

As Above

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Overview

Pitch

As Above follows the actions and motives of Burke & Hare, some of Scotland's most prolific serial killers. You play as Alexander, a jaded detective who has strong suspicions after his friend stayed the night at Hare's guesthouse, never to return. He wants to infiltrate the house and find a way to prove his suspicions.

Synopsis

Along your journey, the Narrator will guide you. With no real insight as to who he is, nor his motivations, it is up to you to heed warnings or trust your own instincts. The game is set in Edinburgh, in 1826, at the time of the Anatomy killings. In the height of grave robbery, bodies were being dug up and sold to doctors to perform autopsies on. Burk & Hare realised that simply killing people and taking them to the doctors would emit a lot of effort and still reap rewards. The prototype is also the prologue and is the segment that sets up the full game.

After the prologue with Alexander the detective, the player will gain more insight into the goings on at Tanner's Close. The full game will then start with Malcolm, a student of Dr Monro as the protagonist. The narrator will remain by his side as he sets off to explore his own suspicions.

Game Name

Reference

'As Above, So Below' is a phrase adapted from Latin, often used to reference the duality and parallel nature of heaven and hell, good and evil and what happens within and without. It is also a common phrase to pass off things as being as they always have been. This title aligns with the game's nuance, genre and styling conventions.

Audience

As Above is for anyone over 18 interested in the story or general history. It will appeal to players of games such as The Devil in Me (Supermassive 2022), As Dusk Falls (Interior/Night, 2022) and Alan Wake (Remedy Entertainment, 2010).

The demographic can extend to those with an interest in cinema, not just games, that seek interactive challenges and new ways of experiencing stories.

Platform

Initially As Above will be for PC release, the full game would go to consoles such as PS5 & Xbox One. This also aligns with popular consoles amongst the demographic.

Most narrative-cinematic games launch on console so this is the overall target platform.

Market Research

The Devil in Me (Supermassive 2022)

The primary market research is the work of Supermassive Games, namely The Devil in Me. The first month of Steam sales alone is estimated at around \$2 million (Gamesensor.info, 2022), making this a viable market competitor.

As Dusk Falls (Interior/Night, 2022)

This game from Int. Night was a surprise market success and really pushed a branching narrative within gameplay - making every decision truly count. Aside from the narrative, the production of the game such as its unique art style has become widely praised by players and industry professionals.

Alan Wake (Remedy Entertainment, 2010)

One of the pioneers of challenging traditional narrative structures within games, Alan Wake also has a second instalment releasing this year. This shows the longevity of the genre and the market demand for more.

Unique Selling Point (USP)

The unique selling point is the story, its significance led to huge advancements and acceptance of what would become autopsy and forensic science. Although a morbid story it has huge historical significance that should not be forgotten.

A further selling point is the location as not many games have been set in Victorian Edinburgh. Also, the cinematic style of gameplay is highly accessible to new players as relies slightly more on choice and narrative than on fast-paced mechanic input.

Gameplay

Core Gameplay

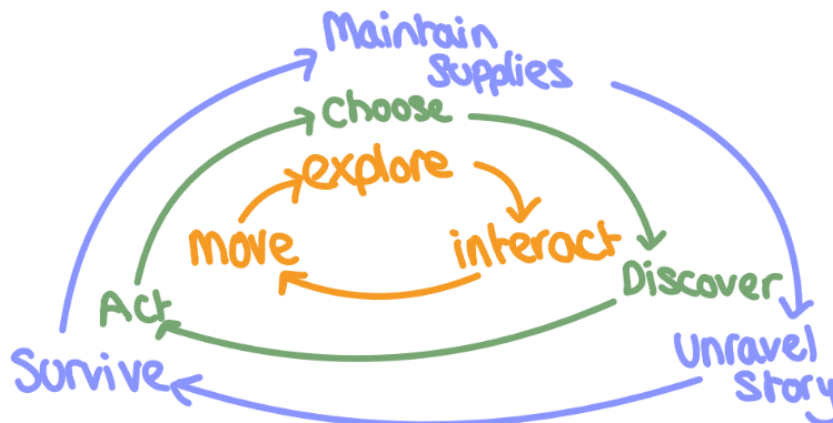
Prologue/Prototype:

The prologue serves as a contextual overview of the story, an almost tutorial for the player to get to grips with how this style of game works and a chance for them to acclimatise to controls. There will be obstacles such as dialogue choices and objectives of exploring, wayfinding and gathering evidence. The player will also become familiar with the narrator and the role he plays in their story.

Main Game (With new protagonist):

The main game will see the player supervising a new protagonist, equipped with all the knowledge of the story and gameplay from the prologue. This will be advantageous when encountering QTE's (Quick Time Events) and needing to quickly understand controls. Narrative knowledge from the prologue could also influence the players' decisions throughout the main game.

Loops:



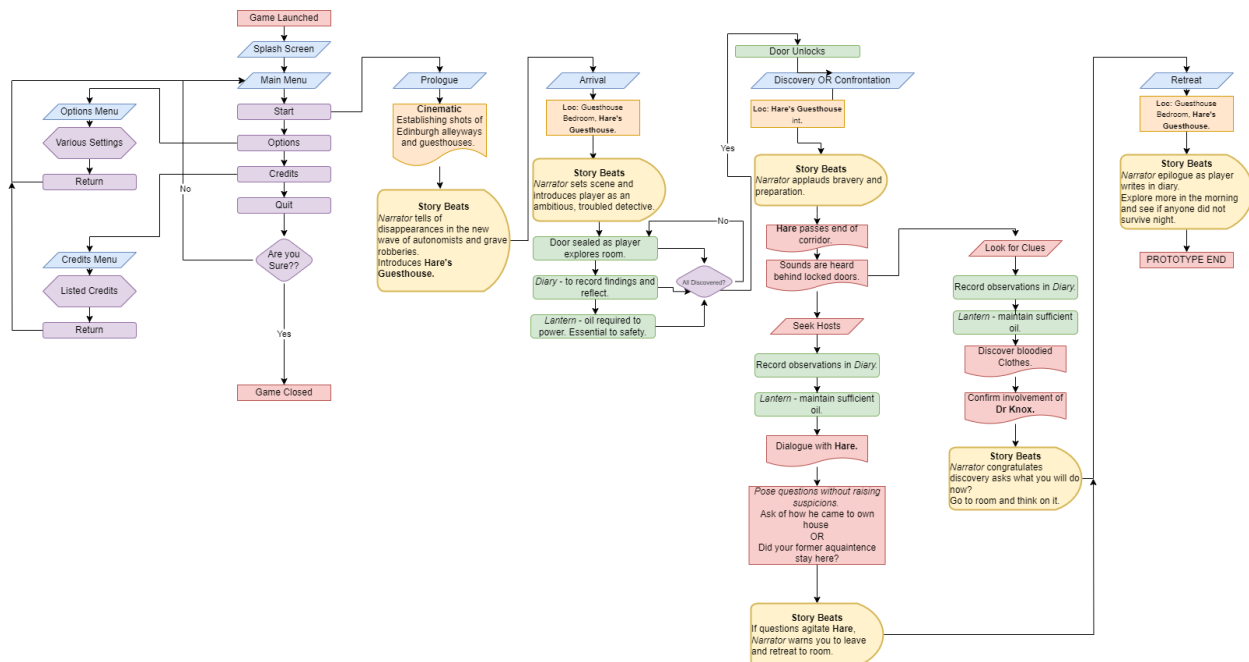
These loops show second-to-second, minute-to-minute and long-term gameplay loops. The constant aim is to move, explode and interact as this will allow for understanding and progression. After that choice comes into the equation where player choice will affect the trajectory of the game - wrong choices could lead to failure or substantial disadvantages. The long-term goal is to survive, maintain any needed supplies (in the main game, not prologue) and unravel the story by deducing truths and finding incriminating evidence, whilst maintaining social standings.

Pillars:



The pillars, similarly to the USP, centre on story, history and atmosphere. As a cinematic game, atmosphere is the driving factor that makes it believable, and actions feel purposeful.

Prototype Gameplay Flowchart:



This flowchart is a system and choice overview of the Prologue (prototype). This cyclic pattern of potential choices will expand throughout the whole game, creating an experience decided by the choices made and actions taken.

Vertical Slice

- [View the full Vertical Slice Here.](#)

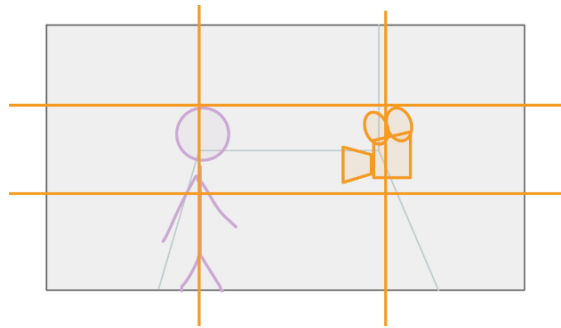
Difficulty (1-5)	0	1	2/3	1	1	1	3	4	5	0	
Moment	Introduction	Arrival	Discovery OR Confirmation	Retreat			A New Day	A Familiar Face	Isaac's Choice	The Long Night	Fatigue
Area	Guest House Room	Guesthouse Interior Upper Floor	Guesthouse Interior Upper Floor	Guest House Room			Streets of Edinburgh	Edinburgh Medical College	Guesthouse Interior	Guesthouse Interior, Surrounding Streets	Anatomy Theatre at the College
Design Focus	Touristic QTE mechanics, acoustics to story and environment	Test mechanic: knowledge and logic interaction	Introduce player choice, and reason and risk.	Conclude Prototype and prompt transition to full game			Introduce main progression, motives and course of action.	Establishing Main Character(s), Navigating Decisions	Navigating Decisions, Survival Skills	Narrative Climate, Mechanic Mastery	Round off story
Narrative Beats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Player is detective (Malcolm) posing as student to guarantee stay Has heard alot of gonging on, alerted to coming an acquaintance this way Leaves Room. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hears sounds from behind closed door Sees floor by threshold outside Encounters Hare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find evidence that confirms murder and incriminates Dr Knox Find out information from Hare Discover Hare's notes, seemingly Dr Knox too much present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FADE TO BLACK as detective writes full suspicion in diary HARD CUT Small sound by Narrator pondering potential fate. FULL CASTER/LP Describe Hare's notes, seemingly Dr Knox too much present Door handles turn. Small sound by Narrator, ready for character swap. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow a young student (Malcolm) on their way to Surgery Hall at the Royal College of Surgeons. Narrator "Well it must again." implies that detective did not make it through the night and now we see someone new Player is now a student of Anatomy, studying under Dr Moore - a bitter rival of Dr Knox. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malcolm had to work overnight to assist with preparations During this time he sees Dr Knox Receive a body from Burke & Hare. Malcolm recognizes Hare - not as a doctor but as a doctor's assistant but he doesn't know who he is He gives Malcolm after overhearing business and decided to pay a visit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malcolm poses to unravel, drunk and is allowed sleep at the college He instantly recognizes the smell of death, he is shown to Alexander room Dialogue options with a guest, the Wiles, Burke and Hare. Player learns of Malcolm one financial situation, he seems pretty sure about by the ease of money coming here, and returned to work or think just to visit Dr Moore to the Sun Malcolm can find the diary of Alexander. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Malcolm confronts Burke & Hare, tries and tries about their method Burke & Hare are alarmed by why a guest would care so much (not knowing Malcolm's true identity and class issue) Malcolm can evade them and run through the streets of Edinburgh to safety, presumably then reporting Burke & Hare Malcolm becomes a victim, whom is discovered by Dr Moore and then reports Burke & Hare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr Moore Discovers Burke publicly to the press We see Hare released and walk away Narrator closes, revealing the fate of the others and Burke's eternal fate, but without desperate moral pondering Malcolm leaves for London, left open the becomes London's Burke & Hare reporter. FADE TO BLACK
Moment Beats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Door sealed as player explores room and discovers motives. Diary introduction, when the detective records findings and suspicions Lamp on table, lit with oil to use Essential for exploration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Space all available, some sealed door hiding potential danger Narrator talking/guiding/learning Lamp on table, lit with oil to use Essential for exploration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialogue interaction and Choice begins. Look for evidence. Confirm Hare About to shift to NEW PROTAGONIST Protagonist Conclusion, character, motives and environment established 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Small Fatigue by Narrator About to shift to NEW PROTAGONIST Protagonist Conclusion, character, motives and environment established 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish time jump and new protagonist, and their motives. Understanding that Alexander did not make it out. Go to Dr Moore or take this into your own hands Lamp on table returns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> College exploration, large internal building, character Lamp, underneath, to search conversations, (weird/rare rhythm) Go to Dr Moore or take this into your own hands Lamp on table returns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discover Alexander's Diary, confirming every suspicion. Enter Burke, Hare and their Wiles. Lamp on table. Mechanic: Rumour is demanded here. Confirm no longer is needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Narrator can pre-warn of some QTE's and prompt quick reactions. Mechanic: Rumour is demanded here. Confirm no longer is needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (During film with voiceover)
Characters	Detective (player), Narrator	Detective, Hare, Narrator	Detective, Hare, Narrator	Detective, Narrator			Malcolm, Narrator, Dr Moore	Narrator, Malcolm, Dr Knox, Burke, Hare	Malcolm, Narrator, Burke, Hare, Wiles, Lodge (QTE)	Narrator, Malcolm, Burke, Hare, (Possibly) Dr Moore	Narrator, Malcolm, Dr Moore, Burke, Hare
Notes	Move, Interact, Functions	Dialogue, Timer Events	Dialogue, Timer Events	Move, Interact, Functions			Sequence only	Dialogue, Timer Events, Move, Interact, Functions	Dialogue, Timer Events, Move, Interact, Functions	Dialogue, Timer Events, Move, Interact, Functions	Sequence only
Interested Player Thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who was the acquaintance to me, what happened to them? How did we find Malcolm's method? Responding to narrators context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is that noise? Am I in danger? What should I do? Is someone here? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will I face this? Do they suspect me? Can I leave unscathed? What was the fate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What will happen now? Where did the diary go? What was the fate? 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did he survive? Who are these? Am I a good person? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do Burke & Hare know who I am? Are the people around me trustworthy? Why is Malcolm so curious about this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can Alexander's Diary help me? Did the witness know about everything, did they help? I need to avoid detection whilst I explore. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is dangerous for me. Malcolm is not helping me survive this with the dialogue options. I need to attempt to leave. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was Malcolm's motive poison or death? Did the narrator really help me throughout? Did Hare really walk away a free man?
Interested Content Beat	Reactive, pressing, planning	Curious, assessment, alert	Curious, curious, engaged	Introspect, thoughtful, reflective			Curious, assessed, writing	Confident, sneaky, subtle	Determined, alert, focused	Responsive, informed, panicked	Reflective, Curious
SFX	Footsteps, placement sounds, interaction, background noises	Footsteps, placement sounds, interaction, background noises, sounds from behind doors, door lock sounds	Footsteps, placement sounds, interaction, background noises, sounds from behind doors, door lock sounds	Footsteps, placement sounds, interaction, background noises			Chatter on streets (setting, ambient)	Footsteps, placement sounds, interaction, background noises	Footsteps, placement sounds, interaction, background noises	Footsteps, placement sounds, interaction, background noises, sounds, setting, chatter	Strong, overture
Ambient Soundtrack	Prepact, chatter from outside	low voice murmur	low voice murmur, silent sounds	Prepact, chatter from outside			Sustain, (200%)	low voice murmur, silent sounds, equipment moving	Prepact, chatter from outside	same music, fireplace, outside ambient	
VFX	the, lantern glow, water/drink/whiskey	Lamp on glow, dust	Lamp on glow, dust	the, lantern glow, water/drink/whiskey			Fire, Smoke, Fire/Lamp on	Dust, Lantern Glow, Strong	the, lantern glow, water/drink/whiskey, blood	the, lantern glow, water/drink/whiskey, ambient	Smoke, Strong, Blood
Notes	Player records findings in diary - better sound, this is a nod to Burke's aim ultimately becoming a notebook finding		Possibility of either smaller mission depending on player choice				Dr Moore would become the surgeon to conduct Burke's public dissection				

Above is a screenshot of the Vertical Slice production plan that includes; narrative and moment beats, SFX, VFX, design focus and pacing.

This document will delve deeper into various aspects but the Vertical Slice is a great overview of the overall pace.

Player

The player will be able to walk and interact when prompted. They cannot jump or run. Running and management of statistics may be introduced in later game stages, as well as during QTE's but the cinematic focus means a restriction in manoeuvrability. This also resembles the traditional, over-the-shoulder, camera style as seen in psychological horror such as the Resident Evil series (Capcom, est. 1996).



Abilities

An example of one ability is an inspection of items, both protagonists are curious people so will naturally investigate their surroundings. This mechanic will also help with investigation and collection objectives as well as allow players to soak up the environment.



Statistics

The only live statistic for the player to manage is the lantern oil level in the full game (when needed), reminiscent of that in *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* (Frictional Games, 2010). It is also not a constant statistic and is only needed in certain low-light areas. More hidden attributes will include character traits and standings with other characters, determined through narrative and event choice decisions.



Progression

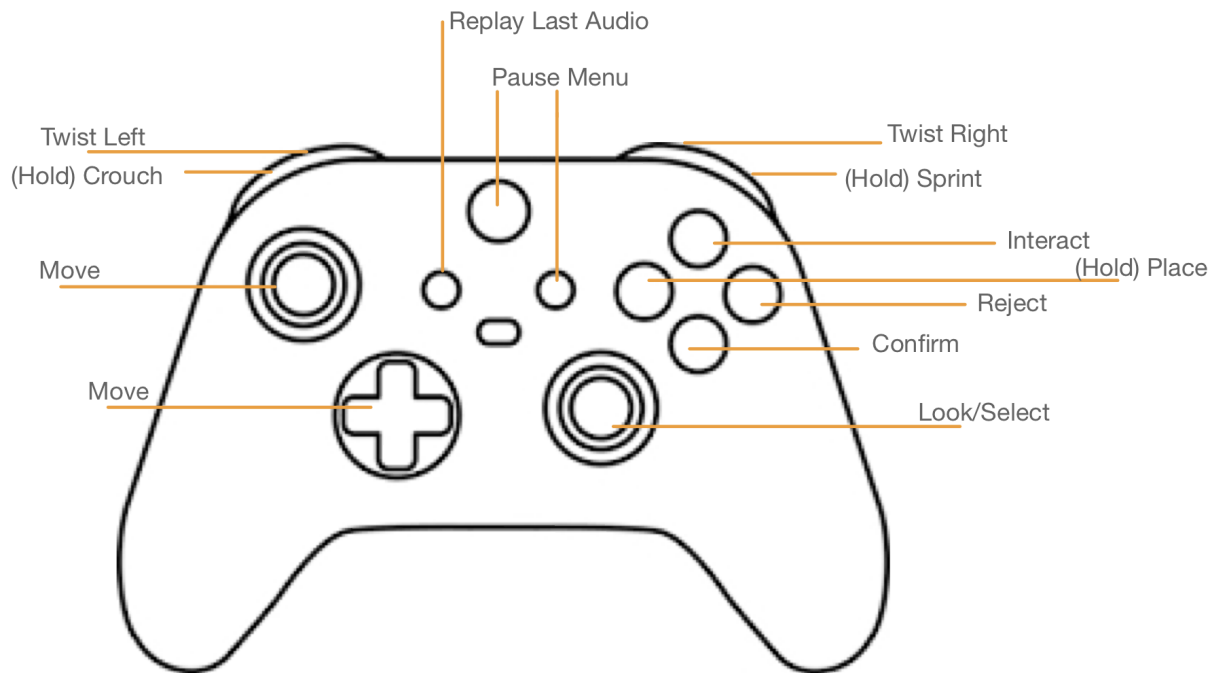
The progression in As Above is solely focused on the narrative and player choices. There are no skills to maintain during gameplay, some wrong decisions can be rectified whereas others are more dire. There are certain times during QTE when the player must activate an ability or be stealthy to complete a traversal puzzle. This will be explicitly told to the player for the first attempt before they are expected to recall controls.

Rules & Objectives

The rule system is dictated by who the player is controlling, their standing with whom surrounds them and the choices they make. The Narrator will remind players of times to use caution and even direct them on possible solutions, sometimes he may hinder them slightly as the narrative progresses.

Controls

The Prologue will be PC only, as full development is aimed at console systems this layout shows the intended schematics. This will need iteration through playtest and further accessibility consultation but this is the core concept. The controls are simple as the barrier of entry for players is aimed to be low.



Story

Full Story Reference & Source: [Here](#)

The story is based on the actual events of Tanners Close and the anatomy murders from the 1820s. Some characters, such as Alexander and Malcolm, have been added to help tell the story and offer context but the antagonists and doctors are all based on actual people.

The game will open with a cinematic in which the Narrator will offer context and motives for what is happening. The full game narrative is within the **vertical slice** but these are the main narrative points:

Opening Cinematic: (Prologue)

- Establishing Tanners Close as the Narrator delivers a contextual monologue.
 - Here we learn of the history of anatomy murders, the culprits are also inferred.
 - The protagonist is revealed to have suspicious and is on a warpath to expose the murderers, they have personal investment since their friend stayed at the house and did not return.

Introduction (Alexander Protagonist): (Introduction, Arrival. Discovery/Confrontation, Retreat)

- Int. of Tanners Close
 - Narrator tells Alexander to use caution.
 - Alexander explores and hears noises from behind doors.
 - He can confront and speak to Hare or go look for evidence.
 - After this, he returns to his room, horrified by his discoveries. It is inferred he decided to drink, leaving himself vulnerable and is then presumed dead.

Main Game (Malcolm Protagonist): (A New Day, A Familiar Face, Tanners Close, The Long Night)

- A cinematic intro mirroring Alexanders, this time following Malcolm to the College.
 - Narrator greets protagonists similarly to before - inferring a constant cycle.
- Int. of Edinburgh Medical College
 - We now have Malcolm as the protagonist, a student of Dr Knox's rival Dr Monroe. He leaves late at night and sees Burke & Hare in quiet murmurs with Dr Knox. Presenting what looks like a body (Alexanders).
 - He then has to traverse the dark halls of the college to find out what he can, the Narrator prompts and puzzles or QTE's.
 - Malcolm then decides to stay at the guest house - his motivations are never confirmed and he seems morbidly fascinated by the whole goings-on. He wants to get close enough to ask questions.
 - Similarly to the prologue, he infiltrates the house and now, instead of just Hare, Malcolm must navigate a night around Burke, Hare and their formidable wives.
 - He can find Alexander's Diary and use this as evidence if he chooses to. He may be brazen and ask too many questions, which would result in his demise.
 - [If he chooses Diary and arrest] He must run through the streets, evading Burke, Hare and their wives. The diary can be used to help convince the police.
 - [If he seeks to ask questions and dies] His body turns up at the college, to be recognised by Dr Monroe who can then initiate arrest.

Epilogue: (Epilogue)

- Cinematic in the same style as the previous two

- Narrator reflects on the story as Dr Monro publicly dissects Burke to a paying audience.
- We see Hare released, walking away.
- [If Malcolm survives] We see him pack up and leave for London, unknown if he went to work or become a copycat.

World

The reference board includes the following elements:

- Hare's Lodging House:** A sketch of a building with the handwritten text "Hare's Lodging House Tanner Close, Edinburgh".
- Caricature of Dr Knox:** A drawing of a man with a lantern, labeled "Caricature of Dr Knox harvesting bodies".
- Lantern Ref:** A handwritten note "Lantern (1810~) College" with an arrow pointing to the caricature.
- Prof. Monro:** A portrait of a man with the handwritten text "Prof. Monro".
- Hare & Burke:** Two small portraits of men, labeled "Hare" and "Burke".
- Margaret:** A portrait of a woman with a child, labeled "Margaret".
- Helen Melnyet:** A portrait of a woman, labeled "Helen Melnyet".
- Edinburgh 1800s:** A collage of historical images and maps of Edinburgh, labeled "Edinburgh 1800s".
- Maps of streets with lodgings:** Handwritten text "Maps of streets with lodgings" with arrows pointing to the maps.
- Dr Knox:** A drawing of a man in a long coat, labeled "Dr Knox".
- Env. Reference in Larand Tanner's Close, Edinburgh ~ 1810's:** A collage of modern-day photographs of narrow streets and buildings, labeled "Env. Reference in Larand Tanner's Close, Edinburgh ~ 1810's".

Reference board showing Tanners Close and portraits of those involved.



Visual Reference 1: A [still](#) from A Plague Tale: Requiem



Visual Reference 2: A [still](#) from Burk & Hare [film] (2010)

Characters



Alexander (Player)

Alexander is a detective from Edinburgh, the rumours about the goings on from Tanners Close have been rife but no evidence has been found or submitted as of yet. Since his old drinking friend, Mary, visited the guesthouse and failed to return he is taking matters into his own hands. He has decided to pose as sickly to gain a bed for the night and find evidence to take them down for good. He is jaded in his work yet persistent with this - he needs answers, yet is exhausted from the pursuit of them.

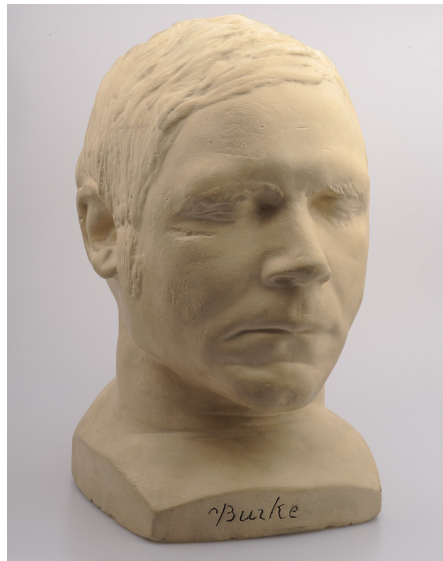
Narrator

Not much is known about who this voice could belong to or their motivations. They serve as a guide, motivator and sometimes disciplinary force. His words are insightful and he knows way more than you. A persistent friend, aiming to educate and guide.



William Hare

Hare is the owner of the guesthouse on Tanners Close. Known for his drunken and aggressive nature he is formidable - yet absolutely charming to his guests. Obviously drunk and usually frustrated, he is not a smart man but that does not mean he is easily fooled.



Burkes Death Mask from Surgeons' Hall Museum, Edinburgh

William Burke

Burke is Hare's long-time friend and business partner, known by folklore as the 'butcher'. He is calculated and greedy. Like Hare, he is also from Ireland and is physically imposing. He is no-nonsense and does not take kindly to nosy folk.

Mary

Mary is based on a real victim, Mary Paterson, however contextually slightly different. She is an old drinking buddy of Alexander and her disappearance and assumed death is the catalyst that begins Alexanders' search for truth.



Dr Knox

Infamous in the medical space for his radical ideas and abrasive nature, Dr Knox is known as the puppet master and the one who harvests the beef. He is utterly self-centred and pushed Burke & Hare for more varied bodies - all in the name of science, of course.

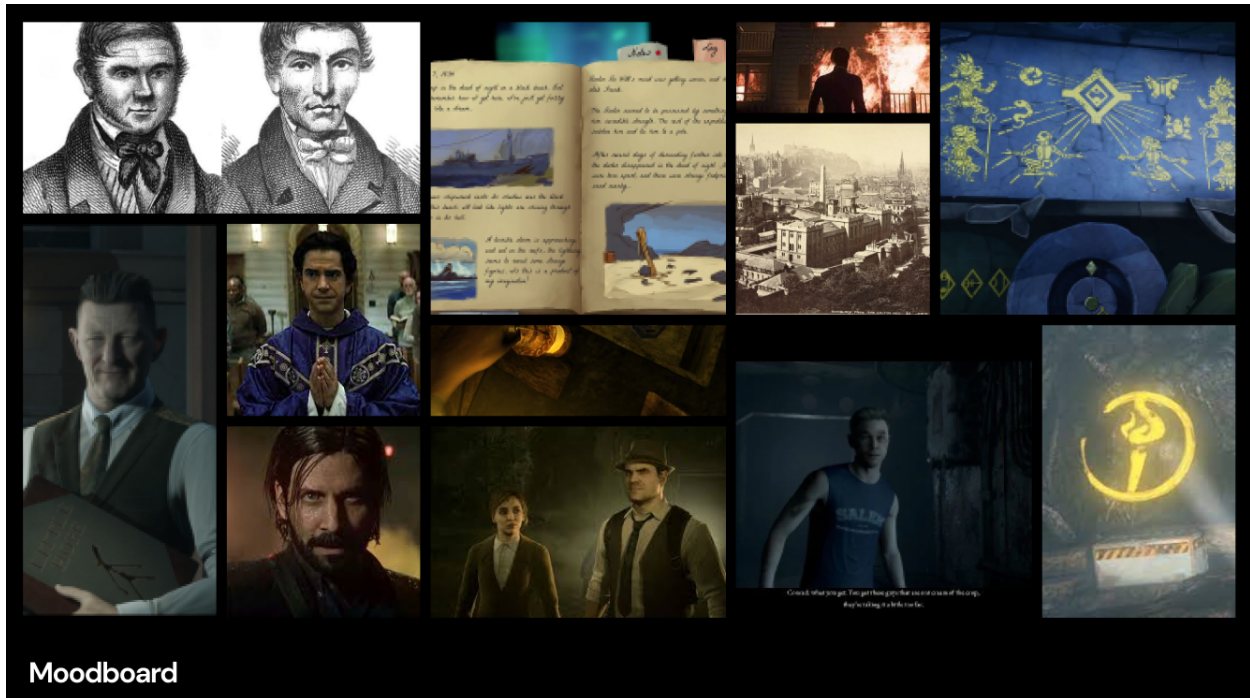
Malcolm (Player Act. 2)

Malcolm is our main protagonist, he is extremely driven and resilient. He has an unwavering curiosity which lends itself well to his craft but could land him in trouble. He is a medical student studying under Dr Monro.

Dr Monro

Dr Monro is a bitter rival of Dr Knox. He is older and Knox is convinced he is past it and that his ideas lack modern views. Dr Monro is however regarded as the best at what he does, with students begging to join his lectures on anatomy, Dr Monro always seems to make the breakthroughs first.

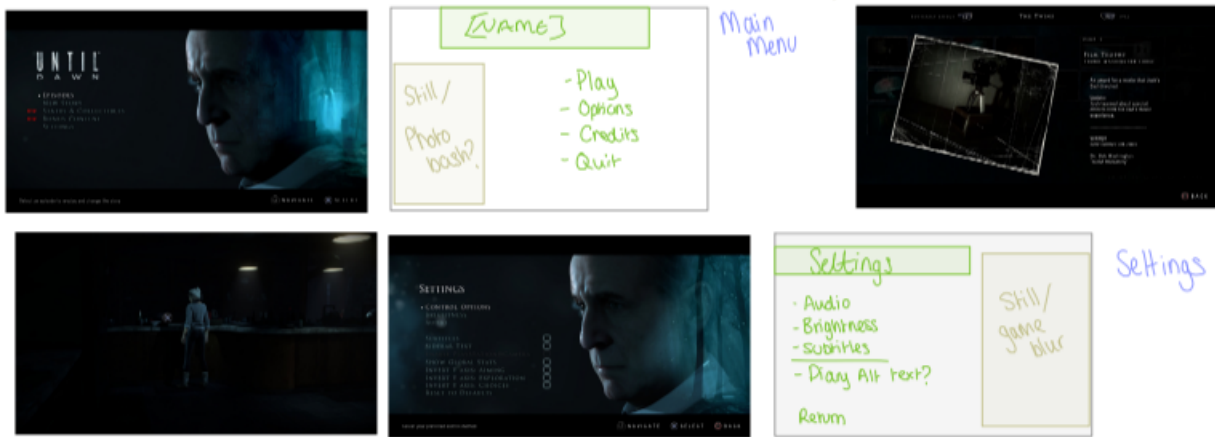
Art Style



The visual style is dark and somewhat grotty, with a lot of brown and blue tones with orange highlights. As the game is in the 1820's there are no electric lights so the orange candlelight can be exaggerated.

Some motifs may exist such as handwritten pages, lanterns and surgical tools. The game should feel real yet mysterious - keeping narrative and cinematic delivery at the forefront of artistic decisions.

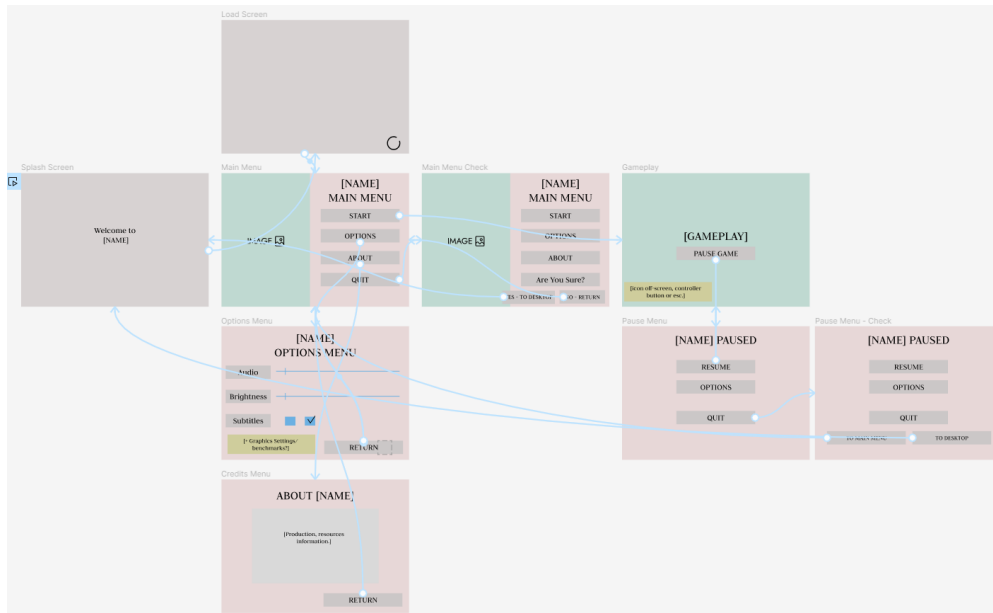
UI/UX



Reference images and drawovers.



The UI background mock-up for As Above.



System flow for User Interface.

Here is the visual reference, mock-up and system flow. The UI will be minimal and help to convey the genre and its conventions.

Audio

The mood of the audio will be solemn and often thoughtful, with a traditional Scottish influence.

Voice Actors will be sourced to enact the voices as truthfully to history as possible.

SFX will be realistic in feel, with an emphasis on footsteps and lingering sounds.

The UI will have feedback clicks and background audio.

Atmospheric References:

- Dark Pictures: Little Hope
 - ▶ [LITTLE HOPE Gameplay Walkthrough Part 1 FULL GAME \[1080P 60FPS PC ULT...](#)
- A Plague Tale:Requiem
 - ▶ [A PLAGUE TALE REQUIEM Gameplay Walkthrough Part 1 FULL GAME \[4K 60FP...](#)
- Traditional Scottish Gaelic Music
 - ▶ [Hè mo leannan - Scottish Gaelic LYRICS + Translation - Navan](#)