The Collection:

A grim corporate horror game that draws inspiration from “I’m on Observation Duty” and “Papers, Please”.

Story:

The year is 1996. As commerce and globalization is at an all-time rise, a small company is growing rapidly. Called ‘The Collection’, the company claims to have anything anyone could ever want. Hence their tagline “You want it, we have it.”. Going into 1998, in just two years The Collection has gone from a chain local to Utah to a super store spanning the world. From America to China, its everywhere. All other stores have become obsolete. All ecommerce has been replaced. Everything aside from things like real estate and cars has been replaced by The Collection. But with many customers comes many returns. The Collection has a store to return facility ratio of 2:1. Issue is, robots can’t handle the complexity of return management and also randomly go missing… Anyways, no issue for The Collection. They simply spend 1 year researching science to bioengineer humans, just to be their mass produced return workers. Given one worker has a job lifespan of 2 weeks before… disappearing, they need a lot of them.

Setting/POV:

As the player, you assume the role as one of The Collection’s… expendables… resources… assets. Your living quarters is stationed approx. 50 meters from the return warehouse, a puny run down dimly lit damp shack. Looking at the return warehouse, it is a colossal structure, no top, left, or right side may be seen. Only a steel door that creaks when you open it. Inside the living quarters is some The Collection propaganda, a vending machine for various items, a TV with The Collections finest films, and a bed. Inside the warehouse lies super tall shelves. The hum of machinery in the distance. Two conveyor belts for you. Various machines. Some lights.

Gameplay:

As a return employee, you inspect returns to see if they are deemed O.K. to send back to shop. Sometimes an item may have some incorrect properties. Maybe a wrong barcode. Don’t worry, there are various machines to help you with that. Oh and don’t forget about the shadow entities! Due to a still-to-be-worked-out genome error with The Collection’s human printers, your eyes will deceive you. Don’t worry, this is due to low light. If you see a shadow entity, shine your flashlight at it, it will dissolve slowly. Careful though, if it gets too close it will fry your brain! In the case of a sneaky one getting real close, supercharge that flashlight and instantly vaporize it. Careful though, it will drain all of its power. Not onto the detailed mechanics of everything.

Each item has its Perfect variant. No issues, no anomalous properties. This is rare. Each item might have one of these wrong/anomalous with it:

* Wrong barcode.
* Something inside of it.
* Glitched speakers
* Incorrect chemical makeup.

Let’s go over how incorrect/anomalies work in this game. So you have an item, great. This item might have incorrect details. Or it might have anomalous properties. Or it might be perfectly fine. That is for the player to figure out on their own. If an item is wrong, then you need to fix it. If it is right, proceed, and if it is anomalous, dispose.

Let’s go over disposers now. There are three of them They are very large, and could hold two people in them! The first one is the SHREDDER. The shredder is used of anomalous items that are soft-nonorganic. The CRUSHER is for hard-nonorganic. Lastly, the ACID DRUM is for organic. Don’t mess these up, or you will have to fix them up. The repair process is as shown:

* Shredder given:
  + Hard Nonorganic: Ruins the blades and you must get a new blade set from the utility closet.
  + Organic: Stains the blades with blood which you must wipe down with a mop.
* Crusher given:
  + Soft nonorganic: Nothing happens; the item is fully intact.
  + Organic: Stains the crusher plate will blood and ooze which you must wipe down with a mop.
* Acid Drum given:
  + Soft-Nonorganic: Fully dissolves and leaves nothing behind, but takes longer than the shredder so might create backup.
  + Hard-nonorganic: Floats around, user must grab tongs from the utility closet to take it out.

Now the conveyors. There are two conveyors the player will interact with. One brings in returns, the other the player must place good items on. If the incoming conveyor fills up, the player loses. If the player places an anomalous item on the outgoing conveyor, one of 3 red lights turns on. If all three are on, the player loses. If the player puts a bad item but not anomalous on the outgoing conveyor, they get a grade penalty.

Grade penalty is a sub mechanic that encourages the user to be efficient, correct, and clean. If the player scores high, they will get their daily allowance. If the player scores too low (maybe <30%), then they will lose. If the player does certain things like finding secrets or solving puzzles, they get extra credit which will provide extra allowance. In the players living quarters they can buy upgrades for their warehouse space as well as their person, and consumables from the vending machine.

If the player loses, their brain chip gets fried and they collapse, getting sent back to the title screen.

There are a couple tools at the user’s tool belt they can use at any time:

* Barcode Scanner:
  + This device ensures the correct barcode is on the item
* Acoustic Microscope:
  + This device picks up on noises emitted by items and ensures it is the correct noise. Most items will have a power button or switch that must be pressed or held while using this device. If the noise is correct, return. If it is wrong, like a radio emits buzz, this tool would ensure it isn't some demonic hymn. If it is, dispose. If not, then go to the Audio Station to get it calibrated. The correct sound for something like a radio would be music. Sometimes the sound is obviously anomalous, like a squeeze toy screaming from the depths of hell.
* Flashlight:
  + If the warehouse becomes too dark, shadow anomaly entities will begin to appear far away and move closer. They have no collision, meaning they phase through objects and such. If they touch the player, the players mind is fried and they die. Shining the flashlight at the entity will slowly dissolve it (while it continues to move closer). In the case of an emergency (super close entity), the player can hold LMB and RMB at the same time to supercharge the light, immediately frying any shadow entities. This however immediately drains the battery in full.

There are then machines. These are in the warehouse as physical machines and cannot be carried around, rather the item is carried to them. Upon the use of a machine, it uses all the power allotted to the player’s workspace and shuts off all lights and other machines. They are:

* Thermal Imager:
  + This machine is to check for things inside an item. It is a machine roughly the size of a microwave that when an item is placed inside, will make the mesh slightly transparent and reveal objects hidden inside. For example, a radio would obviously have a circuit inside, but if a doll has a heart inside, it is anomalous.
* Chemical Analyzer:
  + This is a big one, both size wise and complexity. Some objects have liquids in them. Water bottles, wine, beer, etc. The player can plug these into the chemical analyzer which will return the composition of the liquids inside. To complicate things, it wouldn’t just be "Water" or "Beer". It would return numerical ids (3 digit) of each liquid inside. The player should then compare it to the Chemical ID table also found in the chemical analyzer. If each number matches, its good. If a number is off, it should be disposed of. In some cases, it’s obvious. A red filled water bottle for example, is obviously anomalous. Sometimes the ID might be right, but there is an extra ID. For example, Beer might be: 184 104 129. But if this machine returns 184 104 129 568, no return. Also, sometimes an ID can be quickly realized to be anomalous, and no need for time consuming table look ups. Like Beer: 184 102 666. Additionally, IDs have an allowed differential of +-4. Meaning, Beer is 184 104 129, but 182 106 129 is still good. The chemical analyzer is the most complex and hardest to use, but there are few liquids you will receive so it is a valid trade off.
* Audio Station:
  + This is something the player would put an item inside in order to give it the correct audio. A small minigame is played. Using two 4 buttons, a left/right/down/up, the player must match the items actual soundwave to the correct sound wave.
* Barcode Printer:
  + Goes hand-in-hand with the barcode scanner, prints barcode for the selected one in its terminal the player uses.

The Inspection Table is the ‘center piece’ of the game. It is where the player placed down items to be scanned for noise and barcodes, and has charging ports for the barcode scanner and microphone. The flashlight however is wind up.