Conventio Lutheri

Game Design Document

TEAM 07

DIGITAL BROS GAME ACADEMY

Contents

OVERVIEW 1

GAME MECHANICS 2

- Core gameplay
- Game loops 3
- Gameplay elements 7
  - Key Violin & workbench 8
  - Work tools 13
  - Other tools 16
  - Environmental interactable objects 18
  - Devil's malus 24
  - Player settings 25

LEVEL DESIGN 26

- Abandoned artisan's shop 27
- Workroom 28

NARRATIVE ELEMENTS 29
- Storytelling
  - Characters
  - Storyline & screenplay
- Environment 33
- Quotes and References 35

UI FLOWCHARTS 37
- Start screen
- Pause menu 39
- End game menu 41

ART & AESTETHICS 43
- Overall goals
- Concept art 44
- 3D modeling 47

SFX & MUSIC 50
- Overall goals
- Sfx 51
- Soundtracks 52

Overview

Conventio lutheri is a simulative video game of the luthier's job that exploits a horror-tinged narrative twist to tell the literary topos of the pact between man and the devil.
It's a first person experience for PC only.

The gameplay is presented with simple, low-key mechanics that require players to master in order to complete the game.

Game Mechanics

CORE GAMEPLAY

The core gameplay is a mix between the purely simulative component of the game and the graphic adventure outside repair.

Direct challenge based on players' skills occurs at the workbench. Everything outside refers, however, to a mental challenge of clue gathering and narrative progression.

GAME LOOPS

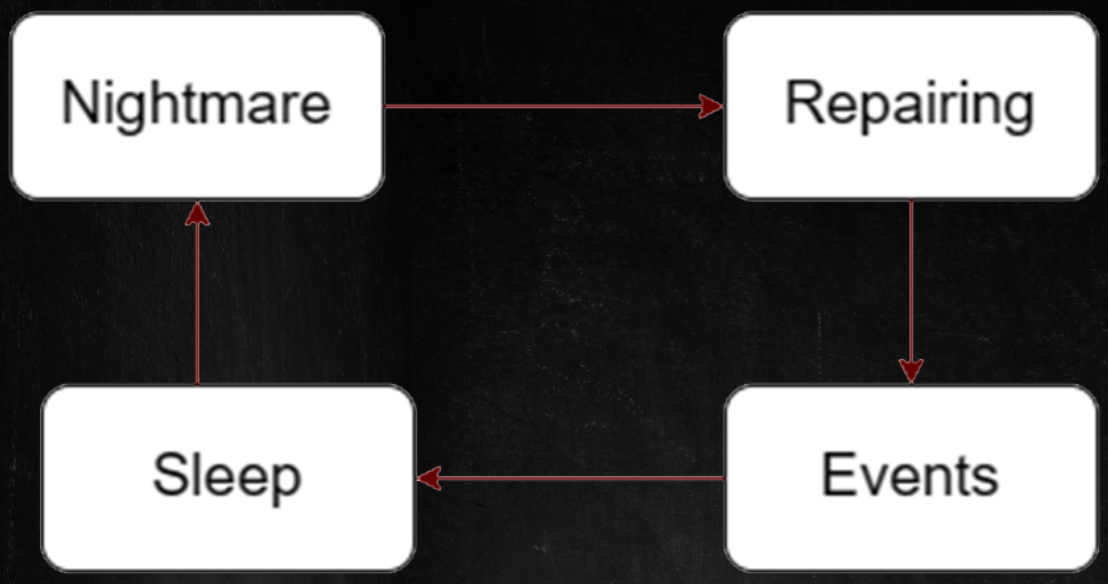
System chart:

Conventio lutheri refers to 4 game systems that interact with each other to generate a single game experience.

Tools | Devilish apparitions | Nightmares | Clues

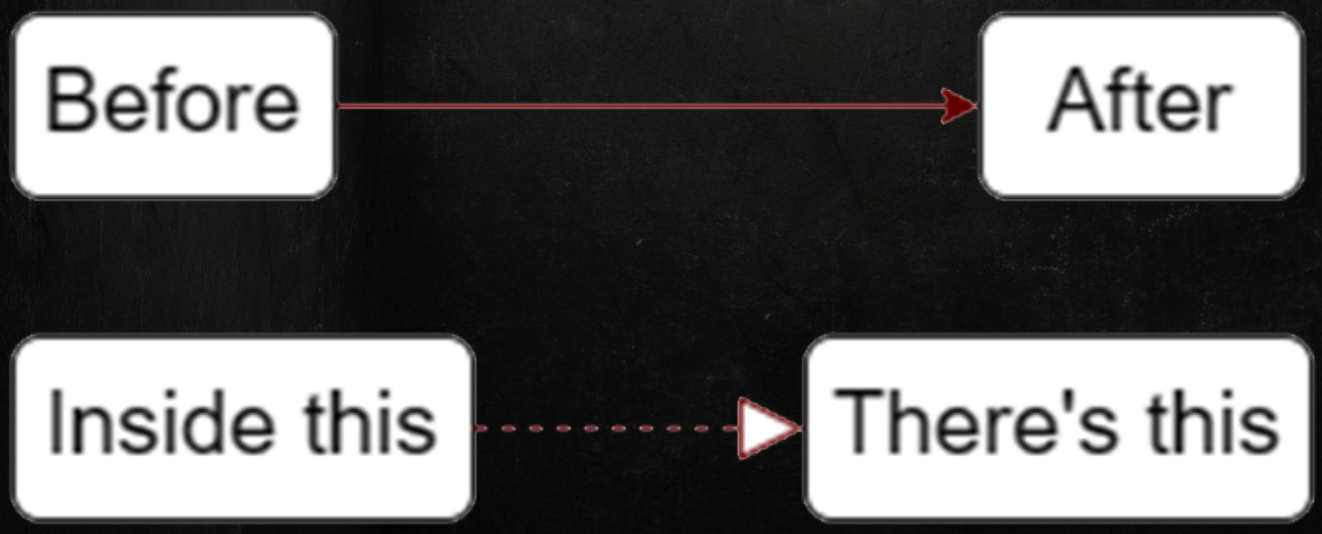
Interactions between systems				
	Tools	Devilish apparitions	Nightmares	Clues
Tools		• Apparitions may require tools to be understood • While repairing the devil appears via hallucinations • The knife is the connection point between real and		• Using tools to reveal clues • Clues give you hints about the use of the knife
Devilish apparitions	• Apparitions may require tools to be understood • While repairing the devil appears via hallucinations • The knife is the connection point between real and		• Nightmares are allegorical predictions about how the devil is gonna act • The devil corrupts nightmares to increase the madness level	• The devil generates strange events in the room which reveal clues • Clues give the opportunity to understand deeply what is the devil's plan
Nightmares		• Nightmares are allegorical predictions about how the devil is gonna act • The devil corrupts nightmares to increase the madness level		• Some clues are hidden in the nightmares • Some clues make the player able to understand deeply the meaning of the nightmares
Clues	• Using tools to reveal clues • Clues give you hints about the use of the knife	• The devil generates strange events in the room which reveal clues • Clues give the opportunity to understand deeply what is the devil's plan	• Some clues are hidden in the nightmares • Some clues make the player able to understand deeply the meaning of the nightmares	

General gameplay loop



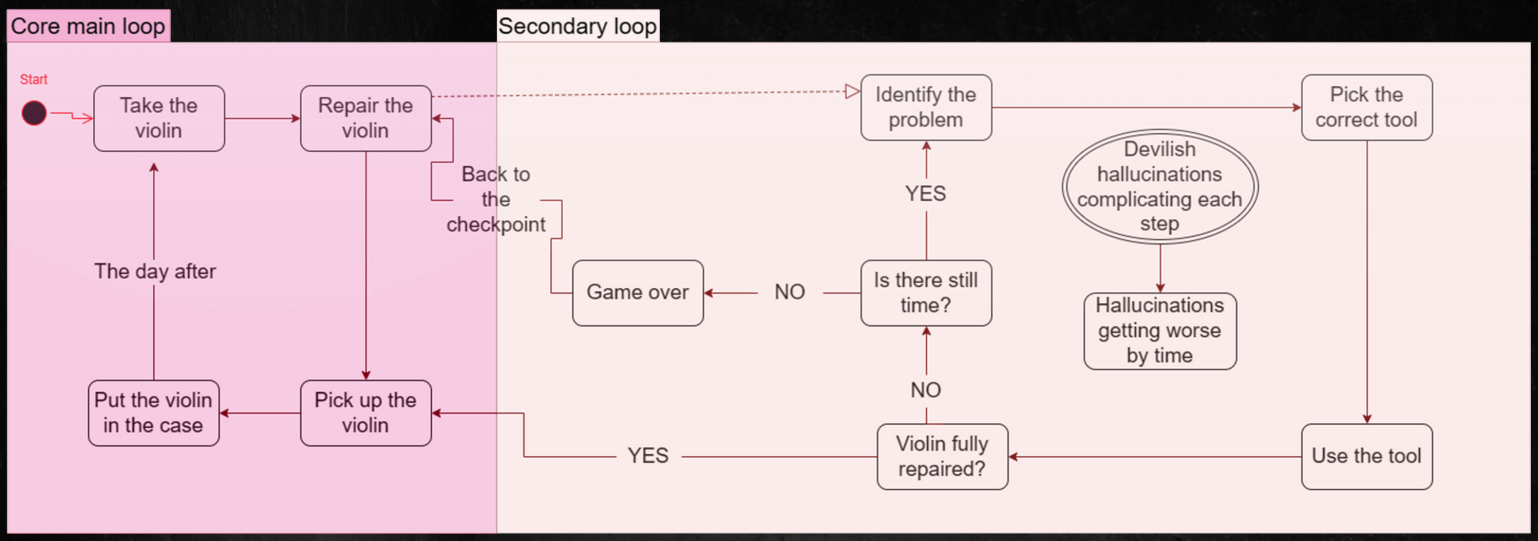
Simulation loops:

In order to properly read the flowcharts, it is necessary to refer to this simple legenda.



Repairing loop:

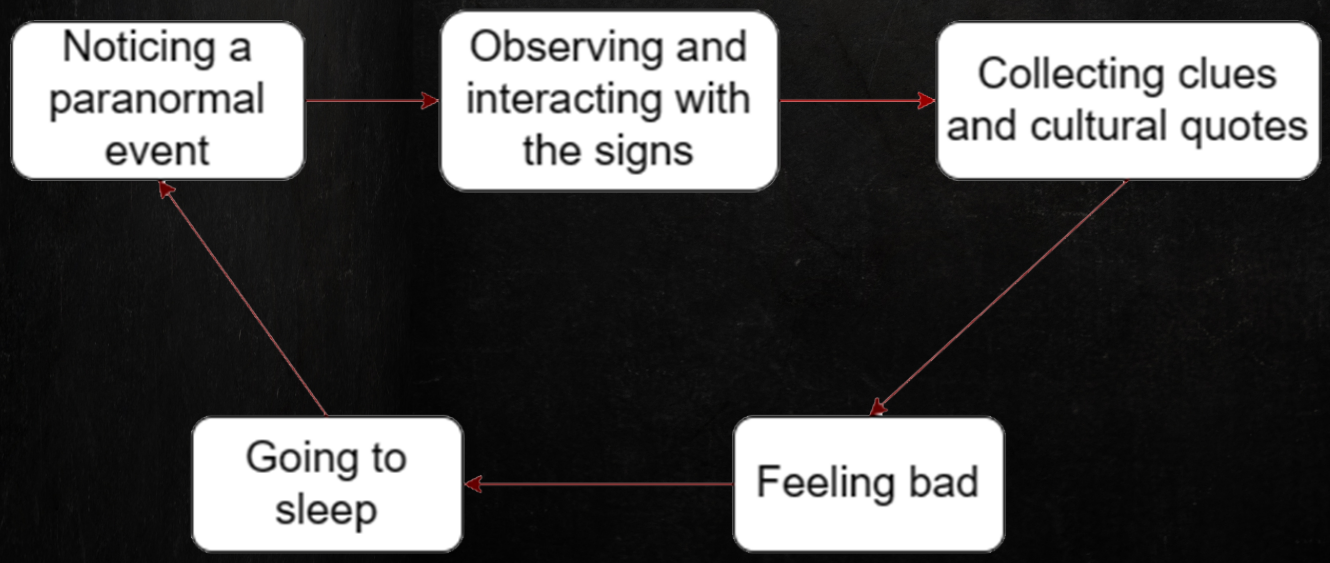
Repairs are the only occasions during which players can actually lose.



Narrative flows:

The narrative system refers to two different components.

Events loop:



Nightmare loop:

GAMEPLAY ELEMENTS

Please refer to the Object in game chart for the full list of the object in the game.

Please, refer to the Tutorial document and Interaction chart document for the technical settings about objects interaction and tutorial.

Please, refer to the Madbar chart for the technical settings about maluses.

Please refer to the Player settings document for technical settings about player controls and camera adjustments.

KEY VIOLIN & WORKBENCH

Violin

Interactions: out of the repair, players can pick up the violin by pressing the _provided.key_.

Description: a late 19th century violin that will be delivered to the player in two possible textures (ruined and painted) and depending on the repair will have present or missing strings and neck.

Main body

Interactions: Out of the repair, players can pick up the body by pressing the _provided.key_.

Description: Sound box of the violin that is disconnected from the neck and strings, which can have three different types of texture: ruined, sanded and painted.

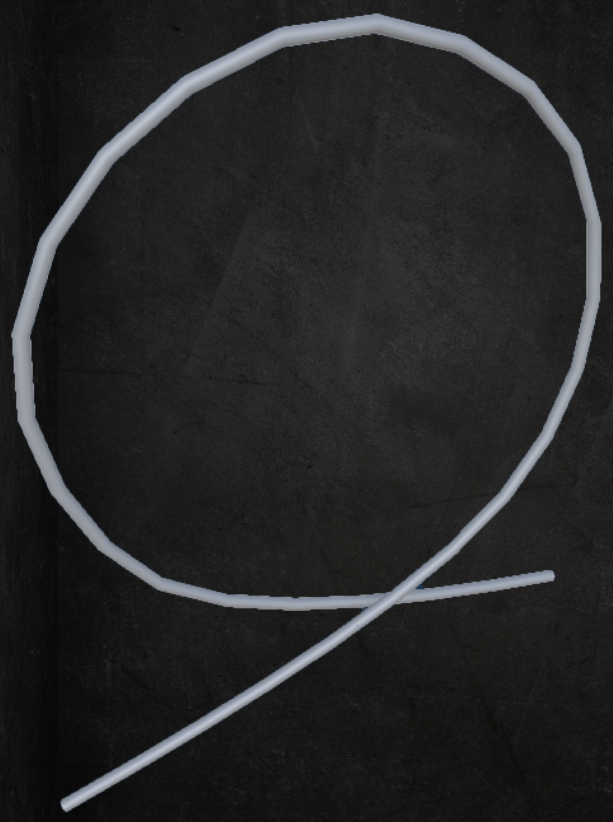
Neck

Interactions: During repairs it can be picked up when your hands are empty (by pressing the _provided.key_) by clicking on it with _provided.button_. Once selected it can be attached to the body of the violin clicking the _provided.button_. Outside of repairs it's not interactable.

Description: Violin neck with no strings attached that sits on the work table that will be able to connect to the body of the violin during repairs that require it.

Strings

Interactions: During the repair you will only be able to pick up from the string holder if empty-handed (by pressing the _provided.button_) with the _provided.button_. Once picked up their state will change to slightly curved and they can be placed on the violin by _provided.button.and.movement_ starting from the top of the neck to the tailpiece. Once inserted on the violin they will return to their taut state.



Description: Violin strings present on the string holder of the work table or directly on the violin. Each violin has 4, and the strings have two different states: taut or slightly curved.

The fourth string of the possessed violin will have a silver coloring, unlike the others.

Can of paint

Interactions: a can of paint that is always present on the workbench and will be used for painting the sound box of the violin. The brush can interact with it to pick up the paint, thus changing the texture.

Description: a vintage can without any particular trait.

WORK TOOLS

Chisel

Interactions: When present in the in-game UI it will be equipable by pressing the _provided.key_. Once equipped players will be able to repair the violin neck by clicking the _provided.button_ on it.
During Act 2 players will be able to interact with the bleeding book.

Description: a small luthier's chisel of the period without any special features.

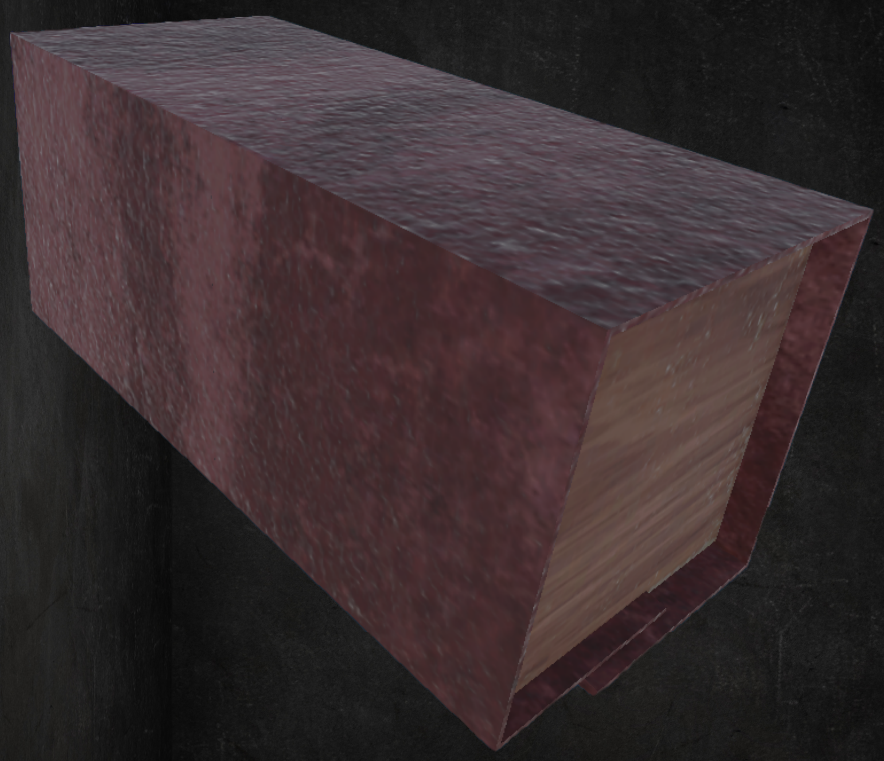
Paint brush

Interactions: When present in the in-game UI it will be equipable by pressing the _provided.key_. Once equipped players will be able to paint the violin neck by clicking the _provided.button_ on it. Before then painting, players must dip the paint brush in the can of painting by clicking on it with the _provided.button_.

Description: a vintage luthier's brush without any special features.

Sandpaper

Interactions: When present in the in-game UI it will be equipable by pressing the _provided.key_. Once equipped players will be able to scrub the violin body by _provided.button.and.movement_ .



Description: a vintage luthier's sandpaper without any particular trait.

OTHER TOOLS

Knife

Interaction: Players can pick up, use and equip the knife by pressing the _provided.key_.

Description: a fine knife with distinctive features, a family heirloom. It is present in the first act before the first repair and then in the finale where it can interact with the possessed violin to cut the silver-plated string.

Scrub brush

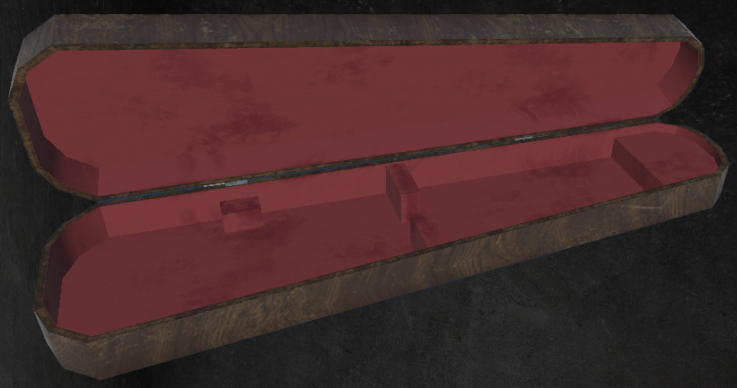
Interactions: players can pick up it by pressing the _provided.button_ on it. For scrubbing players can use it by “holding and dragging the left mouse button”.

Description: a worn-out scrub brush that will only be used by the player during the interlude after the first repair to clean the rot that appeared on the wall.

ENVIRONMENTAL INTERACTABLE OBJECTS

Violin case

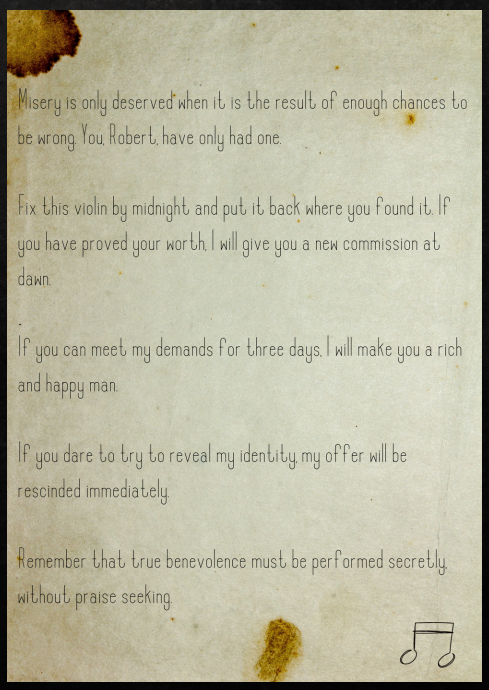
Interactions: players can pick up the violins inside the case by pressing the _provided.key_.



Description: a vintage violin box on the shop counter upstairs where the violins to be repaired will appear inside.

Letters

Interactions: players can pick up and read them by pressing the _provided.key_ and exit ftom the reading mode by pressing the _provided.key_ again.



Misery is only deserved when it is the result of enough chances to be wrong. You, Robert, have only had one.

Fix this violin by midnight and put it back where you found it. If you have proved your worth, I will give you a new commission at dawn.

If you can meet my demands for three days, I will make you a rich and happy man.

If you dare to try to reveal my identity, my offer will be rescinded immediately.

Remember that true benevolence must be performed secretly, without praise seeking.

Description: mysterious letters that appear close to the violin case once per day.

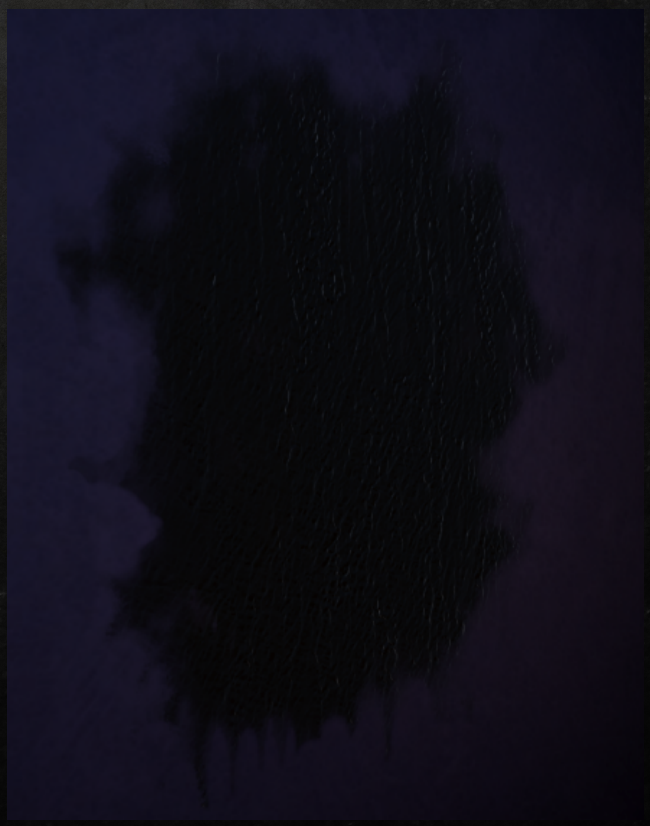
Doors

Interactions: players can open them by pressing the _provide.key_.

Description: normal wooden doors.

Rotten wall

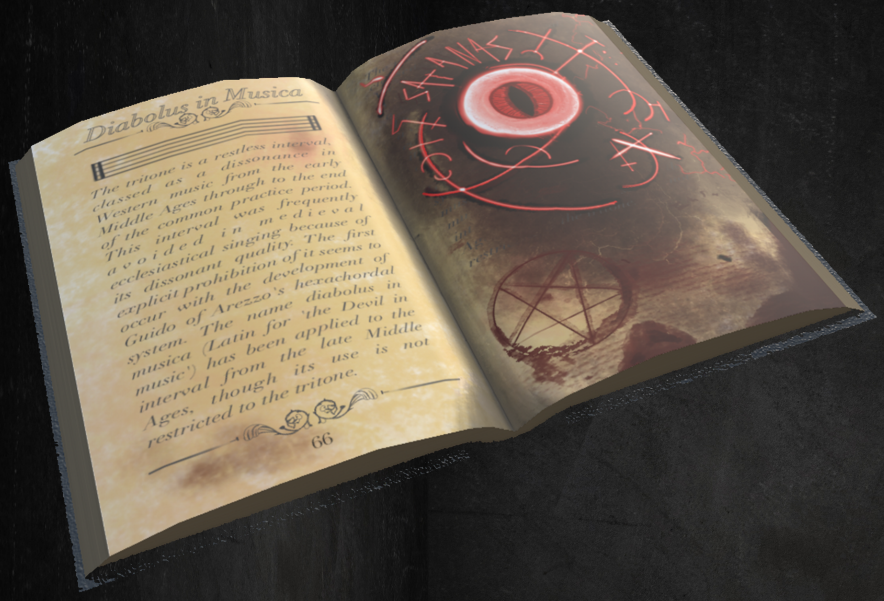
Interactions: players must clean it up by using the scrub brush.

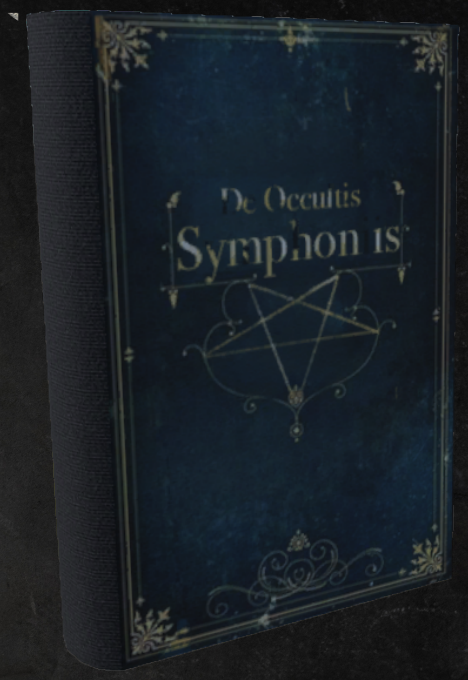


Description: a paranormal mold that appears on the left-to-the-workbench wall.

Devilish book

Interactions: it becomes interactible only when it starts bleeding. Players must use the chisel to unembed it from the library. Players can read it by pressing the _provided.key_.





Description: a paranormal book that in a specified scene starts to bleed.

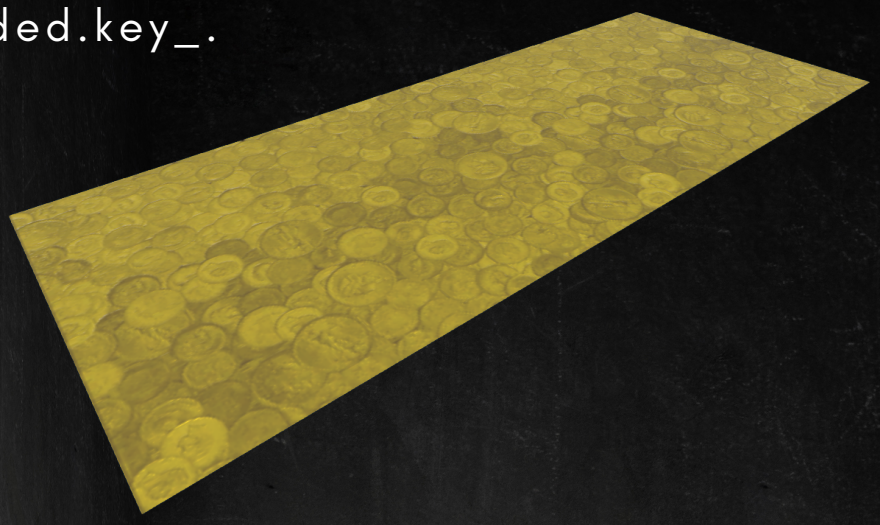
Bed

Interactions: players can go to sleep by pressing the _provided.key_.

Description: a worn-out bed without any particular trait

Pile of coins

Interactions: players can try to pick them up by pressing the _provided.key_.



Description: a golden pile of coins inside a chest appearing in the first dream.

Music stand

Interactions: players can try to read the sheet by pressing the _provided.key_.

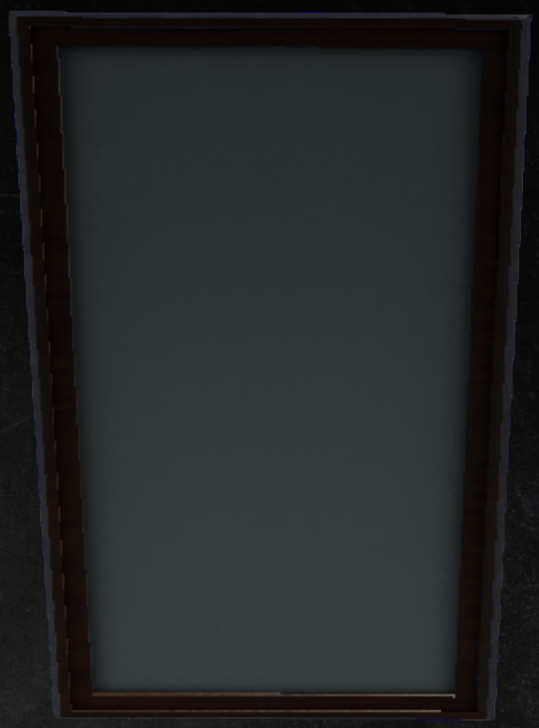
Description: a no-special-traits music stand appearing in the second dream. It has a music sheet on it.

Stool

Interactions: players can sit on it by pressing the _provided.key_.

Description: a common wooden stool necessary to sit and work at the workbench.

Mirror



Interactions: players have to press the _provided.key_ to make an inscription appear on it. As it happens players can read it, after that the game ends

Description: a big mirror that appears in the last scene of the game.

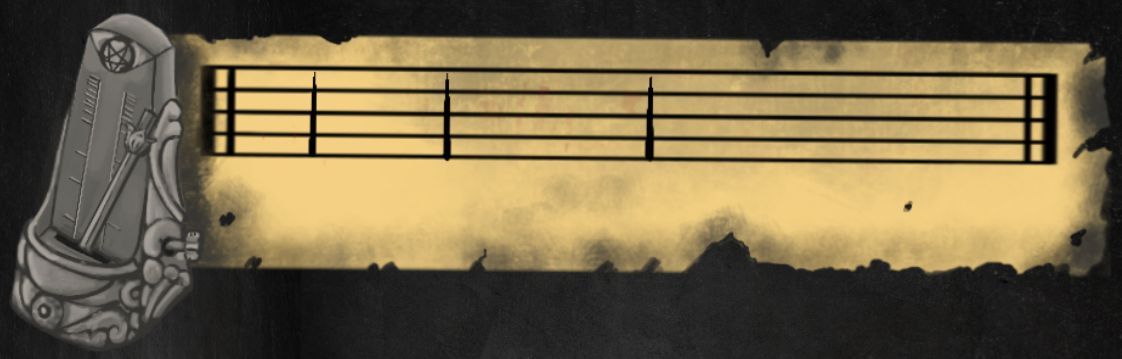
Devilish violin

Interactions: players must press the _provided.key_, after having equipped the knife, to cut the silver string and defeat it.

Description: a violin similar to the others, with the special feature of having a silver fourth string. It will be the boss to defeat at the ending of the game

DEVIL'S MALUS

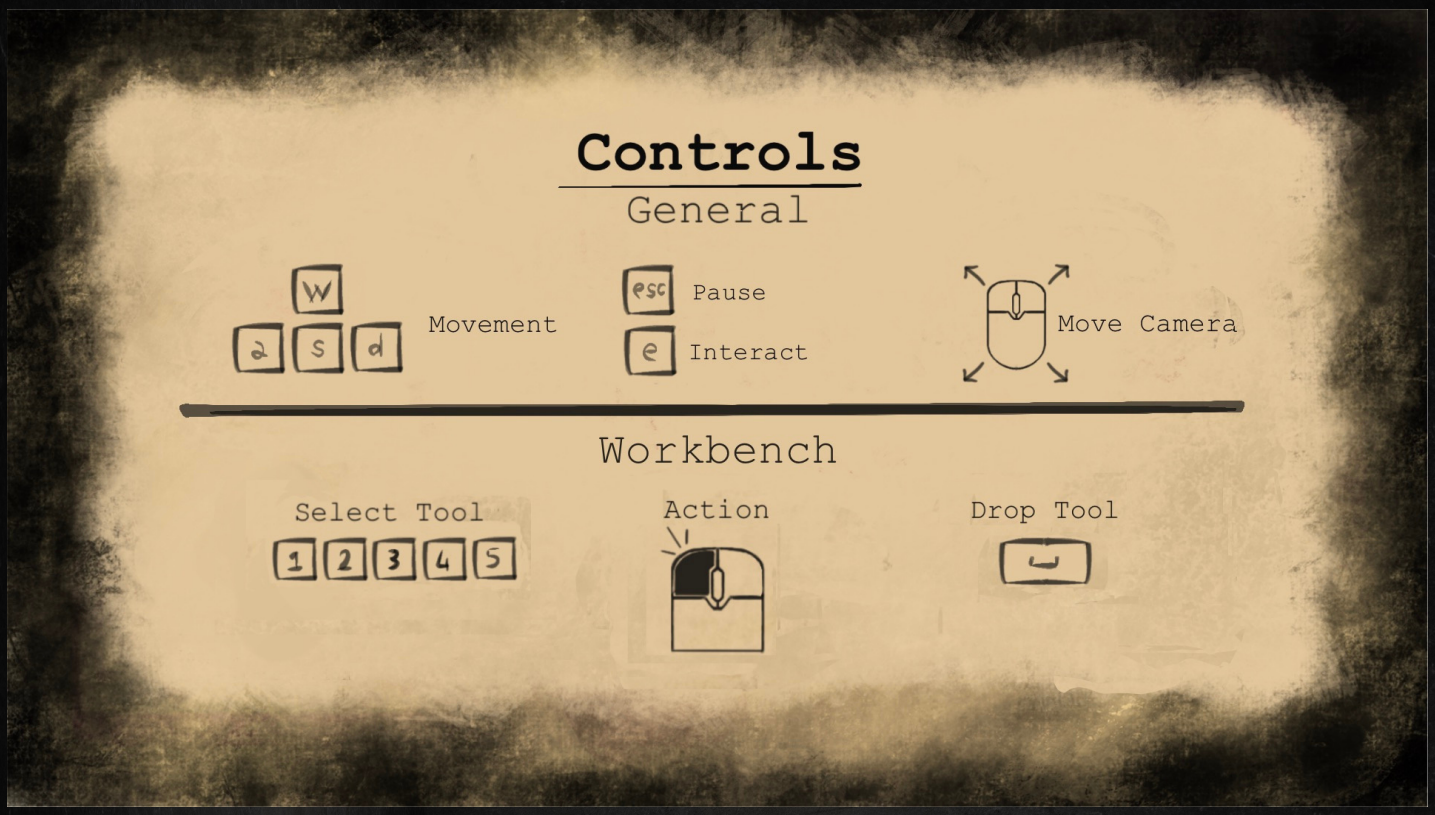
During repairs and the final face-off with the violin, players have to deal with a series of visual hallucinations that make achieving the goals more complicated.



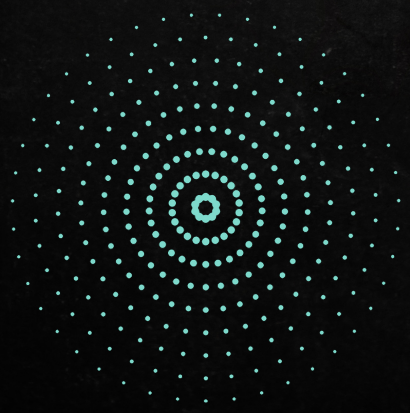
The intensity of the hallucinations is progressive and is represented via UI by an increasing madbar. On reaching the climax, it is game over for players and they have to restart from the last checkpoint.

PLAYER SETTINGS

Player controls are exclusive to mouse and keyboard. Camera movements are linked to mouse movements.

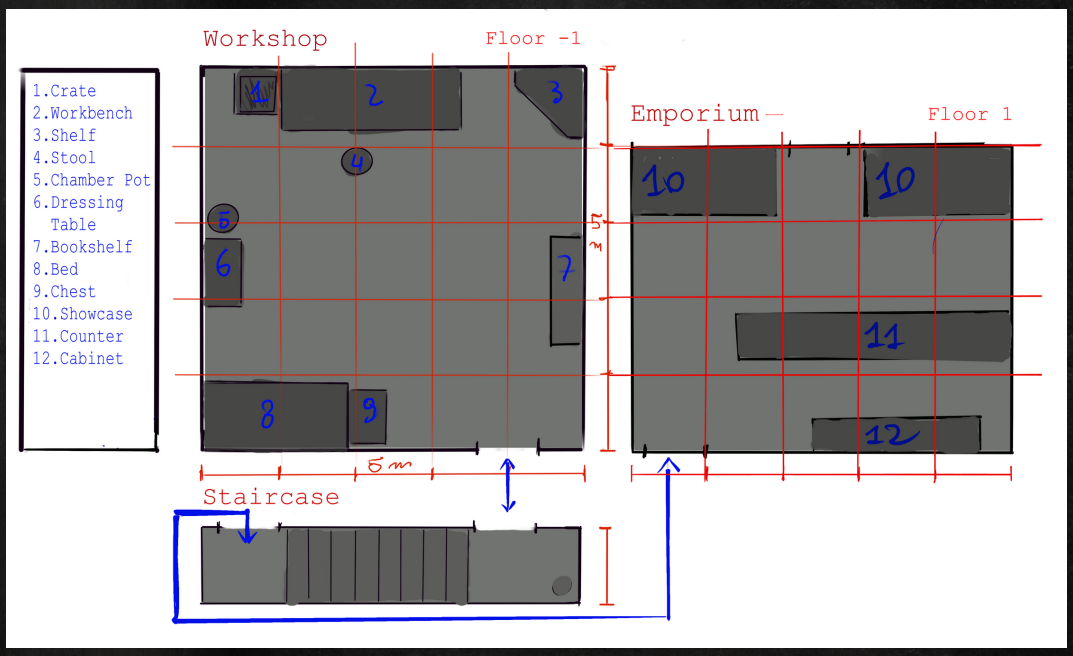


During repairs the cursor is the classic mouse cursor. Outside of repairs it is represented by a pointer in the center of the screen.



Level Design

The game is mainly developed in 3 environments: the abandoned artisan's shop, the workshop and the stairs joining the two.
Our once wealthy protagonist finds himself in a very strong period of both economic and psychological crisis. This is also reflected in the structures around us that we will find in the game: unkempt, poor and abandoned.



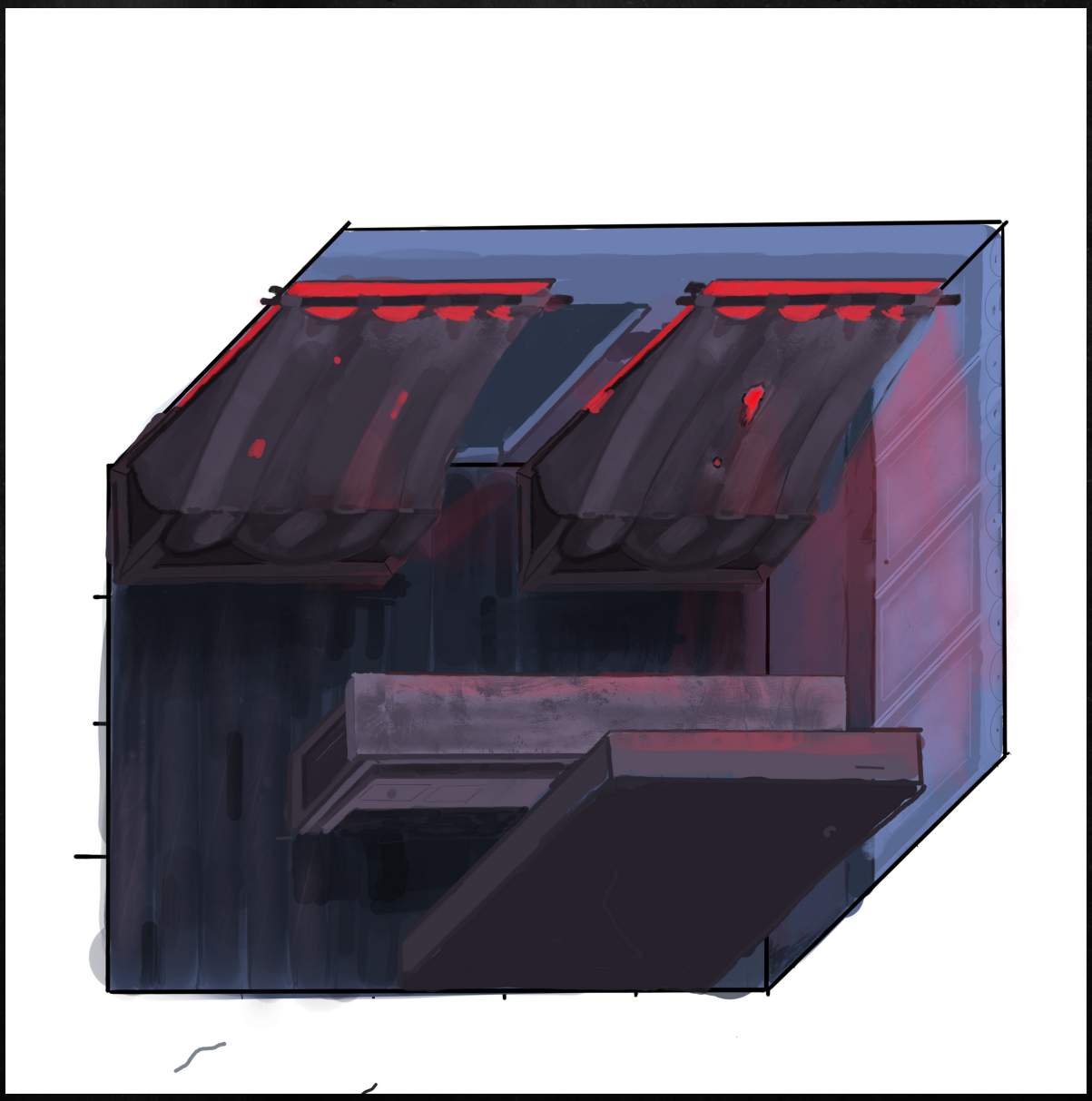
The only object in his possession that he still cherishes and therefore not abandoned to himself is his violin, which in fact remains well displayed on a small table in a corner.

Finally, a 4th very bare environment will be added when the player goes to sleep that will serve to bring the protagonist's nightmares to life.

ABANDONED ARTISAN'S SHOP

An old abandoned shop full of dust where light barely enters.

It will be the only place where the protagonist will have any semblance of contact with the outside world when he picks up the violins to be repaired.

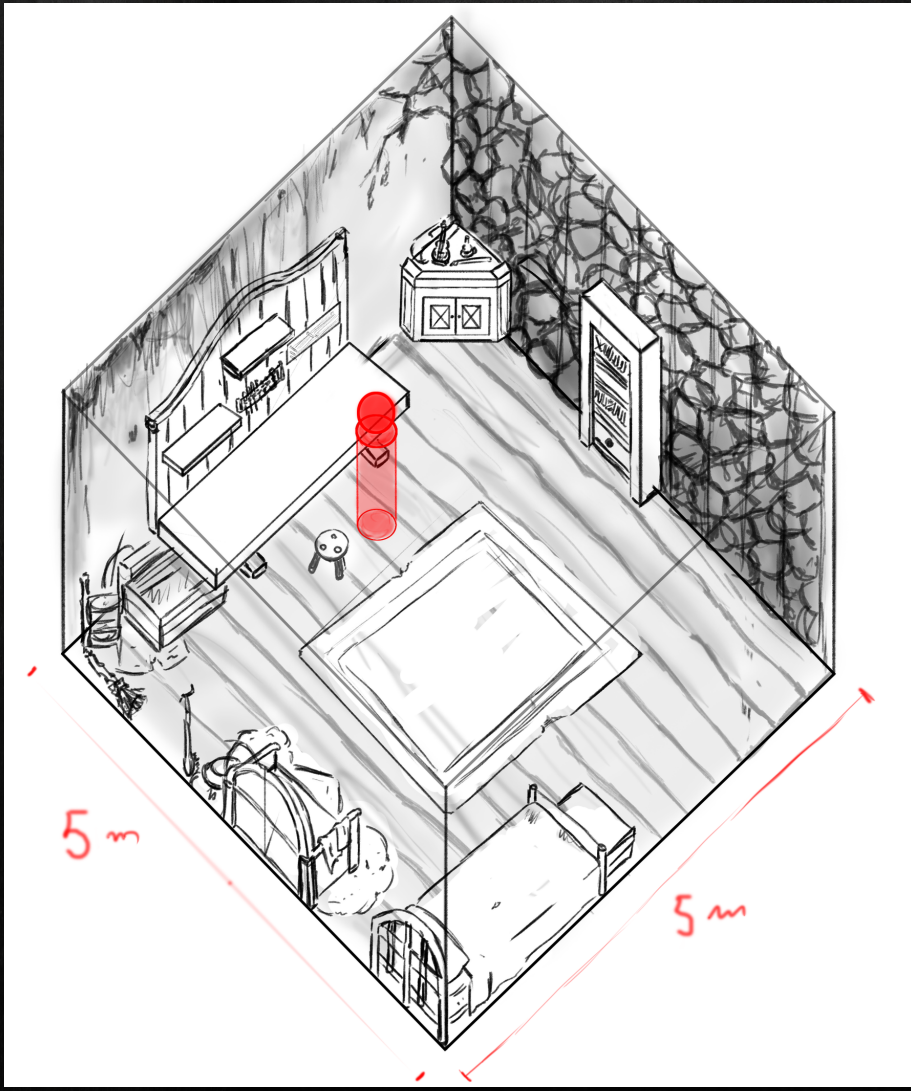


WORKROOM

The luthier's workshop and the only room where he lives.

The protagonist spends his life between the workbench and the bed without ever seeing the light of day or interacting with anyone.

The room is dirty and smelly and the only object that is not ruined is his cursed violin.



Narrative Elements

In Conventio lutheri the narrative component plays a pivotal role as it holds up the horror component through events, environmental styles and interactions, and quotes.

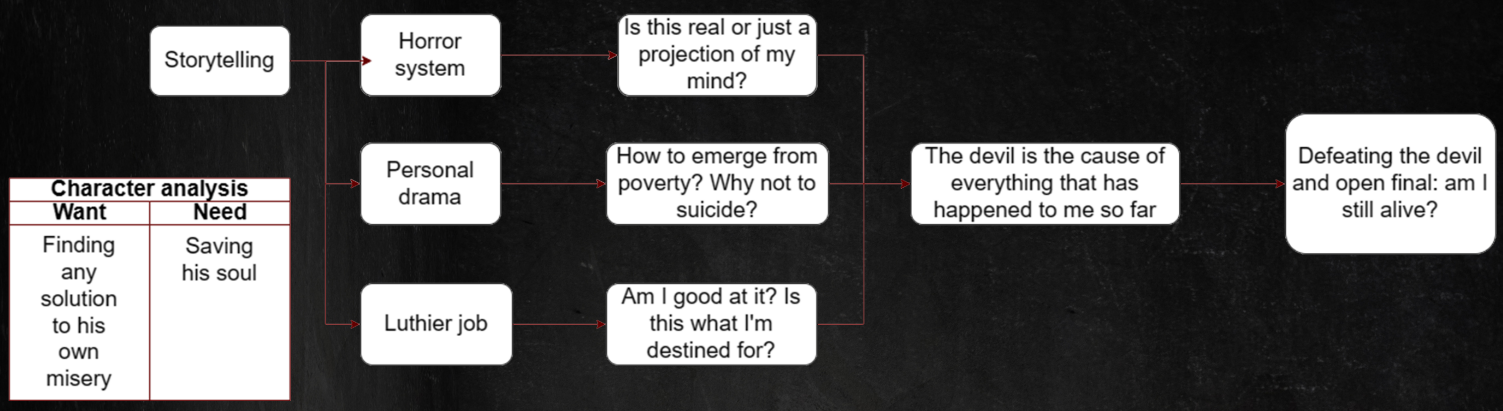
STORYTELLING

Storytelling considers three parallel story lines (horror system, personal drama and luthier job) by first developing them individually until they coincide.

The ultimate goal, then, is to unify under one matrix three different aspects of the protagonist's life by going on to narrate that fragment of his life that, more than any other moment, characterizes his life.

NARRATIVE SYSTEM FLOW

The chart just shown highlights two fundamental aspects of storytelling: storyline and character analysis. Let's delve into them.



CHARACTER

The main character is Robert, a luthier in the late 1800s. After a long career as an established luthier, his life takes a turn as he quickly loses all his customers for no apparent reason.

Players, thanks to various clues scattered throughout the gameplay experience, will discover that it is because of that one silver-stringed violin he still keeps in his workshop.

The violin in question, precisely, contains a devilish presence that desires Robert's soul.

ROBERT CONCEPT ART

Players first meet Robert old, poor, and close to suicide. He is shown to be a man worn down by life, willing to do anything to get out of his condition and initially unaware of what is really going on.

The possibility of having a new life will distract him from carefully analyzing the paranormal events around him, leading him deeper and deeper into a spiral of hallucinations and diabolical influences.

For more technical points about the main character and the villain, please refer to the [Characters document](#).

STORYLINE & SCREENPLAY

The storyline is articulated on two different narrative levels.

The first is the one of reality, in which Robert undergoes diabolical influences during violin repairs and in which he interacts with paranormal manifestations.

The repair section features a madbar that will indicate to players Robert's level of tolerance to hallucinations and distortions. When the bar reaches the maximum, it is game over.

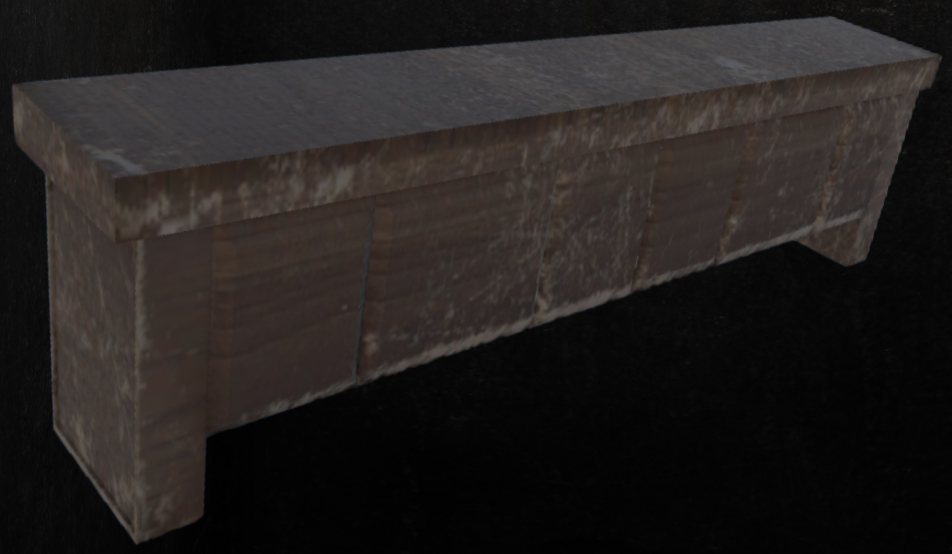
The second level of storytelling, on the other hand, is the dream level. Through revelatory dreams, players will be able to grasp Robert's inner turmoil and come closer to understanding what is the logical pattern that the violin/devil uses and will use to fool Robert. The basic characteristic of dreams is that impossible gameplay applies. That is, every interaction is feigned, leading to no real result, as it serves only to expose the naive instinctiveness of the main character.

The entire story is based on the Screenplay "Conventio lutheri" by Thomas Tramarin.

ENVIRONMENT

The environment plays a key role from a narrative point of view in Conventio lutheri mainly in two respects.

First, because devilish manifestations will go on to alter the environment itself by requiring interaction from players for plot development. For a complete overview of interactions, please refer to the interactions chart.



Second, because the three main settings are loaded with meaning and connect with each other forming a unicum in the ending.

- The underground level is the place of confrontation, the ground where Robert still has power.

- The upper floor is the connecting, faux-neutral bridge between the two conflicting desires: the one of Robert and the one of the Devil.

- The dream world is a land of symbols and projections, a place where the unconscious finds space and where confrontation ceases to exist.

QUOTES & REFERENCES

Characteristic of Conventio lutheri, with particular reference to detail-oriented players, is the series of artistic/cultural references hidden within the entire game.

An explanatory list:

- Intro: The phrase that appears at the beginning of the game is a quote extracted from the Bible's Gospel of John (Κόσμος όλος ἐν τὼ πονηρώ κείται.)

- Robert: The protagonist's name is an homage to Robert Johnson, a blues musician who was said to have sold his soul to the devil

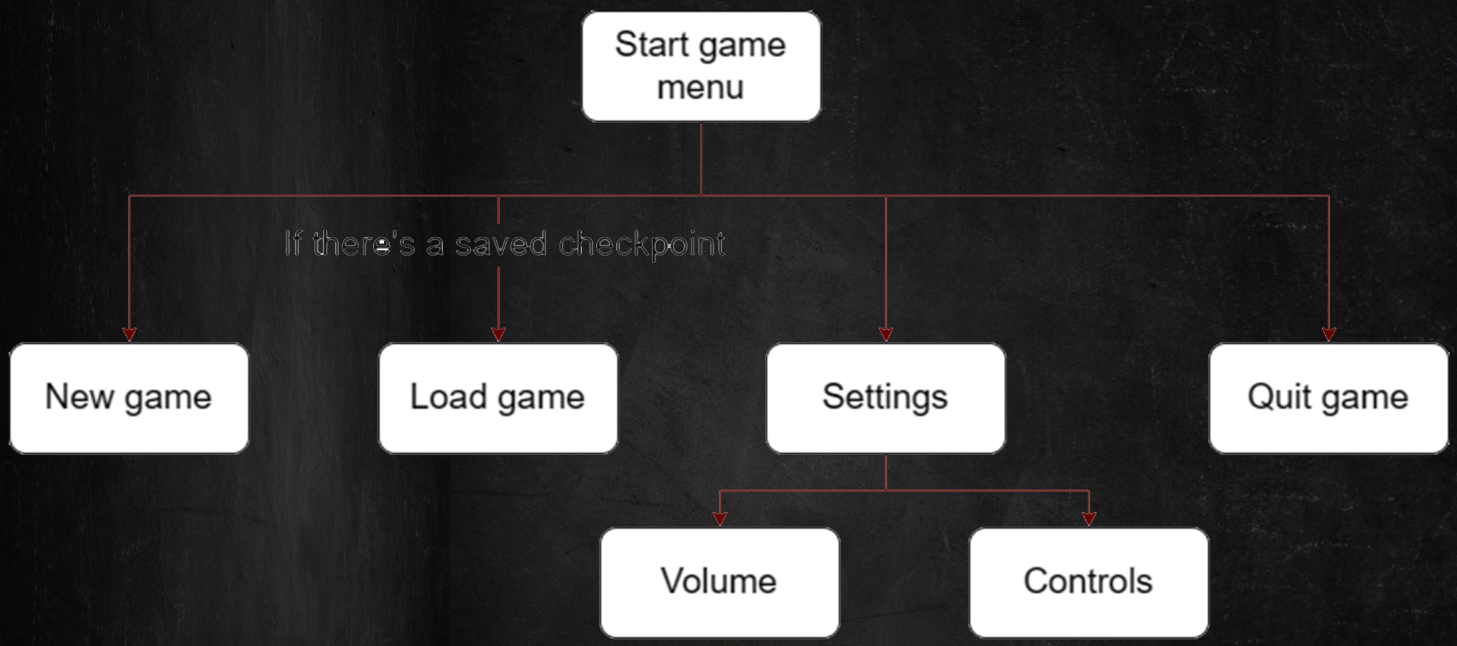
- Diabolus in music: This term was used in the Middle Ages to refer to the musical tritone. That is one of the most dissonant intervals in the tonal scale and, therefore, considered diabolical

- The last letter: Within the letter appears the syntagma "the pale moonlight." This is a reference to the iconic scene in Tim Burton's Batman in which Joker asks Batman, "Have you ever danced with the Devil in the pale moonlight?"

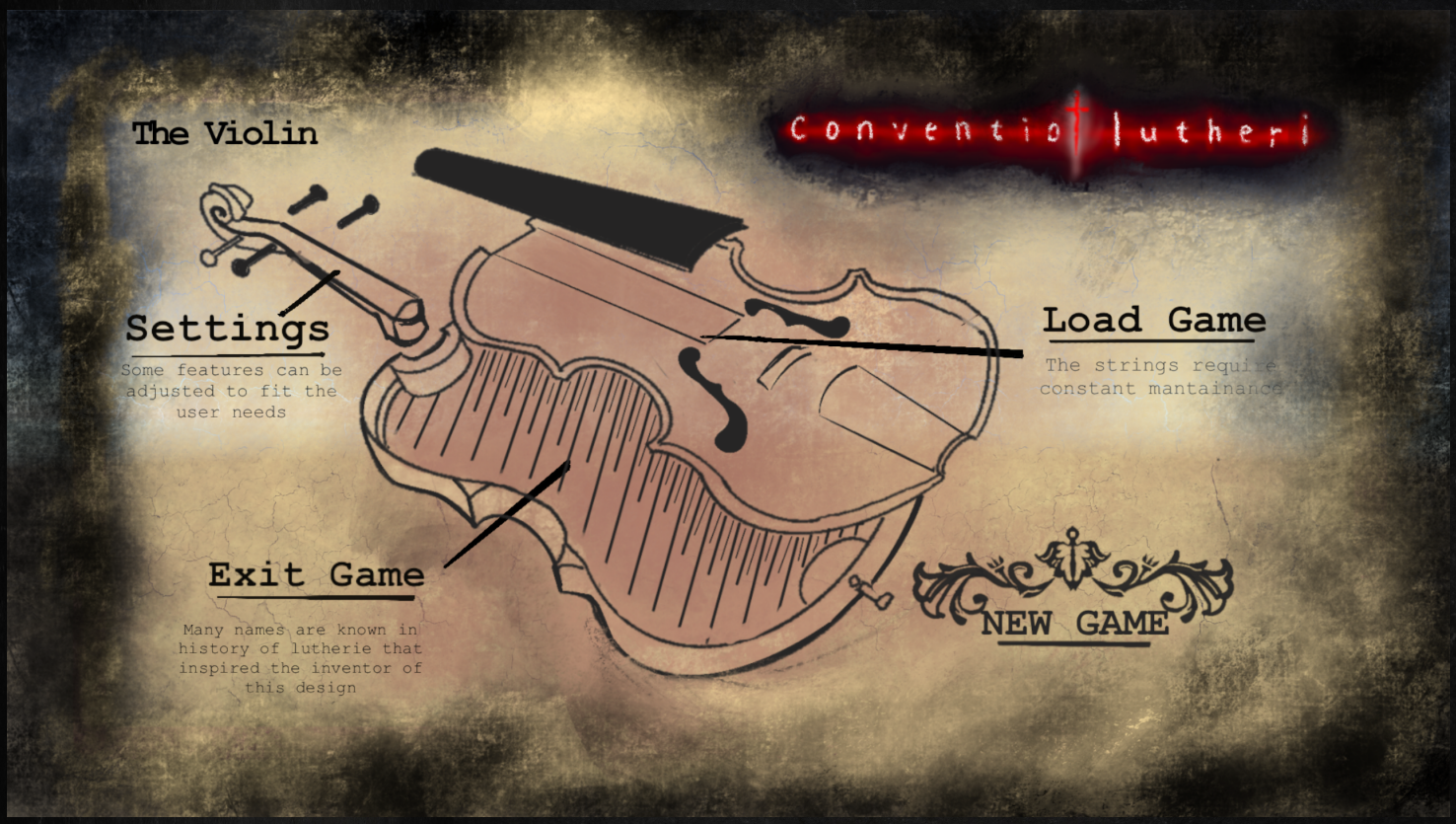
- The ending: the phrase that appears on the mirror is from Goethe's Faust. The novel is a quintessential account of the pact between man and the devil

UI flowcharts

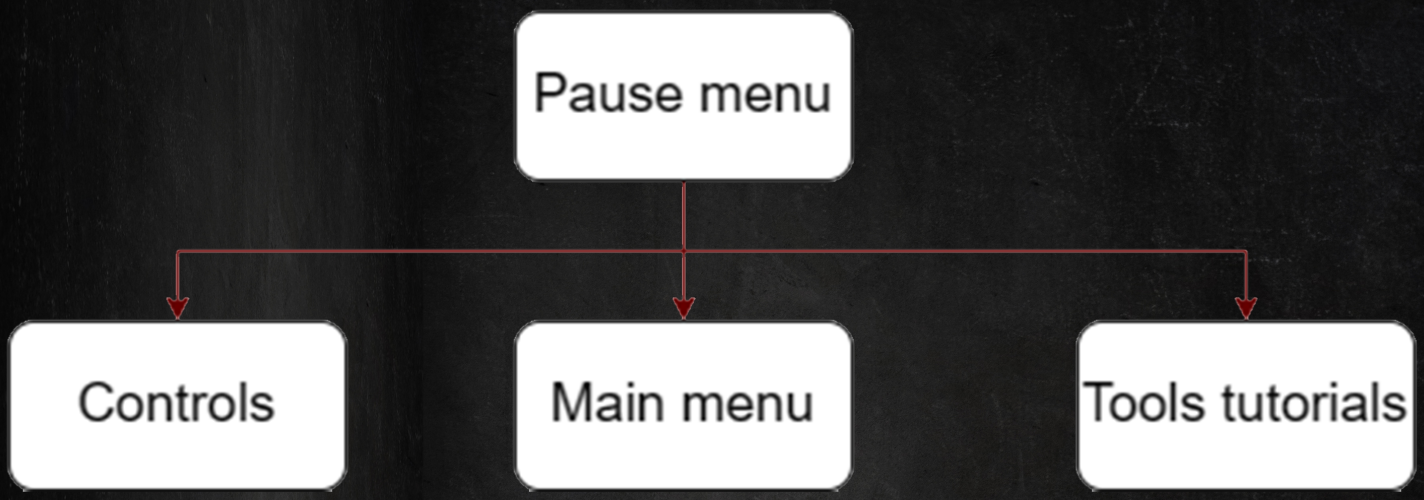
START GAME MENU



START GAME MENU MOCK-UP

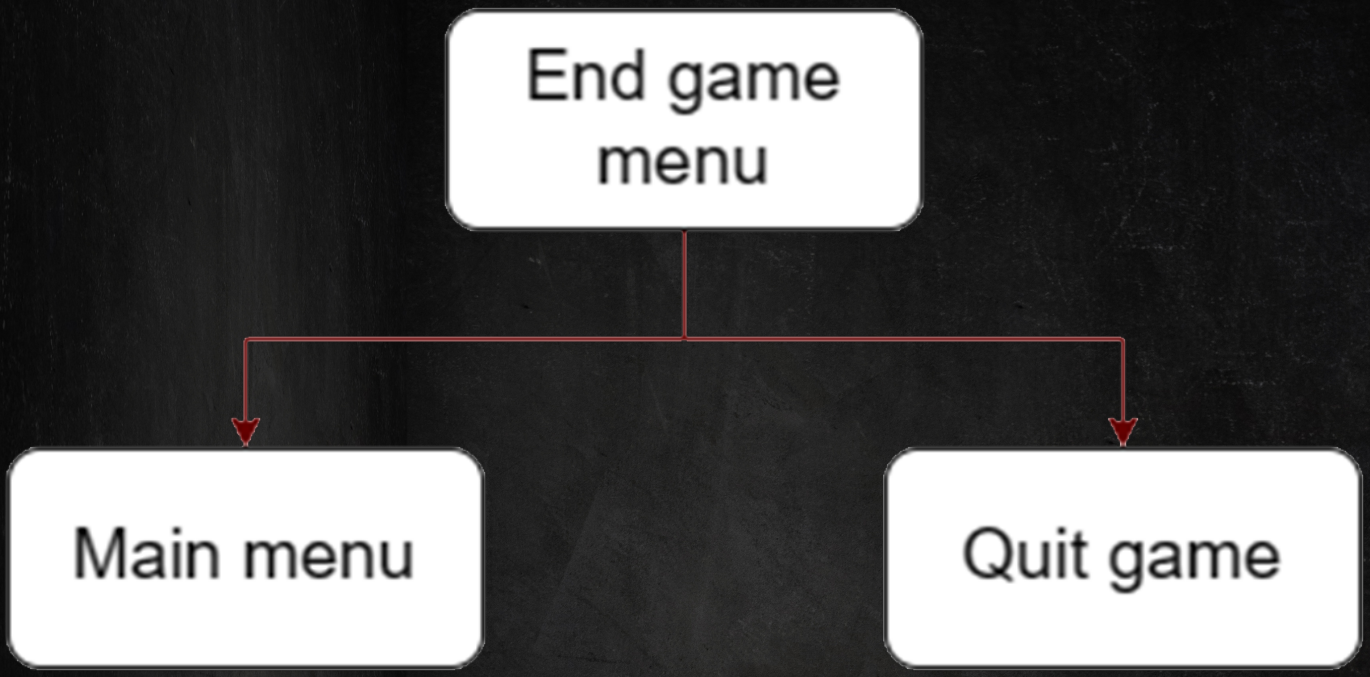


PAUSE MENU



PAUSE MENU MOCK-UP

END GAME MENU



END GAME MENU MOCK-UP

Art & Aesthetics

OVERALL GOALS

The overall goal is to create an anxiety-inducing setting, characterized by worn-out and spartan environments.

The overall mood of Conventio lutheri oscillates between human drama and paranormal terror.

The ultimate goal of the art section is to bring players closer to the claustrophobic experience of a desperate late-19th-century luthier who is losing his mind due to diabolical influences.

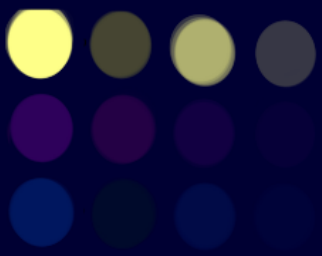
CONCEPT ART

A style as realistic as possible, which makes the choices regarding palettes and lighting even more effective; the main stylistic reference, due to similarity of genre, themes and realism, is the independent title Phasmophobia.

For the furnishings and props, wishing to remain faithful to the historical period in which the game is set, various 19th century craftsmen's workshops were studied, as well as traditional violin-making tools and objects in use in the everyday life of the lower and middle classes of the time.

PAST! A STUPID WORD.
THEN, WHY?
PAST, AND PURE NOTHING, COMPLETE MONOTONY!
WHAT USE IS THIS ETERNAL CREATION!
CREATING, TO ACHIEVE ANNIHILATION!
'THERE, IT'S PAST! WHAT'S TO READ IN IT?
IT'S JUST THE SAME AS IF IT NEVER LIVED,
YET CHASES ROUND IN CIRCLES, AS IF IT DID.
I'D PREFER TO HAVE THE EVERLASTING VOID.

Pal&tte



REFERENCE IMAGES

REFERENCE IMAGES

Conventio Lutheri

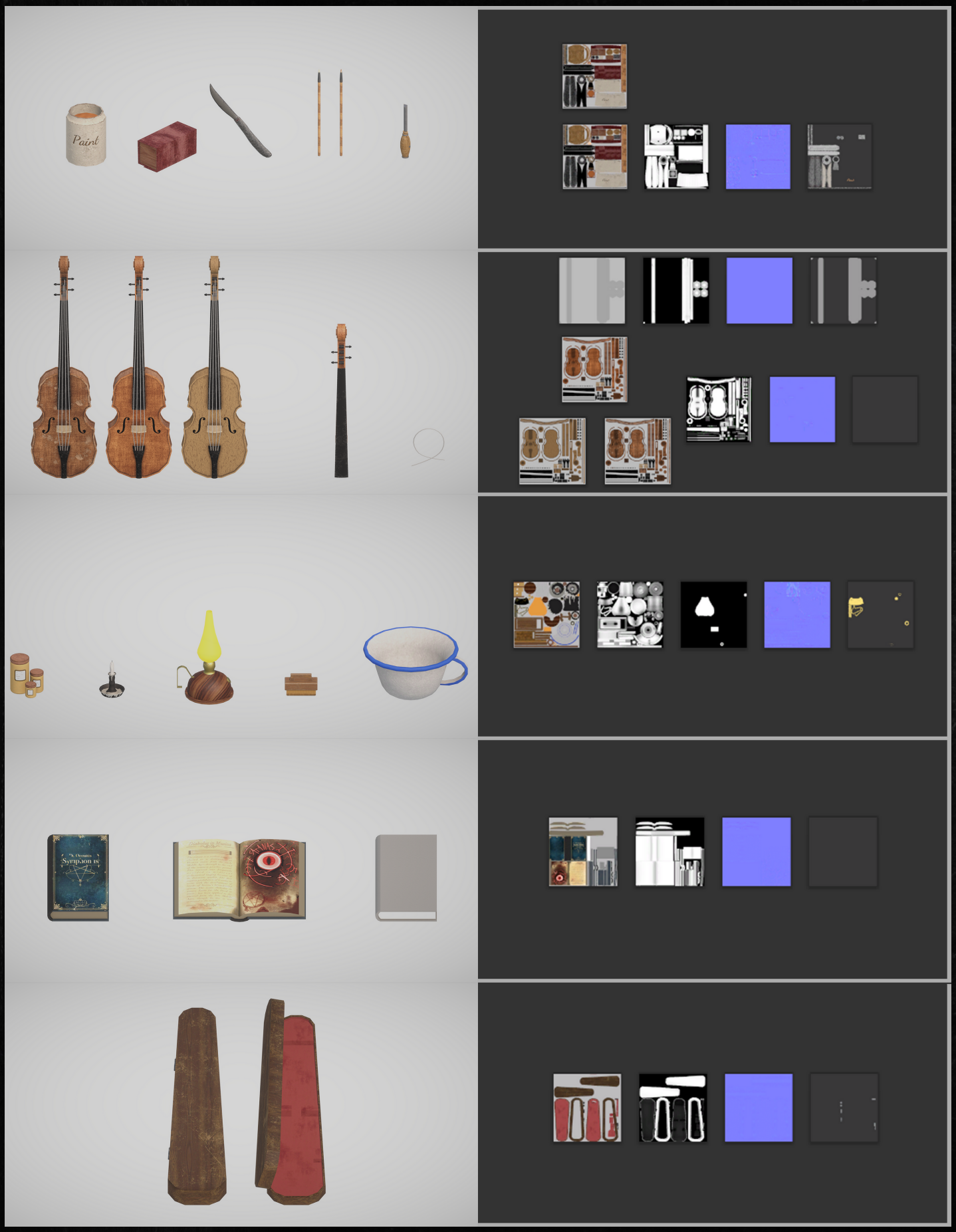
3D MODELING

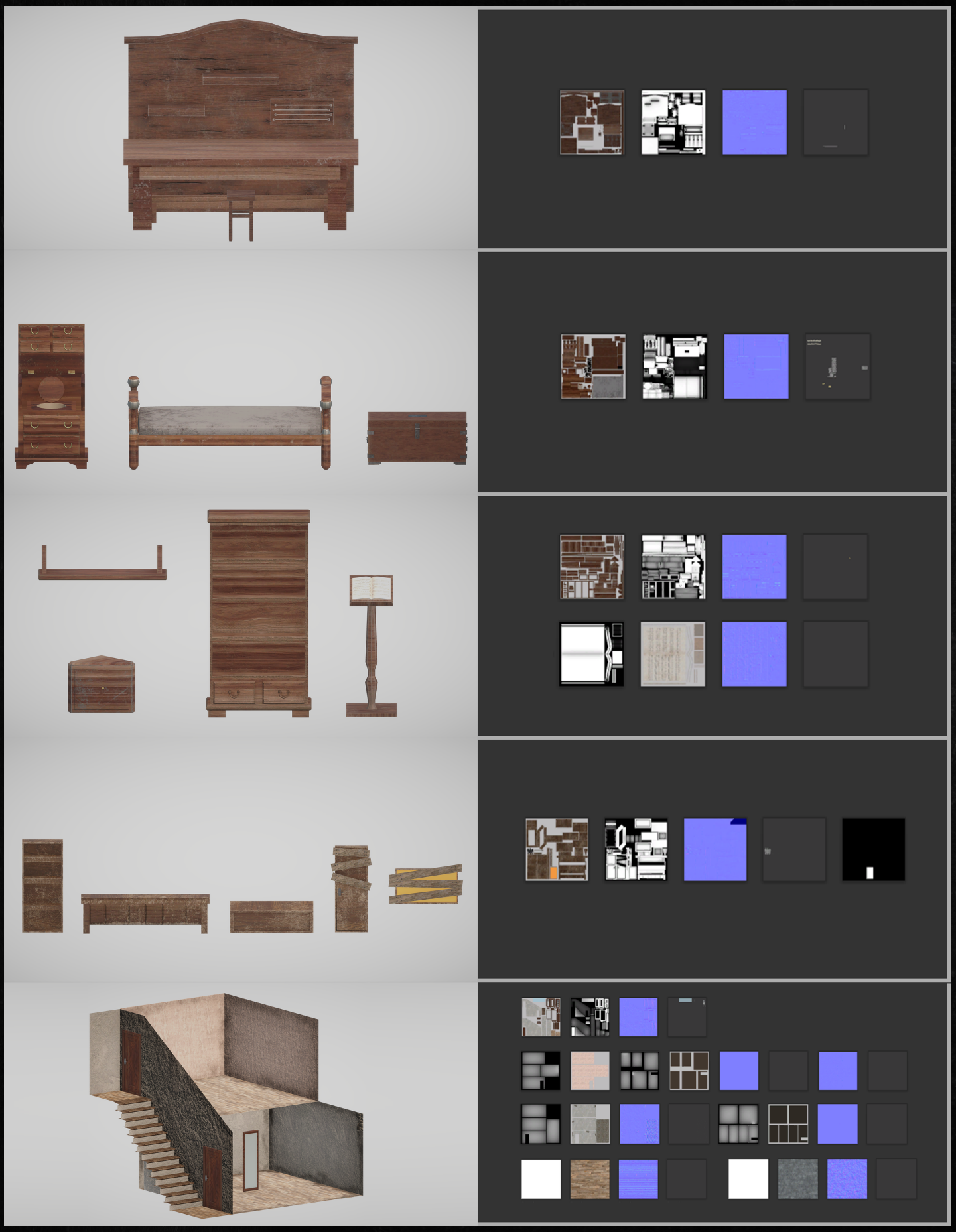
The goal of the 3d modeling in this game is to represent the simplicity and poverty of the environments of the time, paying special attention to objects from the details useful for gameplay and narrative purposes.

The shapes used are, precisely, simple to avoid baroque and unrealistic results.

The textures take as reference dirty, worn-out, abandoned and musty environments to reflect how Robert, the protagonist, has treated his store so far.

The lighting results gloomy. Few points of contrast within an inhospitable environment.


Paint



SFX & Music

OVERALL GOALS

TThe use of harsh, raw sounds for the game environment and a distressing soundtrack will be the method to convey a thriller/horror narrative experience.

The music will be as faithful as possible to the theme of the luthier and the violin in general, creating a thematic continuity between gameplay and sound design.

Please referer to the Soundtrack document to know each track, the precise time of use, and the author.

SFX

The choice of sounds harkens back to the typical slimy, creaky sounds of the horror genre.

The sounds are realistic and complement the gameplay experience by creating an anxiety-inducing setting at every moment of gameplay.

All SFX were taken under free license from freesound.org.

SOUNDTRACKS

The soundtracks were taken from EpidemicSound.

Each track consists of classical instruments and natural sounds, excluding any form of electronic intervention.

String instruments and darker, higher-pitched tones were preferred for narrative consistency.

The Team

DESIGN

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PROGRAMMING

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3D

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