

MNEMOSYNE – NARRATIVE DESIGN PROCESS DOCUMENT

Mnemosyne was made with ambiguity in mind: I've always been fascinated with the portrayal of morality and imperfection, as well as psychological horror in general. When I heard the theme was "escape the city," my immediate thought was that of a prison. I thought it'd be fun to combine the theme of a "mind prison" with that of the deep sea, to emphasize the metaphor of memories obscured and escaping towards the light. This also ties in nicely with the theme of forgiveness and becoming better; as your life starts looking up, things get brighter. I wanted this story to challenge the audience's perception of good and evil, to force them to be uncomfortable in their own morality, and to ask the question of what it means to be a flawed individual.

Mnemosyne - the prison - is possibly my favourite "NPC" of the story. It is not an individual, it doesn't say anything to the player, but it has impact. It is always there, watching, enforcing the status quo. I thought a single identifiable antagonist, one that was human like the protagonist, wouldn't be as impactful given the story's intent. Hence, the prison was made a character in its own right. It is the cruelest character in the story, so it made sense for it to be inhuman. Giving it a name and naming it after the Greek goddess of memory was a fun ironic bit of identification. And its absolute authority is an extreme representation of justice: it punishes all crimes no matter the intent, and this trait makes it an unfair arbiter, a fact that's also meant to get under the player's skin.

The Benthos were named after the deep sea organisms that live in the benthic layer, i.e. the sea floor. I originally thought to have them be merely monsters populating Mnemosyne, but figured allowing the prison to control them would make them more threatening, since if it can control them at any time, it means it's always watching. Otherwise, there's no rhyme or reason to their behaviour. They're just animals to be feared. And it's fine there's nothing more to them other than predator: the real horror of them lies in the sudden moment they gain human intelligence as Mnemosyne takes the reins. They're more for environmental storytelling.

The decision to have the protagonist be a parent was arbitrary, but I deliberately wanted to avoid any generic tropes. Some examples of those are the protagonist has a lover they want to return to, a trope that's especially egregious if they're of the opposite gender. I also wanted to avoid any gendered identification for the protagonist to avoid gender stereotypes. As well, a lot of the media I've engaged with has a bias towards younger characters, with middle-aged or older characters serving secondary roles, or even discriminated against. Again, *Mnemosyne* is meant to challenge the audience; convention was avoided as much as possible.