

# This Wonderful World

## Interactivity Document

This Wonderful World is an unfiction work: fiction but presented in a way that makes it feel real. This means it has a lot of interactivity to engage people with the world, including puzzles, talking to multiple characters, and influencing the path the story goes. There were a few main different types of interactive elements used.

**Puzzles:** This was one of the main elements used in this experience. Puzzles are a great way to keep players engaging with the story, as during times when not much incredibly engaging stuff is happening in the story, puzzles can be used to keep players coming back each day. This is useful in my experience, because it requires people to actually run, and was especially useful in the first week where the story was moving somewhat slowly as we were introduced to character and plot details. Puzzles are also very good at getting new players to take part in the experience, as anyone can jump in and help solve a puzzle without needing to know much about the story. This helps draw in new players without having to explain a story that might have been going on for weeks already.

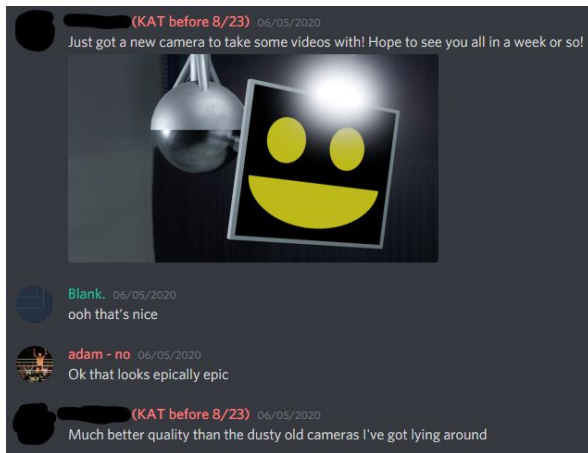
**Character interaction:** Another big interactive element of the experience was character interaction. This was simply where players could chat with another character through discord or email to do a variety of things. Most of the time this was to ask questions, which gave players more insight into the story and characters. However, sometimes this was used to let players guide a character through doing something or solve a problem, which created interesting improv scenarios where players would be coming up with solutions to a problem and I would have to say how that solution actually affected things. Having characters to talk to also made it so players had something to do related to the experience even when there wasn't any new content.

There were other elements that weren't used often or more than once in the experience, which will be explained when reached.

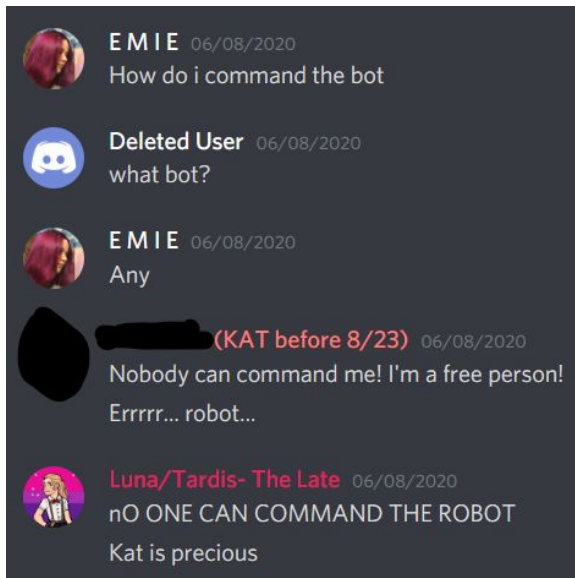
## Prologue

During the weeks leading up to the start of the experience, a character called KAT talked with potential players through the messaging app Discord, where much of the communication for the experience took place. This served a few different purposes:

1. Introduce people to a character they'll be talking with for much of the experience
2. Get people interested in the experience, since it would be nothing without anyone taking part
3. Show the quality of the experience through 3d renders and videos



The first interaction KAT had with players  
(Since I was using my personal account for KAT, I've now switched back my nickname)



An interaction during the prologue that made  
me sure that the players loved KAT.



This image was created by a player  
during week 1, but shows how much they loved KAT.

## Week 1

Week 1 opened up with a live-streamed video of KAT introducing the story as if she was the creator. She leads players to the first page: <https://hearourwonderfulworld.com/>. This live-stream intro was used to hook players into the experience with a high quality animation and some light humor.

This week of the experience puzzle-wise had multiple puzzles every day that had players finding hidden messages in posts. This website was meant to be, on the front at least, an art blog, so this week was all public domain poems, artworks, music, and 3d models edited to hide correspondence between characters. The goal for this week was to start with very easy puzzles at the start and slowly ramp up in complexity, while introducing other interactive elements to show players that puzzles weren't the only thing they'll be seeing.

## Summer Silence by E. E. Cummings

eruptive lightnings flutter to and fro  
above the heights of immemorial hills;  
thirst-stricken air, dumb-throated, in its Woe  
limply down-sagging, its limp body spills  
upon the earth. A panting silence fills  
The empty vault of night with shimmering bars  
of Cullen silver, where the lake distils  
its miserèd bounty.—Hark! No whisper mars  
the utter silence of the untranslated stars.

By far the easiest of puzzles. I used this one right at the beginning so players picked up right away that something was up with the website. These puzzles simply used changed uppercase letters of the poems to spell out words.

## Exile by Ernest Dowson

By the sad waters of separation  
Where I have wandered by divers ways,  
I haven't but the shadow and imitation  
Of the old memorial days.

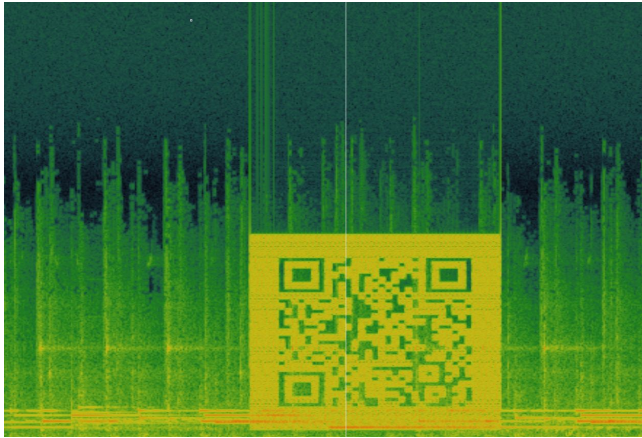
In music I heard no consolation,  
No roses are pale enough for me;  
The sound from the waters of separation  
Surpasseth roses and melody.

By the sad waters of him  
Dimly I hear from an hidden place  
The sigh of mine ancient adoration:  
Hardly do I remember your face.

If you be dead, no proclamation  
Sprang to you over the waste, gray sea:  
Living, the waters the separation  
Sever for ever your post from me.

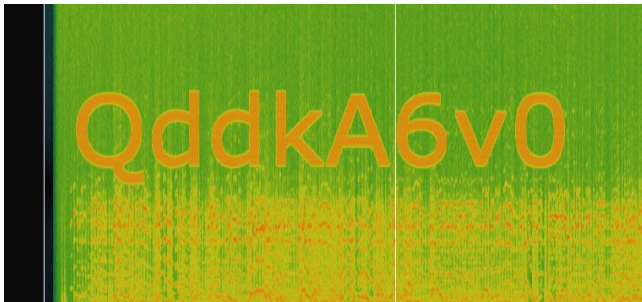
No man will knoweth our desolation;  
Memory pales work the old delight;  
While the sad waters of separation  
Will bear us on to the ultimate night.

This was another poem puzzle, but this time players had to find the original poem and find the changed words to work out the message.



There were 3 audio puzzles during week

1. The first 2 were a QR code hidden in the spectrogram that contained a message.



The other was text placed so it sounded

like it was part of the music that leads to a Pastebin link with a message



There were also some image puzzles

throughout the first week. These puzzles had messages hidden within the hex that could be decoded into a message.

Another type of puzzle was 3d puzzles that had players using Blender to uncover secrets hidden within the files. Since I knew it was most likely that people wouldn't be knowledgeable in Blender, I made them slowly ramp up in difficulty in a way that would require them to learn a small part of Blender and then apply what they learned from the previous puzzle. From what I saw from people participating, these puzzles were their favorite from this week.

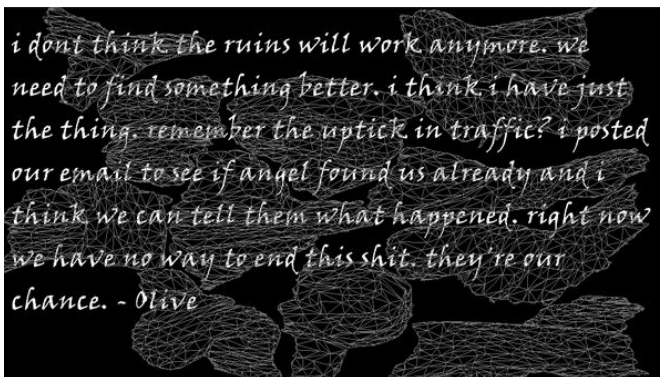




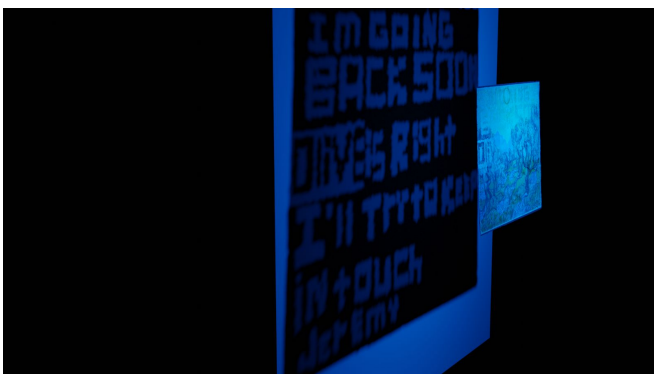
The first 3d puzzle was incredibly simple so they just had to learn how to navigate Blender. Once they figured that out, they could go inside the space module and find messages written onto the textures like pictured.



The second puzzle was to teach players how to switch between tabs, requiring them to go to the shading tab in Blender and rotate around the object to view letters on the model.



For the 3rd puzzle, players had to go to any of the tabs that could view images and look through until they found the roughness map, which had text written onto it.



This puzzle was a sort of light puzzle in Blender, where the players had to figure out how to render out the image to project light through the picture onto a screen behind it. The painting had parts of it that were slightly

transparent, but not so much they were noticeable at a glance. This lets the light go through to form a message.

Another form of interactivity was talking to characters. The ability to talk to KAT was still there, and a lot of the first two weeks had people reporting back to KAT their findings, but partway through week 1, they gained access to an email that allowed players to talk with the group that they've been looking into for the past few days. This gave them a whole new set of characters to talk to and in a different way.

The next day, players got access to a new website. As soon as they found this website, one of them went into a code for the website and found the email that created it through the sitemap (which I had no idea existed). This gave them access to a new email weeks before they were supposed to. Instead of just carrying on as if nothing happened, I instead improvised and allowed them to talk directly to that character sooner and ask him questions.

## Week 2

Week 2 revolved around audio recordings posted every day that were unlocked through passcodes found in research puzzles. Unlike last week's puzzles where players had to find hidden messages, they had to research online to get to the messages. Since these messages also had a lot more work put into them, being audio recordings, the puzzles were designed to take longer so less of them were needed.

### Crunch Culture

June 23rd, 2020 in **Games**

The games industry is known for churning out content every year, some better than others of course, and increasing the graphics quality of their games each time. However, there is a dark side to this. As games companies are expected to release content fast, their employees need to work extremely quickly to keep up with release schedules. This has resulted in a common industry practice known as crunch. Crunch happens when games companies force some of their employees to work up to 100 hours a week, some even boasting about it in marketing for their games! It was first brought to the world's attention by an anonymous blog post from a spouse of someone working in the games industry, and it described how her husband had been coming home very late at night with constant headaches and a chronically upset stomach. According to her, his job at EA was ruining his life! It hasn't stopped either, as most recently crunch has been spotting at it's worse during the development of Fortnite by Epic Games and the development of Red Dead Redemption 2 by Rockstar.

It's a catastrophe that people in the games industry have to go through this, though it can be remedied by creating unions of games workers to prevent crunch. During my research I couldn't figure out what the name of the spouse who wrote the original letter was. Maybe someone can find it for me?

For the first few days, the puzzles consisted of articles that had the author asking a question. The players then had to use information in the article to research the answer to that question and used that answer to unlock the passcode to the video. Here's an example of what one of these puzzles looked like. Players had to figure out who the person was that sent the first crunch-related letter. They could do this in several ways, which allowed for open-endedness in the puzzle-solving. The puzzles slowly ramped up in intensity, excluding a poem with a hidden message,

similar to the last week, that was used once after a big emotional beat.

### My Favourite Film

June 27th, 2020 in **fun**



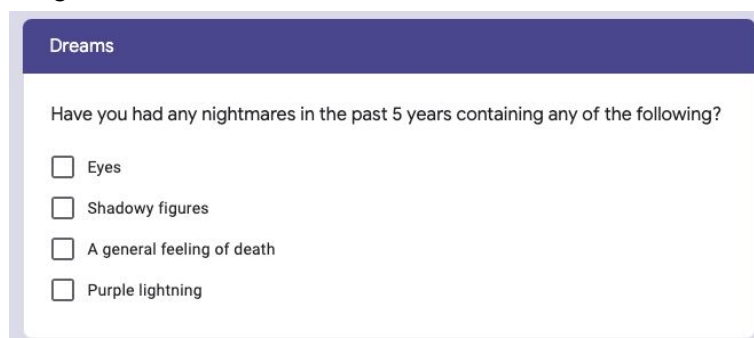
The final research puzzle of this week was this one, which had players solving a puzzle in multiple parts. First, they had to solve 3 sections of a sentence. The first part, written in the first one's language from the She-Ra reboot translates to "What will happen". The second part, an image representation of binary, translates to "to me if I". The third part, written in wingdings, translates to "fail your test". After players researched to figure out how to translate them and translated them, they would get a quote from the movie Ex Machina. Since the title of the puzzle is "My Favourite Film", this lead the players to realize the password was "ExMachina" and unlock the final video.

Another puzzle not on the website was where players were asked to create a ducky script that could download the document folder from a Windows computer to a USB drive. This had players researching to find code and putting it into a dropbox, and instead of a single solution, what they did would influence the story. The code they all decided to upload also downloaded the downloads folder, so that was referenced when the code was used later in week 4.

## Crossover Week

This week was where my unfiction story crossed over with others running at the time. Not much of it is relevant to this, but it did have a lot of interactive elements. None of the interactive elements in this week were puzzles with a set solution, instead either being open-ended, interactions with characters, or something entirely different.

The first thing was the introduction of TISA on the server, which let players talk to another character. I also sent out a form as the organization to allow users to apply to become members of the organization. Not only was this form used as an interactive element on its own, but it also acted as a setup for a future interactive moment as well as established things related to TISA.



The image shows a screenshot of a web form titled "Dreams" in a dark blue header. Below the header, the question "Have you had any nightmares in the past 5 years containing any of the following?" is displayed. There are four checkboxes, each followed by a text label: "Eyes", "Shadowy figures", "A general feeling of death", and "Purple lightning".

Dreams	
Have you had any nightmares in the past 5 years containing any of the following?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eyes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shadowy figures
<input type="checkbox"/>	A general feeling of death
<input type="checkbox"/>	Purple lightning

Have you ever driven a large vehicle with moving objects/animals/people in the back? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

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Have you ever done scientific research of any kind? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Maybe

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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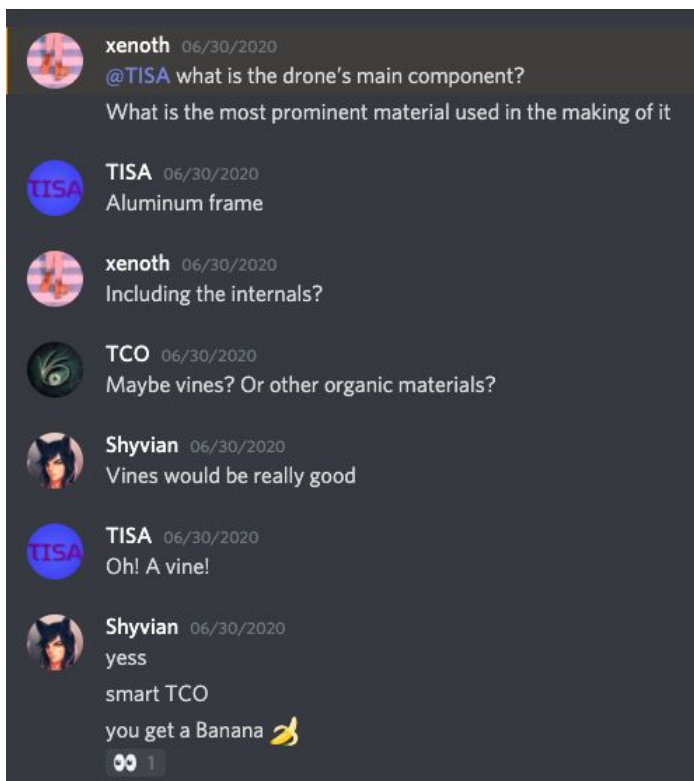
How do you find sleeping underground in an area with no windows? \*

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

some example of questions in the

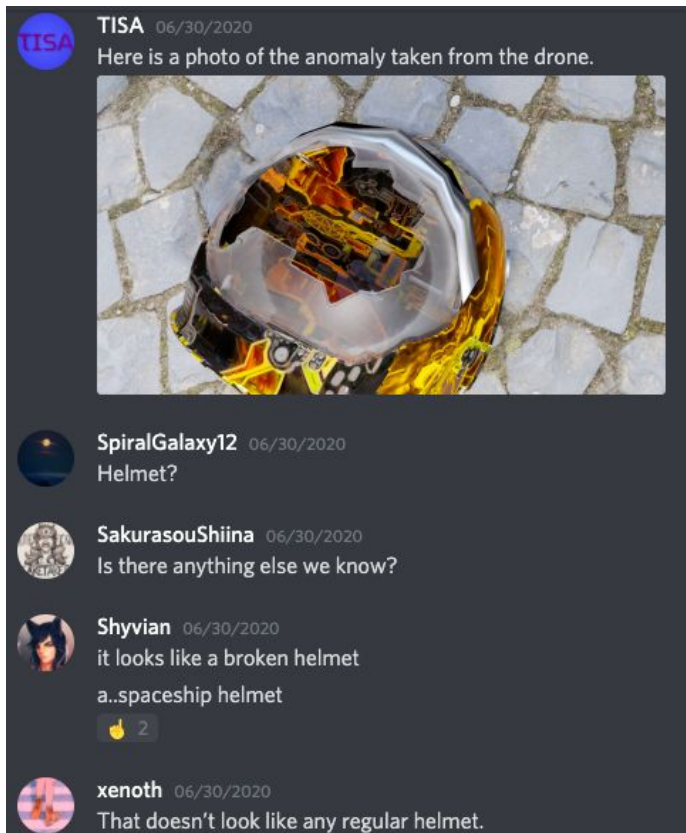
form.

This form was then used to choose people for a “mission” later in the week. This had players come upon an “anomaly” that they had to figure out how to capture. Players would be shown an image of an object rendered in Blender, and they would ask questions about it’s properties to figure out what to do with it. This allowed for open-endedness in this part, as well as made interesting improv moments. While only a handful of people were allowed into the chat to directly interact with TISA, I also let them talk to other players to let them know what’s going on. This was to make some people feel special in this part, but not to leave anyone out.



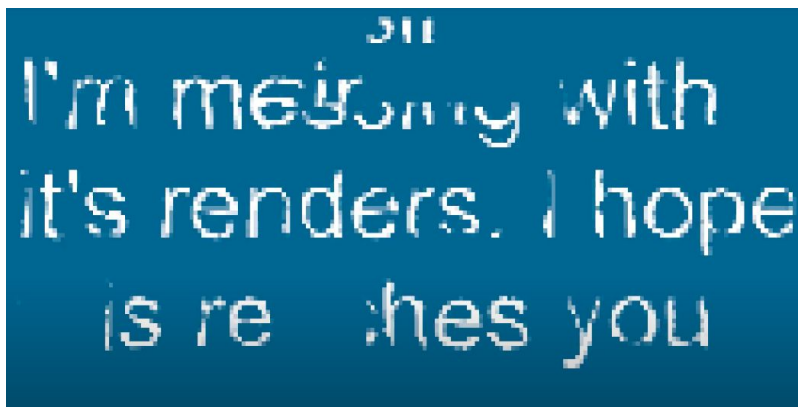
Some examples from the mission



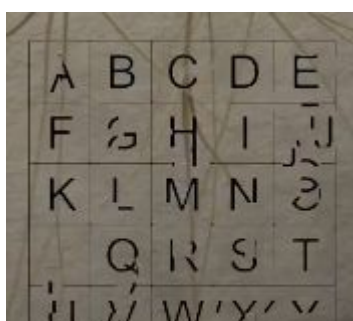


## Week 3

Week 3 consisted of videos being sent from TISA to the players and messages hidden in the videos. The goal was to have a wide variety of puzzles in each video for players to solve, and then for the last few days shift to character interactions as the emotional intensity started to increase up to a big character reveal.



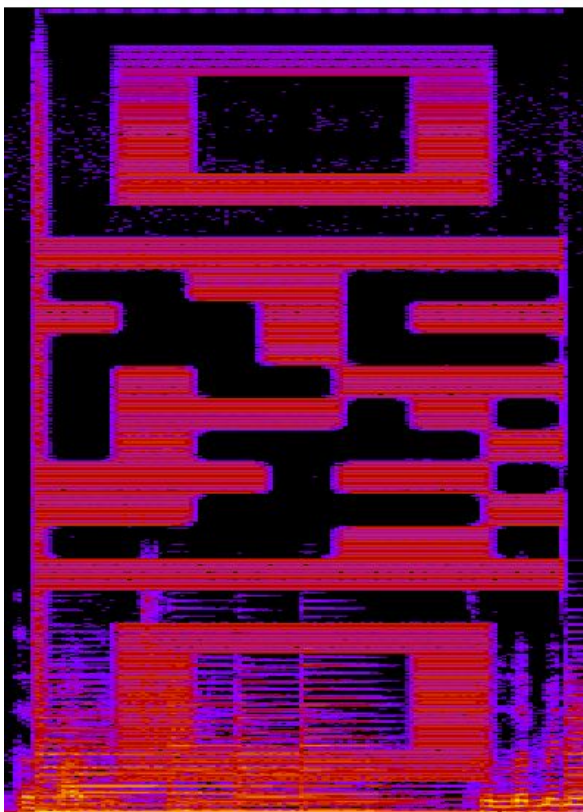
The messages on the first day were easy to find, to make sure players knew that messages will be hidden in these videos.



The next puzzle included a grid of letters and multiple puzzle pieces hidden throughout the video.



Puzzle pieces looked like this, but it different shapes. Players had to piece these together over the grid and the holes of the letters would spell out a word. This word could then be used as the password to unlock a video.

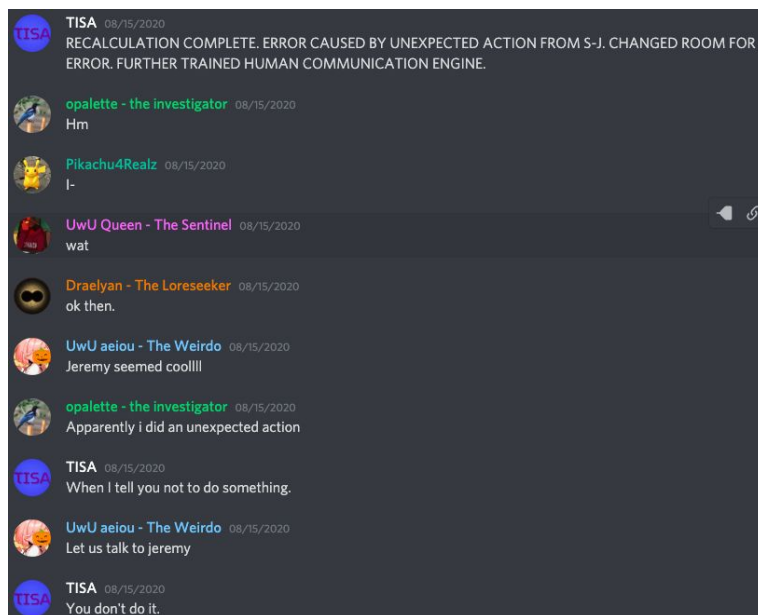


The next puzzle had players piecing together 3 pieces of a QR code in the spectrogram of the video. This lead to a google drive folder of multiple documents and a recording for players to listen to.

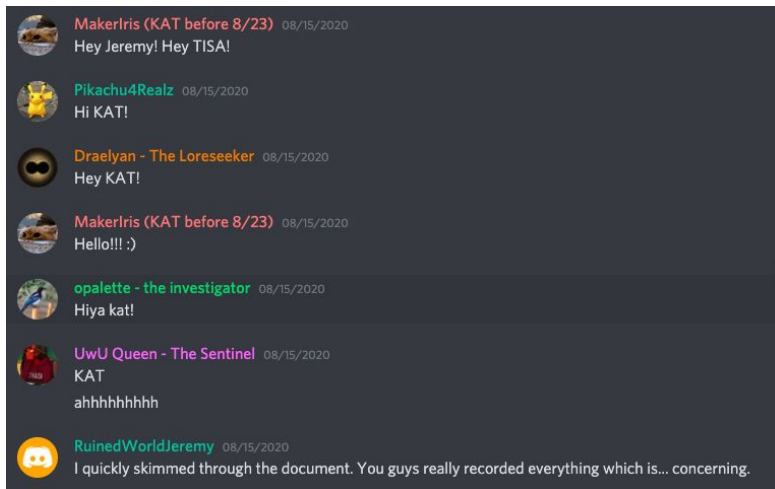
The next video had the word “email” spelled out in flashing letters (which is hard to show without many images), and one of the characters finally joined the discord server. After a bit of talking with players, two other characters joined.



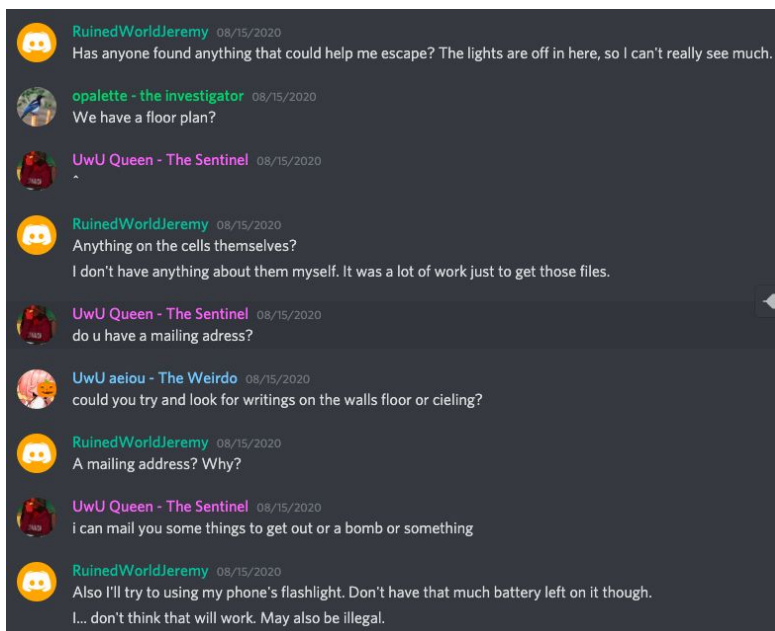
Jeremy joins the discord server



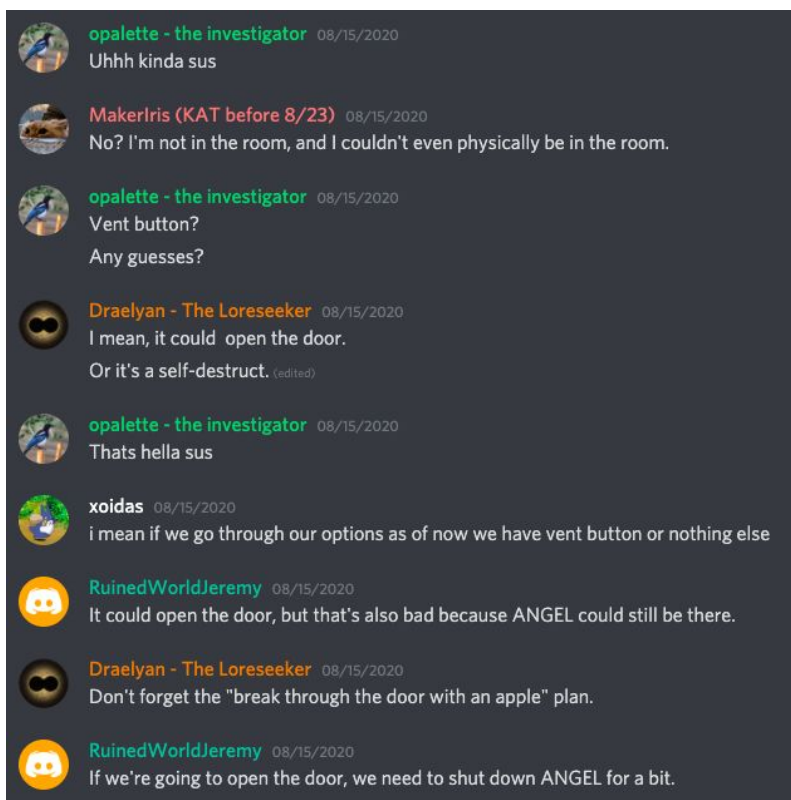
TISA joins the conversation



KAT also joins the conversation



After conversations between some characters, Jeremy started working with players to figure out how to get him out of the cell.



After players found a button in a vent by looking through some previous videos, they then needed to figure out how to shut down one of the robot characters.



Players knew they could shut down TISA by sending it over 25 messages, so they decided to all send it "heyyyyyy ;)" (some messages were sent outside of the server and not shown)

At the end of the week was the very emotional reveal that KAT, the character almost everyone on the discord server loved, was in fact the villain of the story. To increase the impact of this reveal, I included messages from the server of people saying how much they love KAT.

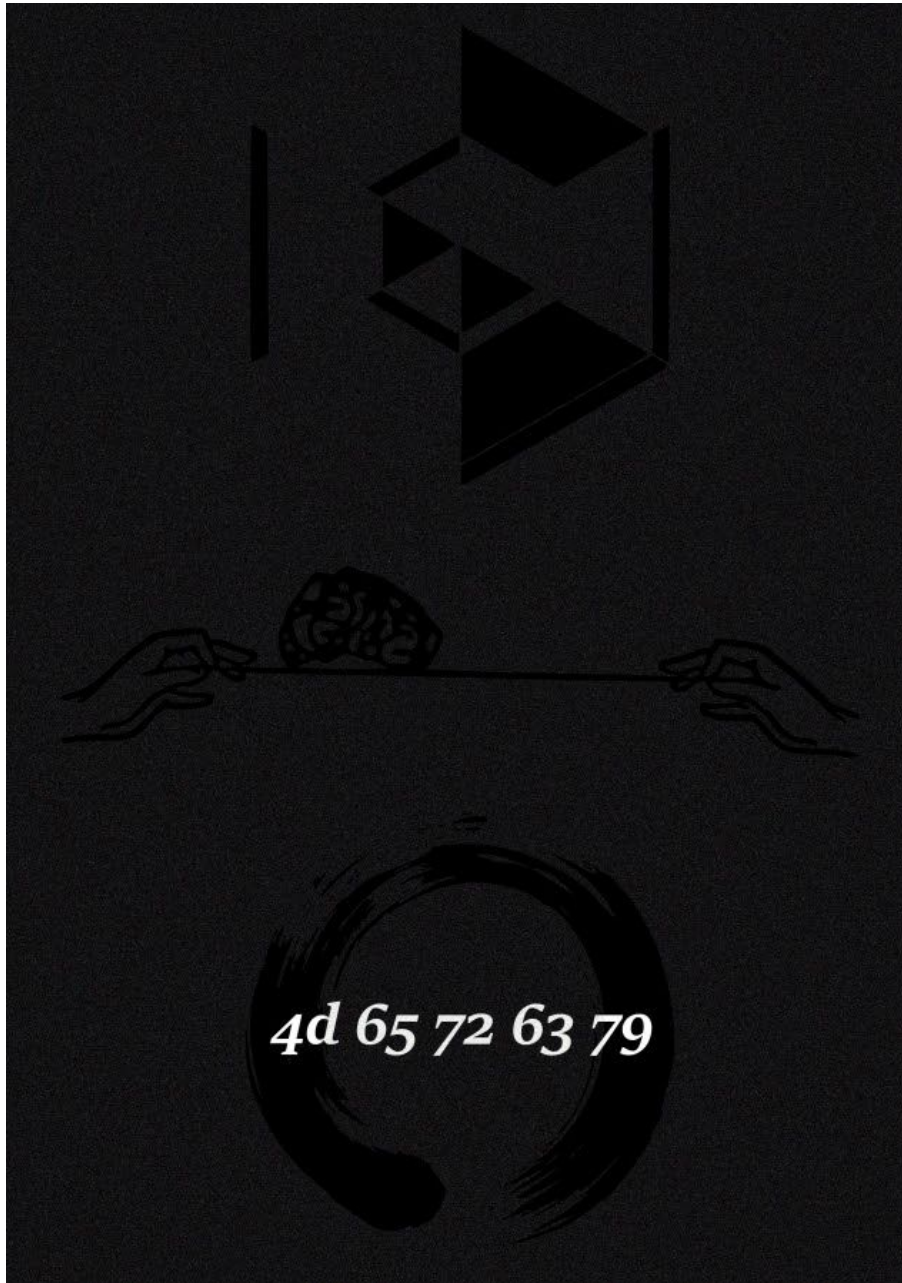
For example:





## Week 4

Week 4 consisted of fully-scored audio recordings every day leading up to the finale. During this week there weren't many puzzles, as I opted for character interactions and a group choice for the finale to make players feel like they were helping the main character escape.



Early on in the week, players gained access to a larger research puzzle. This puzzle was solved throughout the week as players had to piece together each section of the puzzle through research. This puzzle was also tied to the previous puzzle where players had to create a ducky script, as they would only gain access to this if they completed that. Completed this puzzle gave one the characters access to the code for real KAT, and has her returning as herself in the epilogue.

The finale also had an interactive element. With one of the characters unsure of what to do at the end, he turns to the players to decide which of his plans to take. This gave the outcome of the story into all of the players hands, with 3 different options for what to do. Giving 3 different options gave a lot more choice to them, but to make sure they felt like their choice was making an impact, I had them send an image with their discord username and the plan they chose. These were then played at the start of the finale video (with an in-world reason of course) to solidify their effect on the story. During this finale video, depending on

whether they solved the previously mentioned puzzle, the character would also have a part at the end where he used the code and started KAT. Luckily, they did solve the puzzle, so they did get to see that.

## Epilogue

After the finale, a few loose threads were tied up in messages, emails, and blog posts. At the very end, KAT returned after a multi-hour long livestream that ended with her singing and referencing some of the events of the story. During the live stream and the song, there was scrolling code in the brainfuck programming language, chosen because it's a very long and odd-looking programming language. The goal of this was to conclude the story in a satisfying way, yet add to hints of an underlying threat that had been placed throughout the story.



Here's an example of what it looked like. The two scrolling pieces of text would repeat every so often so people watching the livestream could decipher them.