HELP MARK ESCAPE

Game Design Document

Version 1.0.3

Published by:

Embodied Self Defence

Developed by:

Spicy Space Chickens

Contents

GDD Version History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Author(s)
0.0.1	21/02/22	Created initial draft and structure	Liam Rickman
0.0.2	23/02/22	Added: Gameplay overview Added: Interactions, Attributes, Red Flags Added: Level Designs Added: UI/UX Designs	Liam Rickman Robyn Crawford Jake Greenwood
0.0.3	28/02/22	Migrated to Google Docs	Charlotte Wilkinson
0.0.4	28/02/22	Fixed: Formatting errors	Liam Rickman
0.0.5	01/03/22	Added: Characters, story, gameplay Added: Unique selling points Added: Game loop	Liam Rickman
0.0.6	02/03/22	Updated: Attributes, dialogue, interactions Added: Narrative and objectives	Liam Rickman
0.0.7	16/03/22	Added: History tree and feedback	Liam Rickman
0.0.8	22/03/22	Updated: History tree mechanic	Liam Rickman
0.0.9	30/03/22	Updated: Level Designs	Liam Rickman
1.0.0	31/03/22	GDD V1.0.0 completed	Liam Rickman

1.0.1	10/05/22	Updated: UX/UI designs from Moqups	Liam Rickman Charlotte Wilkinson
1.0.2	11/05/22	Added: Game Asset list	Liam Rickman
1.0.3	11/05/22	Moved GDD to OneNote wiki	Liam Rickman

Game Overview

Summary

Help Mark Escape is a 3D visual novel game prototype that demonstrates a core loop and key features that will allow the client *Embodied* to acquire further funding and a complete development of the project. This game aims to educate its players about red flags and how to correctly identify them, to avoid getting into potentially dangerous situations, but also how to react in these situations should you experience them yourself.

Theme, Genre & Setting

- Theme: Self-Defence, Education
- Setting: Modern day, fictional location
- Genre: 3D interactive visual novel

Core Mechanics

- Dialogue
- Interactions
- Red Flags
- Attributes
- Narrative
- Reflection & Feedback
- History Tree

Target Platform

- Primary Platform: Android
- Secondary Platform: Windows PC

Help Mark Escape is targeting a mobile release, primarily due to the client's request for mobile to reach as large an audience as possible so potential players are not limited by their device. Android was chosen as the primary platform due to the ease of porting the game to Android along with most of the development team having access to an Android device over other mobile platforms. The game should also work on other platforms such as IOS, but would require a different process to port to IOS which the team will not be visiting for this prototype.

Along with an Android release, a Windows PC release will also be made, which will function similarly to the mobile version, but with slightly adapted controls to better function with keyboard and mouse inputs.

Target Audience

The target audience for *Help Mark Escape* is ages 17-30 as this age group should allow the game to reach a large audience, but avoid exposing younger audiences to potentially triggering scenarios this game may showcase.

Business Model

A freemium business model would be the most appropriate revenue model for this game which would allow a consumer to get initial access to the game for free. Progressing into other scenarios and learning more from self-defence courses provided by *Embodied* could cost them later once they have involved themself more with the game.

This would fit in well with the current mobile video game market with the majority of similar text-based games using this revenue model and finding success with it.

Key Features

Unique Selling Points

- Storylines derived from real experiences
- Educational to improve real life skills
- Comic book inspired toon visual style

Core Game Loop

- Complete objectives
- Talk to characters
- Interact and explore the environment

## Core Mechanics (Detailed)

Dialogue
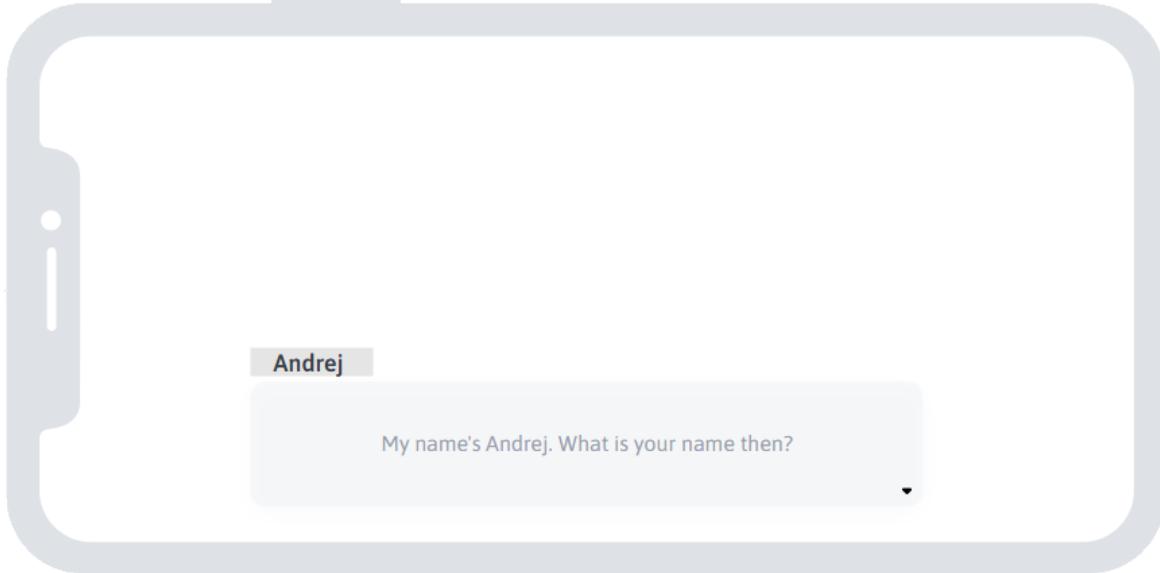
Dialogue is the primary way for the player to advance through the story. Dialogue is usually started via interacting with different characters in the environment. There are two types of dialogue, standard: where the player can tap through the dialogue and choices where the player must make a decision that may change the specific path of the storyline they follow later.

Standard

For standard dialogue, the dialogue popup should appear at the bottom of the screen with the character's name, their current dialogue and a skip button to indicate the player can progress. When interacting with a character, the background should be blurred slightly, to allow the player to focus on the character. The character should also be brought closer to the foreground to further aid the player in focusing on the character.

UX Design
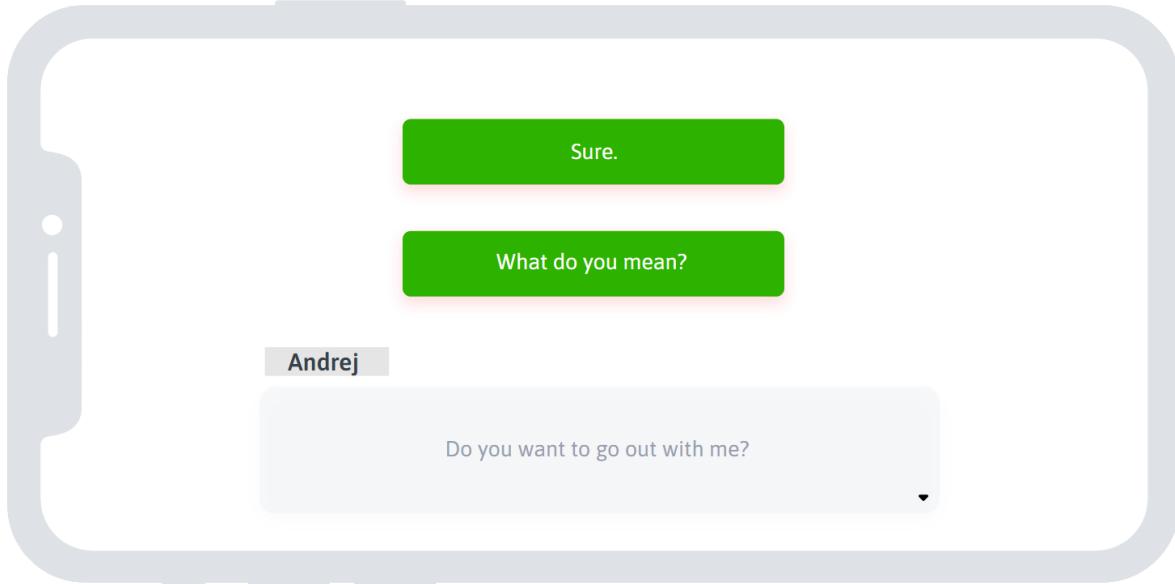
Choices

When the storyline reaches a part of the dialogue where the player needs to reply or make a decision based on previous dialogue, a different interface will appear where the player can input their choice.

Sometimes dialogue options will be locked behind attributes or previous interactions the player has completed. When this occurs, the locked option should be greyed out and text should indicate the option is locked and what is required to unlock it. This gives players a chance to replay the story after gaining the necessary criteria for the unlock.

Updated UX Design

Quick Time Events

Some parts of the dialogue may function as a quick time event where the player has a limited time to react and input their choice. These are used in high intensity situations to force the player to react quickly, to immerse the player and make them think quickly and appropriately.

To indicate a quick time event is present, a timer will appear near the dialogue options and will count down gradually. The speed at which the timer counts down will be dependent on the specific dialogue depending on how intense the situation should feel.

To further increase the intensity of the quick time event, post-processing effects and other visuals should be used to simulate heart rate. This could include screen shake, light flashing (minor to avoid any disturbances to players) or distortion effects. Haptic feedback could also be used to aid this and improve game feel, especially with the use of a mobile device which usually features haptic enabled hardware.

Dialogue Breakdown

A full dialogue breakdown can be accessed via the Miro board which goes in depth on exactly what is said at each part of the dialogue and any choices they can make. This also shows which options will be locked and why they are locked.

Interactions

Interactions for *Help Mark Escape* add another way to progress the story or learn more about the current scenario. These are split into three categories: Dialogue, Object and Location. Each interaction type will have varying functionality, but have some similarities between them.

All interactions will feature an outline to make them stand out in the environment. This should make it more obvious to the player what can be interacted with, to limit them tapping randomly on objects in the environments trying to find what's interactable. These outlines should only appear when the interaction is available, and turn off relative to the story. Along

with the outline, a particle effect will help further make interactions stand out with some moving effects.
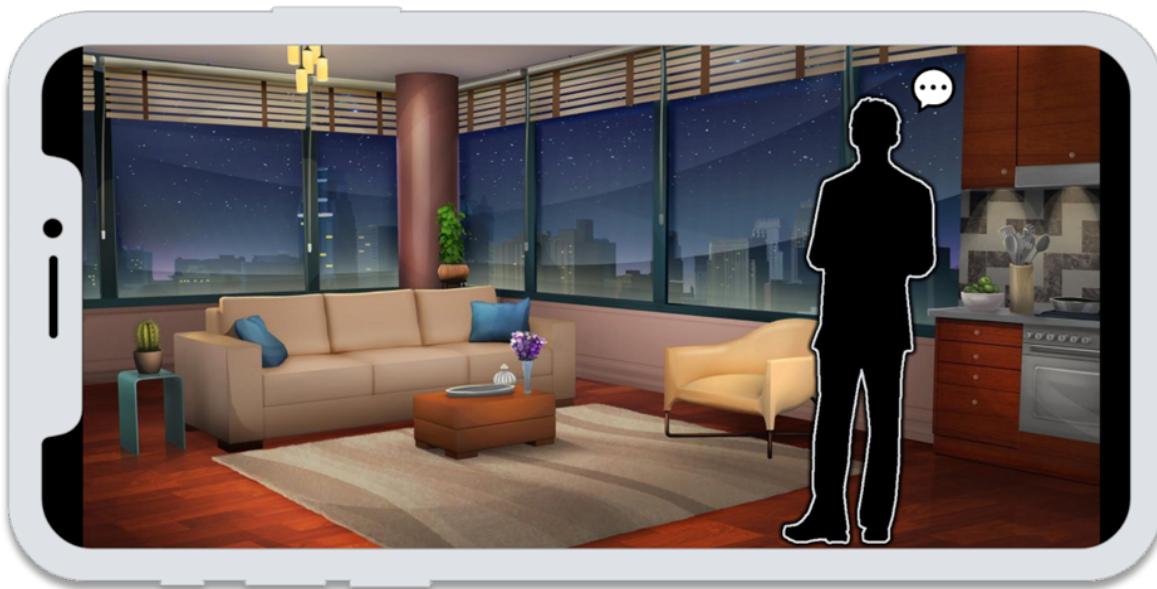
To start the interaction, the player can tap on the object in the environment and it will bring up the appropriate interaction for that interaction type.

As a stretch goal, changing the particle and outline colours dependent on the interaction's relevance to the current story would add valuable information for the player. White outlines could be used for any interactions that don't directly impact your storyline just yet, for example doors between rooms to tell the player they can move between rooms. Gold/Yellow could be used to signal the interaction is relevant to the player's current objective.

Dialogue Interactions

Dialogue interactions are used to start the next section of dialogue. These will mainly be single time interactions and not repeatable once completed. These interactions will mostly be started with characters in the scenes. Characters that start dialogue should have a speech bubble icon to indicate that they are dialogue interactions. Sometimes dialogue interactions will be started via objects such as a mobile phone. These should function the same as character interactions.

Example in scene

Object Interactions

Object interactions will be used to give the player further information about the scenario. This could be character information such as their traits, or environment information such as the apartment cabinets being empty.

Players could make their own observations from the object, but to guide players to the right conclusion a description of the object should also be shown while inspecting the object. This will help educate the player on what objects could mean and how to interpret them as possible red flags.

Some interactions will unlock specific dialogue options within the story which may impact the choices and storylines you can take later on in the game.
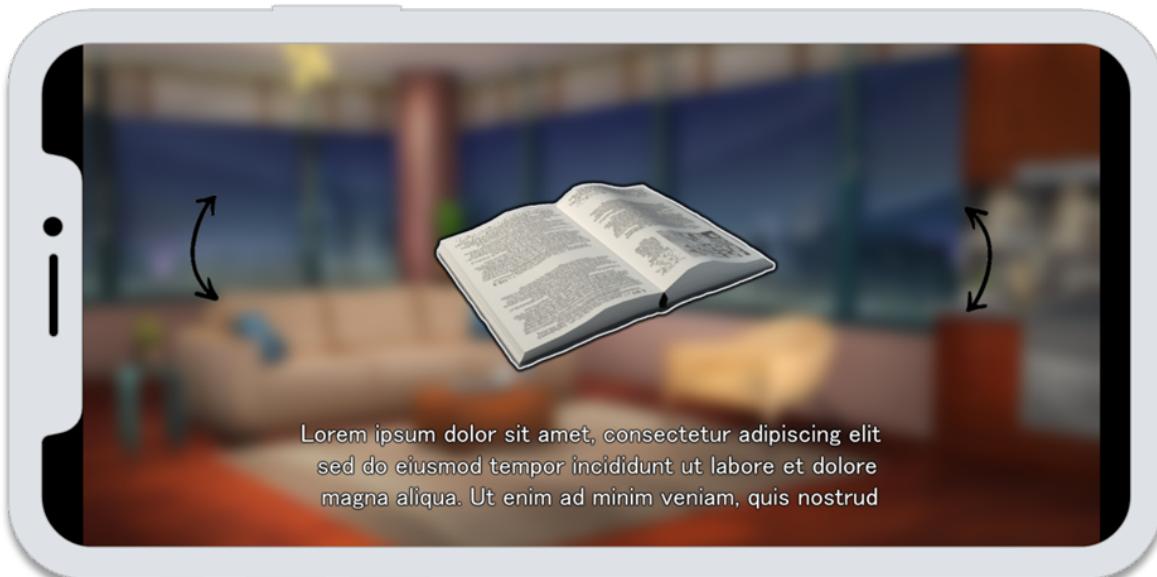
Before Interacting

While Interacting

While interacting with an object, if it is a smaller object like a book it should be brought into the foreground and the player should be allowed to rotate it around to inspect all sides of the object. They would rotate the book by swiping on the screen in the desired direction.

Larger objects such as cabinets will stick to a zoom in like the rest of the interactions as they wouldn't offer any extra value to the interaction.

Location Interactions

Location interactions are primarily used to move the player between spaces in the scene or between environments. These are mostly door interactions that will teleport the player to the new location. While moving using location interactions the screen should fade in and out to avoid a jarring teleport effect.

Some location interactions may start dialogue with a character, depending on the story.

A detailed list of interactions for the vertical slice can be found here.

Red Flags

To help players learn about indicators that could lead to dangerous situations, red flags are used to encourage players to correctly identify red flags throughout the story.
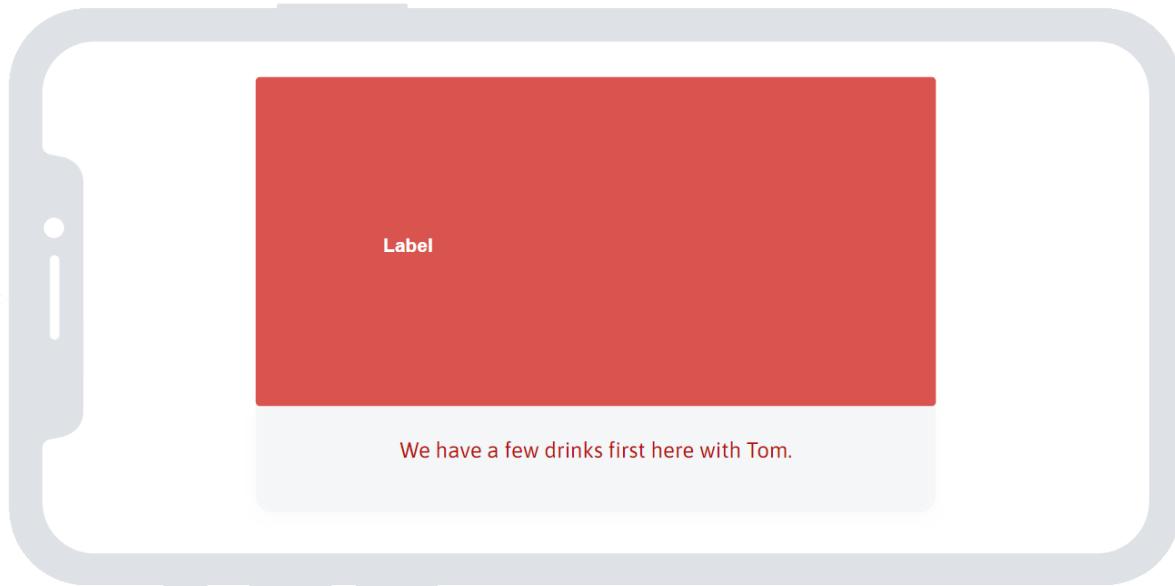
To identify a red flag, the player will use a specific gesture (or button for PC versions) that can be used at all times in the game. The player can use this no matter if a red flag is present or not in the current story. If the player correctly identifies a red flag a pop up should appear with an explanation of the red flag and what it could mean as well providing some encouragement due to correctly identifying a red flag.

One problem with the red flag identifying being accessible all the time is that players could repeatedly "identify" red flags without thinking about if it's actually a red flag moment or not. As this is an educational game it is important not to discourage players, especially for the topic the game covers. To avoid this, there will be no direct negative impact after using the red flag gesture, such as a cooldown or warning.

To encourage players to think more before using the red flag gesture. The amount of times the gesture is used and the amount of correct red flag identifications will be recorded for each player and be used to give an accuracy score at the end. This won't impact the gameplay or story, but should encourage players to aim for a high accuracy score and even add replayability to try and improve on their previous scores.

Pop-up UX Design

End Screen Score

After the game/vertical slice has finished an end screen should appear, detailing:

- # of correct red flag identifications
- # of red flags missed
- Accuracy score (%)

The accuracy score will be calculated using this formula:

(Total Correct Identifications / Total Identification Attempts) * 100

A full list of red flags can be seen here and specific red flag events are shown in the Miro board.

Attributes

Attributes are used to determine which paths of the story are available to the player at any time depending on the choices and actions the player has made previously.

Each attribute will be rated from 1-10 starting at 5 for each. These will increase or decrease throughout the story, mostly due to the player's choices in dialogue, however attributes may also be changed via interactions in the environment. For example, the awareness attribute may increase if the player explores the environment more and finds different objects other players may miss.

Any time an attribute goes up or down, a small pop-up should appear in the corner, notifying the player of the change.

Specific scenarios where attributes are increased or decreased are shown in the dialogue breakdown in the Miro board.

Viewing Attributes

The player should be able to access their attributes while playing to see how they are performing. This will be done via a menu that will display the list of attributes and their current level. A small description will tell the player what each attribute means and how it may affect gameplay for them.

Attribute List

- Awareness: Can help the player make decisions about characters without directly interacting with them. This will be increased by exploring the environment and other interactions.

- Composure: Will impact the players ability to stay calm in tense situations which will allow them to respond more appropriately despite being in a stressful environment.

- Courage: Gained when the player makes brave decisions in gameplay. This will affect the player's ability to choose certain dialogue options where the player may need to stand up for themselves.

- Instinct: Represents your initial reaction towards situations and whether they are leading you down a bad path. Higher instinct will allow the player to choose more appropriate reactions for the scenario.

- Negotiation: Players ability to avoid conflict and defuse situations before anything physical or overly aggressive happens.

- Strength: Physical attribute that impacts the players ability in dangerous situations. May help put off potential attackers starting any conflict due to your physical ability.

Narration, Reflection & Feedback
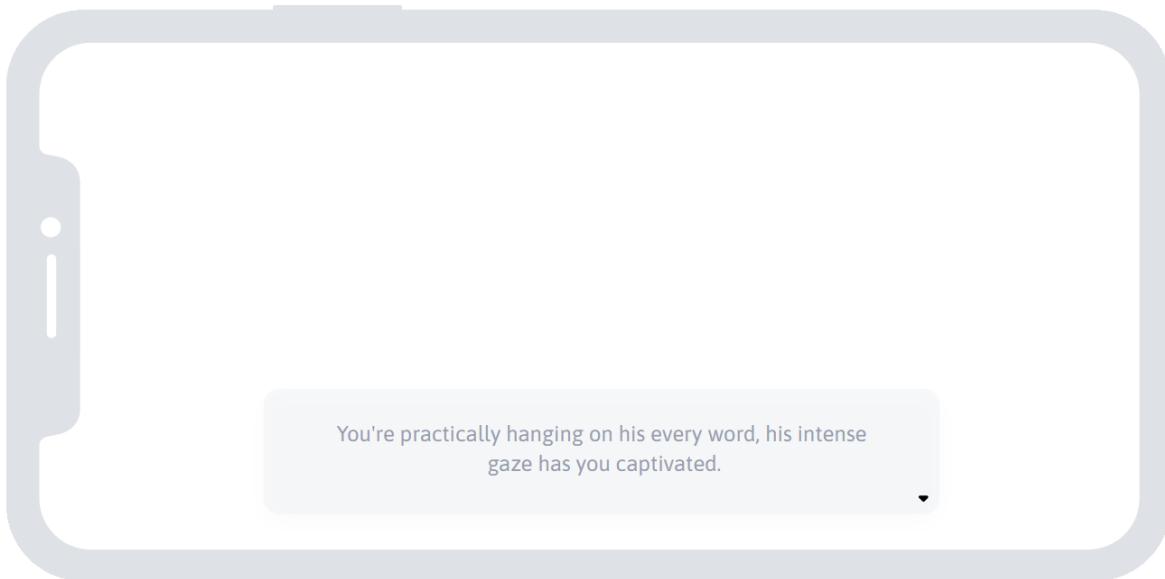
Narration and Reflection

Some areas of the story will use time skips to move faster through the game and get the player to the more exciting sections of the story. To make the time skips less jarring for the player, narrative sections should be used to break up the time skip and update the player on the current scenario.

This will be done via text pop-ups to avoid too much additional workload. Whenever a narrative section is required, the background will be blurred out and a text box should appear (similar to the dialogue pop-ups). For particularly long sections of narrative, this should be split up into multiple text boxes to avoid overwhelming the player with a wall of text. This style of pop-up will also be used for any text used to indicate the player thinking to themself.

Updated UX Design

> You're practically hanging on his every word, his intense gaze has you captivated.

Feedback Videos

Feedback will be given to the player in some key areas of the story and use videos provided by *Embodied*. Ideally, this will appear in-game similar to the narrative pop-ups with the background blurred out and a pop-up video player showcasing the video. The pop-up should have basic video player controls such as play, pause and seeking through the video. Once the player has played through the video they can choose to progress or rewatch the video. This video must be watched to progress to ensure the player doesn't miss out on encouragement areas.

Feedback videos may have to be an embedded YouTube video instead as video files can be quite large which would increase the overall project files.

Prototype Videos

Feedback #1:
- When: Deciding to go home from Andrzej's apartment after meeting Tom.
- Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZv1CytHw6g

Feedback #2:
- When: Deciding not to meet up with Andrzej again after his apartment
- Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hw7w3yTZs4U

Feedback #3
- When: Declining a second date with Andrzej
- Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Amjte2Uw8qg

History Tree

The history tree will allow players to revisit sections of the story to discover different outcomes and scenarios from the branching paths. The player should be allowed to return to

specific save points in the story and replay the game from that point onwards. This should be done via autosaves to make it easier for the player to return to save points without needing to save manually.
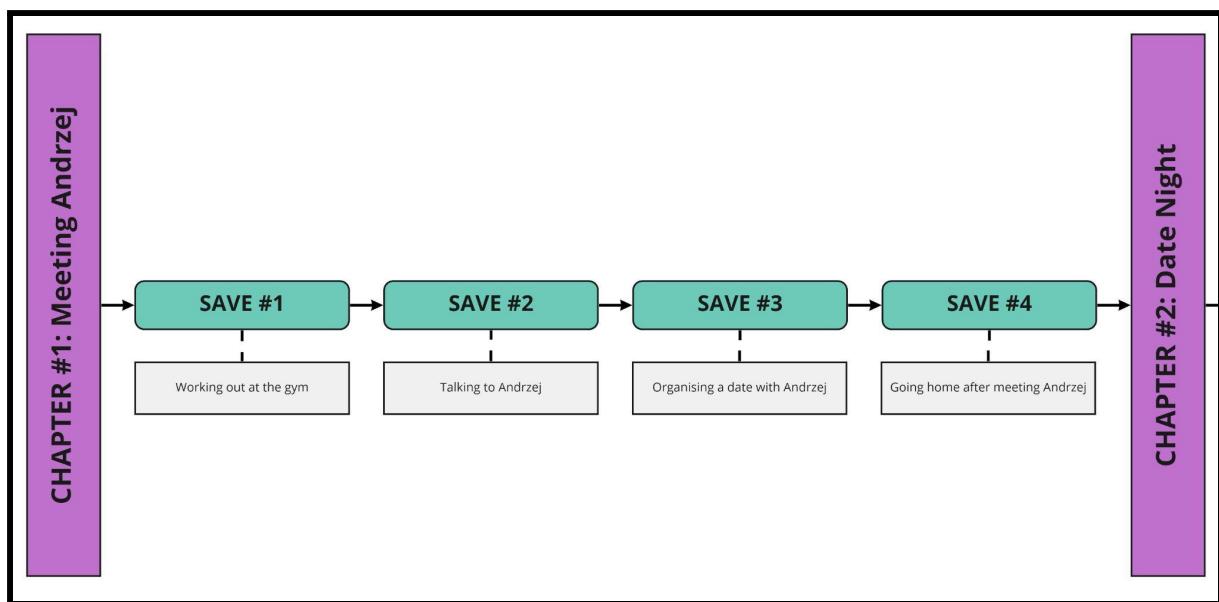
The history tree should display the key sections in the story and the player's current path. The current path should be highlighted in blue with unvisited sections greyed out and locked. Each section should be linked together with lines.

Along with the history tree, the game will have multiple save slots so the player can play through the story multiple times from a blank slate or have different players play on the same device.
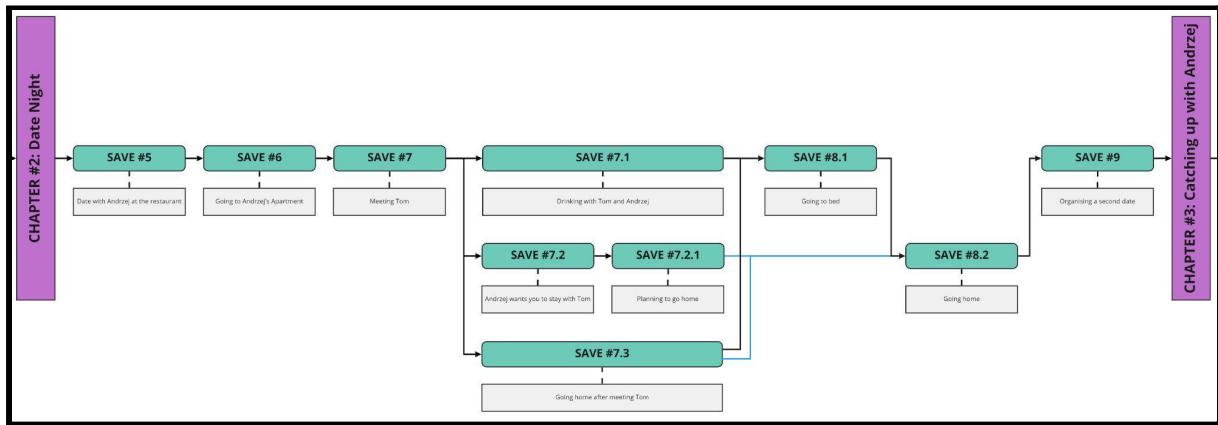
Save Points

Save points won't be used for every piece of dialogue, but rather anywhere key decisions need to be made by the player that they may want to revisit and change later. Each save point should have a small description to give the player an indication of where in the story they will load in from. These saves will be grouped into chapters shown on the Miro board.

Chapter 1: Meeting Andrzej

Chapter 2: Date Night
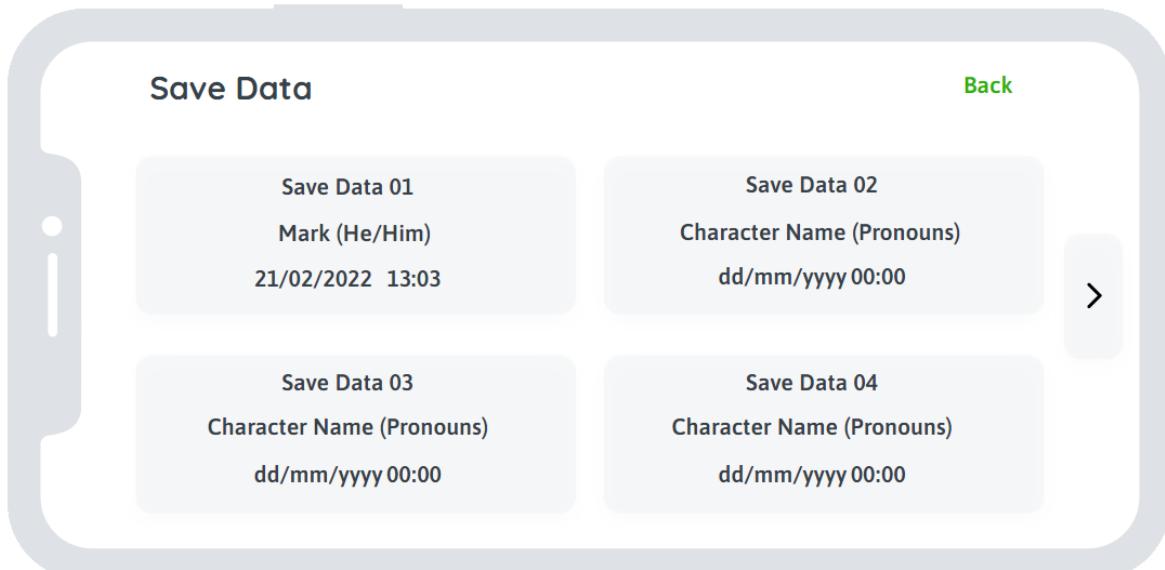
Chapter 3: Catching up with Andrzej
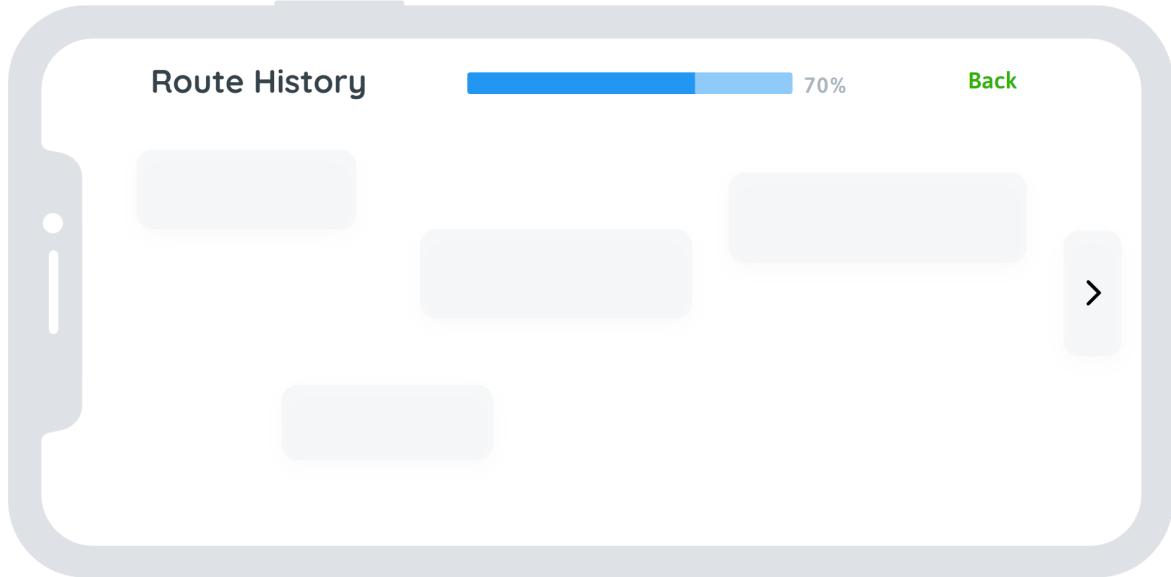
Chapter 4: At home

Save Game UX Design
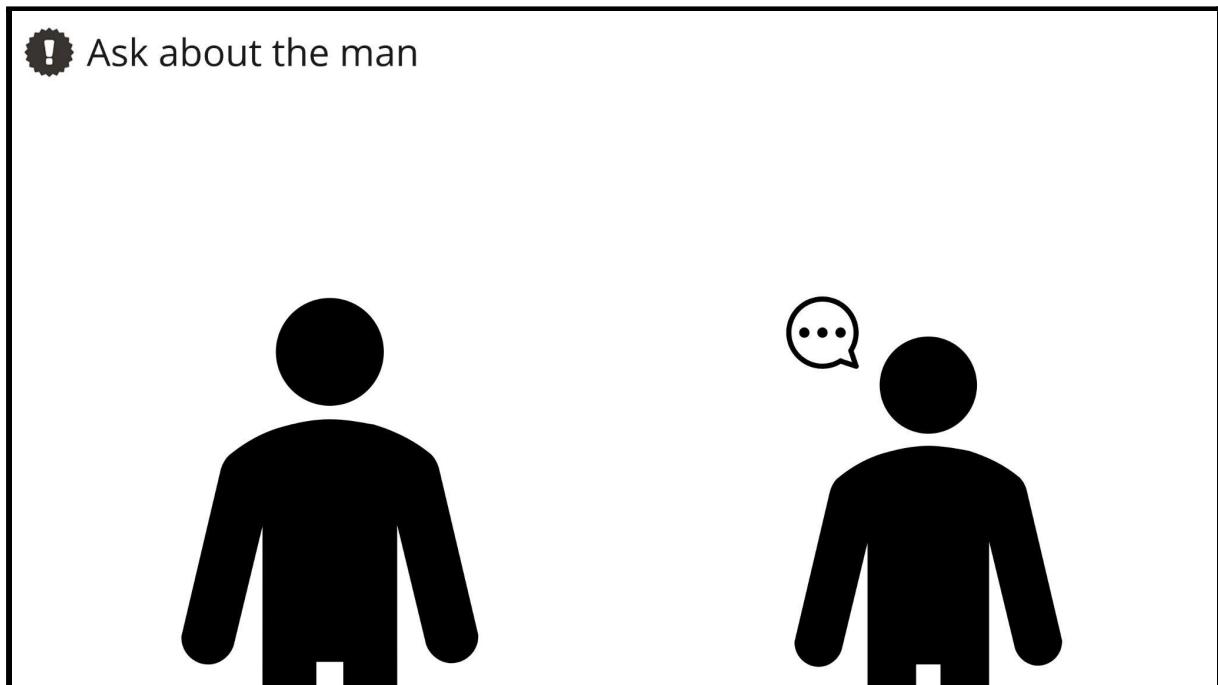
History Tree UX Design

Objectives

To help guide the player and keep them on track with the story, objectives will direct the player towards the mechanic that will progress the story. If the player is required to use an interaction to progress, it should change the outline for that object to yellow as described in the interactions mechanic.

The UI should be kept simple with a line of text showing what the current objective is.

List of objectives

1. Talk to the man
2. Go home
3. Meet Andrzej at the Restaurant
4. Talk to Andrzej
5. Go to Andrzej's apartment
6. Ask about the man
7. Go to bed
8. Go home
9. Talk to Andrzej
10. Take a shower
11. Go home
12. Text Andrzej about the shower incident or go to bed

Story & Gameplay

Characters

Player (Mark)

The playable character and protagonist for *Help Mark Escape* is an LGBTQ+ male called Mark, though both name and pronouns should be editable in game to allow for a more personal experience.
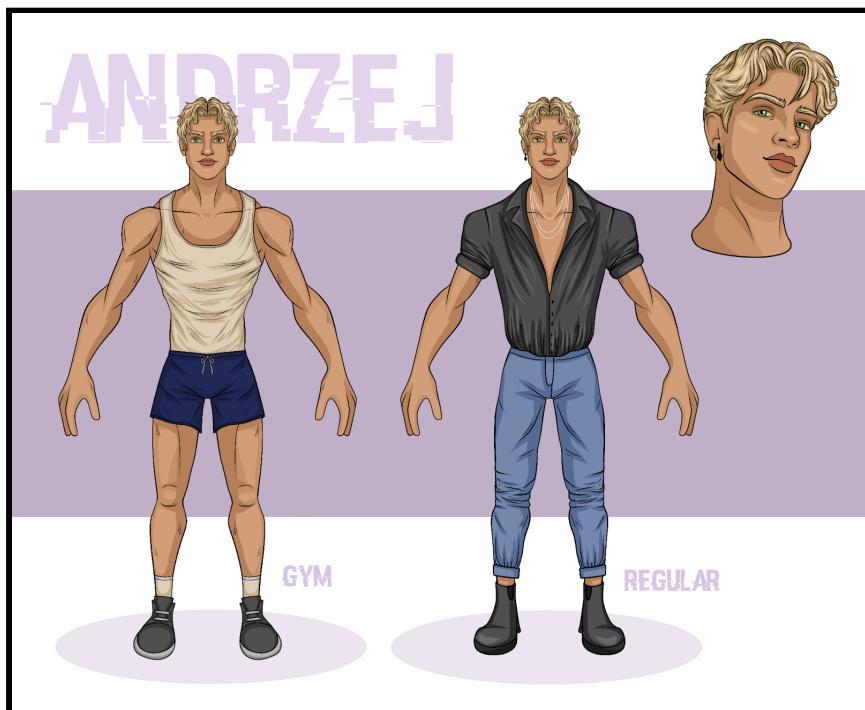
Andrzej

Andrzej is the primary antagonist for *Help Mark Escape* and will be seen in multiple sections of the story. He is an attractive, muscular male, and seems to draw the player in uncontrollably.

As the story progresses it becomes apparent that Andrzej is quite direct and controlling with his actions, eventually revealing his true nature later on.

Concept
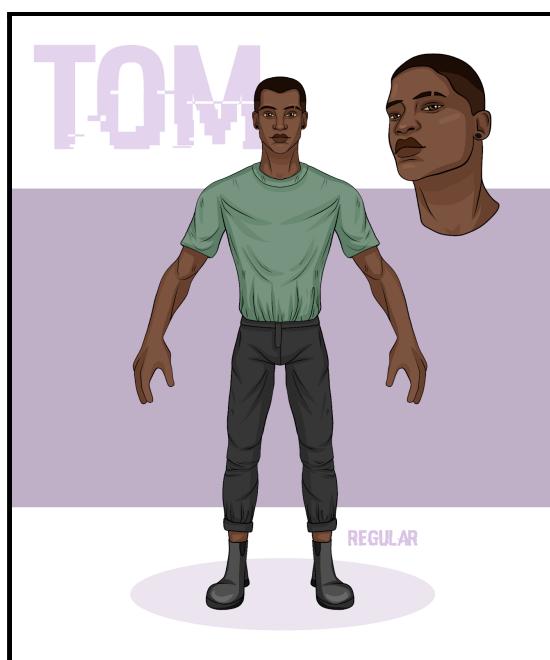
Tom

Tom is a shy individual, seen in Andrzej's apartment. He is introduced as one of Andrzej's employees who is staying with Andrzej while he finds a place to live himself.

As you get to know Tom it is clear that he appears almost afraid of Andrzej and usually only speaks when spoken to instead of contributing and engaging with the conversations.

Concept

Story & Narrative

The original narrative for *Help Mark Escape* was provided by *Embodied* in which the player meets Andrzej at the gym where they hit it off straight away with Andrzej taking interest in the player and asking them out on a date.

The story has been slightly adjusted to better suit the intended gameplay and mechanics, but follows the same core themes and dialogue.
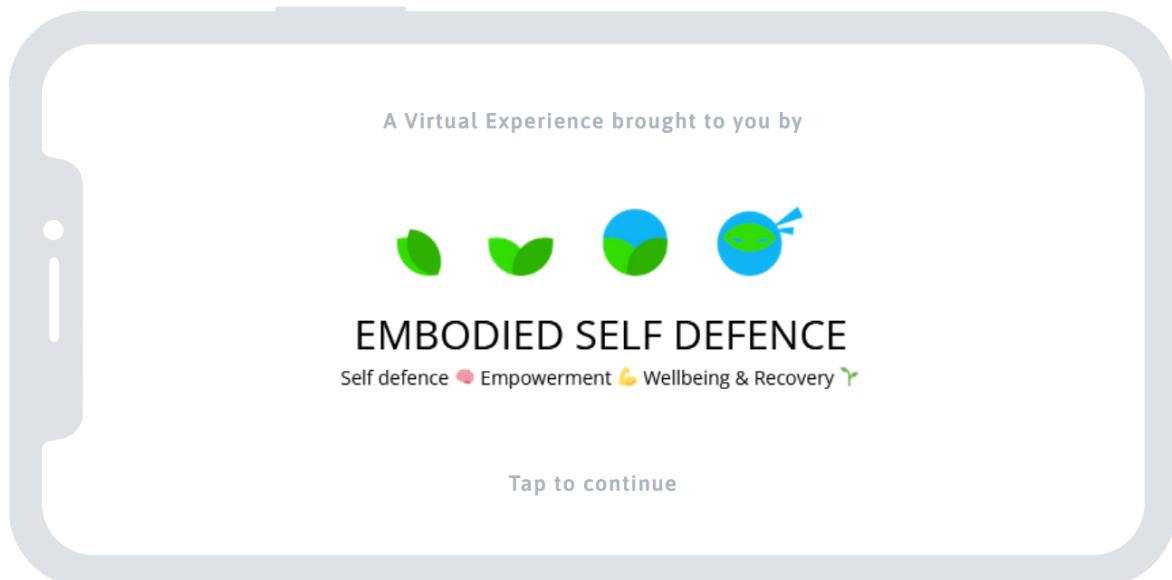
A breakdown of the story, which includes in depth dialogue and a fully built narrative for the prototype can be found on the Miro board.

User Interfaces & Experience

Menu Systems

Loading Screens
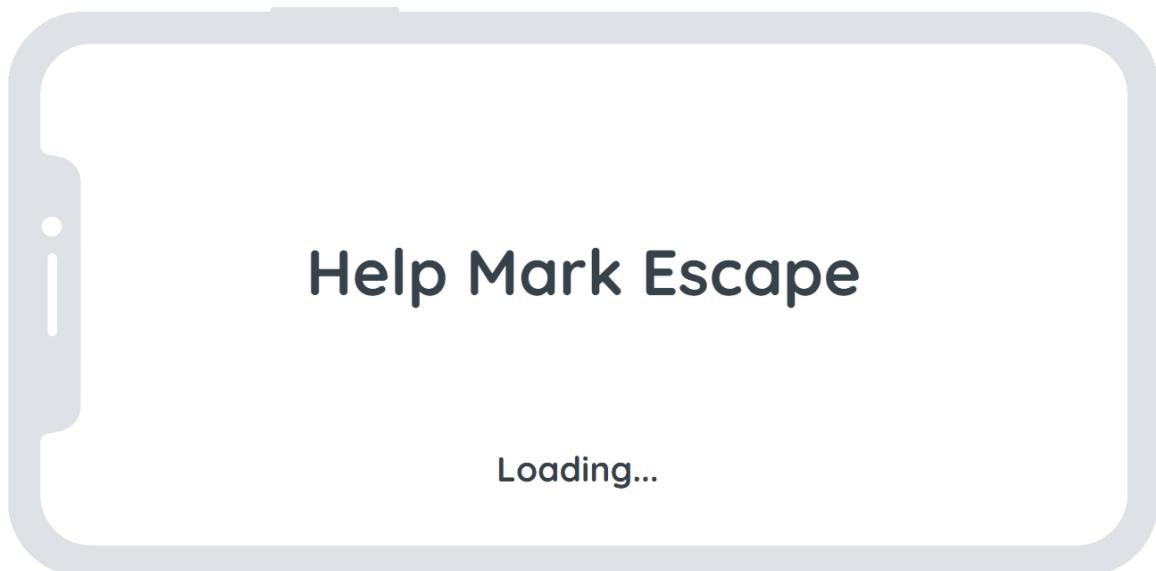
This experience aims to boost your awareness and help you avoid dangerous situations

EMBODIED SELF DEFENCE

Developed by Spicy Space Chickens
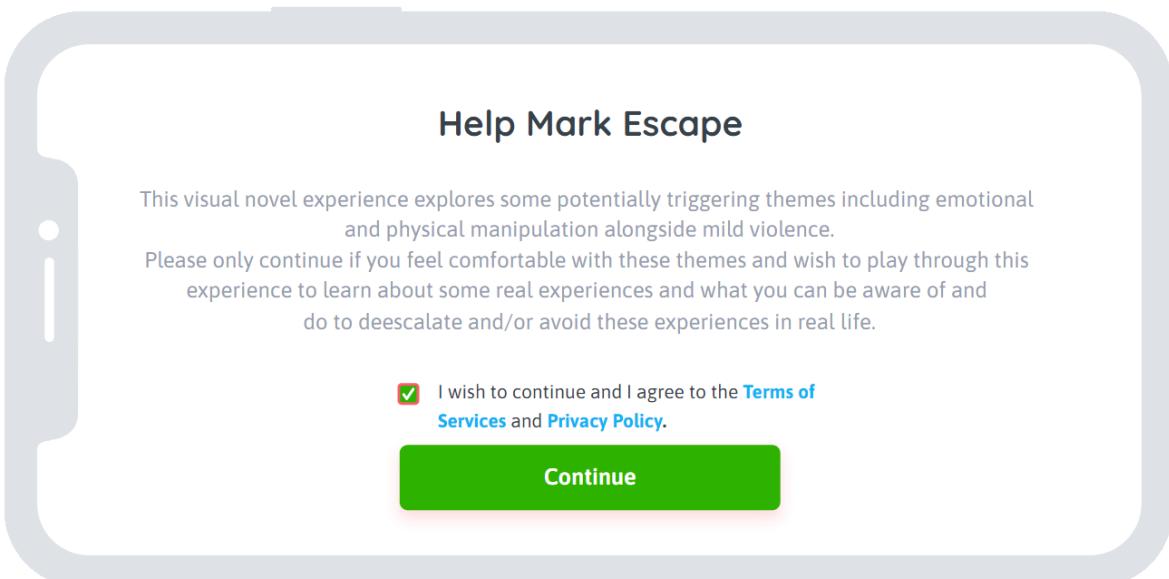
Loading...

Help Mark Escape

Loading...

Help Mark Escape
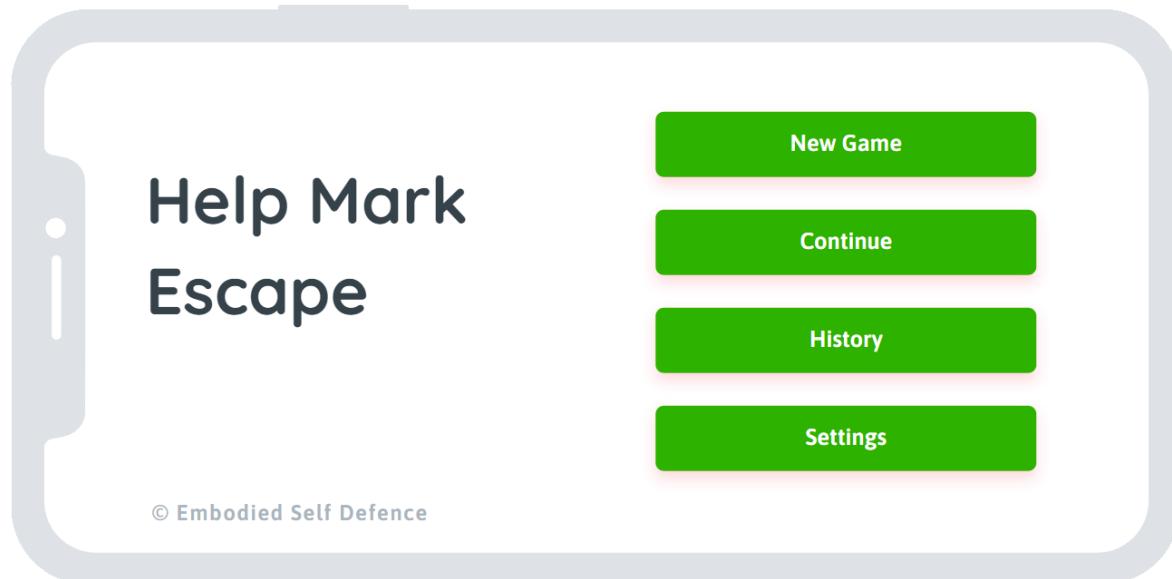
This visual novel experience explores some potentially triggering themes including emotional and physical manipulation alongside mild violence.
Please only continue if you feel comfortable with these themes and wish to play through this experience to learn about some real experiences and what you can be aware of and do to deescalate and/or avoid these experiences in real life.

☑ I wish to continue and I agree to the **Terms of Services** and **Privacy Policy**.

Continue

Main Menu

Help Mark Escape

New Game

Continue

History

Settings

© Embodied Self Defence

Save Menu

Save Data

Save Data 01

Save Data 02

Save Data 03

Save Data 04

History Tree

Route History

>

Settings

Settings

Text Size

Text Speed

Autoplay

Restore Defaults

Confirm   Cancel
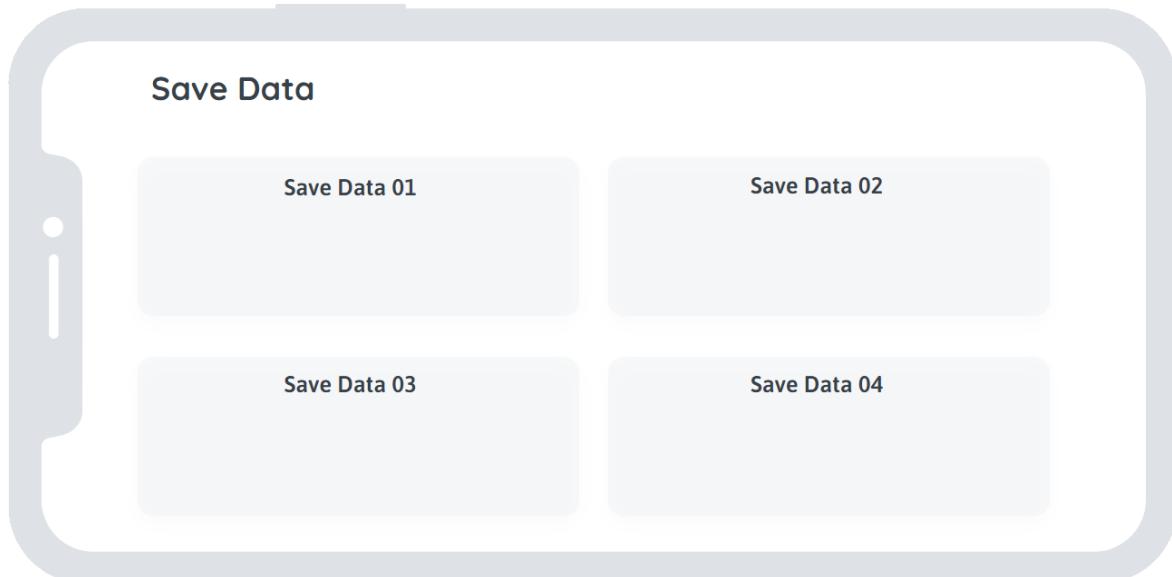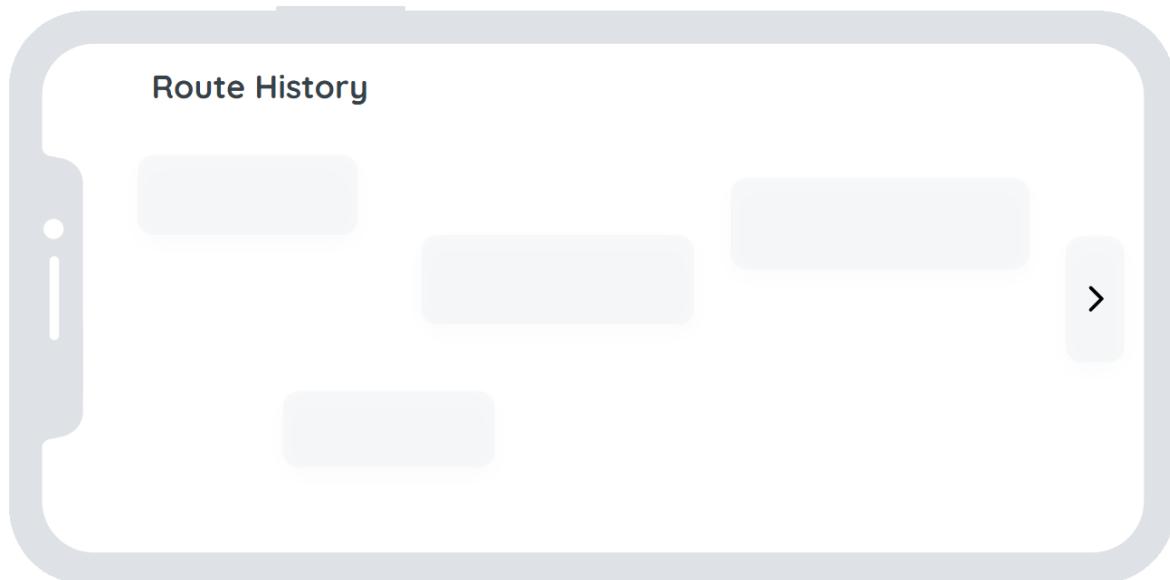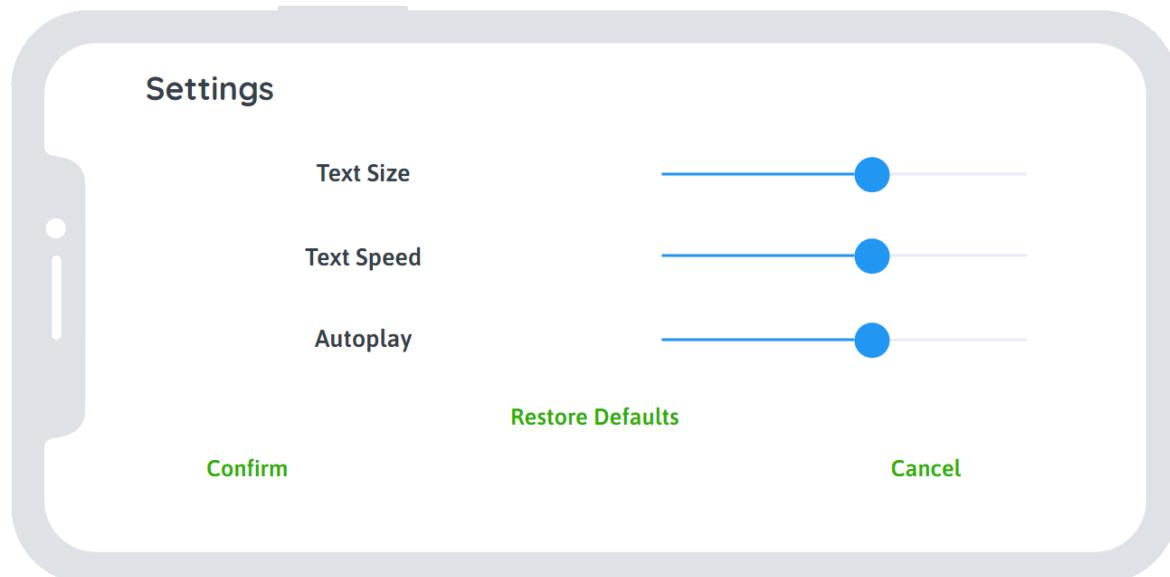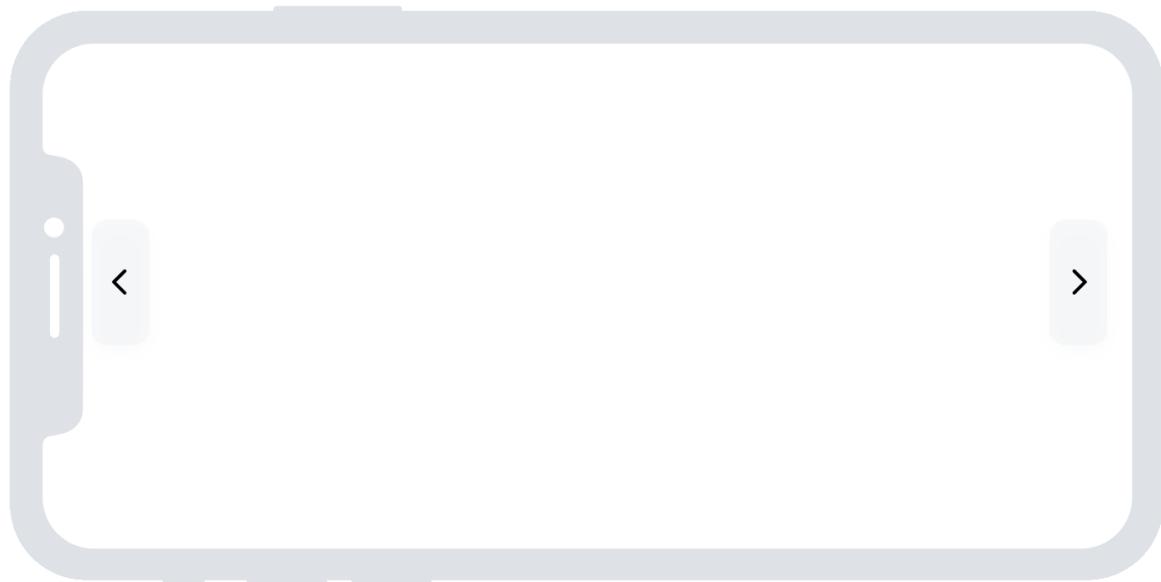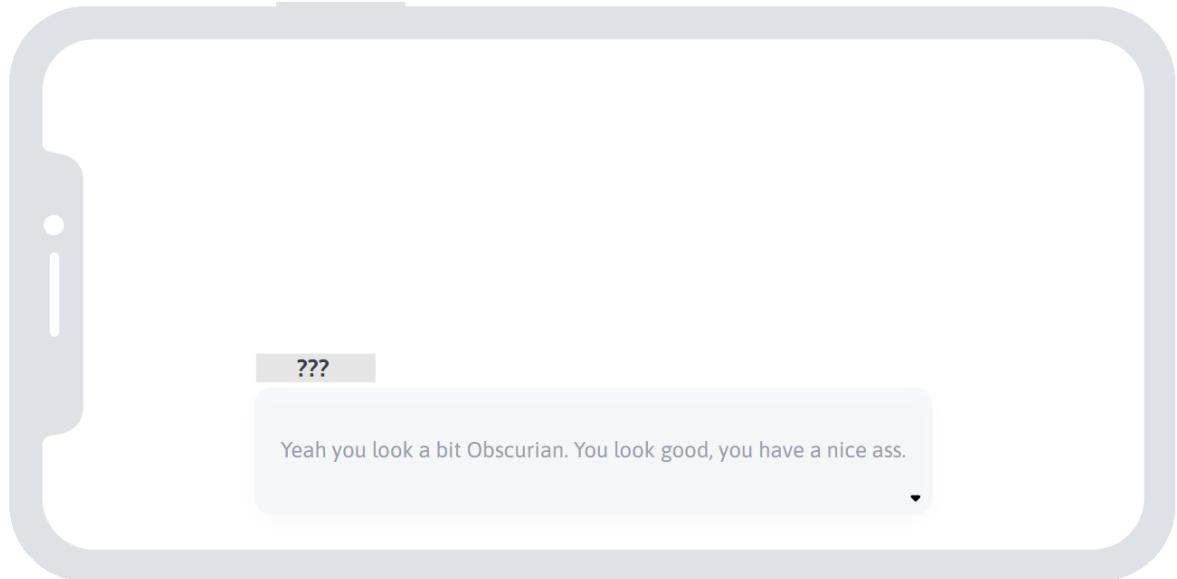
In-Game

Movement

Dialogue

Standard

???

Yeah you look a bit Obscurian. You look good, you have a nice ass.
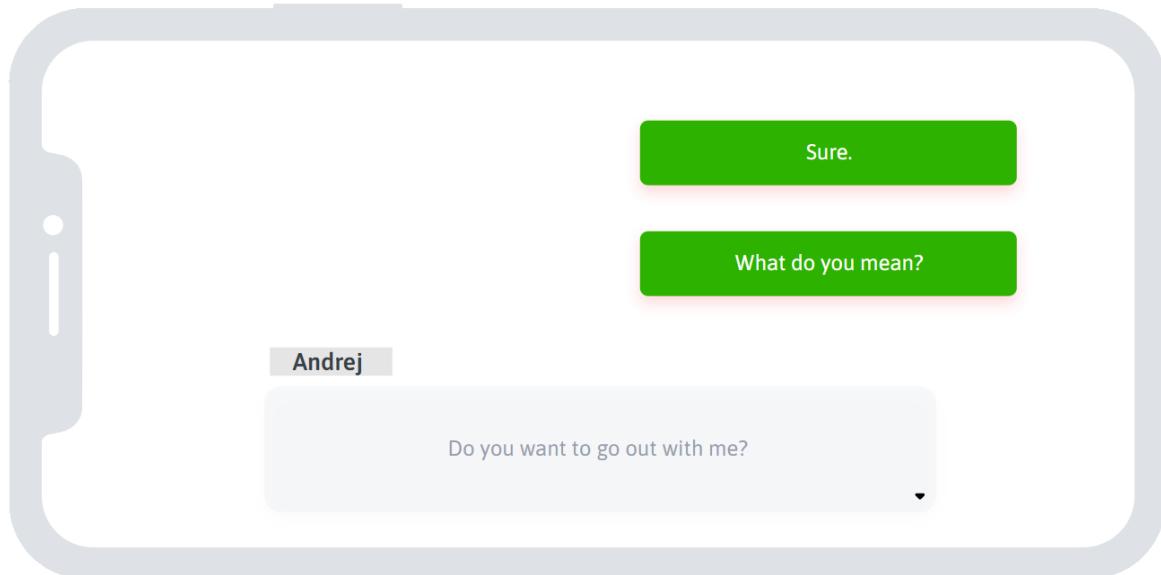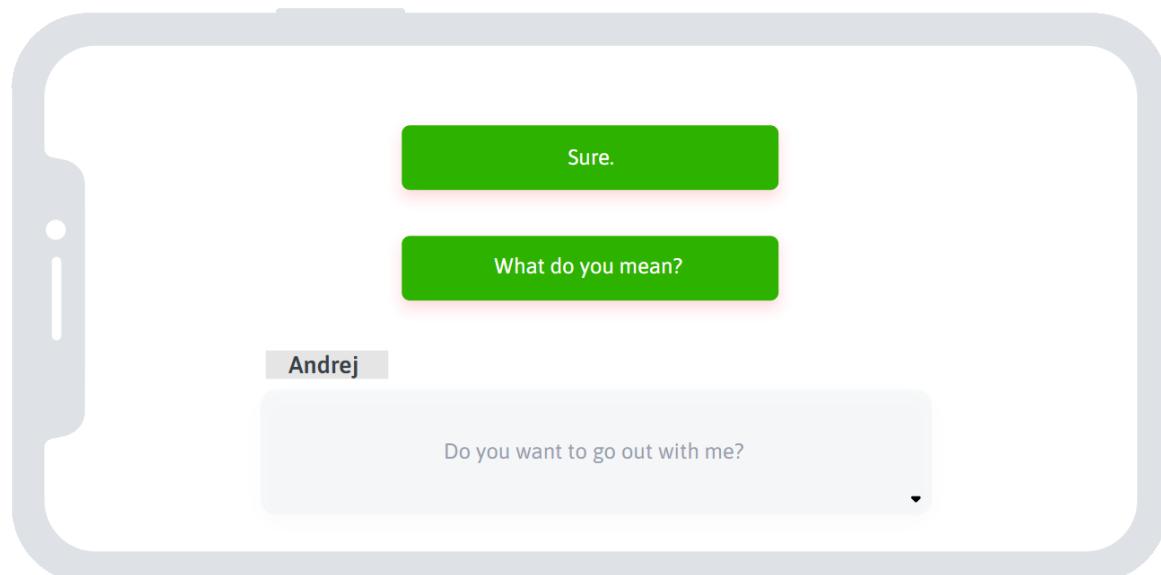
Choices
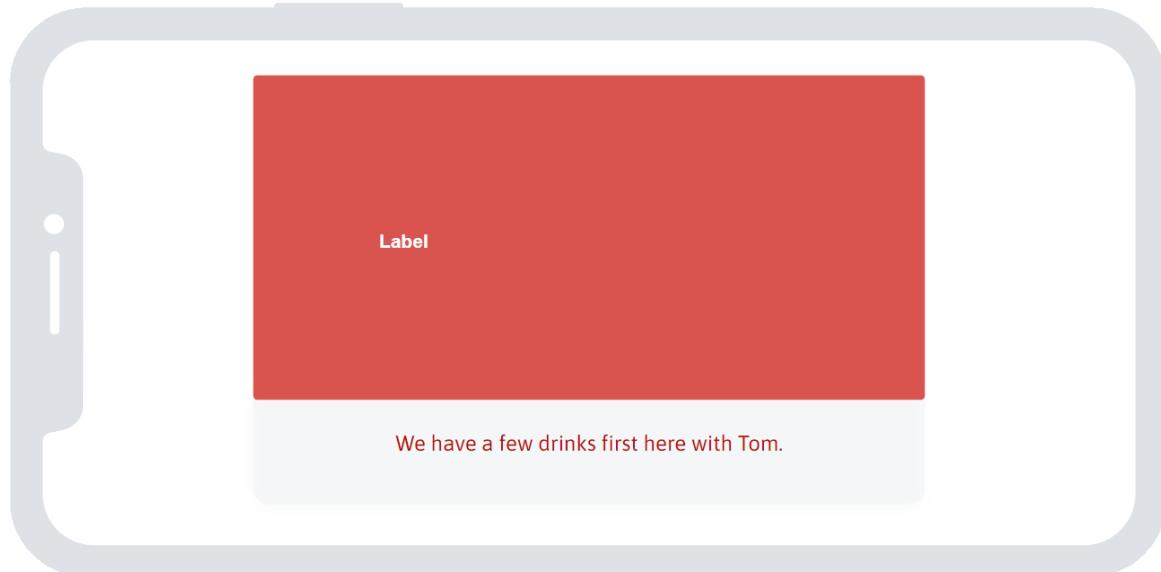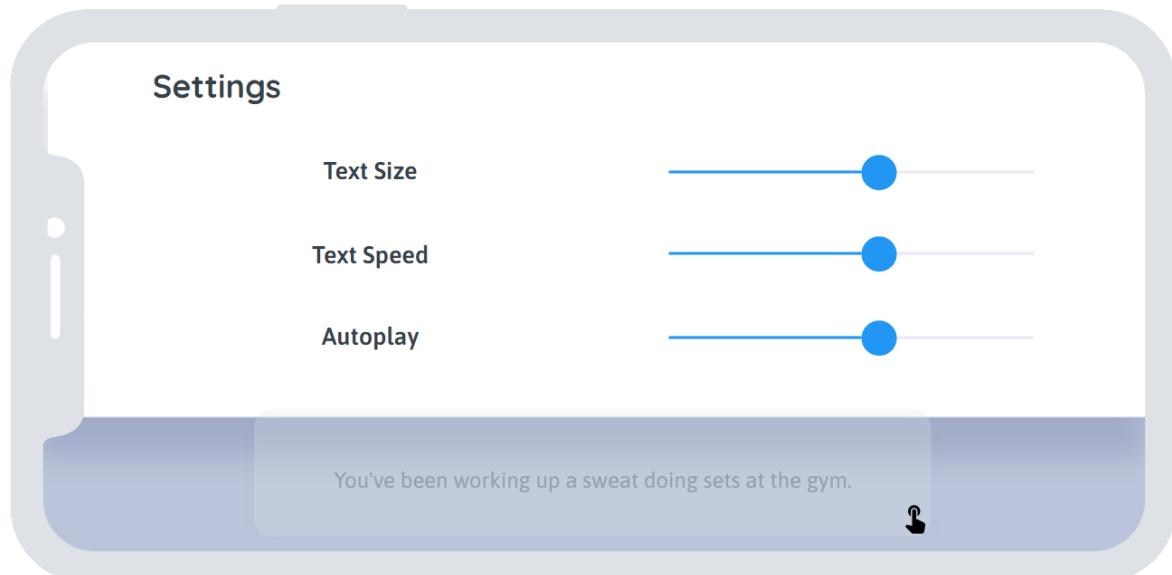
Version #1

Version #2

Red Flag
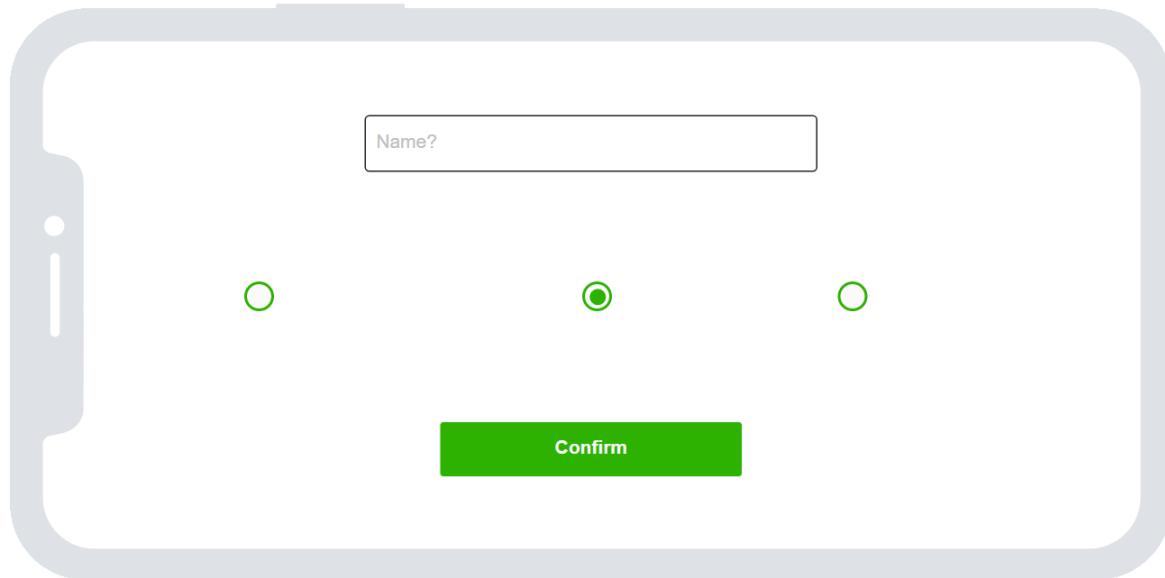
Settings (In-Game Version)
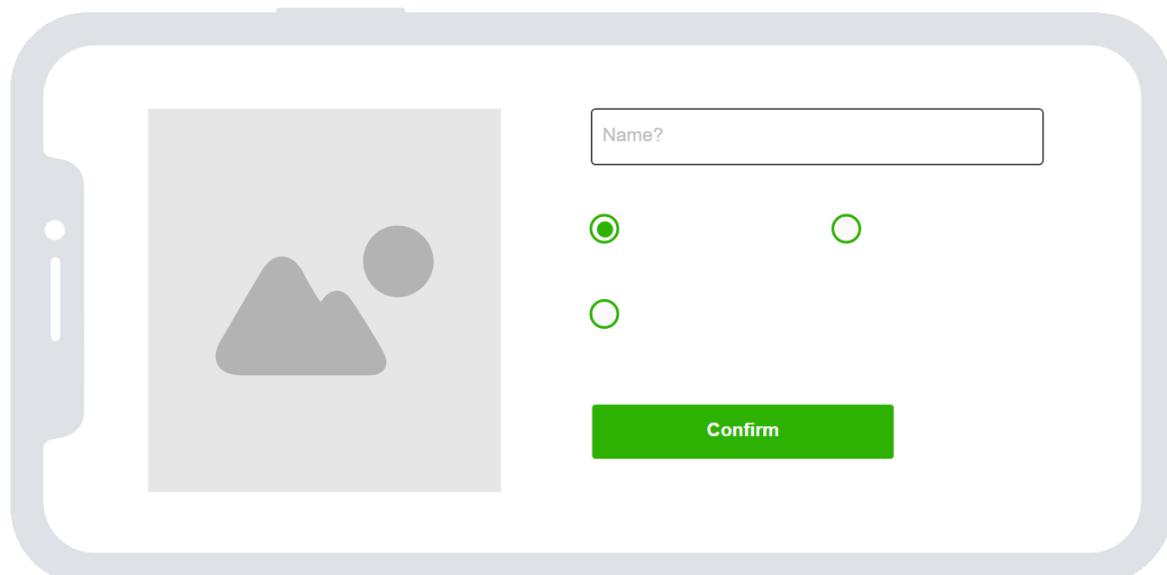
Custom Name and Pronouns

Version #1

Version #2
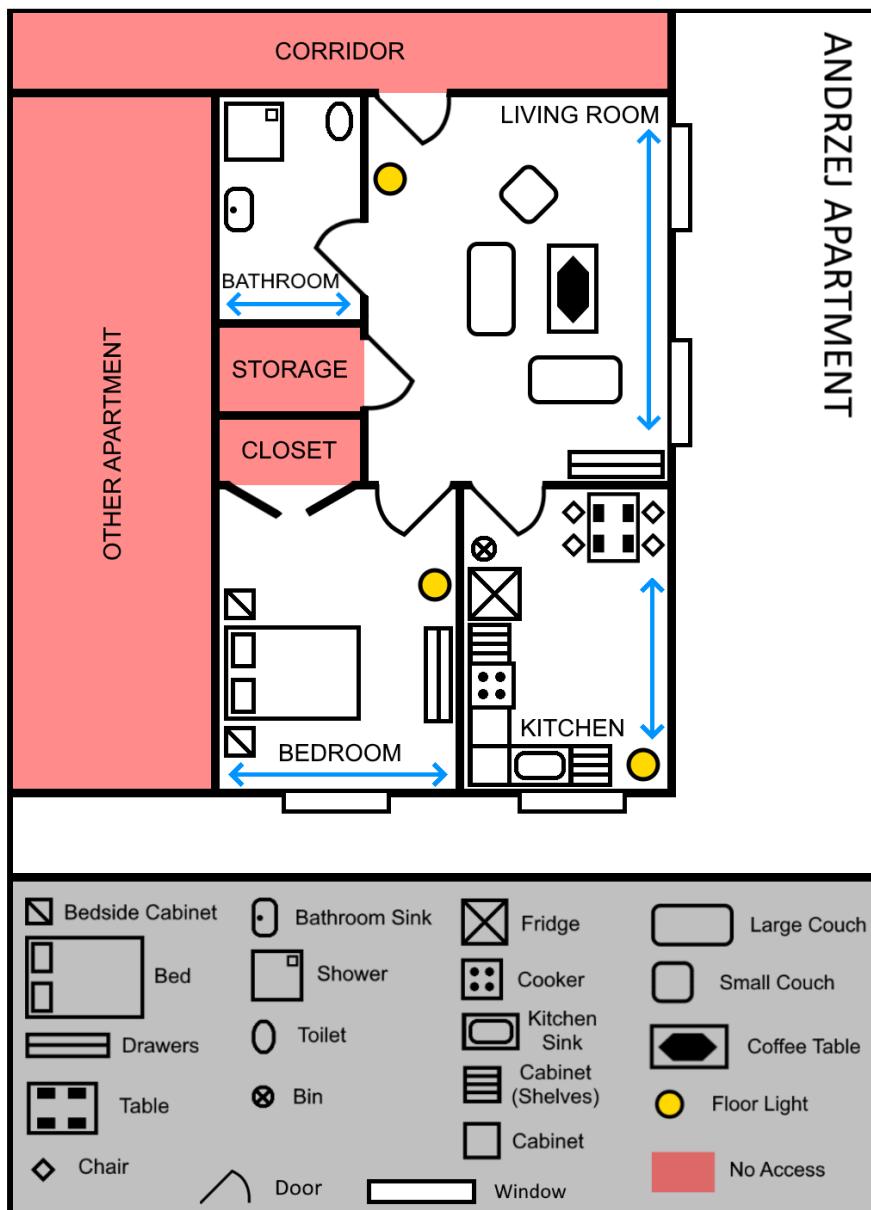
Levels & Environments

Andrzej's Apartment

Andrzej should have a moderately sized apartment, to make it appear like Andrzej is doing well for himself career wise. The apartment will be sparsely decorated, with little personality. This is due to it being a criminal business as the player discovers later in the story.
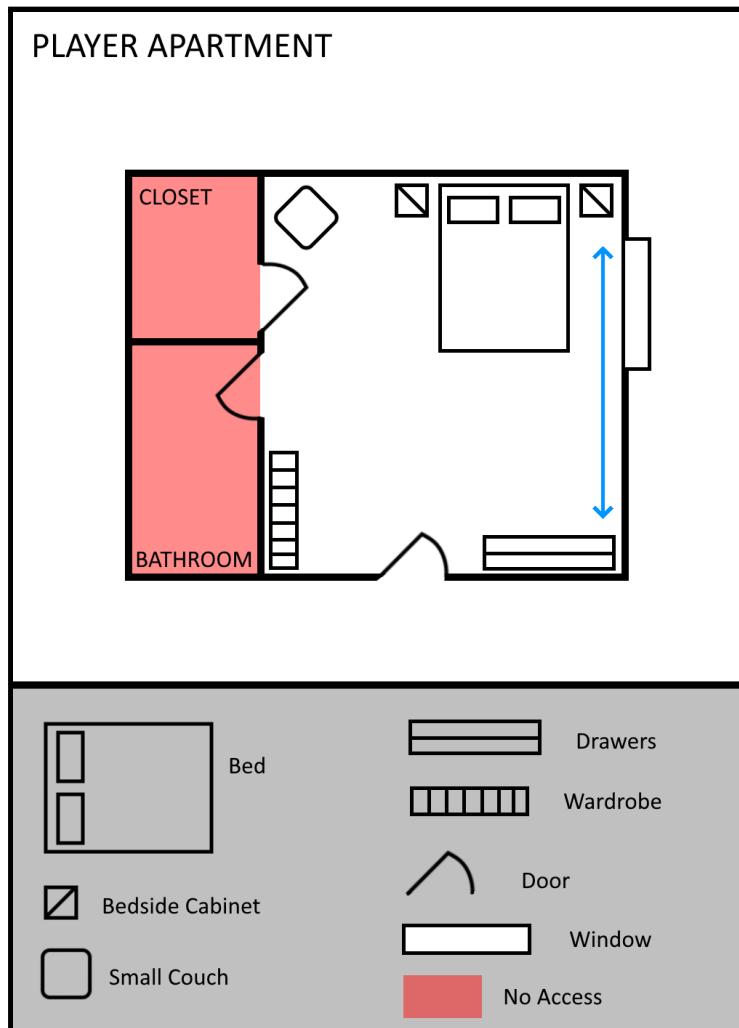
Layout

Player's (Mark) Apartment

The player apartment will only show the players bedroom for this prototype as no other areas are required yet. This should be more personalised than Andrzej to show someone actually living there rather than the house being used for criminal activities.
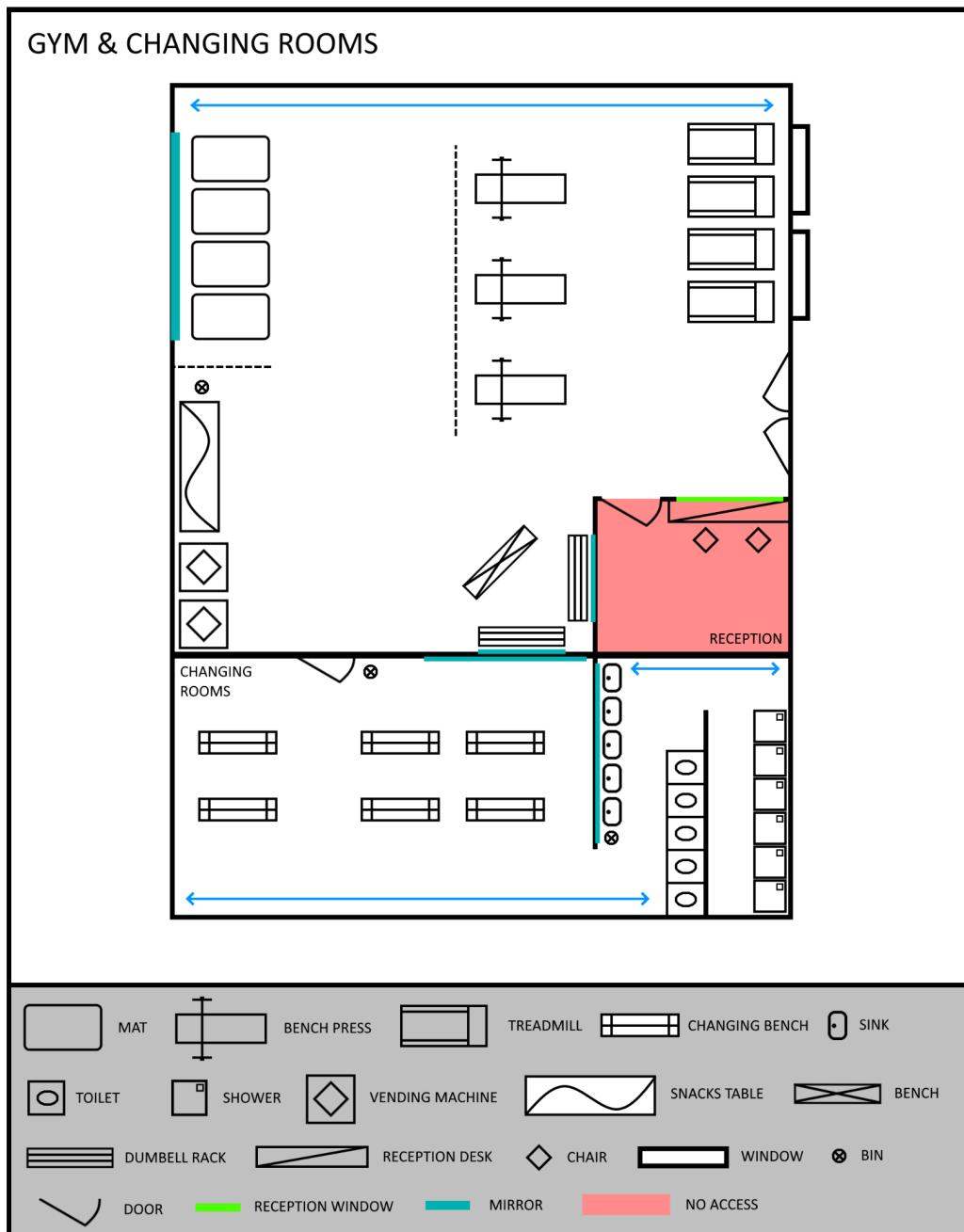
Layout

Gym & Changing Rooms

The gym and changing rooms are used to introduce the player to Andrzej and some meetings between the two. This should follow a typical gym layout and design.
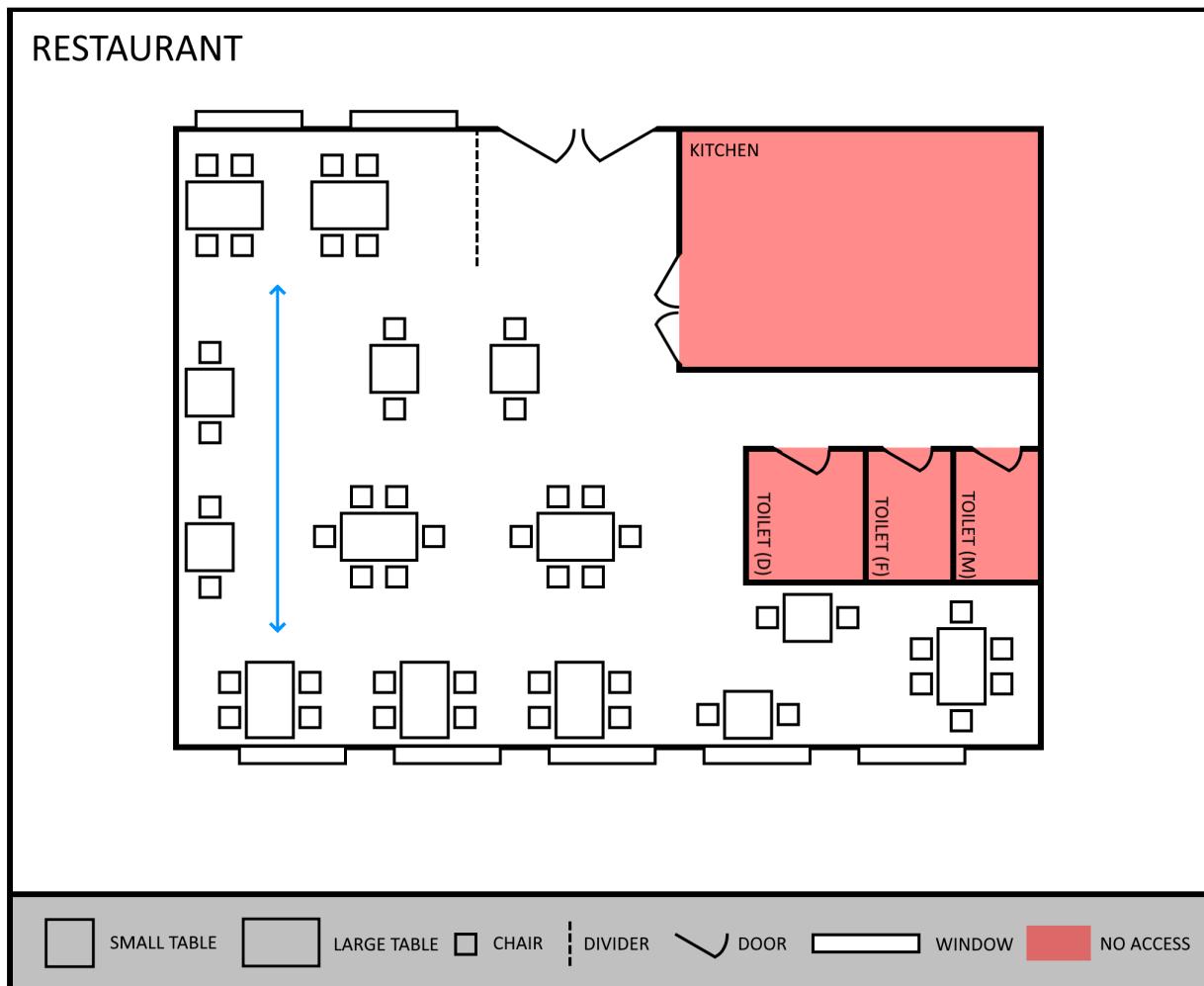
Layout

Restaurant

The restaurant will be used for the date section of the story, it will use an evening setting with the date taking place then. There will be limited interactions here for the prototype, however this environment would be reused in the expanded section of the story for a full build.

Layout

Game Assets

The 3D asset list can be viewed here.