

&Beyond

Design Document for:

Alteration

Some Things Do Matter

“Think future, think present, think past.”™

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GAME OVERVIEW

PHILOSOPHY

TIME MECHANIC

The player effectively controls a lady whom possesses the inexplicable ability to spend a single day in the present, and then a subsequent day a relative 6 months in the future. The player then returns to the present, where they live out another day, only to sleep and wake up 6 months in the relative future again. This cycle continues throughout the game

IMPACT

As the player makes choices, and carries out actions, they are unknowingly affecting the world either in the future, or the past, depending on where the player currently exists.

This impact could be as small scale as a scar upon a colleagues face, or as large scale as the wiping what's left of their family.

THIRD PERSON

Whilst First Person is argued to be more engrossing, I want to give the player the freedom to move around the character, and open up the camera to see more of the world around them.

COMMON QUESTIONS

WHAT IS THE GAME?

Classically categorised as a third person adventure, it is not a typical, genre defined game.

WHY CREATE THIS GAME?

Not enough variation in today's games. This game delves into really living inside a world, and taking on a role of this special lady.

WHERE DOES THIS GAME TAKE PLACE?

This game will take place in the wealthier parts of London. The busier streets and dense city allow for a more obvious impact through the players actions.

WHAT DO I CONTROL?

The player is in control of an Italian, 28 year old lady. This character has all of the limitations and vulnerabilities of a standard human being.

WHAT IS THE MAIN FOCUS?

To finish each day having not ruined the way your life will develop. Small changes can be very sensitive, and the player must keep a good balance of home-life, work, and physical/mental health.

FEATURE SET

GENERAL FEATURES

Days last 48 minutes
Very few weapons
Comic book art
Single story; no revert to last save

GAME PLAY

THIRD PERSON MOVEMENT

The third person controls will be the standard accepted amongst the industry. Right analogue stick will handle the camera, left analogue stick will handle the movement.

INTERACTING WITH ENVIRONMENT

The player will constantly be interacting with the environment. In life, we all find ourselves interacting with things 24/7. We are rarely simply walking through the environment, not holding or touching anything.

Therefore, whilst for simplicity we will not change the button to interact with objects, the button will be contextual depending on what is available to be interacted with.

JUMPING

Jumping is overused in gaming. In real life, I rarely find myself in a position where I need to jump. However, jumping will occasionally be required, but largely handled through contextual input.

RUNNING / WALKING

Whilst running is not an activity many people partake in regularly, the player must not feel restricted or slow. The game will be designed in such a way where walking is a perfectly valid form of commuting. However, to keep realistic in terms of development time, journeys with automobiles will be handled through cut-scenes or skips in time.

EQUIPPING ITEMS

As opposed to limiting equipped items to just weapons, the character is able to pick up cups, food, an iPod, money, amongst other objects. This is to ground the world, and differentiate this game from the many other third person adventure games on the market.

WIN / LOSS

There are no winning or losing scenarios. By the end of the game, the player's character could be a wealthy, popular, authoritative figure; or they could be a poverty-stricken, homeless individual; or anything in between. It depends very much on what they have done in the past/future, and how they interacted with the world around them.

FAMILY

The character will always have a single parent; the Mum; and no other relations. This is explained in the game story. How the player treats their Mum determines how close his relationship is.

PRESENT DAY

A day spent in the present would be much like any day spent by anybody. However, certain story implications will change the characters intentions and goals. The character has a job as a police officer in London, fairly close to where they live. Their work rarely involves anything but walking the beat.

6 MONTHS IN THE FUTURE

The player begins their first day in future life as the chief officer; they have obviously been promoted. Also, the player finds that they have a boyfriend.

The story from here on out is very reliant on the way the player acts in both this future life, and the present day. Decisions made in the present day could result in the player losing their partner, their job, or even their Mum.

DAY CYCLE

As aforementioned days will last a mere 48 minutes; 2 minutes per in-game hour. In this 48 minutes, the player will be faced with both handling the character's work, social, and family life.

After waking up, the player will have breakfast, and be confronted with the choice to check email / work business, call their Mum, or do miscellaneous activities, such as read / eat breakfast / play videogames. The player has the time for probably about 2 of the smaller activities, or one fairly lengthy one.

Commuting to work is a walk. Along the way, the player will see various things; a fallen lady, a lost child, perhaps a wallet on the floor. It's up to them to do what they want, but decisions make a difference.

The work will change over the course of the game, but in the beginning can be broken into present day, and future. See Work for more details.

Once back at home, see Home Life.

WORK

In the present day, at the beginning of the game, the player will walk the streets, dealing with usual things. More research must be done into the routine of a police officer. Balancing work efficiency with social skills will be important. As will decisions made on whom to arrest and charge. All can come back to haunt you.

In the future, as a Chief Officer they have more authority. More research must be done into the routine of a Chief Officer. However, they may not remain as a Chief Officer, depending on the actions of the player during the present day.

HOME LIFE

Back at home this lady usually plays video games, reads, or watches television / movies. However, after recent events the character now spends slightly more time calling their Mum and shopping for her. The Mum lives a 5 minute walk away, and the local supermarket is very close by.

In present day the player will eventually meet the future boyfriend. Balancing looking after the Mum and paying attention to the partner will be difficult, but must be handled correctly if the player wishes to have both of those people in their life in the future. A certain excitement and pressure comes into play when the character meets this partner for the first time, and knows that one day they could be together.

Future life can change drastically depending on the actions of the character in present day. If the Mum is still alive, the player must still occasionally do things for her, and if they still have their boyfriend, pay enough attention to them.

DIALOGUE

Dialogue is a large aspect of changing relationships with characters. It is certainly not the only way, as we all know, actions speak louder than words. However, Mass Effect style dialogue options will feature here, if slightly altered. Silence is always an option, and no morality system is at play.

THE GAME WORLD

OVERVIEW

Fairly busy London; however, the player will not be confronted with many different people due to art/animation constraints. The streets must feel busy, but handled in a clever way.

FAMILIAR LOCATIONS

The character's home, the police station they work at, and the beat they walk will become familiar to the player. However, changes in environments in the future will be noticeable, and can be quite surprising.

CHANGES

Things will get slightly older, and parts of technology can be seen to advance. If the Mum dies, the house will clearly be uninhabited. If the player spends too much time with either the Mum or the girlfriend, their home will be seen to be looking slightly uncared for. The streets can either get slightly worse, with graffiti and the like, or slightly better, with less litter.

THE PHYSICAL WORLD

OVERVIEW

As this will be the higher-class parts of London, the streets are quite clean and the architecture fairly attractive. All buildings will have a clean quality to them; however, the house of the Mum will be slightly cluttered and traditional. The home of the character will be small but clean and minimalist. This will be the same for that of the partner, if slightly less minimalist.

KEY LOCATIONS:

- Character's home
- Partner's home
- Mother's home
- Police station
- Supermarket
- London streets; walking the beat
- London streets; walking to the Mum's house
- London streets; walking to work

TRAVEL

Travel is largely handled through walking. Car journeys will be non-interactive cut scenes of sorts, but will be quite rare.

SCALE

The scale of the London streets will be fairly large, however, the player will have to be directed in such a way where they do not wonder off and try to explore too much. This is not an open world, and so certain streets will be blocked and inaccessible.

IMPORTANT CHARACTERS

The Mum, boyfriend, and a few work colleagues will make up the bulk of the cast. They will each have a deep character, and will be portrayed in such a way as to be real people with real back-stories.

WEATHER

As this is British weather, it will not be very sunny. However, it will not be forever raining. Usually the climate will be a cold, grey, and rather uninspiring one. As the player is feeling good, and things are going well, the weather will reflect this, with mild sun and brighter, richer vibrancy to the environment,

TIME

The day / night cycle will be in full implementation here. It is necessary for the lateness in the day to be reflected by the outside world.

RENDERING SYSTEM

OVERVIEW

The current plans are to develop this game within the UDK. It is a powerful 3D engine which will handle the rendering of our 3D models, maps, Flash UI and assets.

CAMERA

OVERVIEW

Typical third person camera, but will not have to handle very much fast paced running and frantic turning.

GAME ENGINE

OVERVIEW

Plans are to build the game in the UDK. The code is written in UnrealScript, the models can be built in any software compatible with the engine. UI is handled through Flash which is supported by the UDK.

GAME CHARACTERS

OVERVIEW

Slightly stylised, but meaningfully portrayed, as to allow the player to connect with each character. I am not going for realism, but more a sense of humanity. I would like a comic book look to them, perhaps akin to the graphic novel artwork done by David Mazzucchelli, or maybe slightly more Jim Lee.

APPEARANCE

As aforementioned, each character must not be overly cartoonish, but realism is not the aim. Jim Lee handled a dark but recognisable graphic novel look with his work in Batman Hush. I would very much like the same sort of art style.

PROTAGONIST

I have avoided using the term protagonist as this is often associated with a hero. The character is not inherently any sort of hero, merely a person who makes certain choices.

This lady will be rather attractive, and very obviously Italian. Her eyes will be bright, her skin colour an olive tone and her nose described as Roman. She will not dress in a provocative way; her style is a respectable, conservative one. Her name is Verdandi Mancini, and she is 28 years old.

MUM

Named Caterina Mancini, she was obviously once a very attractive lady; she is now aged, and at 64 has shiny but healthy-looking silver hair. Her face is not overwhelmed with wrinkles, but is one of a lady who has lived through many hard times. She often wears dresses and still holds herself up-right with confidence.

BOYFRIEND

An Asian man with styled, short hair and a distinguished, handsome face. He is well-groomed, and wears stylish clothes. His name is Andrew Tan, and he is 26 years old.

PERSONALITY

As a kind lady herself, Verdandi surrounds herself with considerate and caring people. However, work colleagues are not so easy to choose, and there are a few that she does not get on well with.

VERDANDI MANCINI

Brought up in a big family in Italy, she was taught the importance of a close relationship with the people she loves from a young age. Since arriving in England, it was extremely difficult for her to learn a life without the regular Sunday meets with her beloved family.

She has never lost her caring nature, instilled in her most by her Granddad. However, when there is a problem, she will be the first to voice it; be it with somebody else, or with a situation. She's very open with how she feels about things, and rarely holds back. She considers herself brutally honest, but has been accused of not knowing when best to say something, and when to leave it.

Despite this, everybody who gets to know her considers her to be one of the kindest and compassionate people they have met. She will happily dedicate hours of time in trying to help somebody, or make them feel better.

CATERINA MANCINI

Spending the first 38 years of her life in Italy, she considers it her only true home. Shortly after her Dad died 14 years ago she met a young British man whom she fell in love with. There was no-one more important to her than her father, and so after losing him there was a massive gap in her life. James filled the hole perfectly, and after a year the two were married.

James was offered a job in England a year later, and could not refuse. Bringing along with him Caterina and her daughter from a former relationship which did not end well, they moved to London. Two months in James was diagnosed with a cancerous brain tumour, and a year later died.

Caterina has always been an almost intolerably strong person, but two deaths so close to each other took their toll. She remains upbeat, for both herself and her daughter. However, her mental health took a decent bashing.

Recently she has officially been diagnosed with dementia, and is pretty reliant on her daughter. Her memory deteriorates day by day, but Verdandi cannot afford the cost of having her professionally cared for.

ANDREW TAN

He has always lived in England, but was brought up in a very Vietnamese centric home. He is fluent in the language, and has only ever really known Vietnamese food until fairly recently.

As a seriously hard working individual, Andrew has always succeeded in all educational and vocational ventures. He always had an interest in Mathematics, and studied as an Actuary at the University of Warwick. He is now working as an actuary at a lead UK bank. His salary is very large, and lifestyle quite comfortable.

He cares for Verdandi deeply, and often offers to pay for her Mum's care. Verdandi has always been a proud woman and refuses persistently. However, recently she has been finding it more difficult to say no.

USER INTERFACE

OVERVIEW

All UI is handled in Flash, fully supported by the UDK. The HUD will be non-existent in a permanent sense.

FRONT END

OVERVIEW

The front end of the game will include just two options; Play and Options.

PLAY

Within Play, the player can choose to continue an existing game, start a new game, or chapter select. These are self-explanatory.

OPTIONS

The standard options will be included (brightness, volume, subtitles etc.). As well as this the player will be given a limited choice to change the controls.

HUD

OVERVIEW

Only context-sensitive actions will require any visualisation for the gamer. Other than this, there will be no HUD in the traditional sense. The screen will be entirely consumed by the world, as to immerse the player.

INTERACTIVE OBJECTS

A low opacity button will appear over any object which may be interacted with. It will remain discreet, but obviously needs to be clear enough for the player to make sense of. Heavy Rain is definitely an influence here.

DIALOGUE

Perhaps one of the more pervasive, prominent UI features will be the prompts for dialogue options. Conversations are not a constant occurrence, but are regular enough for it to be necessary to focus heavily on making the dialogue choice interface minimalist and attractive.

PAUSE MENU

OVERVIEW

Once again, the pause menu needn't have very many options at all. It will be subtle in its colouring and design, but will take up the entire centre of the screen when displayed. There will be no resume. Who actually clicks on resume anyway? They just press the start menu again, or press the cancel button.

LOAD

The game works as a save at any time, load at any time game. As well as manual saving, auto-saves will also feature, occurring at more important moments and small milestones. The player can load up a save file at any point.

SAVE

Largely explained above; the player will have the ability to save the game at any point. The only exception will be during non-interactive moments.

QUIT

Very self-explanatory; this will take the player to the main menu.

OBJECTS

OVERVIEW

Interactive objects will be plentiful in this game. The list will ultimately be too large to detail here, and will be dependent on what is thought to be necessary in a level whilst it is in development.

DOORS

No need to press a button to open the door, as the player walks towards it; the character will intuitively open it anyway.

WEAPONS

Weapons will feature in a very small way throughout the game. As a patrolling police officer, Verdandi will have a gun, but will only be a situation in which to use it in one or two occasions.

FOOD

As Verdandi wonders her, or her boyfriend's home, she could feasibly be holding a bag of crisps or a breakfast bar. She will also occasionally be sitting down at the table to eat, and if this is with another person, it is likely that dialogue options will occur. Pressing the button to eat whilst also balancing talking will be a challenge which I enjoy as an idea. The flow of a conversation is important.

RADIO

From the little research I have managed to do into work as a Police Officer, it seems that radios are relied on in a large way. Therefore, I see this as a great opportunity for more dialogue options, in which the player will unknowingly be changing the way that she is thought of by her colleagues and superiors. This will obviously impact her career 6 months in the future.

MUSICAL SCORES AND SOUND EFFECTS

MUSICAL SCORES

MUSICAL SCORES OVERVIEW

The music will remain serious, but without being pretentious. Of course, the mood of the game largely depends on player decisions, and whilst I do want to be overly ambitious, the various scores will be contextual in terms of what is currently going on the game, and what atmosphere is necessary.

3D SCORES

I want the sound to be sub-consciously engrossing, and I really feel that the extra work required to create a three dimensional sound will be worth it.

SCORE MEMORY

The variety of musical tracks will not be massive, but will be diverse enough as to create a variety of different emotional responses to the multiple tracks.

SOUND EFFECTS

SOUND EFFECTS OVERVIEW

Sound effects, in my opinion, are one of the most important things in substantiating the world and the player actions. Every interaction must be accompanied with a suitable and fitting sound.

FRONT END SOUND EFFECTS

Choosing a menu option will involve a subtle sound cue. The sound, in my mind, is an exaggerated turning of a page in a book.

IN-GAME SOUND EFFECTS

As aforementioned, almost every action will require sound. It surrounds us in every way, and is extremely important. Sounds will be natural, but selecting options such as with dialogue

will have to remain subtle, and also fairly non-electronic as to not detract from the experience.

SINGLE-PLAYER GAME

OVERVIEW

This game is intended to be solely a single player experience. Disregarding the sheer complexity of make a game such as this a classic multiplayer experience, I also do not believe it would fit in anyway with the type of game that I want to make.

That being said, the rise of asynchronous multiplayer, along with the many interesting recent implementations of such an offering definitely intrigues me. I will look more into this in the future.

STORY

I will be writing a decently lengthy story plot behind the events of the game. It will be fairly general in many ways, as the plot can differ greatly. I do wish to be detailing the different paths that the story can take eventually.

As a summary, the player will control a police officer; Verdandi Mancini. She has had the job for 7 years and is now very well respected amongst her colleagues. Her mother was diagnosed with Dementia just 6 months ago. Since then, it has been a learning experience for Verdandi as she tries to balance her normal life, with her new life as a carer.

The player enters as for the first time Verdandi falls asleep and wakes up 6 months into the future. It takes a while to notice, and she refuses to believe it for at least a few hours. Not trying to alarm anybody, she deals with it alone, and acts casual.

This new turn of events means that Verdandi is thrust into a relatively new life. She has been promoted, she has a boyfriend, and her Mum has only got worse. That night, Verdandi barely sleeps, but as soon as she does, she is greeted with the present day upon awakening.

It is this day that, by happenstance, Verdandi bumps into her future boyfriend. It is difficult for her to avoid saying anything, but the player must try to act normal as not to change the future.

From here on out, various daily occurrences will change Verdandi's life in the future, depending on her reaction (determined by the player). Will she still have the boyfriend, the new job, her Mum?

LENGTH OF GAMEPLAY

The entire experience will last about two in game weeks. This will account for about eight and a half hours taking into consideration sleep. Each in-game hour will last a real two minutes. Therefore, assuming Verdandi sleeps an average of 6 hours a night, there will be 18 hours (36 minutes) of active time. Over two weeks, this is 8 hours 24 minutes.

END OF GAME

The game will end after this two weeks with Verdandi either having mastered a balance of future and present life, or she would have collapsed under the change, and her life could be inalterably ruined. This is very much down to how the player acts, and how their actions shape the future of Verdandi.