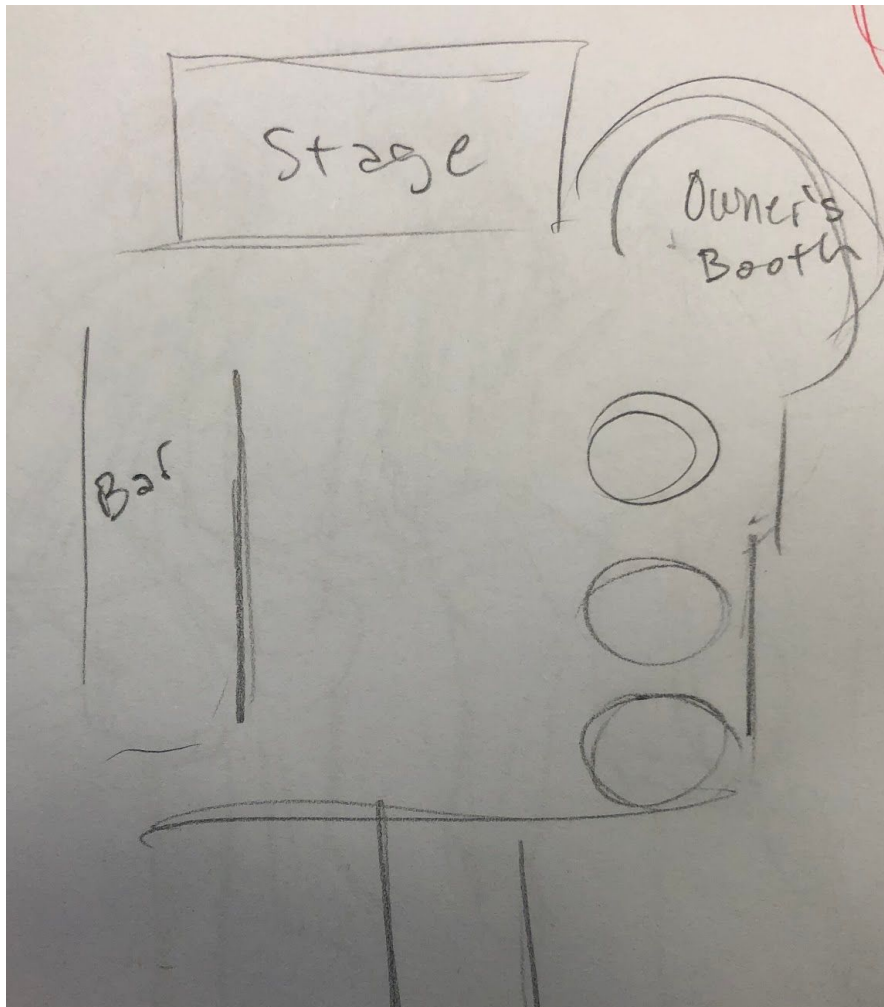


# Wonderland: An Outsider's Story

By Michelle Zheng and Fidel Caceres

In this prototype, Fidel and I worked together to make a world and the diverging stories that we could derive from it. *Wonderland* is about an illicit speakeasy under the aforementioned name in 1920s America. In Fidel's story, you can go through the night of the newly hired bartender. In my game, you experience the night through the eyes of a first-time patron who was recommended the establishment by their friend, the doorman of the place. The stories of the characters occur in the periphery of the other and their paths cross on some instances due to the fact they are a bartender and a patron. Below is a general map of the setting, Wonderland. The patron would enter the establishment from the bottom triangle while the bartender would be working at the bar.



wake up   
 later   
 early   
 like -1   
 Wonderland   
 Booth like -1   
 owner asks for drink   
 get drink   
 guess Bar ask love   
 thrown out helps   
 thrown out   
 get for drink   
 you have a good night & no one is hurt!   
 get shot   
 money   
 take   
 ignore   
 shot   
 dance   
 drink   
 sit down   
 spill drink + kicked out   
 Bartender   
 Steals   
 tell door man   
 bt gets shoot   
 bt gets thrown out

It's starting to get dark out when you open your eyes. You had taken a short nap after returning from work earlier today in preparation for a night of fun at your friend's new workplace. A hidden away little speakeasy that the law hadn't caught wind of yet.

**Let's freshen up and get there early!**

**Still got time. I'll catch a few more z's.**

“Welcome to Wonderland,” the doorman says.

The space is dark, but cozy. There’s a jazz playing and you spot the bar by the stage and a booth in the back. You look back to your friend.

“Now, don’t you be going near that booth alright? That’s the owner’s private area and she’s the type to clean up anyone she doesn’t like. You understand?”

“Crystal,” you grin at him and he rolls his eyes before going back to his job.

**Get a drink.**

**Let's see that booth.**



Early sketch of patron's choice. Bar or the booth?

Arc 2 is the conflict. This part is more flexible because do to the various choices the player can make, there is not a clear common point that can be considered the spark for the conflict. The conflicts themselves are the choices that the player must make. Particularly those in the beginning while the player is unsure of the consequences. These come in the form of incomplete information most of the time, particularly during a first playthrough. Since a new player would be unfamiliar with certain characters or circumstances behind certain events, many players make choices unsure of the exact results of their decisions until they have made them.

Should you go to the bar or go to the back booth? The player is warned from a decision, but in truth, the player never really know what exactly will happen.

Another conflict that results out of the choices is in-game vs out of game. There are choices that the player can make that are interesting to the player controlling, but would clearly be a terrible decision for the in-game character.

*In the corner of your eyes, you see it; there is a stack of money under the counter, barely visible from your angle. You're not exactly tight on money, but still...*

**Nab it while the bartender is busy.**

**Better not.**

Instances like this, a sensible person would likely not want to steal money while they're already in an illegal establishment like a speakeasy, but a curious player might want to choose to steal to see what will happen.

Part 3 of the arc is the climax. There are a few climax moments in the story and there is no specific moment shared for every playthrough. They are clear moments where the player can make a critical choice. Like whether to report the stealing bartender to your friend or to the owner who you've been warned away from. Or whether or not to try and escape or escalate the situation when you refuse an order from the owner.

*"No?" She repeats with a raised eyebrow.*

*She doesn't seem particularly bothered by your refusal, but the atmosphere has shifted. The earlier noise from the other patrons seems to have quieted a little and you feel... unnerved. You don't want to retract what you said but...*

**Turn and leave.**

**Ask her to get *you* a drink.**

The last arc is the conclusion or the ending. There are 5 general endings overall. First is the ending where the player character is thrown out of Wonderland.

There are a few ways to trigger this ending. If you choose to go to the owner's booth and get her a drink, by choosing something you would like, you anger the owner and she tosses you out. Another way to trigger this ending is by going to the owner and refusing to her order. If you arrived to the speakeasy early, she won't be offended by your appearance and will only toss you



out if you try to leave. The last way to trigger this ending is to go to the bar instead and get a drink. Instead of sitting down to finish your drink, if you try to dance, you will spill it on the owner, resulting in you being tossed out.

The next ending is where the player is shot and thrown out. There are two ways to trigger this ending. First is if the player chooses to steal the money under the bar. The other is if the player refuses to the owner's demand for a drink after intruding on their booth. If the player escalates the situation, you will be shot. A third, slightly different scenario will occur if the player arrives to Wonderland late. The owner will be offended by your unkempt appearance and if you refused her, she will put you down.

The third ending is if the player has a (relatively) peaceful night. This ending can be achieved if the player gets the owner a drink she likes or if the player doesn't get any extra sleep and relaxes at the table with their drink. In this ending, no one is shot or thrown out of Wonderland.

The last two endings involve the bartender. If the player spots the bartender stealing, if the player reports to the owner, the bartender will be shot and the player will pass out. If the player reports to the doorman, the bartender will be thrown out without being killed.

This story world was based on an another project we had worked on before based on a Caravan Palace song of the same name. The aesthetic initially conceptualized was something akin to neon noir. Characters were created based on what is mentioned in the song and what one would expect to see in an establishment like a 1920s speakeasy.

The owner (conceptualized on the right) is an archetypal femme fatale with elements of the ruler archetype as she is capricious and will put down anyone who she finds distasteful.

Both the bartender and the patrons are protagonists in each of their stories, but the patron is designed to be more of a chaotic neutral type of character who want a good time with their illicit alcohol. The bartender is more on the normal neutral side as she is a tired employee who is desperate for cash.

The bartender plays a unique role as the sage and mediator in the story as they provide advice to both the bartender and the patron and in situations where they intervene, bloodshed is avoided.



In terms of discarded ideas, early ideas involved the brother mentioned in the original Caravan Palace song, but as he is not physically present in the song's narrative and we didn't want him to overshadow the owner's authority, the brother was ultimately omitted from the script. Another idea that I tailored for patron's storyline is the peaceful night endings. In the song, someone is always thrown out "into the gutter" and to reflect that, I had initially planned for every ending to always have someone thrown out. As the script progressed however, I found that I would rather make an ending where no one is hurt over contriving a reason for someone to suddenly be thrown out of Wonderland.