Does it make people want to work in order to get it?

Puzzle Principle #8: Hints Extend Interest

A well-timed hinr can renew a players hope on the puzzle. It cheapens the experience somewhat, but solving a puzzle with a hint is infinitely better than not solving it at all. Could have a hint system with point penalty.

Puzzle Principle #9: Give the Answer!

The pleasure in solving puzzles is the "aha" experience. Funny thing is that the experience is not trigger when solving the puzzle, but when you see the answer to it. If you have given serious consideration to a problem, given up and then getting the answer, you still get a fragment of that aha experience. For certain experiences, it could be advantageous to give the payer the answer if they are truly stuck, the internet is gonna do it for them anyways.

Puzzle Principle #10: Perceptual Shifts are a Double-edged Sword
Puzzles like “Form 4 equiliteral triangles with 6 match sticks” depend of a perceptual shift in the puzzle solver and offers a great deal of pleasure when the shift is made, but if they don’t, thet get nothing. They are like riddles, and offers no possibility to progress, either you get it, or you Don’t. Should be used carefully.

The lens of Puzzle: 58#

Puzzles make the player stop and think. To ensure your puzzles are doing everything you want to shape the player experience, ask yourself these questions:

- What are the puzzles in my game?
- Should I have more puzzles or less, why?
- Which of the ten puzzle principles apply to each of my puzzles
- Do I have any congruous puzzles? How can I better integrate them into the game?