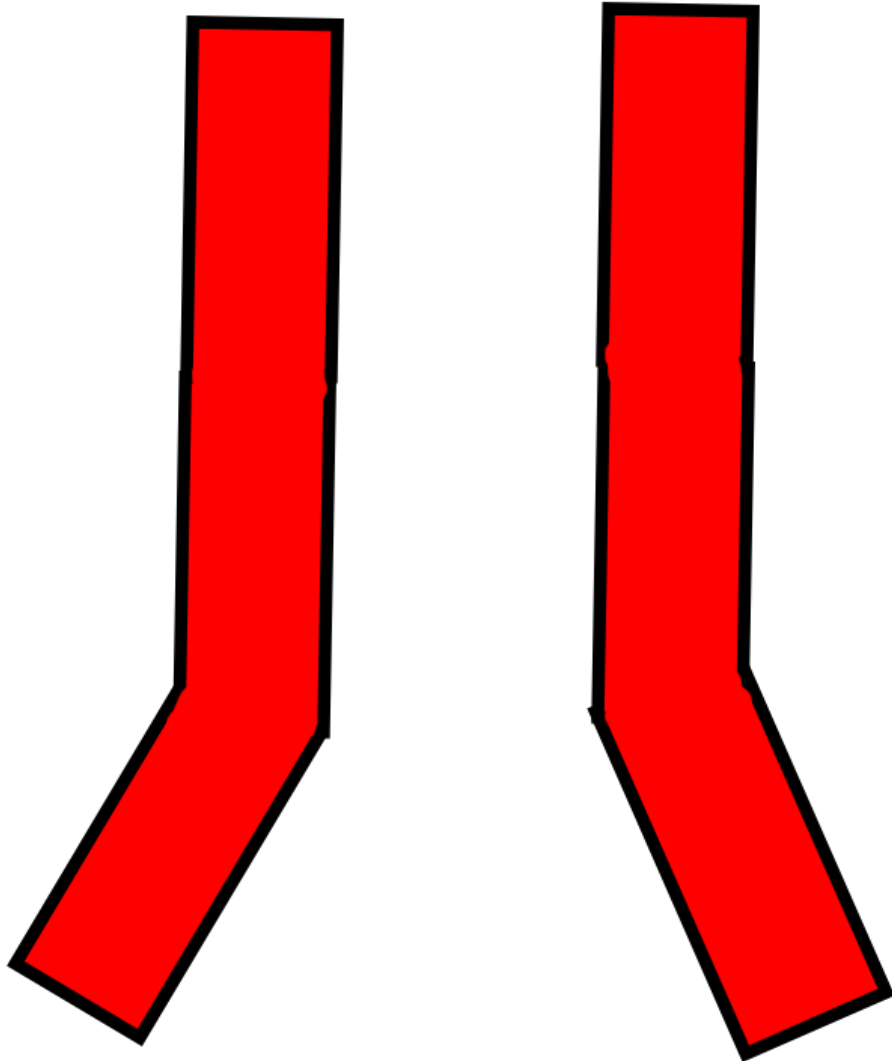


Game Design Document

Written by Yannick Fullager



Release Name: Where are They?

Working Name: Where are they?

Links to other documents:

- [Github](#)
- [Narrative Design Document](#)

Game pitch	2
Two-Line Pitch:	2
Game Concept	2
Game Genre	3
Target Audience	3
Game Appeal	3
Art	3
Inspiration	4
3D Art	5
2D Art	6
Design	8
Level Design	8
Narrative Design	9
Gameplay Design	10
Sound	12
Music	12
Sound Effects	12

Role of this document:

The role of this document is to act as the central repository of all concrete decisions made for this project. This document will not incorporate decisions that were discussed and ultimately decided against involving this project. This is done so that the document is easy to comprehend and navigate.

Furthermore, this document will include details that can be found in other documents. Such as the narrative design. This is because this document acts as the central repository for all decisions. Separate documents exist for convenience. This includes but is not limited to Narrative, Technical designs, Asset lists, and Kanban board. Please see the above links for the full list and actionable links.

Game State

The game is nearly finished, with most of its core code completed.

Weekly update

Most of the code has been completed now, with mostly just minor updates and polish needed.

Appendix

For the sake of making it clear, several terms will be discussed here. The first of these terms is the narrator, who is the human within the suit. This, however, raises the question of who the player is; the answer is that the player is the AI suit that controls the narrator's body.

Game pitch

Two-Line Pitch:

Where are they is a single-player, narrated horror game. You're tasked with searching for a missing crew on a space station with an unwilling tagalong.

Game Concept

Where are they? It is a single-player, narrated suspense horror game with a twist. You play as a suit's AI that takes control of the wearer's body. The wearer is a man named Anthony, who was tasked with discovering why the space station's crew had stopped reporting. The twist is something you discover throughout the game; it is that Anthony arrived at the wrong station, which is still under construction.

Game Genre

The game genre is a sci-fi suspense horror-style. The game takes elements from other horror games, such as Alien Isolation and Stanley Parable. These elements include the atmosphere of Alien Isolation and the narration of Stanley Parable. Due to time constraints, there will not be as many options as in Stanley Parable. It also takes inspiration from the concept of Doctor Who's Oxygen.

Target Audience

Where are they? It takes the usual core atmosphere of the suspense horror sub-genre, which should be targeted more towards that target demographic. This target demographic is 18 to 20 years old. However, since the game contains no actual violence, 16-18-year-olds can also be included in the target demographic.

Game Appeal/USP

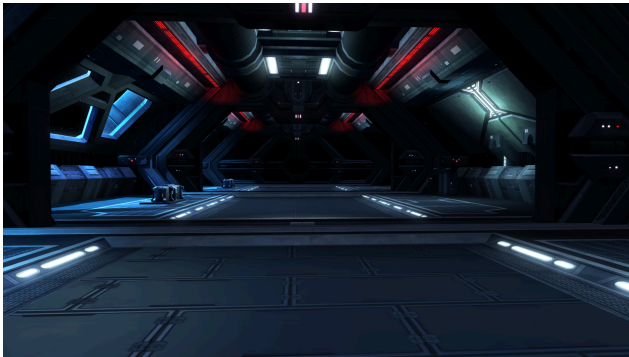
The source of game appeal compared to similar games on the market is the narration. This narration is used to add to the player's tension and give them clues on the game's narrative. The aim of making it a narrated horror is to use different versions of fear that are rarely explored. These types of fear are the lack of control a human can have over their body. This isn't because the player is being controlled, but rather experiencing the fear of another "human" lack of control. This aims to inspire a sense of self-reflection and a sense of dread over what could be, whilst also creating a much more tense atmosphere in a lot smaller of a limited window.

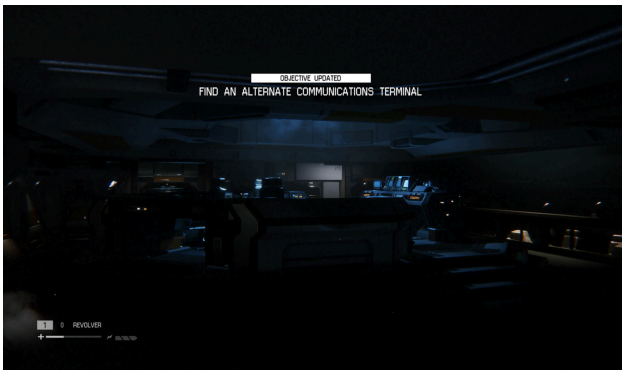
Art

This section details how the art looks and the decisions/reasoning behind this look. To do this, each sub-section will contain the overall decision and then, below it, why.

THIS SECTION DOES NOT CONTAIN WHAT ASSETS ARE NEEDED. Any assets specifically mentioned are purely an example to give a better understanding.

Inspiration







3D Art

Environment

The game's environment is utilitarian in design and will contain lots of duller colours, such as grey and white. The main visual appeal to the player will be made through the lighting, which will be sparse so that there are dark patches. These dark patches are used to create an unnerving atmosphere.

Additionally, there will be multiple systems, panels and lights that do not function entirely. This is also to add to the unnerving atmosphere. These non-functional environmental pieces will also be used to give hints to the game's narrative. This is because the station is simply under construction.

Specific Models

Even though there is no monster in the game's narrative, there will be a monster model. This model will be made to resemble that of the robot slightly. The model will be fully textured in black and will only be used as a stage piece to generate the idea that there is something there.

Another key model will be the robots that are constructing the station. These robots will be made to resemble a heart monitor with caterpillar tracks and arms. To help it, however, not resemble other robots such as Karen from SpongeBob, this robot will have a large central chest.



2D Art

UI

The UI will have a futuristic helmet HUD look that is similar to that of Halo. This also plays into how the pause menu of the game would work. When the pause menu is activated, it will be activated as if on the helmet's HUD.



Within the HUD, it will contain three main elements: A subtitle for any dialogue, A heart rate monitor, and a bar constantly checking for authorisation. (The red box is the authorisation bar, the red circle is the heart rate monitor, the black box is the dialogue)

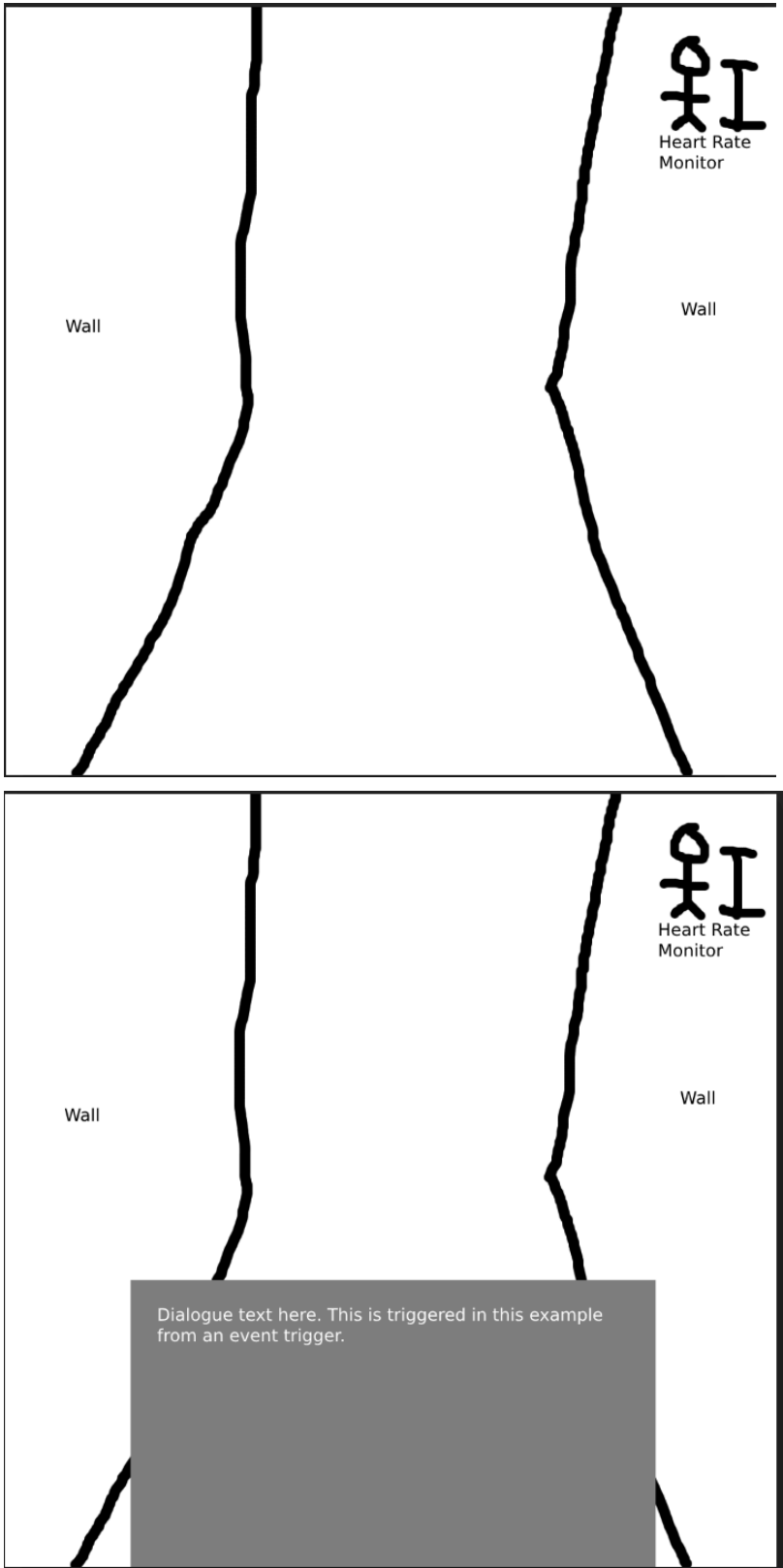


These elements are included to further drive the narrative and also provide several gameplay and accessibility options.

Additionally, by focusing most of the UI on the right-hand side, the game can maintain easy player retention on the right side of the screen. This gives more options for both horror elements and gameplay elements. However, due to the scope, these will largely be just horror elements.

Design

Core Concept visualisation



Level Design

The level design is largely simple, with small extra parts complicating it. These parts are not accessible from the start, so the player doesn't feel overwhelmed or deterred from following the set storyline. This allows the game's narrative to be controlled to a degree, allowing the player to experience it as intended.

In the level designs below, you can see via coloured lines which areas are accessible from the start and which aren't. Red means accessible at the start, but will eventually be closed off. Black means accessible later.



(Main Level Design)



(Rooms accessibility layout)

The reasoning behind the rooms no longer being accessible is to aid with the narrative and to make the player feel more claustrophobic within the space station. Additionally, by limiting what rooms are available and which are not, the game prevents the player from walking backwards and forwards between the same areas. Aiding in preventing the game from feeling bland.

Narrative Design

The game's narrative design is explored more in the narrative design document. This section will give brief overviews. This is so that you, the reader, can get a quick understanding of the goals and methods of the narrative design.

Story Structure:

The game's story will be broken up into a three-act structure. This is so that the story will be convenient to write. This will also allow the game to tell a coherent story from start to end.

Act 1: Arrival. The player arrives, and the game portrays itself more as a typical horror game.

Act 2: Questioning. The player plays through the level, but the only thing ever in the rooms that the player suspects has the 'monster' is robots.

Act 3: Realisation. The player discovers that they are, in fact, on a construction site rather than the correct site.

Story Dynamic:

The main dynamic of the story is the dynamic between the player/AI suit (will refer to it as the AI suit for this section) and the narrator.

Sound Design crossover:

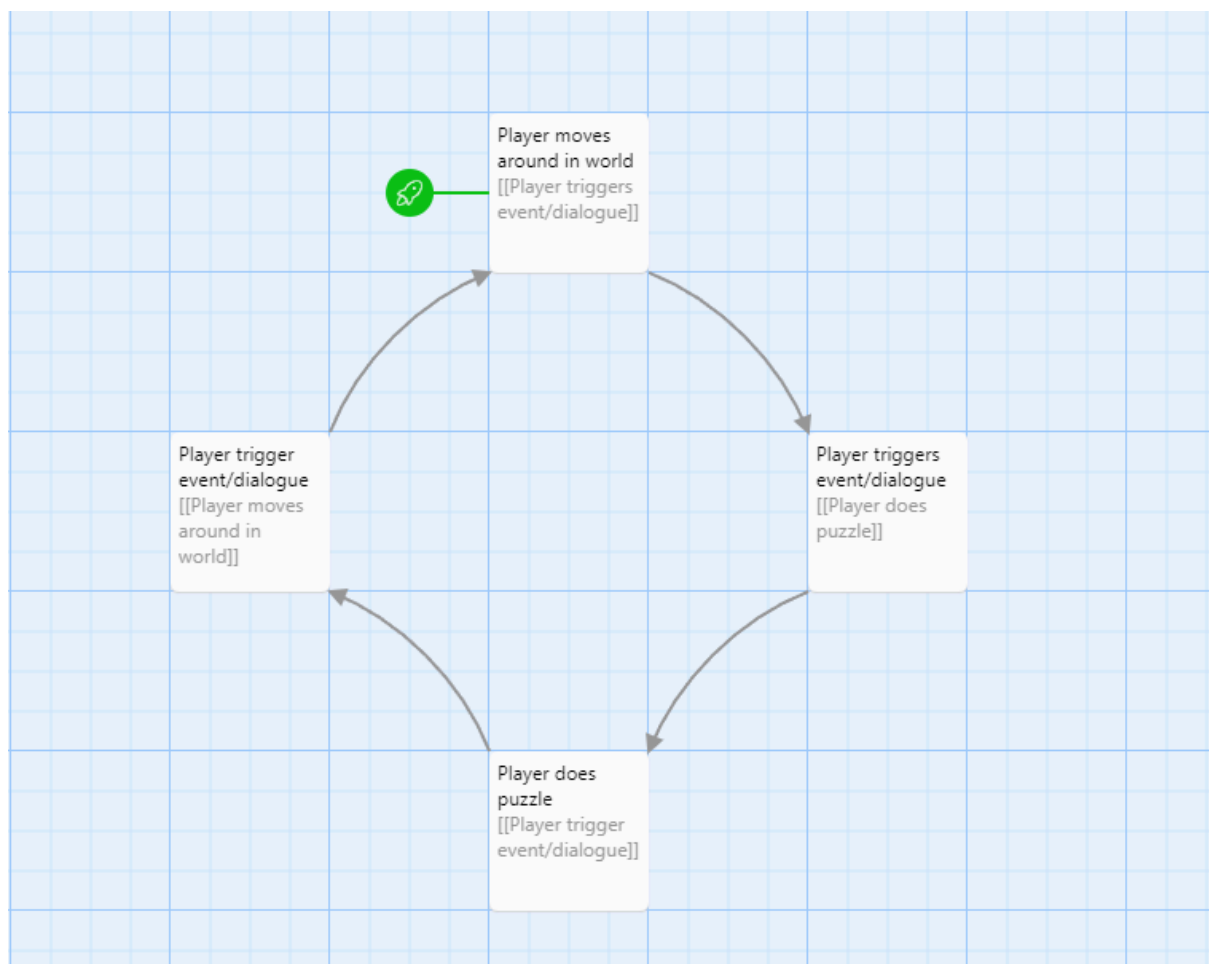
Due to how much of the storytelling for the 'monster' will be done via sound, there is a large crossover with sound design. As such, this section aims to capture how the sounds should sound. The sound assets needed in particular are located here.

World backstory

The world backstory is that after the unification of humanity following a near resource collapse on Earth, humanity started mass colonising the galaxy and founding space stations to collect as many resources as possible. The game takes place on one such space station that is under construction. The space station is owned by the corporation Gastro Industries.

Gameplay Design

Core gameplay loop:



When the pause menu is opened, the narrator will say menu. This is to give both the menu a diegetic feel whilst also aiding in making the game slightly more accessible. Additionally, it also adds to the game's narration in a way that even Stanley Parable doesn't do.

The core gameplay will consist of three separate parts:

Horror/Narration

Puzzles

Heart Rate Monitor

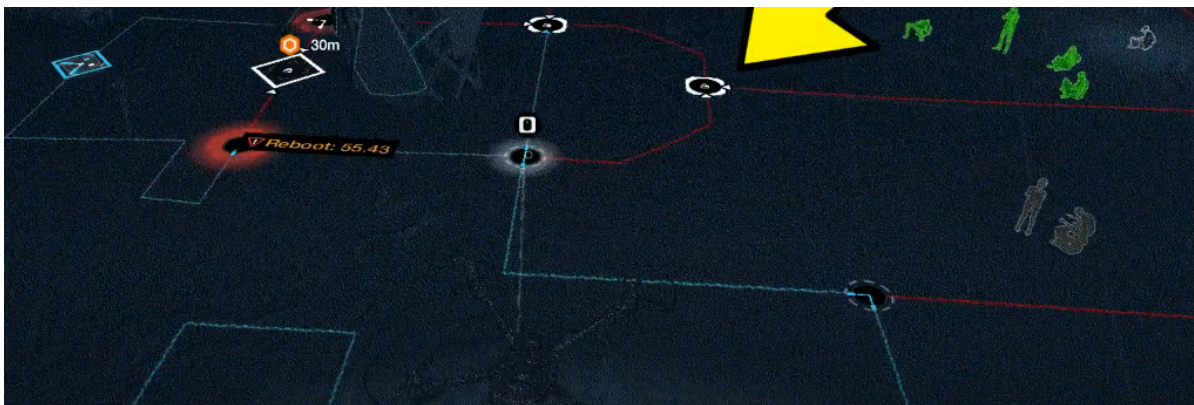
Horror/Narration

The narration will add to the horror factor of the game by having the narrator (human inside the suit) progressively get more terrified. This is despite the fact that the narrator inside believes the player to be trying to get him killed since the player's objectives are opposite of the desires of the narrator.

Puzzles

The puzzles will be the game's main way of granting the player access to new areas. As well as allowing them to progress the game's narrative through accessing different console systems.

The puzzles will consist of a single type of puzzle. This is for the sake of scope. The type of puzzle will be an energy direction style puzzle similar to what Watch Dogs 2 uses. In this the player has to turn junctions so that the energy or power can flow in the right direction. This puzzle in-game will be used to access terminals and doors/new areas.



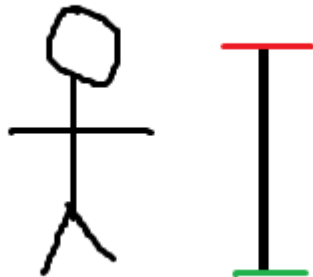
(Example of the Watch Dogs 2 puzzle)

This is to access new rooms and other such areas of interest. These rooms are used to forward the plot. Whilst the game's endpoint becomes one room closer to the player.

The Heart Rate Monitor

The Heart Monitor is the last of the major gameplay elements. The heart rate monitor is a system of triggers which increase or decrease from the player's actions. Each time the player activates a line of dialogue, it changes the narrator's heart rate. This heart rate can act as a defeat state since if the heart rate reaches too high, the narrator has a heart attack. Producing a game over state.

The reverse is also true. If the player decides to protect the narrator a bit, then the heart rate will go down. This, however, comes at the cost of game progression, adding an incentive to take the game a little slower while still providing a fast and small experience. This causes the player to experience and intake more of the game's narrative than they would normally.



(Simple concept art for it. Red means heart attack, and green means safe.)

Control Scheme

The control scheme for the game is going to follow basic conventions to make the game as simple as possible. Additionally, they wouldn't require any severe movement, which aims to assist those with disabilities by providing options.. This means the controls will be:

WASD or arrow keys for movement.

F to interact.

Space bar to continue the dialogue or left click.


And ESC to access the pause menu. To navigate the menu, you require the mouse and left click.


Sound


Music

The main role of music in this game will be to keep the player in a constant state of unnerved suspension. By constantly implying something is about to happen when in reality it won't. This largely comes down to scope as a decision, since this project doesn't have the time to make multiple large events to maintain the player's fear.

Musical Inspiration:

 [Alien Isolation | Full Soundtrack 2022](#)

 [Friday the 13th original theme](#)

 [Jaws Theme Song](#)

Sound Effects

The sound effects will be largely metallic and mechanical. This is to drive home the lack of fellow people. Aiding in the feeling of loneliness and helps to create tension for the player. The soundscape will largely comprise quiet hums of machines and other ambience expected on a space station. Such as steam from exposed vents.