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Digital Storytelling

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*The Missing Egg: Final Project Documentation*

Link: <https://sylvia5monthes.itch.io/wilson-mystery>; Password: digitalstorytelling2021

(The application has a left sidebar for saving progress, adjusting volume, and restarting)

For my Digital Storytelling final project, I wanted to tell a lighthearted story that I could have fun creating. After reading about it in the class readings, I knew that I wanted to learn how to use Twine, a platform for creating interactive fiction with hypertext. I was particularly interested in how I could make use of its user-friendly functionality, especially the passages and links. I initially thought about detective boards, and I eventually landed on the idea of designing a simple mystery that the player can actively participate in resolving. While brainstorming, I realized that I could use Wilson Residence Hall as the setting and incorporate real elements into a fictional plot, recording characteristics of my freshman dorm for others to experience.

My story is called *The Missing Egg: A Wilson Original*, and it is an interactive traditional story. The player starts in Wilson's center hallway and is given directions to make scrambled eggs, which is when they discover that an egg has gone missing. After this revelation, the player must explore the first floor and search for clues that will unlock more actions that they can take, gradually bringing them closer to discovering the egg's whereabouts and the thief. Given the motivation and the freedom to travel through rooms and click on action choices, the player has agency. However, the player must follow a linear progression through the story and cannot go directly to the ending even if they already know the answer. They are led to believe that the egg

has been eaten, and at the end it is revealed that the egg is actually in someone's suite restroom (Video). While finding clues, the player reads descriptions of each room that are based off of my knowledge of Wilson after living there for a semester.

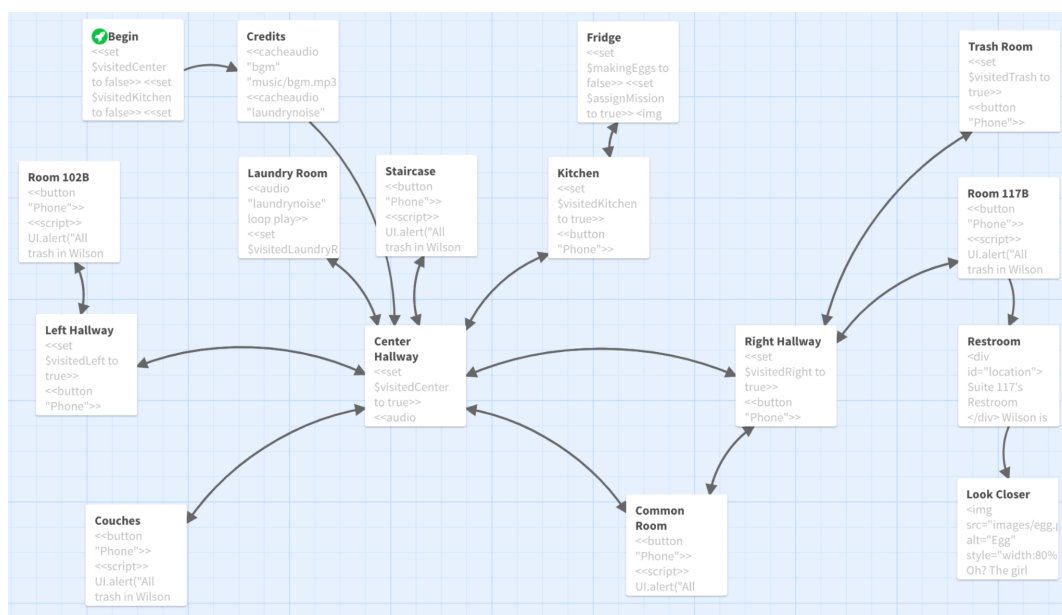


Figure 1. Final project storyboard in Twine.

I used spatial and procedural affordances to create my story. In Twine, I designated each passage to be a room or section of Wilson and laid out these passages on the storyboard similar to how they are located relative to each other in real life (see Figure 1). Links between each passage allow the player to navigate between rooms. The storyboard resembles a deep map, not only depicting the whereabouts of each room but also documenting my personal experiences and interactions in them. Employing spatial and environmental storytelling, my story embeds a mystery narrative as well as a more subtle personal one in the rooms and halls of Wilson. The player, addressed as “You,” vaguely assumes my point of view without knowing much of my identity. After reading descriptions of certain objects and rooms and learning of my thoughts regarding them, they are free to come up with their own ideas and fill in the blanks. Their path through Wilson as they solve the mystery is also unique. While Twine does not require any

coding experience to make an interactive story, I coded in Sugarcube, Twine's programming language, to create procedural affordances. Variables and conditionals specify that certain actions and text appear only if the player has found certain clues, talked to certain people, or explored specific areas, tracking the player's progress through the story (see Figure 2 and Figure 3).

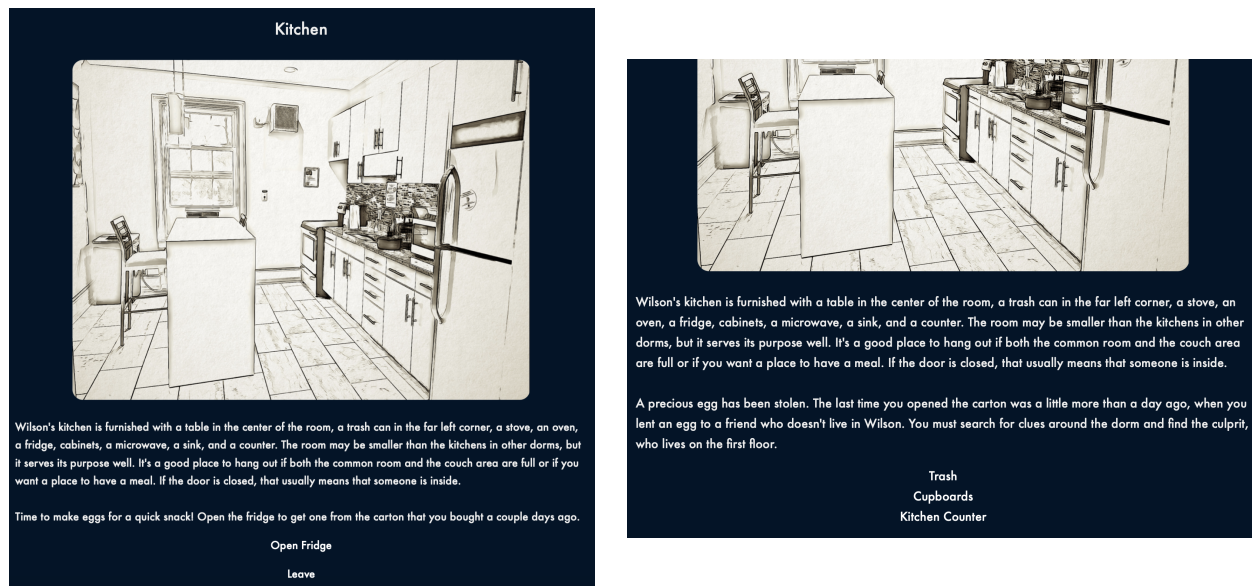


Figure 2. Kitchen text changes after opening the fridge and the missing egg is discovered.

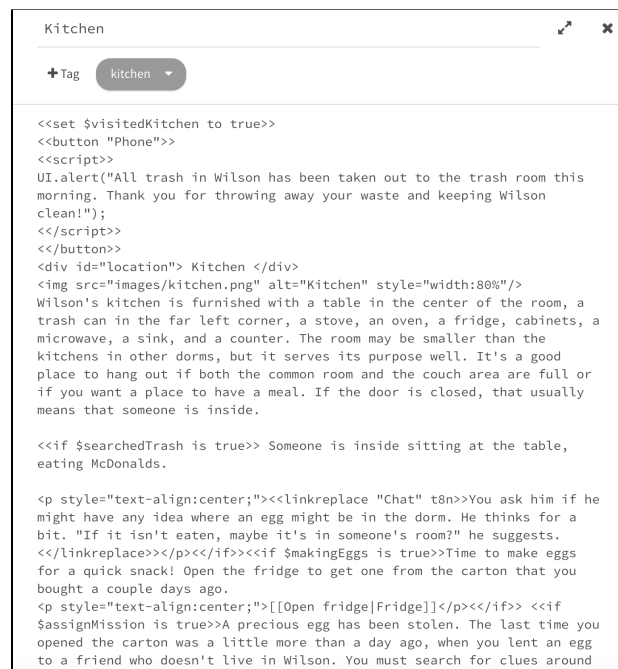


Figure 3. Code for the kitchen passage with variables and conditionals.

*The Missing Egg* is a multimedia work that integrates text, images, and music into a digital medium. Other than coding in Sugarcube, I learned HTML and CSS to make my story more immersive. I experimented with bolding, italics, and font size, but I also added animations to my text to make it appear more natural or to add more emotion. For example, text that counts the eggs appears on the screen one at a time to mimic the actual counting progress, and the following text exclamation that an egg is missing vibrates to convey an intense emotion such as shock ([Video](#)). In the trash room, text fades on and off the screen to replicate the room's flickering lights that are described within the passage (The [Video](#) example of the trash room also demonstrates an example of what happens if an action's prerequisites have not been unlocked). For the images displayed in each passage, I went around Wilson's first floor to take pictures of each section. For each picture, I added a black and white filter with yellow undertones to characterize the modern setting with a sense of "mystery" and make viewers feel as if they are looking at evidence from a crime scene. Finally, I added audio. I didn't want to get overly picky with picking the main background music due to time constraints, but I think that this music is satisfactory in setting the tone of the interactive story. I initially considered adding suspenseful music, but I decided that I wanted a peaceful yet slightly playful tune that would suit the story's late time setting and would not stress the player. I wanted the music to encourage them to explore Wilson at their own pace, which is also essential to the player experience. In addition to the background music, I also recorded the noises that dryers and washers make in the laundry room when they are being used ([Video](#)). Out of all of the rooms in Wilson, the laundry room is the one that makes the most noise. I believe that this addition, which plays only when the player enters the laundry room, contributes to the immersive experience).

Despite the hours spent learning simple code, such as how to center an image with CSS, I had a lot of fun creating this interactive story. I'm satisfied with how I intertwined a sort-of-mystery story with a story of Wilson that was inspired from my own experience. For many, Twine acts as a beginner-friendly storyboarding platform that builds towards more advanced game development. I am extremely grateful for how easy it was to learn how to create an interactive story, and I can see a future rendition of this work produced with a game engine. The story currently only has one ending, and a future version may allow the player to guess the answer and potentially lose. The story can either be in 2D or in 3D and can have graphics that allow players to travel more realistically through the dorm. Since the location is set in a closed space, it would be really interesting to try incorporating augmented reality into the story by overlaying interactable objects and characters onto Wilson rooms and hallways. While this will be even more difficult to implement, the story can benefit from an AI similar to the one in *Facade* for conversing with the characters, allowing them to respond to the player with crucial information if it recognizes certain keywords. The future of *Wilson's Missing Egg* contains many exciting possibilities.