



SHIVAH

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OVERVIEW



A third person point-and-click adventure game where protagonist *Russell Stone* doubles as both rabbi and sleuth, as he tries to solve a murder he is implicated in while contemplating the answers to some of life's hardest questions.



STRONGEST ELEMENT



The complex and layered representation of *Rabbi Stone* which conveys his internal struggle of being torn between his morals as a man and the teachings of his faith as a rabbi.



UNSUCCESSFUL ELEMENT



The final confrontation between Rabbis *Stone* and *Zelig* suffers from the combat mechanics being tied into the motif of rabbinical responses, without giving the player any intuition or prior knowledge of how these might work in concert.



HIGHLIGHT



The moment when *Rabbi Zelig* kills *Rajshree*, though not available in all endings, stands out both in terms of its shock value and what it signifies in conjunction with the central themes of the game.



CHARACTERS



Russell Stone is the rabbi of *B'nai Ben-Zion* synagogue. Bitter, cynical and in the midst of an existential crisis, he often questions his morals and faith and is forced into the role of a detective to clear his name when he becomes the prime suspect in the murder of a former member of his congregation.



Josh Kaplan is the cantor at *Stone's* synagogue and acts as his foil, with *Kaplan's* youthful, vibrant energy contrasting with *Stone's* disillusioned, embittered and cynical demeanor.



Detective *Sam Durkin* sets the ball rolling for the murder plot driving the game by informing *Stone* of the killing of *Jack Lauder* and indirectly suggesting that *Stone* is the prime suspect, thereby thrusting the protagonist into the murder mystery.



Rajshree Lauder is the wife of murder victim *Jack* and has a complex relationship with *Stone* which evolves as the game progresses. She provides *Stone* (and hence the player) with information about her family business which is key in solving the murder. In the final act, she is kidnapped by the perpetrator and her fate rests on choices made by the player.



Amos Zelig is the rabbi of the prosperous *Beth Tikvah* synagogue. In contrast to *Stone*, *Zelig* is revered, wealthy and does not have the internal struggles and conflicts that plague *Stone*. He is revealed as the antagonist when *Stone* hacks into his email to reveal *Zelig's* complicity in the game's twin murders.



The shady and mysterious *Joe DeMarco* pops up multiple times in *Stone's* murder investigation. The two eventually have a heated encounter in an underground subway station, where *Stone* gains the upper hand and it is left to the player to decide *DeMarco's* fate, the result of which has a significant impact on the final outcome of the game.



LESSONS



- Intuitive mechanics for in-game tasks can help the player identify with the character and add to narrative experience
The search engine and drag-and-drop mechanics simulate Stone's mental processes during investigation
- Don't combine narrative elements with in-game mechanics when there is no natural fit
Combining the motif of rabbinical responses with combat mechanics is contrived and illogical
- A flawed finale can sour the player to an otherwise great experience
The final act ends with a trial-and-error stricken encounter that is more frustrating than rewarding
- Depriving players of agency can be powerful when done right
It drives home the sense of helplessness that Stone is experiencing in the game



Search Engine



Drag-and-Drop