MONOCHROME

Game Design Document

By The Nameless Pebbles
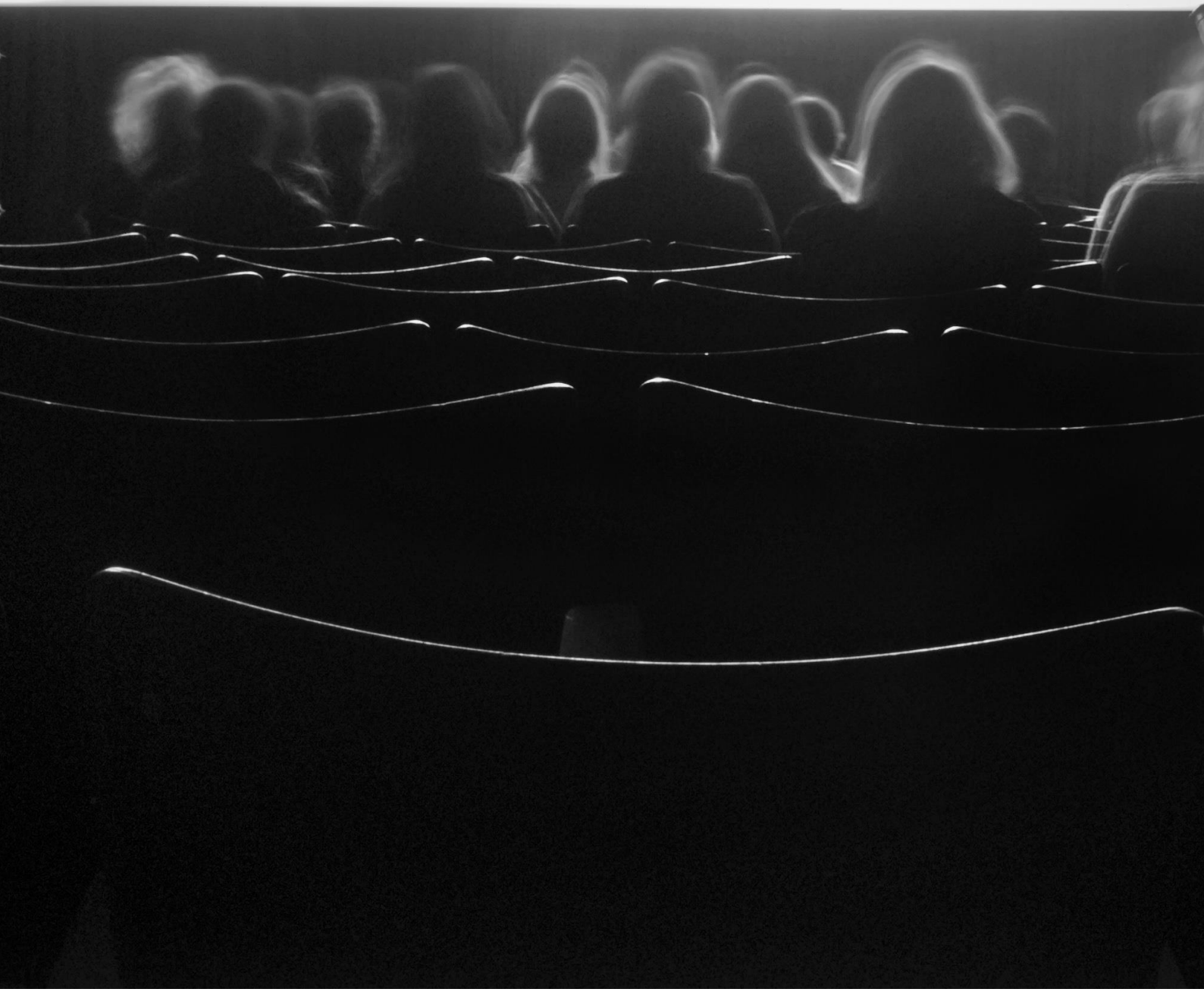
Document Information	
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Purpose of Document	The purpose of this document is to have all the information related to the video game Monochrome

Table of Contents

1 Game Idea

1.1 Plot

Our protagonist has taken a job that will require them to take care of an old Movie Theatre for a couple of months on a distant town far from home. During their staying, a blizzard strikes the town trapping our protagonist inside. The game will utilize horror elements in order to facilitate player's immersion, aiming to create a connection with the character's mental stability which will deteriorate as to the lost social interaction and complete isolation.

1.2 Game Information

Game Engine: Unity

Genre: Psychological Horror

Theme – Monophobia (Fear of Isolation)

2   Mechanics

This section aims to document every system interaction between the player and the game. Within this section, we will detail core mechanics that have specific attachment to the theme and some basic mechanics that overall add to the experience and players engagement to the game itself.
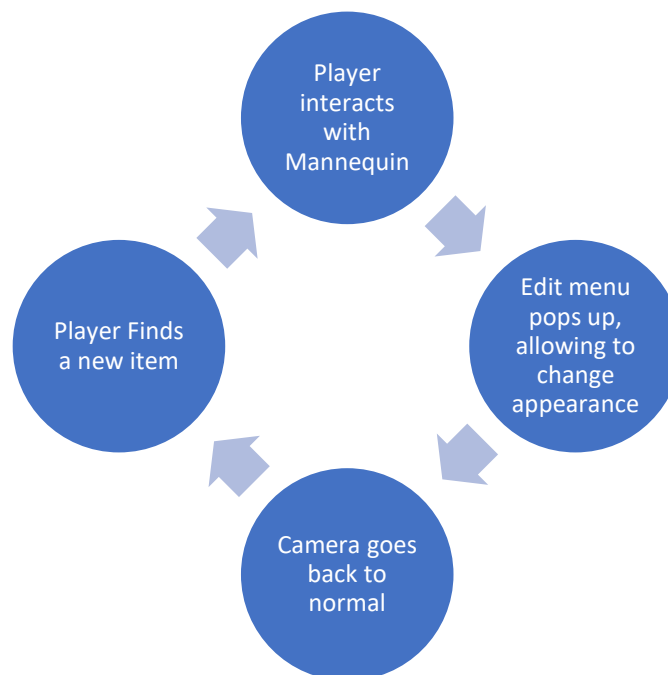
2.1   Core Mechanics related to theme

There will be three main core mechanics that are specifically attached to the game. These include the use of non-human companion, phone signal simulation and a task machine. These mechanics will be explained in more detail down below:

2.1.1   Non-Human Companion

We believe it would be a good idea for the player to have a mannequin as their non-human companion, like what portal does with the heart cube or Firewatch with Forrest Byrnes. The reasoning to incorporate this into the game is because the game itself has no NPCs. We are giving players something they can be attached to, similar behaviour as a person in isolation. After all, human beings are social creatures by nature.

To increase players interaction and connection with the inanimate object, players will be able to find clothing items and props around the map, thus boosting exploration. These collectibles can be used to customise their companion. Further into the game the companion will be added to the horror aspect of the game. Disappearing one of the days and reappearing in different rooms or in front of cameras to give the sense that its alive, making emphasis on the characters dissociation with reality.

Player interacts with Mannequin

Edit menu pops up, allowing to change appearance

Camera goes back to normal

Player Finds a new item

2.1.2   Phone Signal

I think this mechanic is a more organic way to indirectly force players to explore the level. Basically, at certain intervals the character will receive text messages from their partner, and they will need to answer to boost the sanity levels. The reasoning behind this is related to the impact social media has nowadays in everyday life. Being unable to reach loved ones nowadays is a lot more anxiety inducing. This mechanic plays around with the feeling of being left behind and makes emphasis on the distance between the character and their home.

The way the mechanic works is that there will be areas on the map where the player has enough signal to send a message. The player will have to find these areas by paying attention to the signal bar on their phone. The closer the player is to the rooms with signal the more bars will appear. Having three bars will allow the player to send the message and thus boost their sanity levels.
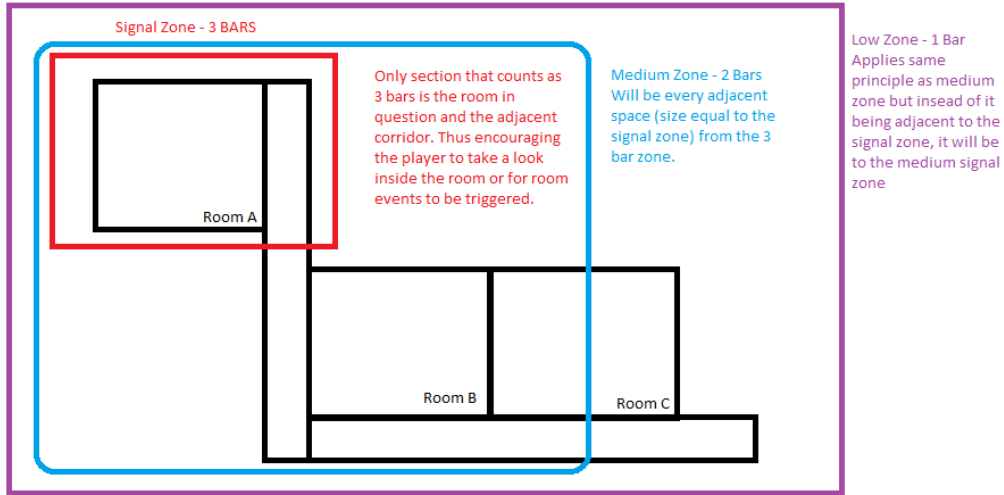
The areas where the signal is will be chosen at random from a selection hand made by the developers. These areas will have anomaly triggers that will link to the players narrative.

2.1.3   Task Machine

Finally, we going to also use a task machine that will print out daily instructions to the player. Once the player is done with the main task it will need to go back to the task machine to submit their progress and end the day. This machine will provide input to the player via audio queues which are basic robotic noises, replacing normal dialog between themselves and a supervisor.

We believe that having the machine instead of an actual person giving the tasks will create more distance between the player and human interactions.

As you can see by the engagement loop. Players will end the day once they have finished all main tasks throughout the day. If the player were to interact with the machine without completing the tasks, the machine will emit a failing sound and nothing else will happen.

2.2   Tasks

The player will be assigning the set of tasks to perform during the day. Some will be noted as primary objectives which are required to complete the day/level. In addition to these, players will also be able to perform secondary tasks that do not restrict them from completing the day but will have effects on the world if they are left undone.

2.2.1   Repairs

The player will interact with broken objects and fix them. Some objects require an additional object/tool for them to be fix. Some of these repairable are listed below:

1. Broken Fuse box (Player will need to get a spare fuse from the supply room)
2. Broken Window (Player will need to find planks and a hammer to repair)
3. Broken Heating system (Player will need to find the section that needs fixing)
4. Alarm system, cinema projector and lighting checks, make sure they are working properly

2.2.1.1 Cascade Effect

This means that if the player chose to ignore them, it will lead to cascade effects that will have heavy influence on the next day. Consequences being:

- Broken window translates to coldness, which will lead to great sanity loss and snow getting in which will have to be cleaned.
- Broken Fuse translates to total darkness of the entire building until fix and generators are restarted.
- Broken heating will result in great sanity loss and need of extra sections with need of repairs.
- Alarm system will just be constant annoyance for the player as well as adding -1 sanity every 5 minutes of alarm playing.

2.2.2   Organising and Cleaning

Player will interact with miss placed objects, or pickups to be able to move them to a set location. Cleaning is a simple interaction that will be perform at specific box triggers.

1. Placing items in the correct room either taken from the supply room, storage or because they were misplaced due to anomalies.
2. Clean or put things in order

2.2.3   Security

Player will interact with miss placed objects, or pickups to be able to move them to a set location. Cleaning is a simple interaction that will be perform at specific box triggers.

1. Patrolling buildings to ensure security is maintained
2. Checking security cameras

2.3   Anomalies

This will play randomly and will increase in frequency depending on the main character's state of mind. Multiple anomalies can play at the same time, but minor twitching will be involved avoiding repeats and bugs. Some can be:

- Movie randomly playing.

- Light anomalies (flickering, change in colour, spotlight turning and pointing at random o objects.)

- Objects out of place (from chairs and portraits to mannequins or other stuff)

- Broken stuff (Caretaker will have to clean).

- Footsteps (Sound)

- Children laughing or talking in the distance.

2.3.1   Nightmarish Anomalies

This type of anomalies is the rarest ones, and more likely to appear at later days. What makes them different from normal anomalies is that they will take sanity from the player if they get too close.

- Eyes in the dark or shadows silhouette (this can be easily implemented by placing planes
    with a Png on them like decals).

2.3.2   How can player Detect Anomalies?

Some anomalies are easier to spot than other, although all of them will trigger a static sound and glitching graphics on the player's phone. If the user were to be close to the anomaly when interacting with their phone, the phone screen will suffer from glitches. Whether they are using or not the phone, being close to them will trigger static sounds.

If the player is currently looking at the anomaly happening or is in the same room. The camera will have also a visual glitch accompanied with its own unique sound.

2.4   Memory Fragments (Mechanic)

The core narrative on the game will be presented to the player using memory fragments. These will be part of the player's main tasks and can also be found through the map. This will work as a metaphor to the players real entrapment which is their own mind. Memory fragments can be experienced the following way:

- **Follow:** memory played as an audio with shadows that the player will have to follow to trigger the next audio line. This narrative will be displayed as an anomaly, where the player will enter a collider and trigger the whole fragment. If the player decides to follow the shadow that is causing the dialog to pop up, more lines will come up. Once all lines are played the shadow will disappear and a mystic noise of disappearance will play. This shadow will need a different queue to make players understand is non-harmful. Probably using light to give a spectral look would work best.
- **Watch:** A small film will be projected to one of the cinema screens. Characters will be displayed as silhouettes and will be acting out a scene (memory from the main character). From visual point of view, we will just use different frames, like how visual novels work (Meaning now animations just a compilation of pictures).

2.5   Sanity

The sanity system will have great impact on the player's experience however its status will remain hidden throughout the entirety of the game. This said, there will still be some indirect UI feedback for the player, for them to notice that there is something out of place.

The text message system will trigger when sanity is low which will add up for players chances to avoid restarting the day.

2.5.1   System Itself

Sanity levels will go from 10 to 0. Player starts at 8. If player sanity reaches 0, they will reset the day. If they reset, they start with 5.

2.5.2   Gaining or Loosing

- Being on the same room as the anomaly when it happens will translate to **-2 Sanity**.
- Being too close to a nightmarish anomaly will translate to **-1 Sanity.**
- Being in the dark for too long **-1 Sanity** per minute.
- Staying too long on the same day **-2 Sanity** per 6 minutes.
- Secondary task's cascade effect **-2 Sanity**.
- Sending text message **+2 Sanity.**
- Performing a secondary task **+1 Sanity.**
- Completing all main tasks **+1 Sanity.**
- Customising your companion for the first time **+2 Sanity.**

2.5.3   Player Feedback on Sanity

- A black vignette will appear if the sanity is low.
- At critical levels, whispers will play in the background around the player.
- Visual Glitches will start to happen if the players sanity is below average.
- Character dialogs, talks to himself when sanity is below average.

Important: Players cannot start the day with negative or sanity equal to 0. So negative effects that are apply at the beginning of the day will not take place if it results on any of the cases.

2.6   Save System

The save system will be tied to the task machine. Players will end the day when interacting with the task machine, after completing all tasks. Players will be prompt with the option "Want to end the day?" and if accepting, the following will happen:

- Player's sanity levels will be saved and transferred to the next level initial state.
- All player collectibles will be saved and can be used to customize the companion. (Meaning they should not re-appear on the map and already accessible on the customization menu)
- All secondary tasks that are not done will be marked as failed and consequences will translate to the next level.
- Memory pieces will be saved.

2.7   Inventory System

The inventory system will be almost invisible to the main UI; however, the player will be able to check what their carrying through their phone. They will have an app that will write down their inventory items. App itself will be called iCarry.

Players will utilize the item when interacting with an object that requires it automatically.

2.8   Map

On the phone, players will have access to the overlay of the map. It will be displayed as a blueprint and will have all the rooms and corridors named. Player's themselves will have to guide themselves based on landmarks or their own sense of direction.

This helps create a sense of alienation from the world itself.

2.9   Phone

➔ iCarry
➔ Signal Tracker
➔ Messages
➔ Camera Icon (Not usable, just for show)
➔ Gallery (Has map of the place)
➔ Calendar (Marks current day)
➔ Settings (change settings of the game)

3   Game & Narrative Design

The base game will contain a linear task that will divide the whole game into days. Each day the player will have a set of tasks the have to perform, on top of that there will be narrative elements that will trigger once the player interacts with them.

3.1   Core Story

Our protagonist has taken a job that will require them to take care of an old Movie Theatre for a couple of months on a distant town far from home. During their staying, a blizzard strikes the town trapping our protagonist inside. The game will utilize horror elements to facilitate player's immersion, aiming to create a connection with the character's mental stability which will deteriorate as to the lost social interaction and complete isolation. <mark>– Need to make it more descriptive and give more details!</mark>

3.2   Protagonist – Gabriel Rivera

Born in 1977, he was raised in a poor apartment building in a rundown neighbourhood. Gabriel was an only child and lived with his mother. His father abandoned them before he was born so he never had a true father figure to look to. Things were more complicated as he grew up since he would have to move from apartment to apartment to match his mother's job relocations.

During his childhood, Gabriel was always seen as different or strange. His migratory lifestyle led him to have attachment issues. Leaving him with a strange sensation of never truly belonging anywhere.

Not long after finishing secondary school, Gabriel left the nest to pursue a more stable lifestyle, a place where he could finally settle in. It was when he met the love of his life, Victoria Evans. They both worked at a small restaurant and Victoria seemed to be intrigued by Gabriel's determination and life goals.

Often seen as an achiever, Gabriel was always seen a person with a driven personality, passionate and energetic. Along the desire for settling in and having a stable lifestyle, Gabriel had a taste for the artistic. He always wanted to become a movie director, been able to give life to his imagination and portray stories never seen before.

A few years after dating. Gabriel and Victoria decided to move to the next step and get a loan to buy a house. It was at the main entrance of such house when Gabriel proposed to her, and so she became Mrs. Rivera Evans. Not even a year after, Gabriel had his first born.

Things were looking good, house loans were slowly getting paid, and they were happy. Victoria was named Manager of the restaurant a few years later. On top of this, a publishing company offered to finance Gabriel's first film. This allowed Gabriel to work from home and take care of the child while Victoria focused on getting a stable income.

It was around Theo's (Gabriel's and Victoria's son), eighths birthday when things started to go south. Theo got ill and between medication bills and the house loan things started to become more challenging. To make things worse, the restaurant closed due to some personal issues regarding the owner's family, this forced Victoria to search other job opportunities. Gabriel had to delay his work to take care of his son while Victoria had to work extra hours to pay the bills, which were still not enough.

With no other options it was time for Gabriel to join in the job searching, debts were pilling off and there was no time to be wasted. It was then when Gabriel received the anonymous call to work at the cinema as a caretaker. Payment seemed good; very good. Seemed to be to perfect to be true, but the situation was critical and there weren't many options. Gabriel took the job.

3.2.1   Wife

3.2.2   Son

3.3   Memory Fragments (Narrative)

3.3.1   Main Fragments

3.3.1.1   Main motivation (Camera Gift 30st Birthday)

Starts in the morning, Gabriel just woke up, he is in bed. Looks to the other side of the bed, only to realise his wife is already up. He can hear his wife humming a song in the next room.

Important feature to program: There needs to be a collision area near the interactable memory fragment, within this area the player can hear the wife's hums. The idea is to create immersion and let the players know it's a narrative component that they can interact with. (Also make sure to either highlight with light or colour).

Asset Needed: Camera (will be the interactable).

Scene:

Victoria – *"Good morning birthday boy."*

Gabriel – *(While stretching) "Hey, you are up early."*

Victoria – *"Well, it's a special day for a special person. (Pause) Come on, up you go. Made you breakfast."*

Gabriel – *"No kisses?"*

Victoria – *(chuckles + kiss) "Now, would u come?"*

Gabriel – *"Okey, what's up?"*

Victoria – *"What do you mean?"*

Gabriel – *"I can see you want to tell me something."*

Victoria – *"I don't know what you are talking about."*

Gabriel – *"Yeah... sure, so you are telling me that when I walk to the kitchen there won't be a surprise waiting for me?"*

Victoria – *"Am i that obvious?"*

Gabriel – *"Let's just say that I will not trust you to hide a body"*

Victoria – *"Right, because that's something you have to worry about Mr. Serial Killer."*

Victoria – *"Will you go to the kitchen now? Or you still in a detective mood?"*

Gabriel – *(Chuckles) "Its elementary my dear Watson... (stops) Okey, I am going."*

- Transition to Kitchen –

Victoria – *"Ep ep ep, eyes closed no cheating"*

Gabriel – *"Alright but you will have to guide me, don't want to bump into anything." (Chairs moving, some plates and what sounds like a wrapped box noises play)*

Victoria – *"Alright, open eyes now."*

Gabriel – *"Red velvet cake with an iced mocha... (excited) now that's a present"*

Victoria – *"Nah ah, that's just your breakfast. This (present is placed on the table) is your present."*

Small bit of silence, then unwrapping starts

Gabriel – *"Hun, this... this is..."*

Victoria – *"Before you go ahead and worry about how much it cost and so on, everyone from work gave a bit of money and I have some savings that made this possible. Don't worry, we not in any imminent crippling debt or anything... plus, you deserve it hun."*

Victoria – *"Besides, you been talking the ear off everyone who asks you about movies and such. It's time for you to be able to develop some of those projects you been thinking about."*

Chair noises play as Gabriel quickly stands for the chair and hugs Victoria

Victoria – *"Easy now tiger, I am fragile, remember?"*

Gabriel – *"This is amazing, I love you."*

Victoria – *"I love you too buttercup."*

End Scene

3.3.1.2   Happy moment (character gets the job) – Wife happy
3.3.1.3   Child being born (Happy moment)
3.3.1.4   Son Gets Sick
3.3.1.5   Fighting + debt

Scene starts with Victoria sitting at a table seems to be doing some billing and money estimations. Gabriel just enters scene; he seems tired but happy to see his partner.

Important feature to program: There needs to be a collision area near the interactable memory fragment, within this area the player can the dialogs on the scene muffled on repeat. The idea is to create immersion and let the players know it's a narrative component that they can interact with. (Also make sure to either highlight with light or colour).

Asset Needed: Billing papers (will be the interactable).

Scene:

Gabriel – *"Theo is sleeping, he seems getting better."*

Victoria – *(More preoccupied on the documents) "Good"*

Gabriel – *"Can I do something for you? Maybe prepare some coffee or..."*

Victoria – *"I am trying to do some bill calculation now Gabe, please let me think."*

Gabriel – *"Maybe I can take over? I wasn't that bad in math at school I am sure I can lay..."*

Victoria – *"No, I am on it. Now can you please let me work?"*

Gabriel – *"Okey, I can read the room, I'll give you space."*

Gabriel sits in the couch, starts watching tv

Victoria – *(Drops pencil in the floor, sighs) "Shouldn't you be working on the script? Publishing companies don't wait around and definitely won't be happy with late submissions."*

Gabriel – *"After today? Doubt I have any brain power to write anything. I got a few audio logs made during the day, hopefully I can write stuff down during our break."*

Victoria – *(Irritated) "So that's it, day is over. Time to relax and forget about life problems."*

Gabriel – *"(exhausted) Yep."*

Victoria – *"You do realise that despite the extra hours we are taking is still not enough to cover all... (Tosses papers in the table) this." Gabriel - (Turns off T.V) "I... I could ask the publishing company for some early payment, to make things easier for us onwards."*

Victoria – *"So then we can be I'm bigger debt when you can't deliver your work? Let's be frank Gabriel, you been stuck for weeks now, and they are getting impatient."*

Gabriel – *" You... don't believe I can make this. Do you?"*

Victoria – *(Sighs) "Its late and I am exhausted, can we leave the theatrics for tomorrow?"*

Dead silence in the room

Victoria – *"Gabriel, I am sorry I didn't..."*

Gabriel – *"No, I think you say enough. I am going for a walk... I can't do this."*

Victoria – *"Gabriel please listen to me, Gabriel!"*

Door opens, Gabriel exits scene and door closes

Scene ends

3.4   Day System

14 days total

3.5   Difficulty Scaling

Change on how rare anomalies are and modification on how much sanity affects player.

3.6   Tutorial

4   Level Design

4   Level Design

5   Sound Design

6   Testing

7   Sources

Cover Page	https://www.visit.brussels/en/visitors/venue-details.Cinema-Nova.229504

7   Sources