Design Statement: I wanted to explore many themes that I had not before for this class. I am usually not one to enjoy or voluntarily play games in the horror genre, but I realized that I would need to not only understand what makes a good horror game, but also be comfortable imagining and executing ideas with those characteristics in order to be a better game designer. You will see the results of my pushed boundaries in this portfolio. I am pleased with the results, but I will continue to refine my ideas in the future.

The *Pontianak* and *Witness*:

The *pontianak* is a monster from Malaysian and Indonesian folklore, popularized by the film industry in the 1950s and 1960s. Her existence symbolizes the strong beliefs surrounding the male-favoring gender and sexual roles in these cultures. She, the monster is always female, has fangs, long flowing hair, and claws; she wears a long white robe or gown and is known to shriek or laugh loudly and possess "ghost-like traits" (Lee 1432) as well as "vampiric-like tendencies" (Skeat qtd. in Hock-Soon Ng 169). Timo Duile writes that some versions of the folklore state she is "…a victim of rape who fell pregnant and was eventually killed by her rapists… a traumatized ghost seeking revenge against men" (286). Since the tendency in most horror films is to sexualize or transmogrify women due to the persistence of the male gaze, Andrew Hock-Soon Ng argues that films depicting *pontianaks* completely reverse these paradigms. "…she… can hardly be said to be fetishized, because she is persistently depicted in all her grotesque glory" (172).

She is neither hero nor villain yet can be both of these simultaneously. It all depends on one's interpretation. I was heavily inspired by this creature and based two of my assignments around her. The original idea had more characters and more locations involved with the plot, but I felt that it made the overall themes too vague.

All images, except for the drawing of Annie as a Pontianak, are not my own and are merely there for reference.

Overview:

Witness follows the Player as they try to help a struggling college student whose situation reminds them of their own friend's experiences 20 years ago. Their friend, Annie, seems to stalk the Player and terrorize them, although it is left up to interpretation whether Annie's supernatural presence is real or if she is a manifestation of the Player's own guilt.

Beth Curtis is one of the Player's students, and they overhear her and her friends talking about a party at Alpha Delta Theta, a fraternity for which the Player pledged in the past. This leads them to look back on their own college days, and their friend

Annie's untimely death, and the events leading up to it. Annie's story will be told through flashbacks, dreams, and old text messages/voicemails that the Player has.

Concept/Design:

- Interactive narrative
- Horror elements: both supernatural and psychological
- Single player
- Plot mostly conveyed through text and/or voice recordings, like in Gone Home.
- Darker lighting, shadowy
- Less photo-realistic style, more fluid. Almost like an oil painting.

Audience and Platform:

- PC, Xbox, PlayStation
- 18+ due to themes and plot elements that could be sensitive to younger demographics.

Characters and Setting:

- Player: Former Alpha Delta Theta pledge, and Annie's best friend. Currently an English professor.
- Annie Warner: 20-year-old psychology major, player's best friend. Dies 20 years before time of game. Becomes a Pontianak after death.
- Beth Curtis: 19-year-old English major, looks similarly to Annie. Player's student.
- Various college students and professors
- Non-specific college campus, somewhere in the northeast of the U.S.
  - Alpha Delta Theta House
    - Both 20 years past and present game time

- o Player's classroom
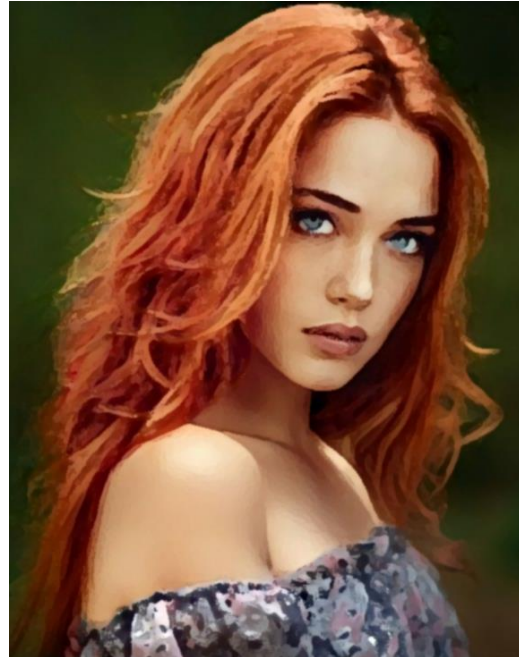- o Player's house

Interactions
- Various items will trigger different parts of the story.
  - o Alpha Delta Theta memorabilia
  - o Pictures
  - o Old texts
  - o Old voicemails
- Will include a few cut scenes including conversations, hauntings, dreams, etc.

Inspiration for campus' look: very old, creepy aesthetic

Annie Warner Inspiration Picture

Beth Curtis Inspiration Picture

Annie as Pontianak

Opening Scene:

The game starts in a dark bedroom. Annie Warner stands at the end of the bed. Her long dark hair shines and her beautiful white gown glows in the moonlight coming in through the window. She is just as beautiful as you remember. Her eyes sparkle and she smiles warmly. Her form flickers and suddenly Annie is looming over the bed. Her stomach is torn open, a bloody mess, a huge blood stain permeates her flowing white dress. She locks eyes with you. Her eyes are black voids. She shrieks and wails.

You knew. You knew and you did NOTHING!!!!! It's all your fault! You did this to me! And now SHE will suffer. Will you just do nothing again? How many times will you let MY blood stain your hands?!

She lunges at you, extending her claw-like hands. Her fanged mouth seems to swallow you whole. The game cuts to black, revealing the title card showing the word Witness seemingly written in blood, it drips down the screen.

Works Cited

Duile, Timo. "Kuntilanak: Ghost Narratives and Malay Modernity in Pontianak, Indonesia." *Brill*, vol. 176, 2020, pp. 279-303.

Hock-Soon Ng, Andrew. "'Death and the Maiden': The *Pontianak* as Excess in Malay Popular Culture." *Draculas, Vampires, and Other Undead Forms: Essays on Gender, Race, and Culture,* edited by John Edgar Browning and Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart, Scarecrow Press Inc., 2009, pp. 167-86

Lee, Y. B. "The Villainous *Pontianak*? Examining Gender, Culture and Power in Malaysian Horror Films." *Pertanika Journals Social Sciences & Humanities,* vol. 24, no. 4, 2016, pp. 1431-44.

242 Eucalyptus Lane:

With *Witness,* I felt the overall plot and surrounding themes were too vague. This muddled the design and prevented me from really focusing on the core story of the *Pontianak*. In my second assignment, I expanded on my previous ideas by narrowing my focus and further detailing the story. I feel that I was more successful this time around and that I was able to explore the intense and complex themes more thoroughly.

The drawing of Annie is my own, and the text messages were created by me using assets from Adobe Stock. The house was built using the Sims 4 by me. The music is not mine.

Overview:

242 Eucalyptus Lane follows the Player as they remember the events leading to their friend, Annie's death 20 years ago. Throughout, a ghost-like Annie seems to stalk the Player and terrorize them, although it is left up to interpretation whether Annie's supernatural presence is real or if she is a manifestation of the Player's own guilt. Annie's story will be told through flashbacks, dreams, and old text messages/voicemails that the Player has. The game ends with a cut scene showing a group of young college freshmen excitedly discussing Alpha Delta Theta's upcoming party. One of the freshmen looks very much like Annie, who appears behind the group and stares directly into camera and then fades away.

Concept/Design:

- Interactive narrative
- Horror elements: both supernatural and psychological
- Single player
- Plot mostly conveyed through text and/or voice recordings, like in Gone Home.
- Darker lighting, shadowy
- Less photo-realistic style, more fluid. Almost like an oil painting.
- Ambience noise when collecting story items.
- Subtle but eerie music in background during dream sequences/hauntings
  - Kind of like Little Nightmares or something along those lines
  - Mostly sad, but still eerie enough that you get goosebumps.
  - Six's Theme Part 2
  - The Nome's Nest
  - Prison Toys

Audience and Platform:

- PC, Xbox, PlayStation
- 18+ due to themes and plot elements that could be sensitive to younger demographics.

Characters and Setting:

- Player
- Annie Warner
- Various college students (featured in flashbacks)
- Non-specific college campus, somewhere in the northeast of the U.S.
  - Alpha Delta Theta House (via flashbacks)
  - Player's house

Interactions

- Various items will trigger different parts of the story.
  - Alpha Delta Theta memorabilia
  - Pictures
  - Old texts

- o Old voicemails
- Hauntings and dreams will occur at designated points in the story.

Opening Scene:

The game starts in a dark bedroom. Your best friend, Annie Warner, stands at the end of the bed. Her long red hair shines and her beautiful white gown glows in the moonlight coming in through the window. She is just as beautiful as you remember. Her eyes sparkle and she smiles warmly. Her form flickers and suddenly Annie is looming over the bed. Her stomach is torn open, a bloody mess, a huge blood stain permeates her flowing white dress. She locks eyes with you. Her eyes are black voids. She shrieks and wails. You knew. You knew and you did NOTHING!!!!! It's all your fault! You did this to me! She lunges at you, extending her claw-like hands. Her fanged mouth seems to swallow you whole. The game cuts to black, revealing the title card showing *242 Eucalyptus Lane* seemingly written in blood, it drips down the screen.

Annie as Pontianak

The Pontianak is a creature from Malaysian folklore. When a woman is sexually assaulted and dies from the resulting pregnancy, she comes back as a Pontianak, seeking vengeance against anyone involved in her demise. Annie's vengeance comes from the Player facing and accepting the events leading up to Annie's death.

Player's House Exterior

(Sims 4)

Ground Floor

Second Floor (Above)

Closer view of living room. Bookshelves will have photo albums that are story triggers.
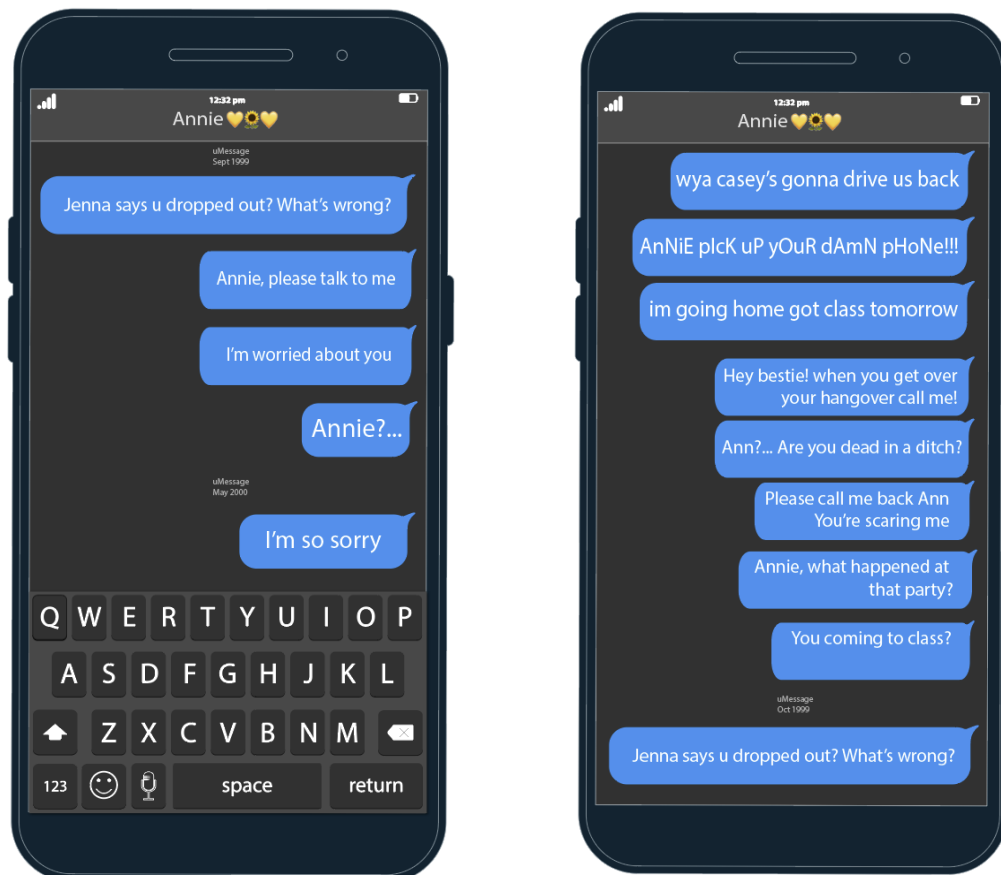
Gallery walls will have various photos that will be story triggers

Clutter on the table by the door will have story triggers, namely the phone.

More story triggers via photos in bedroom

Samples of text messages on phone that will trigger story.

Corridor:

For the final project in this class, I worked in a group to create a game demo of my group member's game design using Twine. His concept was interesting and thought-provoking. I had a lot of fun bringing it to life. I feel like we could have explored certain themes and aspects further, but due to time and end-of-semester burn-out, we were unable to. I am happy with the final product, though.

Corridor

A game about turbulence

Created by: Avery Smith, Biraj Meshiya,

Milo Witcher, & Tonya Velcko

Tonya Velcko
Final Portfolio

Introduction

Corridor is a first-person exploration game where the player wanders through a house, viewing it through the eyes of a pet cat. The game uses several pieces of the Rhetoric of Play, pieces of the Hero's Journey, and Procedural Rhetoric. Even though the story is somewhat ambiguous, it promotes meaningful play by allowing the player to envision their own true plot.

Corridor uses every aspect of the Rhetoric of Play excluding frivolity. The game possesses a somber and serious tone, having to deal with the turbulence and tumult of life. Things become serious, and there is not much space for flights of fancy. Progress is a key part of the game's plot: Things becoming better, being able to attain that "good" or "happy" ending. The player must explore the entirety of the house and witness the problems that the household is facing in order to witness the happiness that waits beyond. Despite the progress the player needs to make, the player holds no power. The game is linear, there are no choices the player can make to change what they are seeing. This lack of power for the player plays into the rhetoric of the game: sometimes we feel powerless about the challenges that face us in life, and all we can do is see them through to the end. Identity and Self are brought up very briefly for the player. They are able to see themselves in the reflections of objects and are aware of their own existence in the world around them. It is clear the player is a cat and can only witness what is happening in front of them (again playing into the role of power within the game structure).

Imaginary is important to the game's procedural rhetoric, though not so much the Rhetoric or context of the play. The problems brought forth by the game are heavy and can strike a nerve with some players. However, for procedural rhetoric, the idea of certain objects

being imaginary or on another plane of existence helps convey the idea that not all problems

are visible to the naked eye. Sometimes there are layers, we as people need to pull back in order

to understand what is truly going on, or in this case, what the plot of the game is.

The fine line between imaginary objects and real objects regarding the procedural

rhetoric gives us nonverbal cues and hints regarding the game's plot. A prime example is the

mess the player first discovers in the bedroom at the beginning of the game. None of those

objects are real, however; when the player gets to the second bedroom, we can see that these

problems have become real. They are no longer in a sketchy style (alluding that they are not

grounded in reality). All of the mess and damage to the room is very real. These subtle changes

in the game convey meanings without outright telling the player.

The player being a cat is a part of the procedural rhetoric as well. The player is not able

to choose a human character, they are simply a cat with no control of their environment. This

lack of freedom conveys the sense of hopelessness which is pivotal to the plot of the game.

Then there is the progression: needing to go to certain places to progress from room to room.

Not being able to look back after doing so. This also runs parallel to the plot.

Finally, there is the Hero's Journey. The player starts in the 7th stage of the journey. They

are approaching the main issue, though not experiencing it themselves. Think of them more as a

side character to the hero of the journey (The cat's owner). As they get closer to the bedroom

downstairs and the basement, they are getting closer and closer to the 8th step: the most

tumultuous step. The pit, their biggest ordeal. After they view the true chaos happening within

the walls of the house, things slowly become better, and the game ends on step 11: a

resurrection. Things get better, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Throughout the Hero's

Journey map for the player, we can also see the dissipation of the procedural rhetoric objects. As

the player ventures further into the "special world" phase, and out into the "ordinary world" we

see the disappearance of these sketchy objects. They are almost non-existent by the end of the

game, as the player has come back to a state of normalcy. There is no more intense turbulence

like there was in the "special world".

Plot Overview

The plot of the story is both simple and complex. The player is a pet cat, who starts their

journey hiding under their owner's bed. They venture out from underneath the bed and explore

the tumult of the house while staying hidden from their owner and the person who appears to

be their owners' partner.

As the player travels from room to room they are able to gain more insight into the

issues happening within the house. Signs point to their owner struggling with depression,

finances, and emotional abuse from one of their partners. This information is told through key

objects within each room, whether real or not. Each room is accompanied by text, seeming to

come from the cat's owner. These text snippets further the meaning of each object found in the

rooms.

Eventually, the player will make it to the back porch, where they are able to see the

happy ending their owner craves.

Characters

There are only 3 characters seen by the player throughout the game. The 4th character, the abusive partner, remains hidden to the player. None of the characters have names as far as the player knows.

The Cat

The cat is the player character. They are a small, brown, non-gendered cat with a white marking on the face. They explore the house and witness the ongoings within. They are entirely player controlled.

The Owner

The owner is one of the two characters seen at the end of the game, living a happy life with one of their partners. They are the primary person experiencing the strain and struggle presented throughout the game. They are a non-player character.

The Partner

The Partner is the partner of The Owner. They experience much of the struggle that The Owner is experiencing. They are also seen at the end of the game living a happy life with The Owner. They are a non-playable character.

The Ex

The Ex is the main antagonist throughout the gameplay. They are the one unintelligibly yelling at the end of the hall close to the beginning of the game. Much of the issues addressed through the imaginary objects and real damage to the house are caused by The Ex. They are a non-playable character.

The House

The house is an ordinary house with a polyamorous triangle and their cat inhabiting it. It has 3 main floors consisting of a basement, main floor, and second floor. Each floor has its own color pallet pertaining to its role in the story. The world is also the regular world. Most events that happen in the game are events that can happen in the real world.
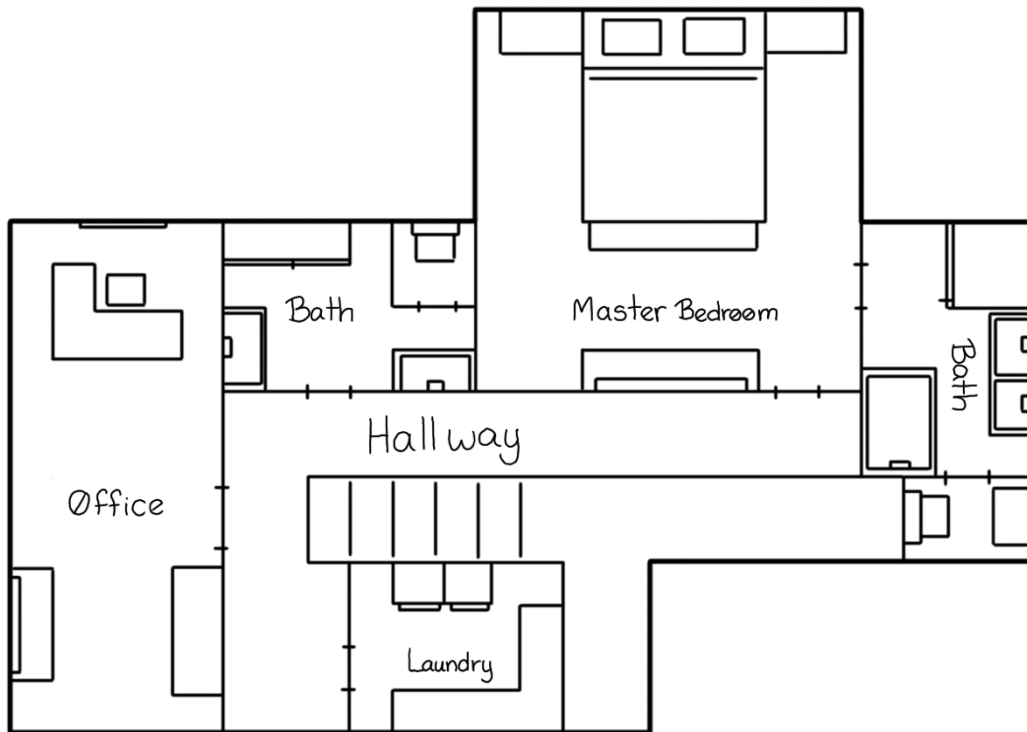
The Second Floor

Figure 1: The floor plan of the second floor.

The second floor is where the player begins the game. It has a master bedroom with a master bathroom connected to it. Out and down the hall is a secondary bathroom, a large office space/entertainment room, and a laundry room.

Figure 2: The color pallet of the entire second floor.

The color pallet of the second floor is dark and gloomy, as a lot of conflict and turbulence occurs up here.
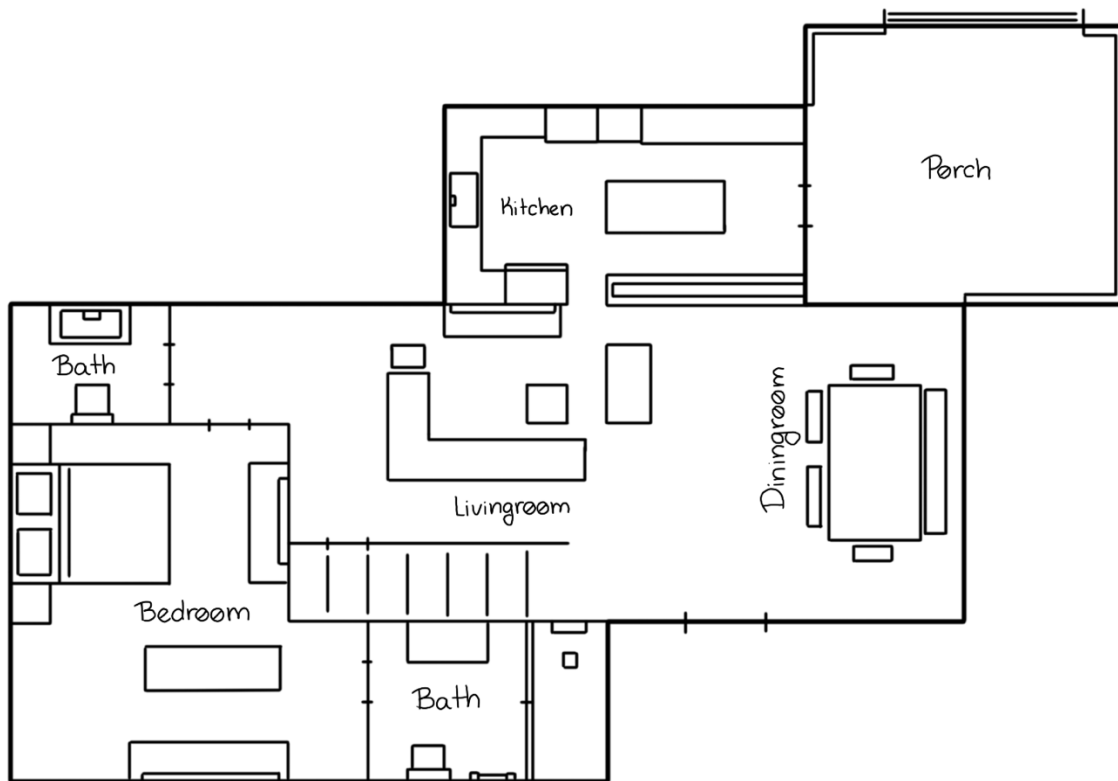
The First Floor

Figure 3: The floor plan of the first floor.

The first floor of the house has a slightly warmer color pallet to it the first time it

is visited, however; it is not as warm as the second time it is visited. The first floor

consists of a main living space with a dining room, a guest bathroom, a guest bedroom,

a kitchen, and a porch. The guest bedroom of the house has a dark color pallet matching

the one in the basement. The porch has the lightest color pallet out of all the rooms. The

porch is the location where the game ends, and the non-player characters receive their

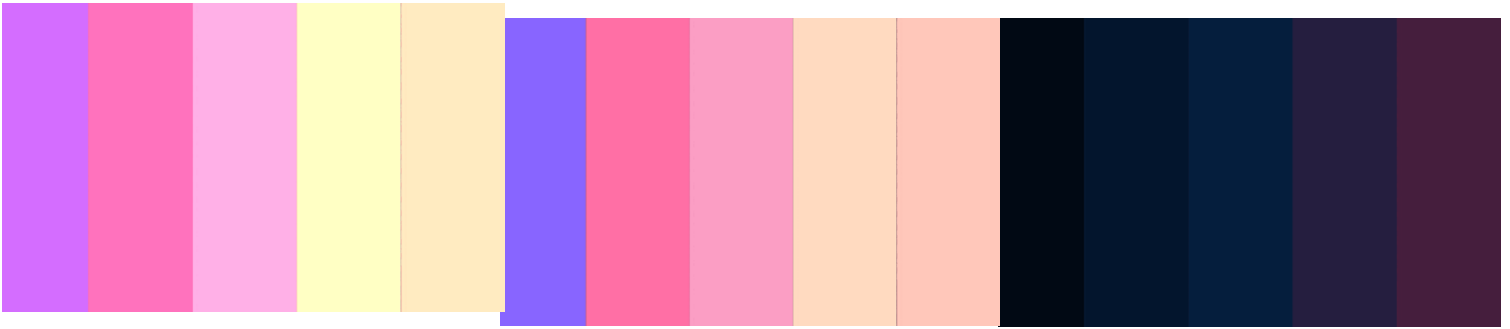happy ending, or rather a glimpse into the future.

Figure 4: The color pallet shifts in tone with each revisit of

the room, it slowly becomes darker and gloomier.
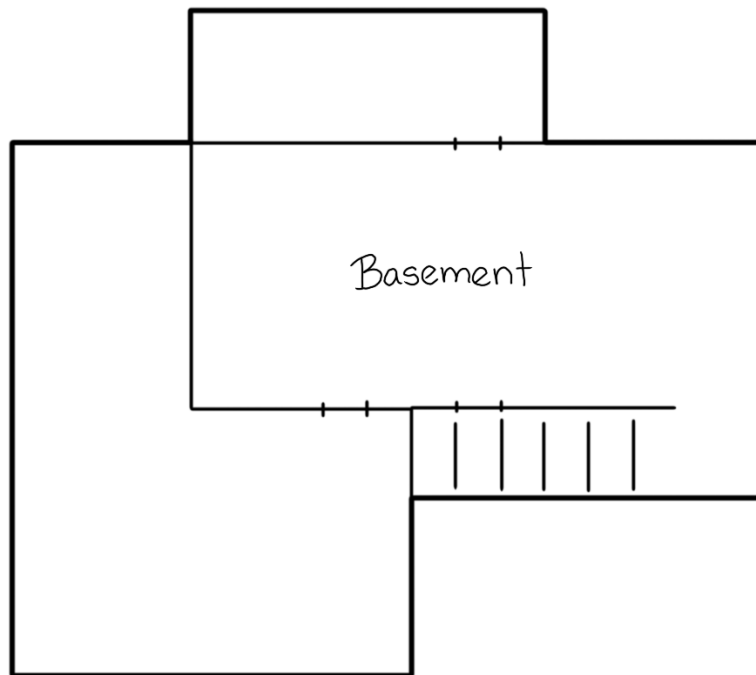
<u>The Basement</u>

Figure 5: The floor plan of the basement.

The basement has the darkest color pallet out of all the rooms. It is cold and

damp in the basement, and it has the sketchiest objects out of all the floors/rooms. Not

much is to be done in the basement other than reading what is on the sketchy objects

(as they a predominantly boxes and labels).

Figure 6: The dark color pallet represents the cold

and dark nature of the house's basement.

Worldbuilding Schemas

Societal Structure

The societal structure within the house is deeply unbalanced, with The Ex reigning

supreme over The Owner and The Partner. The Ex is the one calling most, if not all of the

shots within the house, leading to what the player is seeing throughout their journey of

the house.

The Owner and The Partner stand on the same level as one another, they see each other as equals. They carry the weight of things as equals, and do not deem one as being less than the other on the basis of sex, employment status, or mental state. They will always deem each other as equals regardless of outside factors. The Ex however, does not see The Owner nor The Partner in the same way they see each other. The Ex deems both of them as lesser than himself, regarding himself as the head of the household and the most useful out of the three.

The player (otherwise known as the cat) is seen as a baby to The Owner and The Partner. The cat is treated like a spoiled child, receiving as much love and affection as possible when there are no outside issues hindering the relationship. The cat tends to gravitate towards The Owner and The Partner, staying away from The Ex as much as possible.

The social structure within the house is not traditional to the rest of the world. They live in a polyamorous triangle, meaning each person is in a relationship with the other in the triangle. The rest of the world's couples fall into the category of traditional couples (individuals of the opposite sex), having separated pets from their children (unlike the relationship taking place within the house).

The social structure taking place within the house would be seen as deeply flawed for several reasons outside of the polyamorous triangle taking place and the cat being deemed as a childlike figure.

Health and Medicine

Within the house, health and medicine are a sensitive subject. It is clear from the gameplay that The Owner and The Partner struggle greatly with mental health. In a way it is also an issue for The Ex.

The Owner struggles with mental illness, some hereditary, some from the tumultuous and stressful environment. They are able to take medications to quell the symptoms of their ailment, however it is something that is going to stick with them for a while.

The Partner understands that they may have some sort of mental illness but is unable to receive medications to handle the symptoms of the illness. They have no issue with The Owner taking medication, and actively encourages them to continue doing so (as they clearly do not take them from time to time as displayed by the pills all over the floor in the second bathroom downstairs).

The Ex parallels to how society feels the most about mental health: a sort of handle it on your own deal. They do not believe in therapy nor medications and believe anyone taking medication is a drug addict.

Society slightly varies from how The Ex views mental health and illness. They believe therapy is an option, but not required. Medication is also more encouraged than The Ex would like it to be. Society also does not deem anyone taking prescribed

medications as a drug addict. They are instead someone seen as taking responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.

Location

The Location of the story is key to conveying how the plot unfolds. The house is set in a suburban setting (Though not mentioned by Ippolito, it falls nicely between rural and urban settings), as most domestic issues like this occur in environments such as these. There is ability to have the porch in the back of the house without having to look at a dingy city, or off into endless fields of crops and nothingness. It gives the false sense of an idyllic lifestyle, as having a house in suburban America is the American Dream.

Within the house every room gives off a hostile aura. Every turn there is some new issue or problem that needs to be addressed. The Owner and Partner cannot take two steps without an issue escalating. It presents a trouble in paradise feel to the game.

Corridor_Upstairs_Bedroom.html