Wolf in the Crowd Report

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Experience Goal
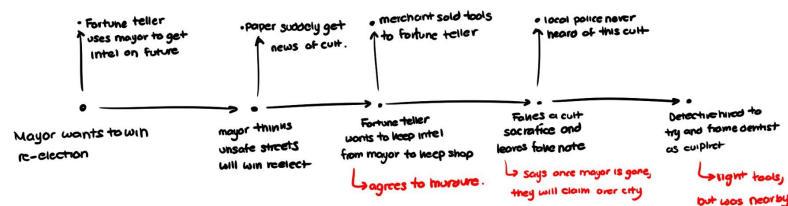
The project's main goal was to create a story where the player plays as a detective trying to solve a murdure. The idea was to place the players into the shoes of the detective, having to go through the motions of interviewing, observing, and finding the clues necessary to accuse the right individual. Much like how real cases are handled, the detective has the option to accuse any of the suspects, but only one of them is the one who truly committed the crime. Furthermore, the idea was to also reward players with observation, as characters will attempt to lie and throw blame towards other characters in an effort to get the detective to accuse the incorrect individual.
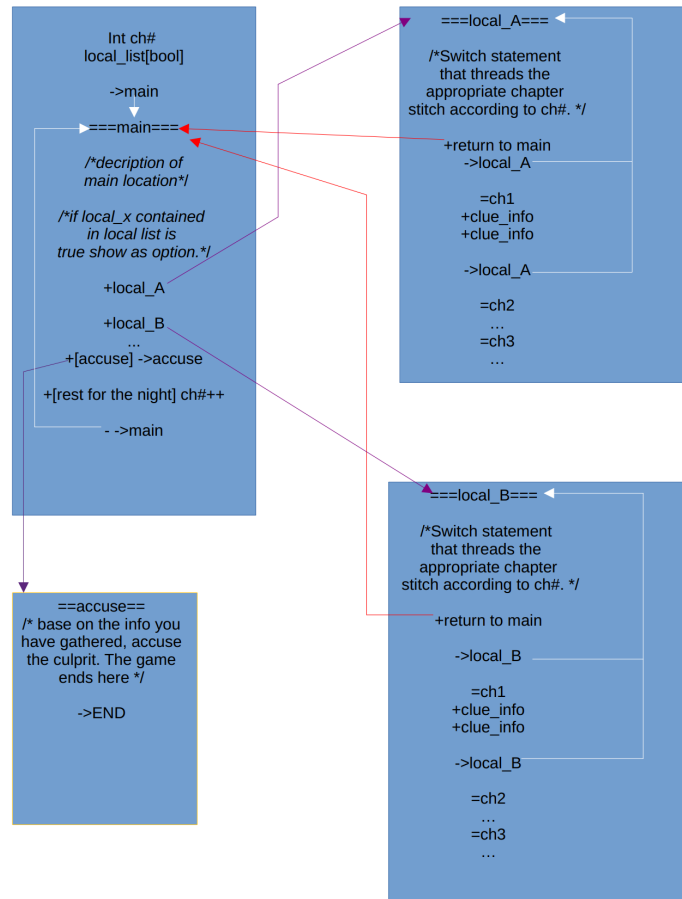
Narrative Stance and Rationale

The narrative of the story is told through a first person perspective. Much like how the mystery genre is arranged, important information is hidden from the player. The player has to go about and listen, ask questions, and analyze what the characters say to infer a truth. Because of this, the characters are written to have contradictions within their own accounts. Narratively, two of the characters have a vested interest in lying to the player, where the other 2 were simply at the wrong place and wrong time. This means the narrative has to be given through an explicit first person narrative approach, as the player leans at the same time as the detective. This also helped serve the functionality of having players to keep attention to what characters say. As the game does not explicitly tell them what has happened, the player has to piece together the puzzle through conversation. Truths are scattered throughout the conversation. Furthermore, the game's options are arranged where the detective can skip actions in a day, and if they are confident accuse someone before the final day turns around, but doing so causes some accusations to be locked and hidden.

Story Structure

Overall story planning. The story was downscaled a lot in the final version,

Program Layout. The program is designed around modularity, and easy to implement.

Int ch#
local_list[bool]

->main

===main===

/*decription of
main location*/

/*if local_x contained
in local list is
true show as option.*/

+local_A

+local_B
…
+[accuse] ->accuse

+[rest for the night] ch#++

- ->main

==accuse==
/* base on the info you
have gathered, accuse
the culprit. The game
ends here */

->END

===local_A===

/*Switch statement
that threads the
appropriate chapter
stitch according to ch#. */

+return to main
->local_A

=ch1
+clue_info
+clue_info

->local_A

=ch2
…
=ch3
…

===local_B===

/*Switch statement
that threads the
appropriate chapter
stitch according to ch#. */

+return to main

->local_B

=ch1
+clue_info
+clue_info

->local_B

=ch2
…
=ch3
…

Key Ink Variables

The program has three major tracking structures: a chapter tracking int, a list of possible locations that are unlocked by adding them to the list, and ints representing how much evidence you have on each of the suspects. The root knot acts as the main function of the program which presents character menus and locations to travel to while having two options of its own: to go to sleep and advance to the next chapter, and to accuse a suspect to end the case once you have enough incriminating evidence. Within the body of knot root, there are options guarded by if statements as to whether a location/character is unlocked. If unlocked, you can divert to the knot of the location/character. Each character and location is a separate .ink file with its own knot with a switch statement that threads to the stitch required for that chapter. Because you can have multiple stitches of the same name in different knots, you only need to copy paste the knot, rename the knot and change the options and that's it. Some options will increment the evidence on one or multiple suspects. Every option is one use and has two different single use choices so you cannot get all of the evidence in one run. After exhausting all the options for that state, you can choose the leave option to divert back to root. In the accusation phase, you need to have a

certain amount of evidence on a person to accuse them. After accusing someone, you receive a unique ending depending on who you accuse.

Ink affordances

Because the game is a text-based game, this allows us to work well within the limits of ink's limitations. We decided to draw inspiration from visual novels for the game. Ink allowed us to separate the context of the story into independent storylets. Because we had multiple writers, this allowed us to free up the workload from a single individual having to do the writing. In addition, Ink allows modularity, something which we set up for the back of the code. Each character was divided into an individual file, which meant that to replace or adjust a character (such as new story content being added), it was as simple as replacing the existing file with the new updated file. On top of that, ink being limited to a text based format also gives the player a reasonable affordance to how to interact with the game. Because of its text based format, this means players in the game will implicitly understand the limited nature of their choices, and allows an easier time balancing mechanics as most players will understand they need to click an option to progress the story. Ink allows us to use this formal affordance from the player side to craft a game that works within the players expectation on interaction. We also could use the inks ability to collapse states to create the illusion of choice and agency within the game.

Discourse Example/Demonstration

You can only interview a finite number of characters per day. The detective has limited time, thus players have to choose carefully who to interview with to glean information from. Below is a example of what happens when going down the Mayor's interview

The Mayor gives me a dry laugh, "Well now detective! If we knew, we wouldn't have called you!"

I adjust my hat, "Forgive me sir, I was thinking more along the lines of... do you know anybody who could have had reason to kill the victim?"

The Mayor seems to think for a while, crossing his arms, "Well... don't know what could come of it, but... I suspect her family did have some unpaid bills..."

"Bills?" I echo, "What kind?"

"I'm afraid I don't know that much detail, Detective." the Mayor admits.

"Very well."

"Detective! You are back so soon, how can I help you?" the Mayor asks.

"I just wanted to know some details about the case."

The Mayor glances at his wristwatch, a rare commodity, but I suppose it's yet another sign of his status and wealth. He smiles kindly at me, "Of course detective, I have time to spare for your inquiries."

Suggest their distaste for the medical profession, and those who claim they have the credibility to "fix" someone. Says people with that much power can easily manipulate another (ironic, since he is also in power)

"Do you have the body so I may examine it?"

Going through the interview, some options may unlock to learn something about the character to make you learn more about their presence in the crime.

> The mayor looks appalled.
>
> "I...? Should I have asked her family to just keep the body?" He shakes his head solemnly, "No, no... the poor girl's funeral is already over. This happened over a week ago you see..." He straightens his posture, "No family would have their angel lying to rot after that!"
>
> "Rather careless, but I'll have to understand." I said quickly.
>
> The mayor looks at his wristwatch again.
>
> "Listen, detective, I appreciate your efforts to finding the truth behind this murder, and I would love to stay and help you some more, but I really must get to my next appointment soon..." he says, getting up.
>
> Shame, I am not finished asking my questions. I can't let him walk away just yet.
>
> "Wait, Mr. Mayor, just one more thing!" I call out.
>
> "Very well, detective. Just one more." He says, stopping at the doorway.
>
> Hmm... It seems like I will only get to ask one question. I must choose my next words carefully. What would I like to know...?
>
> > "Do you know anyone who could have large blades...?":
> >
> > "Could you tell me your whereabouts during the time of the murder?"

Once an option is selected, the game will activate some knowledge base, and advance the day forward.

> The Mayor shifts his gaze, "Detective... you aren't asking me to accuse someone on the spot are you?"
>
> "No, no." I assure him, "I just need a tip on where to investigate next."
>
> "I see..." He says, "Well, I would never accuse these good fellows... especially after what they've done for this town and all..." his voice drops to a whisper, "But... the only place I'd reckon you could find such instruments would be a doctor's office or the sort..."
>
> "I understand." I say, noting the information, "Thank you for your honesty Mr. Mayor."
>
> And with that, he left his office, leading me out first. I suppose I should carry on with my investigation.
>
> Day1
>
> It's a cold and crisp morning. I see that despite the recent murder, the town still stays active. Business has to run, I suppose.
>
> I wonder just how much of this I'll be able to uncover today.
>
> > denstist
> >
> > fortune_teller
> >
> > City Hall

Something Cool

The game was actually made with the intention of evenly adding visuals. In early concepts we had rough character designs and art style direction we had wanted to go in.

However our scope of the original project was far larger then what we could achieve in the limited time frame we had. That being said, we have actual drawings produced of the characters before the scaleback in scope. The modularity of the code luckey makes this an easy element to put in. Some examples of early development sketches.

Some early sketches exploring the style the game would have been made with. We wanted to go with this more grounded, gritty and styled aesthetic

Mayor dooole

Some characters were explored in the initial concept before being scoped back due to time constraints. Above are examples of the Mayor, the Fortune Teller, and the Forgien Merchant.

Resources used

Github was used for version control. The Ink manual was also a heavy reference in understanding the coding format, and key to understanding the back-end functionality of what Ink can offer. This meant that it took a few days for us to understand the limit of what ink can do before we went ahead with the coding of the game itself. On top of that, the teacher examples

were also important in letting us see how the code interacts with a live version of ink. This lets us understand how inks are arranged and organized, and lets us design the structures around the limitations of ink. Beyond that, most of the resources we ended up using were made by us. The script was made entirely by our team.