

Murderer's Perspective

Game Design Document

(genre- HOPA; platform – PC and smartphones)

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Abstract

A HOPA (hidden object puzzle adventure) game in which you play a shady character known as **Contractor**, who is hired to investigate a crime scene in a remote location in the middle of the night, to determine if a murder was committed or not and to defuse the situation / **get rid of the relevant evidence**. The game has an inter-connected, **hub based map**. Main gameplay element is the **contextual timer**: each time you do a specific action, the clearly visible in-game timer is advanced by a single unit. As the units continue to advance, certain events will transpire in the game world whether the player is prepared to deal with them / able to witness them or not. The game has **6 endings**: 4 of them are failure states, which nevertheless reveal some information relevant to the Contractor's investigation. Two of the endings are victory conditions. The game has some „**red herring**“ side stories, necessary to distract the player from the central mystery. Moreover, „the Contractor“ is not simply a player's avatar, he is a **separate character** with his own agenda. Figuring out **mystery of the Contractor**, his goals and the identity of his employers is an **optional, secondary objective** for the more attentive players. Completing all the endings rewards the players with *extra meta-narrative*. Reaching 1/6 endings is free, after that the player is prompted to buy the whole game (**premium model with a trial version**).

Locations

The game is set somewhere along the **Kancamangus highway** in **New Hampshire**, USA. The scene of the crime is a parking lot near the abandon roadside attraction – an old amusement park. Locations are as follows: a very dirty payphone booth (**hub area** in the center of the parking lot); the parking lot itself; a drive-in dinner (functional); storage garages; a part of an abandoned amusement park; a section of the surrounding woods; a parking lot restroom; an empty highway. All the areas are represented by a number of static, 2D images. Each area is **interconnected** with all the others, yet they are not always accessible - different areas are accessible during different parts of the game's narrative.

Gameplay

Hub-based, interconnected game-world: helps to ground the gameplay in a sense of realism, makes item collecting a challenge (the inventory is limited, player must backtrack to hub from time to time); makes traversing the world a challenge. Most of the puzzles are contained in their respective areas to maintain the backtracking within reason and avoid the problems found in classic adventure games (in the classic titles the player often had to scout every inch of every accessible area countless times, as the puzzle and its solution were often very much apart from each other). Moving across the game world is done by simply tapping / clicking on the edge of the screen, which transports the Contractor to the adjusting screen (costs one timer unit).

Contextual timer (main mechanic): each time you do a specific action (click / tap the screen in search of hidden object, move your character from one screen to another, succeed or fail a puzzle) the in-game timer is advanced by one unit. As the units continue to advance, certain events will transpire in the game world independently of the player. Such a mechanic is designed to accommodate multiple endings as well as be a form of punishment: the player is incentivized to be very careful and do as few mistakes as possible, because the timer advances at any rate. The lighting puzzles do have a fail-safe mechanic (see below), but the hidden object hunts do not; failing to complete those “in time” often prompts a “game over” screen; sometimes leads to undesirable “bad ends.”

Hidden object hunts: contextualized as hunts for clues and evidence. Some of the objects will be picked up by the Contractor and stored in his inventory; he will merely make notes in his notebook about others (their equivalents in the game world will be greyed out). Player has no choice in the matter – it will help to streamline the gameplay and further establish Contractor as his own character and not the player’s avatar. Furthermore, the „objects“ to click / tap onto can also be the words in NPCs text bubbles. There will be a far lesser amount of objects on screen at any given time compared to the other HOPA games. The challenge is still achieved due to the very punishing “timer” mechanic (every miss-click or miss-tap moves the timer forwards) and the lighting gimmick. Even though the lighting puzzles will not always be present, the lighting in the game will be sparse throughout the whole narrative: dark shadows and intense contrasts will make noticing the required objects a challenge even without the typical clutter. Furthermore, a lesser number of objects will be perfect for the

small smartphone screen (avoiding the necessity to introduce counter-intuitive “zoom in / zoom out” function).

Lighting puzzles: manipulation of light and shadow is the gimmick of the game. As mentioned before, sparse lighting combined with the punishing timer mechanics means that we can avoid the overabundance of clutter prevalent in many hidden object games. If some objects are obscured by shadows and the miss-clicks (miss-taps) are severely punished, the screens can be left clean and minimalistic (perfect for smartphones). Secondly, „seeing things in different light“ will play nicely with the central mystery of the game – the narrative is centered around something that looks like a murder, sounds like a murder but is not actually a murder. The puzzles themselves (solved in dedicated puzzle screens at the specific moments during the playthrough) will always have something to do with the manipulation of light-sources and the objects casting shadows to reveal something new in the immediate environment.

Mindscape puzzles: after hunting enough objects the player is prompted to „connect the clues“ inside the Contractor’s mind. If they succeed, Contractor reaches a conclusion which becomes a new note in his notebook for further use. A simple, straightforward system. During the subsequent playthroughs the previously-connected chains of evidence will remain highlighted so the player could always know what they did before (avoiding the issue of accidentally repeating the same actions over and over again).

Simple „lock and key“ puzzles: standard adventure genre puzzles. Apply correct item (or note) on correct object (or NPC). The only way to converse with NPCs is to show them correct note / item (there are no dialogue trees). This is done to keep dialogue minimal and cryptic. The dialogue will not be voice acted, but represented as large speech bubbles, suitable for small smartphone screens and stylish enough to not look out of place on the PC.

Fail / Safe challenges: after player makes three mistakes while doing puzzles, Contractor notes that he „needs to concentrate his mind“ and the fail / safe challenge ensues. During it the player is presented with the random screens in which they must collect as many written-down objects as possible (with a real-world timer counting down the seconds). If they find enough objects, player can try the failed puzzle again. If they find more than necessary, they are rewarded with in-game hints. If they don’t find enough objects in time, it’s game over.

Hint system: the player can accumulate a number of “insights” - it is an in-game hint system, using one “insight” will highlight every interactable object on any screen for a

duration of one “timer” advancement (i. e., objects are highlighted until the player taps / clicks on anything). This hint system works on two occasions: hidden object hunts and during the dialogues with NPCs.

Save system: the game will use an auto-save function (saving every time player interacts with the game-world). On PC the saves will be stored locally with the disclaimer to “keep the save games for future episodes” (see “franchise potential”). On smartphones, the saves will be kept on cloud. If player reaches “game over” screen, the save-state that will be automatically loaded afterwards shall be the moment just before the player made a point-of-no-return mistake (if the mistake involved a “timer” running out with no progress being done, the player is transported to a moment just before the hidden object hunt / “lock and key” puzzle they are supposed to complete). If the player reaches one of the endings - good or bad ones – they must start a game anew. However, their choices made during previous playthroughs are highlighted (see “mindscape puzzles”), furthermore, the player will have an ability to skip tutorial section and act 1 section (the disclaimer will point out that it is to be done with the player’s own discretion – see “optional content” in “game’s narrative) and jump straight into act 2, where the first major choice of the game must be made.

Characters

Contractor. Main character of the game, player-controlled character. Dressed as policeman, identifies himself as officer Carmichael. He works for the mysterious Benefactors, who provides him with the contracts of delicate matter. Contractor’s job is to assess the situation, gather clues, defuse the possible catastrophe and get rid of the relevant evidence, so the mystery remains unsolved in the public eye (contrast to the usual “detective” character who uncovers truth). Contractor is not an unseen, first person character like in most hidden object games – he is always visible on screen and the player is always aware of Contractor’s relation with

surrounding environment. Contractor provides every item description, he is a *de facto* narrator (in lieu with classic film noir protagonists).

James McEnrou, attorney at law. The „victim“ who is found lying dead in a puddle of his own blood near the phone booth. A well-known lawman from NYC, who has fallen from grace due to his gambling problems and the suspected ties with the organized crime. James has four stab wounds – three done by another person. However, James has inflicted the fourth wound – the fatal one – upon himself a few minutes before the confrontation with the perpetrator, thus, his cause of death is actually a suicide.

Joanna McEnrou (known also as „Jenny“ or „Woman in Green“; also disguises herself as „maniac“ during the middle section of the narrative). A famous surgeon, the „victim’s“ wife and the perpetrator; she did wound James three times, had a motive to kill him. However, she wounded James in self-defense and did not inflict the fatal wound. Through most of the game Joanna is hiding her identity. She is also responsible for the hit-and-run incident that occurred on the same highway 3 years ago.

Sammuel Wolfe. A leader of a small-time biker gang „Wolf Riders“. A simple-minded criminal. Sammuel is Joanna’s lover and a main suspect in the early parts of the game. He has reasonable motives to kill James.

The Fisher King, an enigmatic drifter. A mysterious hobo hobbling around on one leg. He is actually a Russian mob enforcer from NYC and an associate of James. His job was to keep tabs on James. Fisher King is the main suspect during the later parts of the game, he also has a hidden shack in the woods area.

Heather. A teenage punk girl travelling through the state on foot. Seems suspicious, yet is truly

honest. Her only motivation is to stir up trouble. She will help the contractor if he helps her out in turn.

Mateusz „Mad Matt“ Nowak. An ambitious member of „Wolf Riders“. Hides his Polish ancestry (pretends to be “Matthew”), as the gang is „American only“. Wishes to take Sammuel’s place.

„Wolf Riders“ gang. A gang of bikers, which appears in certain areas during the later parts of the game and acts as moving roadblocks – the Contractor will not be able to access the areas in which the gang resides at any given moment.

Officer Carmichael – a police officer, whose identity is temporarily stolen by Contractor. He is tied up inside the trunk of Contractor’s car. Will only be intractable during the second playthrough if the player has completed certain optional content beforehand.

The Detective. The actual player’s avatar, who only appears in the game after the player has reached all six of the available endings.

Central Mystery (fabula)

James and Joanna McEnrous are a New York **power couple** – James a well-known attorney at law who have helped a lot of people (**including mobsters**) to avoid prison, Joanna – a **famous surgeon**. Three years ago, Joanna was driving on Kancamangus highway and **committed a hit-and-run**. Joanna was crushed by guilt, contacted the police – yet the body

was never found and Joanna **was not charged with manslaughter**. It was because James had contacted his **mob associates** to take care of the mess (mobsters hid the body and silenced the victim's family). James **told his wife nothing** about it. Afterwards James was knee-deep **in debt** with the mob, tried to win his money back via **gambling**, yet lost even more. As James gambled the family's fortune away, Joanna started **cheating on him** with a simple-minded **biker Samuel** and demanded **a divorce**. James, now a wreck of a man, found out about his wife's infidelity; the mob he was in debt with was also breathing down his neck. James **decided to take his own life**, yet in a way that **Joanna would be blamed** for it (he resented his wife now). Thus, James stole one of Joanna's **anatomy books** and called her to come "for urgent matter" in the middle of the night in the same place the hit-and-run incident happened three years ago. Inside a nearby **storage garage** James has carefully **stabbed himself** into a vital vein with a knife, yet left it inside the wound to contain the rapid blood loss; he then limped to the designated meeting place (phone booth). Seeing Joanna's car arriving James took out the knife, hid it inside the pay phone. Joanna confronted James. With his last strength, James attacked her with an identical knife; in self-defense Joanna **fought back**, disarmed James; however, he fell down in a pool of his blood and Joanna **though she has accidentally murdered him**. Terrified she fled the scene, got into the nearby drive-in dinner, and called Samuel to come and help her. Yet the Contractor arrived at the crime scene before the biker. Unravelling this mystery and destroying the evidence is the goal of the game.

Narrative Structure (syuzhet)

The introduction cut scene

The footage of CCTV camera on the phonebooth is shown – something that looks like a man's body falls down near the booth. The picture fades, text on screen explains that there has just been an incident on the Kancamangus highway, New Hampshire. "Client is concerned, send in the Contractor? Highway patrol – officer Carmichael - is on his way. Assess the situation and defuse it if before it is too late. Determine if it was MURDER." Title screen – „**Murderer's Perspective**." After the player presses „play“, the first area of the game is just outside of the phonebooth – it's middle of the night, the body of James is lying

near the booth, the police car is nearby, outside it – Contractor disguised as officer Carmichael. For all the player knows, he is officer Carmichael.

Act 0 – the tutorial section

Available locations – the phone booth and the parking lot area with the dead body. The central gameplay mechanics are introduced to the player except (initially) the timer mechanic – the player is incentivized to experiment, mistakes are not punished that harshly. First **hidden object hunt** is contextualized as collecting the evidence from the crime scene. When the player collects all the pieces of evidence but one, Contractor notes that there is one more piece, but he „needs to change perspective“ to find it. First **lighting based puzzle** is introduced (redirect streetlamp light into phone booth). After completing the lighting puzzle the Contractor must connect the gathered evidence via the first **mindscape puzzle** and make conclusions. Conclusions at this point – three stab wounds done hastily, one – very precise and lethal, killer must be well versed in anatomy. It is a murder and intended one at that. The victim is rich, not local, his name starts with „J“, surname is „McEnrou“. Afterwards player is confronted by the Fisher King outside the phone booth, must use the correct item on him (introducing „**lock and key**“ puzzles). One item Contractor refuses to use is his police license (first indication that the Contractor is not a police officer). Fisher king unblock the path, says that the killer is still around. Player can see Sammuel in the distance, the biker flees to the shadows. Contractor notes that he must act fast as things are afoot; **timer mechanic** is introduced.

Act 1 – exploration

Available areas to explore: telephone booth (hub area), all the parking lot locations, highway section, drive-in dinner. All the other areas are either locked or inaccessible due to darkness (woods, bathroom and amusement park). Contractor’s inventory is limited, thus player is incentivized to regularly go back to hub to store items – telephone booth is the „safe“ location, also timer does not move when making actions inside of it.

OPTIONAL CONTENT – there is an ambience track playing inside the phone booth and near the police car. In one of the screen Contractor is depicted near the figurative „camera“ and player sees that there is a headphone in one of his ears. If the player clicks on it, the Contractor notes that „sound helps him to concentrate and ignore the noises“. Afterwards when the player is accessing the screen with the police car, they can hear some irregular shuffling noises. If they press either on the Contractor’s ear with the headphone on or on the

car's trunk, Contractor takes out the headphone, opens the trunk and kicks the handcuffed, blindfolded person inside of it to keep quiet. That person is the real officer Carmichael. This optional sequence unlocks the Prologue and Epilogue sections of the game in further playthroughs. END OF OPTIONAL CONTENT

Characters the player can interact with: Fisher King, Joanna, Heather. Sammuel is out there as well, yet always flees, thus is not intractable. The player finds Joanna inside the dinner pretending to be „Jenny“, the waitress, who is oblivious to the crime outside. Fisher King moves around the parking lot and talks in riddles. Heather can be found hanging around near the amusement park; she is mean and unhelpful. The player can also find a motorbike (belonging to Sammuel) parked near the highway. Hidden object hunts inside of dinner and near the bike; lighting puzzles in the parking lot and near the dinner.

Hidden object hunt example: Joanna is inside the dinner pretending to be Jenny the waitress, who is just about to close the place for the night. Contractor (as a policeman) is allowed to search the place, yet if the player taps / clicks on anything belonging to Joanna, she will (at first) warn the player about it and get the object back and (if the player taps on her belongings the second time) forces Contractor out – asks him to come back with the warrant. The trick is to synchronize tapping / clicking with Joanna's movements on screen (she moves each time a “timer” advances, i. e. each time the player clicks on anything). The player can collect Joanna's belongings without her noticing when Joanna is far away / facing another direction. Obviously, animations are not being used, it is Joanna's still image that “moves” around. If the player manages to get kicked out of the dinner, they must come back through the back door and complete a far more complex puzzle to accomplish the same goal – and the “timer” is ticking. This is an example how the “timer” mechanic can enrich something as simple as the hidden object hunt.

Collected evidence: newspaper clipping about „J. McEnrou“ (meaning Joanna, yet the player presumes James at this point – they both share the same initial) and the mysterious hit-and-run three years back; the fact that Joanna is not a waitress (player finds a sticky note belonging to real waitress); the fact that the supposed victim has texted with his wife recently about divorce (his wife wanted it, he did not); the fact that supposed victim was a lawyer; rumor that the amusement park was closed due to the „maniac“ killings some time ago (rumor is from Heather, it's a red-herring). After another mindscape puzzle (connecting the evidence, pinpointing that the killing motive might have something to do with that hit-and-

run, motivated by revenge), Contractor confronts Joanna, who admits being the victim's wife. However, Joanna flees as she and Contractor are *seemingly* assaulted by Sammuell. Seeing Contractor's police uniform Sammuell is confused, flees as well, promises to „**bring his friends.**“

Act 2 – branching paths, ticking clock, first Bad End

Available areas to explore: all of the previous ones + the storage garages and the parking lot bathroom. Only Heather and Fisher King are left around; they both promise to tell something in exchange for Contractor's help (quests), they both ask Contractor not to trust the other one. The player must do **only one of the quests**. If they try to do both, they won't be able to complete either and will receive Bad End in the next act. There is **an additional timer** on screen – it counts down time units until „Biker gang arrives.“ Fisher King asks Contractor to investigate the nearby parking garages and get him some booze belonging to the dinner's owner; afterwards meet him in the parking lot bathroom. Heather is now inside the dinner and asks Contractor to help her trash the place. **OPTION A:** If the player chooses to help Fisher King, they receive crowbar and lock-pick. Upon opening garages, player must conduct hidden object hunts in each of them. There is nothing of interest there; except the last one, the last garage is obscured by shadows, player must do a lighting puzzle. Completing it grants a single item – a picture of Joanna and Sammuell making out with the word „TRAITOR“ written on it. When the player goes to the bathroom to meet Fisher King, **the hobo slits Contractor's throat**. Fisher King reveals having both legs, an expensive suit underneath the hobo coats as well as some Russian prison tattoos. He is disappointed that Contractor did not find any money belonging to that „good for nothing James.“ Contractor dies – **BAD END 1**. **OPTION B:** If the player chooses to help Heather, they trash dinner (inverted hidden object hunt) and find a purse left behind by Joanna. Inside it is a picture of her daughter, evidence that she and Sammuell are lovers and that her husband had gambling problems. Upon seeing the picture Heather identifies family as „NYC power couple – famous lawyer and a surgeon“. Timer runs out, „Wolf Riders“ arrive on their motorbikes. A mindscape puzzle ensues to connect the newfound clues.

Act 3 – inversion of the safe space, new tools, moving roadblocks

The bikers bit by bit (as timer advances) occupy three out of four parking area spaces and the road segment; they do not approach Contractor (they still think he is a policeman) nor

the dead body, yet warn him not to approach them either. Player **cannot access these areas anymore**, they must plan their routes and sneak around.

More in-depth explanation of the moving roadblocks: if a particular screen is occupied by the biker gang, still images of its members and equipment are present on screen and Contractor can only access those items / objects that are 1) out of sight of the bikers; 2) within reach of the Contractor's avatar visible crouching on the edge screen. However, the clues (not items) are still available, as the Contractor can observe from afar. These clues usually have something to do with the bikers themselves. This restriction only applies to the screens that are on "edge" of bikers' occupied territory; the screens that are beyond them ("inside" biker occupied territory) are completely inaccessible. As the "timer" advances, bikers also spread throughout the game-world, making less and less areas (screens) accessible. A fluid, moving roadblock, which makes traversing a world an even greater challenge than before.

Storage garages are open and trashed, Fisher King is nowhere to be seen. **Phone booth is not safe anymore**, if the player stores items there, some unseen force steals them. There is a new shadow inside the phonebooth – if the player clicks / taps on it, a vague figure with a terrible face ("maniac") is revealed to be crouching behind Contractor. The same figure stalks them around as they collect new evidence – each time player clicks on the figure, it strikes the player with some blunt object and it's „**game over**“. Heather inside the dinner grants the Contractor **a new tool** if he completed her task in act 2 – **a powerful flashlight with rechargeable batteries**. Now player can explore **woods and abandoned amusement park**, but must use flashlight carefully (if the batteries are empty, player must trek back to the police car to **recharge them**; and the timer is ticking). In the amusement park Contractor can find a bunch of horror house dolls with terrible faces, one has a missing face mask. Nearby - Joanna's green dress and **the bloodied knife, a "murder" weapon**. In the woods the player can find **an abandoned hobo shack**, inside it – Fisher King without his hobo rags. Fisher King asks if the Contractor has any suspects. If the Contractor did not visit amusement park beforehand, there are no items to show Fisher King; mobster shoots the Contractor dead. **BAD END 2**. If the player has murder weapon, they can show it to Fisher King – the mobster remarks "so it was Joanna", explains about James' debt to the mob „to save his wife from tight spot 3 years back“ and disappears into the woods – this time for good – leaving a usable **UV light** behind (another tool). If the player did not fully complete Heather's task in Act 2, all they can do is hang out with Heather in dinner and piss of the bikers. Heather tells the player about her reasons for travelling the state on foot, explains that the rumor about the

maniac killings was made up. Bikers eventually take James' body and ride away – **BAD END 3**. If the player did not reach any bad ends, they must complete mindscape puzzle connecting figure with terrible face to Joanna and the murder weapon. Joanna is now a prime suspect.

Act 4 – Final Act

Phone booth and its surroundings are now occupied by the bikers, Joanna without her green dress (dressed in black, carries mask with terrible face) is now with Sammuel. Via hidden object hunts player can identify that 1) half of the gang led by Mad Matt has turned against Sammuel for getting them into a mess with dead body just to save his lover; 2) gang is **all-American**, yet **Matt is secretly Polish**. Timer is ticking; if the player does not do anything in time, Matt kills Sammuel and Joanna, **BAD END 4**. If the player manages to complete lighting puzzle and get proof of Matt's Polish ancestry, catastrophe is averted, bikers drive away, **only Sammuel and Joannah remain**. If the player confronts Joanna with murder weapon, she bursts into tears and confesses killing James in self-defense. She promises to turn herself to the police, Sammuel escapes wanting nothing to do with it. **GOOD END 1**. However, if the player does not confront Joanna yet but uses **UV light** in the phone booth, they will find 1) blood marks on the payphone and **James' suicide weapon** inside of it; 2) blood marks leading to the empty storage garage. Inside it the player will find **a hidden room**, in it – final hidden object hunt and lighting puzzle. Completing them grants 1) James' **book of New Hampshire law** with a marked page of **capital punishment** for murder; 2) half-burned book on anatomy (book belongs to Joanna); 3) evidence, indicating that this garage belonged to James. Player must solve another mindscape puzzle to piece entire mystery together and deduce that 1) **James committed suicide**; 2) he wanted to blame Joanna for it so she would receive capital punishment. Thus, it was *an attempted murder* – **perpetrator was actually James, victim – Joanna**.

Final decision

The player can confront Joanna with the entire resolved mystery. Joanna is completely distraught – she hates James, but also feels unbearable guilt for her hit and run accident 3 years ago that has led to all this. The player then has a choice – present Joanna with the collected **“murder” weapon** or a **photo of her daughter**. If the first choice is made, Contractor destroys all the relevant evidence and leaves. It is stated that no-one remained who knew the whole truth (implying that Joanna committed suicide as well). If the second

choice is made, Contractor destroys all the evidence, Joanna helps him; she promises to forget everything and turn the new page in her life for the sake of her daughter. Both choices constitute **GOOD END 2**.

Prologue and Epilogue

If the player completed the optional content, during the **subsequent playthrough** they are able to play prologue during which Contractor (dressed in plain clothes) breaks into officer Carmichael's apartment and via the hidden object hunt must collect enough clues about him in a very short time. It is followed by a cut scene of Contractor knocking the officer unconscious near the phone booth before the start of the game. **If the prologue is completed and one of the good endings are reached**, during epilogue Contractor releases the officer from the car trunk and must use enough clues about him to scare the policeman so he will never talk about what happened to anybody (a lengthier „lock – key“ puzzle). Afterwards Contractor is shown in his dark and dirty apartment. “The Benefactors“ on his computer congratulate the main character for the job well done – their client, the law firm for which James was working for, is very happy. Benefactors grant Contractor his reward: a single word “Myriam.“ Contractor is shown tattooing that word onto his arm. Other such words already on his arm are “Montana“ and “1991“. Contractor destroys his computer and leaves the apartment. **The game ends.**

If the player has completed all the endings, they are rewarded with a **meta narrative**. In this additional section the player embodies **an unseen detective** from the first-person perspective (**a real player avatar**). That detective is working on Contractor's case and must piece together everything that happened that night in New Hampshire. It is **a sort of exam** – the player must connect all the information from all playthroughs to have a **complete picture of the events**. Afterwards detective must „deduce“ which of the good endings has actually come to pass. This decision is saved and will affect other „Perspective“ games' narratives (if we will ever make more).

Game's atmosphere and chosen “fantasy”

Every game embodies a certain fantasy (a world-saving hero; a silent assassin; a town-building tycoon), most of the detective games embody the fantasy of being a Sherlockian private-eye – a genius sleuth with great deductive abilities, managing to uncover the truth and

set things right. This type of character might be ironic, world-weary, yet is always a hero of the story. The chosen fantasy of the Murderer's Perspective is that of the antihero – a grimy, morally bankrupt character with hidden agenda, who is there to conceal the truth rather than make it public. The character might do the right thing, he might also not – it is the player's choice presented in a more organic manner than “choose between red (bad) and blue (good) options”. Even more, the “right” way to finish the game also means concealing the truth – the antihero fantasy stays throughout. The darkness and mystery intrinsic to the main character should be as big of an attraction point as the central “murder” mystery narrative.

The atmosphere of the game should be dark and moody, reminiscent of the early film noir films with the dash of the David Lynch-style weirdness in the mix. The timer mechanic should do wonders – strange and bizarre characters appear on screen, spout some cryptic sentences, and mysteriously disappear when you are not looking (only to reappear later in different – and often unexplained - circumstances). The timer mechanic should also accumulate an ever-present and ever-growing sense of tension and impending danger.

The “detective” section of the game (playable after the player reaches all different ending states) is a sort-of compromise, embodying the usual private-eye fantasy – you play as someone who connects the dots, uncovers the truth, works on the right side of the law.

Franchise potential

We can make a series of „Perspective“ games featuring Contractor and different gimmicks (sound, space, color, etc.). Each would be different, standalone case, yet each would reveal a little bit more about the Contractor and his Benefactors. If the player would complete all of them, they would be rewarded by an extra episode „Contractor's perspective“ – in which the Contractor would come into final confrontation with the unseen detective.

Main inspirations

„Zero Escape“ series (Nintendo DS), „Kyle Hyde“ series (Nintendo DS), indie flash puzzle games (2004-2008), David Lynch films, the lack of context and the overabundance of clutter in modern HOPA games.