

Guilty?

Level Design Document

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High Concept

Guilty? is a multi-strand narrative experience which places the player in the role of an Adventurer who answers a small Hamlet's plea for help in solving the mystery of its disappearing residents. Played from a 1st person perspective and set in a dark fantasy setting, *Guilty?* is very much inspired by products of a similar genre and/or setting; such as video games like *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* and *Red Dead Redemption 2*, as well as Choose your own Adventure books like *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* and *Forest of Doom*, even *Dungeons and Dragons* was a major inspiration for the project. Gameplay will involve the player exploring the game area to find information on the disappearances and interacting with a few NPCs who may be able to shed some light on the mystery. The player will be able to pick up and interact with clues within the world (for example notebooks and bones) and choose multiple dialogue options with NPCs, culminating in them having to accuse one NPC of being the culprit.

Project Purpose

I aim to create a level in which the primary focus is narrative and features a multi-strand dialogue system which players can use to interact with NPCs through the world. Furthermore, I want to emphasise player choice within the story, providing them with the information they need to choose who they think is guilty.

My doing this I hope to further my understanding of narrative heavy storytelling as well as learn more in terms of branching level design. I also believe that by doing this I will greatly improve my understanding of Unreal Engine 4 and its blueprinting tools as well as design workflow in general.

Features:

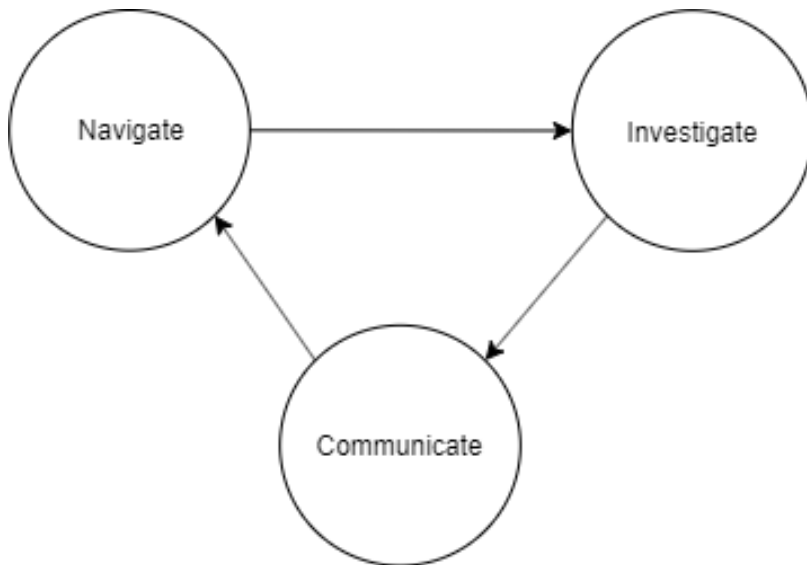
- A complete level with a fully functioning Core Gameplay loop.
- A large open area of play which the player can explore as they wish.
- A fully functioning dialogue system which players can use to interact with NPCs.
- Multiple game endings dependent on player choice.

Unique Selling Points

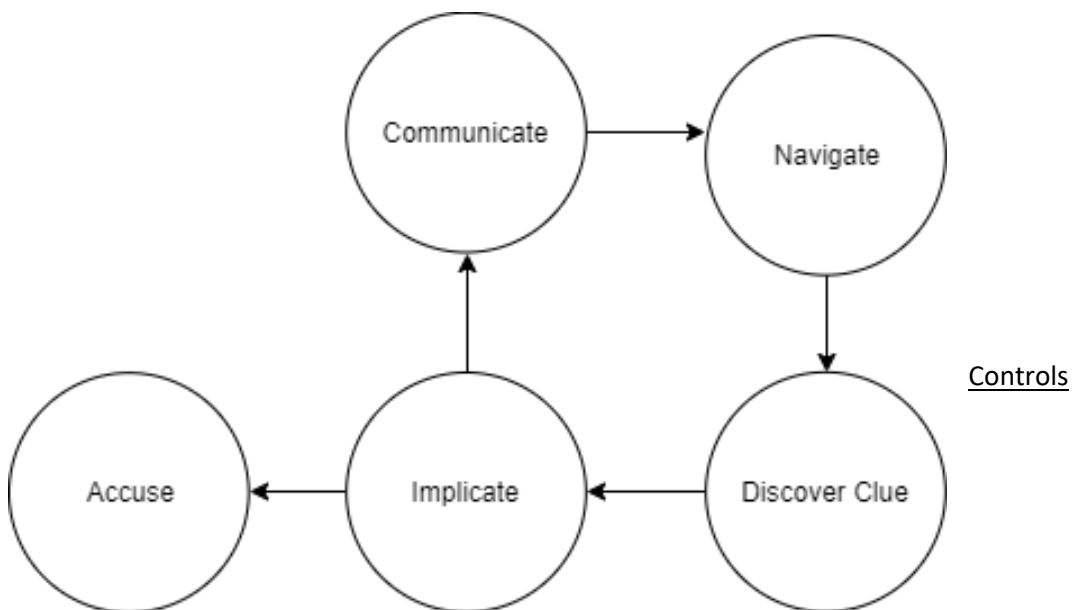
- **Unique NPCs**
 - Non-Player Characters with whom the player can interact via a dialogue menu, they have fully scripted dialogue within which the player can choose from a number of options to influence which path the interaction and narrative takes.
 - Each have their own individual unique appearances and animations.
- **A semi-open dark fantasy setting**
 - Inspired by the likes of *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* and *God of War (2018)*, *Guilty?* is set in a world that is grim and dark, though not bereft of light-hearted moments and beautiful vistas.
- **Multiple game endings**
 - Depending on their choices, players can experience different endings to *Guilty?*

Gameplay loops

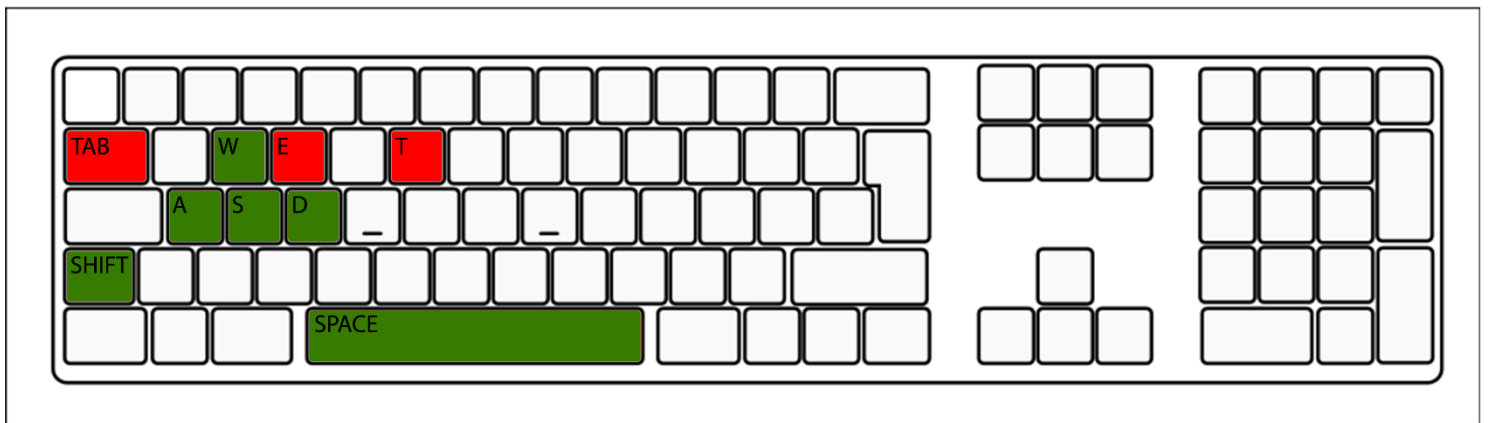
Core Loop



Secondary Loop – NPC Accusation



Mouse and Keyboard



Controls	Key Bindings
Movement	W/A/S/D
Camera	Mouse Control
Jump	SPACE
Interact	E
Journal	TAB
Torch	T
Sprint	L-SHIFT
UI Buttons	Left Mouse Button

Character Mechanics

Action	Purpose	Control
Walk	Basic movement	W/A/S/D Keys
Sprint	Fast movement	W + L-SHIFT
Jump	Reach higher areas	SPACE
Interact	Interact with NPCs to start dialogue	E
Interact with UI element	Select dialogue options and clicking button on UI	Left Mouse Button
Journal	View a log of narrative progress	TAB
Torch	Light the surrounding area	T

Level Design

Level Description

The player controls an adventurer who has been hired to help a village solve disappearances. They must search the village and the surrounding landscape for clues, as well as talking to NPCs to glean information. Once they have found clues which point to certain NPCs they may accuse them of wrongdoing or, continue looking and see if they can find more evidence to corroborate their theories.

Once they have decided which NPC is guilty, they may speak to them and accuse them of a crime, the NPC is taken to the hangman and the game ends. Whether or not the disappearances stop, and the player receives the “Good” or “Bad” ending is dependent on what clues they found and which NPC they accused of causing the disappearances.

Win Condition

The player accuses one of the NPCs of being behind the disappearances and triggers the end game cutscene.

Loss Condition

Technically there is no way to lose the game. However, there are two endings the story, one is “good” (the player accuses the right NPC and disappearances stop) the other is “bad” (they player accuses the wrong NPC and the disappearances continue). The game ends at that point either way but the player may judge for themselves that they have “lost” the game as they failed complete the “quest” that had brought them to the village in the first place.

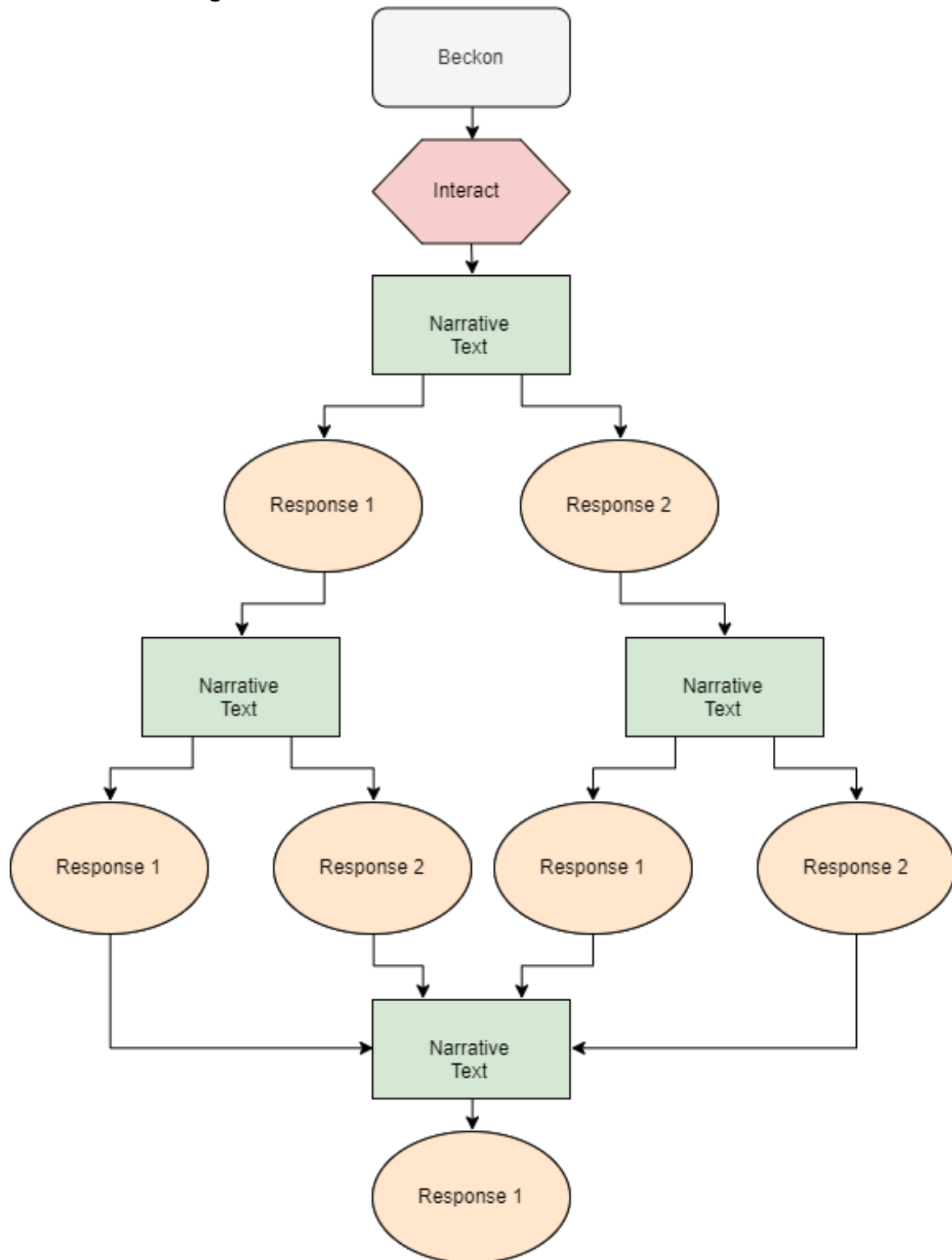
Narrative Design

The narrative of the level is told through some environmental storytelling (The evidence that can be found throughout the level) but is mostly delivered in written form. This is either in dialogue with NPCs or in the player’s journal where their character voices their thoughts and discoveries.

Dialogue

Dialogue is a unique part of *Guilty?* it is used to give the player all the majority of the information they need to meet the game’s win condition. It is also unique to each NPC; the player has different interactions with all of them and can select different paths during each conversation. Additionally, NPCs have different dialogue trees depending on whether the player has previously spoken to them and what evidence they have recovered.

Farmer Main Dialogue



Farmer:

“HEY! HEY! Over here!”

(Player approaches)

Farmer:

“What’re you doing here? It’s not safe.”

Player:

- “Slow down, what’s wrong?”
- “Pah! Not safe? I laugh in the face of danger.”

Farmer:

- “People in Town keep disappearing, no one knows where they’ve gone but half the village has vanished.”
- “Suit yourself, it’s your funeral but don’t say I didn’t warn you.”

Player:

- “That’s why I’m here, the Mayor sent for help, don’t worry I’ll find the missing people. Where can I find the Mayor?”

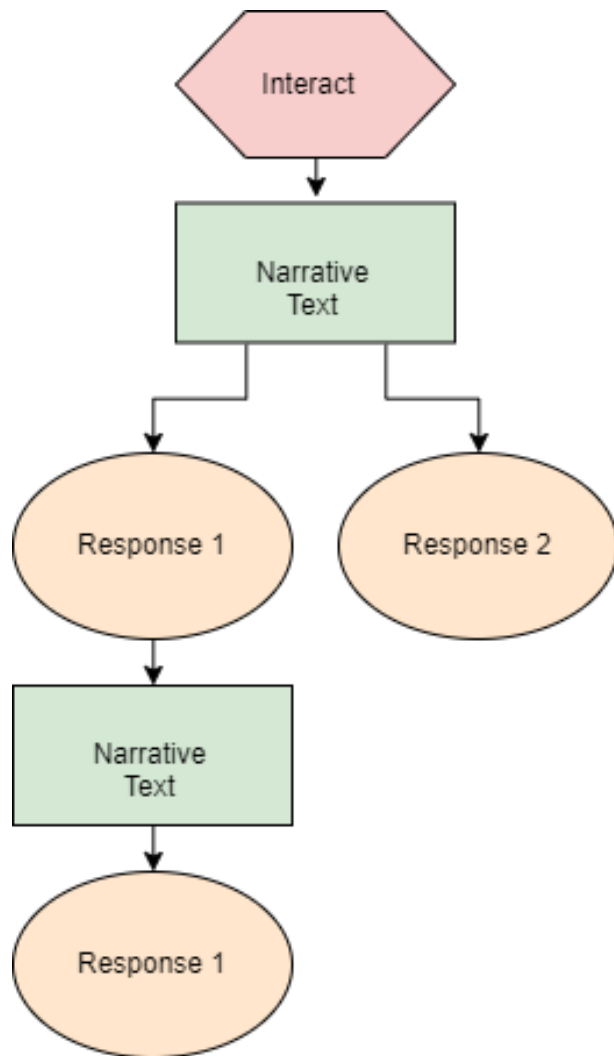
Farmer:

“He’s probably in the town hall, it’s the big building on the right as you get to town. You can’t miss it.”

Player:

- “Thanks, I should go and talk to him.”

Farmer Secondary Dialogue



Farmer:

“Hello again, can I do something else for you?”

Player:

- “Where did you say the Mayor was?”
- “Nevermind”

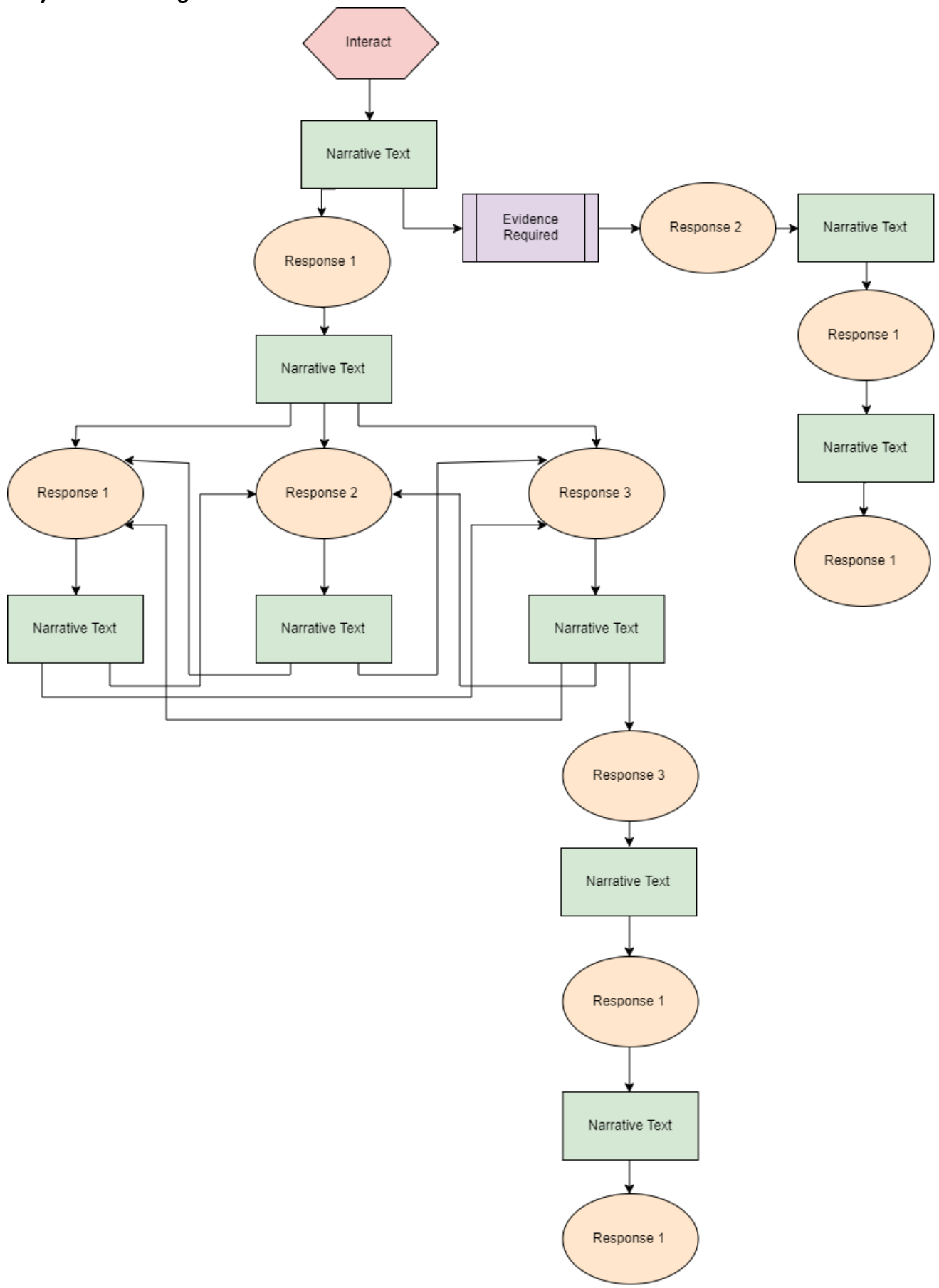
Farmer:

“Probably in the town hall, it’s the big building on the right as you get to town. You can’t miss it.”

Player:

- “Thanks”

Mayor Main Dialogue



Mayor:

“What can I do for you Stranger?”

Player:

“I’m here about the disappearances, you sent for help, correct?”

Mayor:

“Oh... yes of course, thank goodness you’re here. Let me fill in the details for you. Over the last several weeks members of our small community have been disappearing. At first it was just a young couple, naturally everyone assumed they’d simply run off together, gone to see the world as the young and carefree are often want to do. But when more people began to vanish I got worried and sent for help, we don’t have any guardsmen or soldiers here and I wasn’t sure what else to do.”
Is there anything else you’d like to know?”

Player:

- “Why didn’t you send for help earlier?”
- “Number of disappearances?”
- “Anything out of place or suspect happening, aside from the disappearances themselves?”

Mayor:

- “Like I said, we all thought it was a young couple running away together, an old farmer dying at work and the scavengers taking his corpse. There are wolves in these parts you know... but you’re right I should’ve sent a letter to the Thane earlier, if I had maybe we would still have a village and he wouldn’t have needed to send you.”
- “There have been 7 so far; the young couple I mentioned before, Stannig and Margarete, Jorlan, an older farmer from east of the village, a party of three men, Torren, Glenn, Heimel and Elena, the little girl we sent them to search for.”
- “Nothing, who knows what’s going, if I did I wouldn’t have had to write to the Thane. Unofficially of course I have my suspicions but that’s all they are.”

Player:

- SEE PREVIOUS
- SEE PREVIOUS
- “What are they? You suspect *someone* rather than something?”

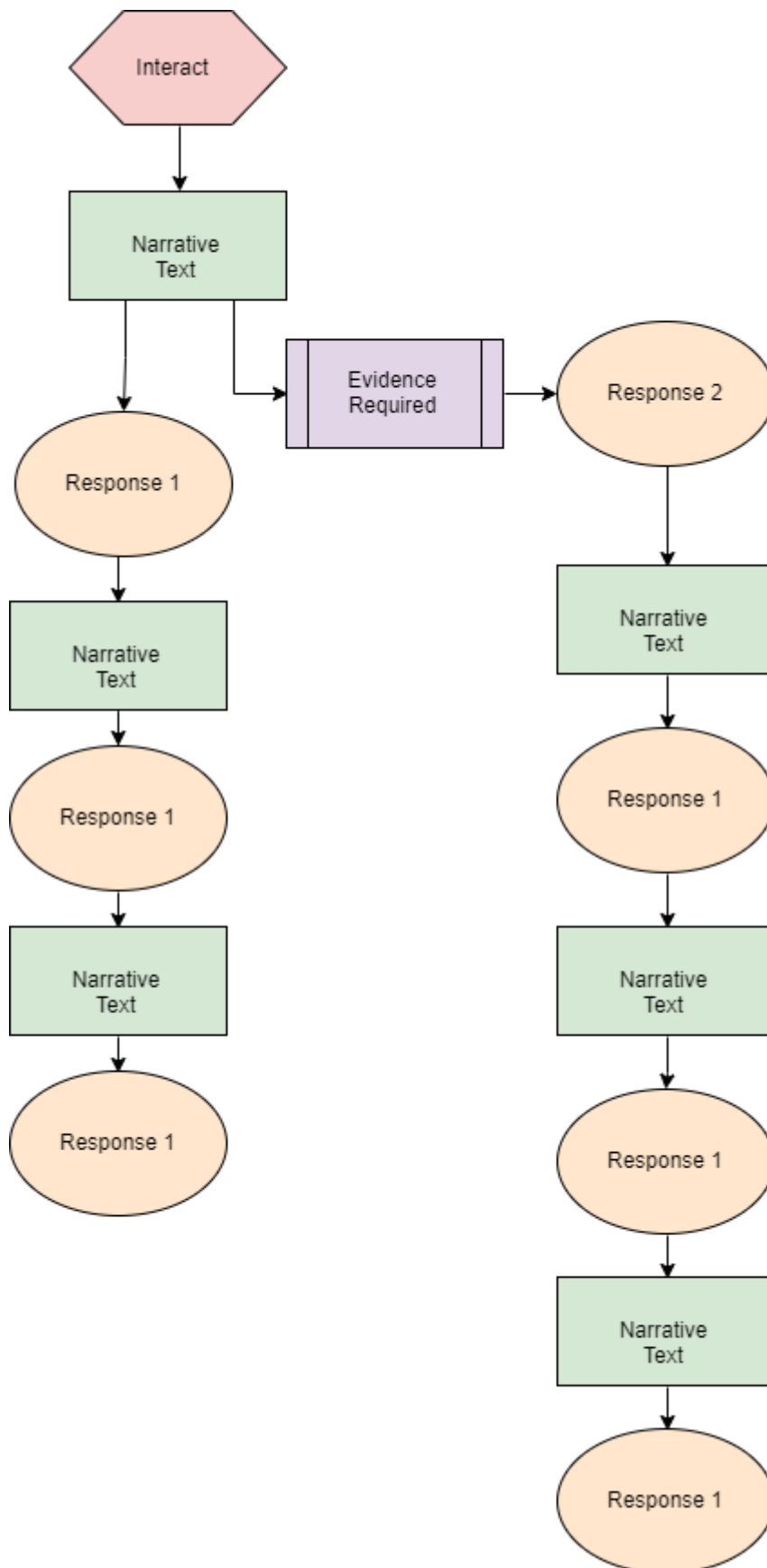
Mayor:

“I probably shouldn’t tell you; I don’t like to speculate... but... you are here to help after all and the sooner this is resolved the better. Cotter. He’s the town drunk; we’ve tried to get him to stop with the drink, to leave, to give him work, you name it, but he always refuses. Ever since his wife died a few winters back he’s been angry at the world and all the people in it, he regularly fights with the other townsfolk, in particular Jorlan. Now it might be nothing and hopefully he’s just a sad lonely man who will one day climb out of whatever pit he’s fallen into, but the nagging in the back of my mind tells me that’s not the case. I don’t know, perhaps I shouldn’t have told you, but I just want my town to be safe again.”

Mayor:

“Anyway, I must let you get to work, if you have any questions just come back and ask. Thank you again stranger, I don’t know what we would have done if you hadn’t of arrived. Good luck. Oh, and Cotter is normally over by watch-tower that could be a good place to start.”

Mayor Secondary Dialogue



Mayor:

“You're back? Have you managed to find the Villain behind this?”

Player:

(1) Requires Mayor's Notebook Evidence

- “Not yet, but I'm working on it don't worry”
- “(1) Since you mention it, yes actually.”

Mayor:

- “A shame... anyway, what can I do for you?”
- “You have? Excellent. Was it as I suspected, that knave Cotter?”

Player

- “I was wondering where you said I could find Cotter?”
- “It's funny Mr Mayor, it seems like the evidence points... to you.”

Mayor:

- “He's normally over by watch-tower, that could be a good place to start.”
- “Evidence? What evidence?”

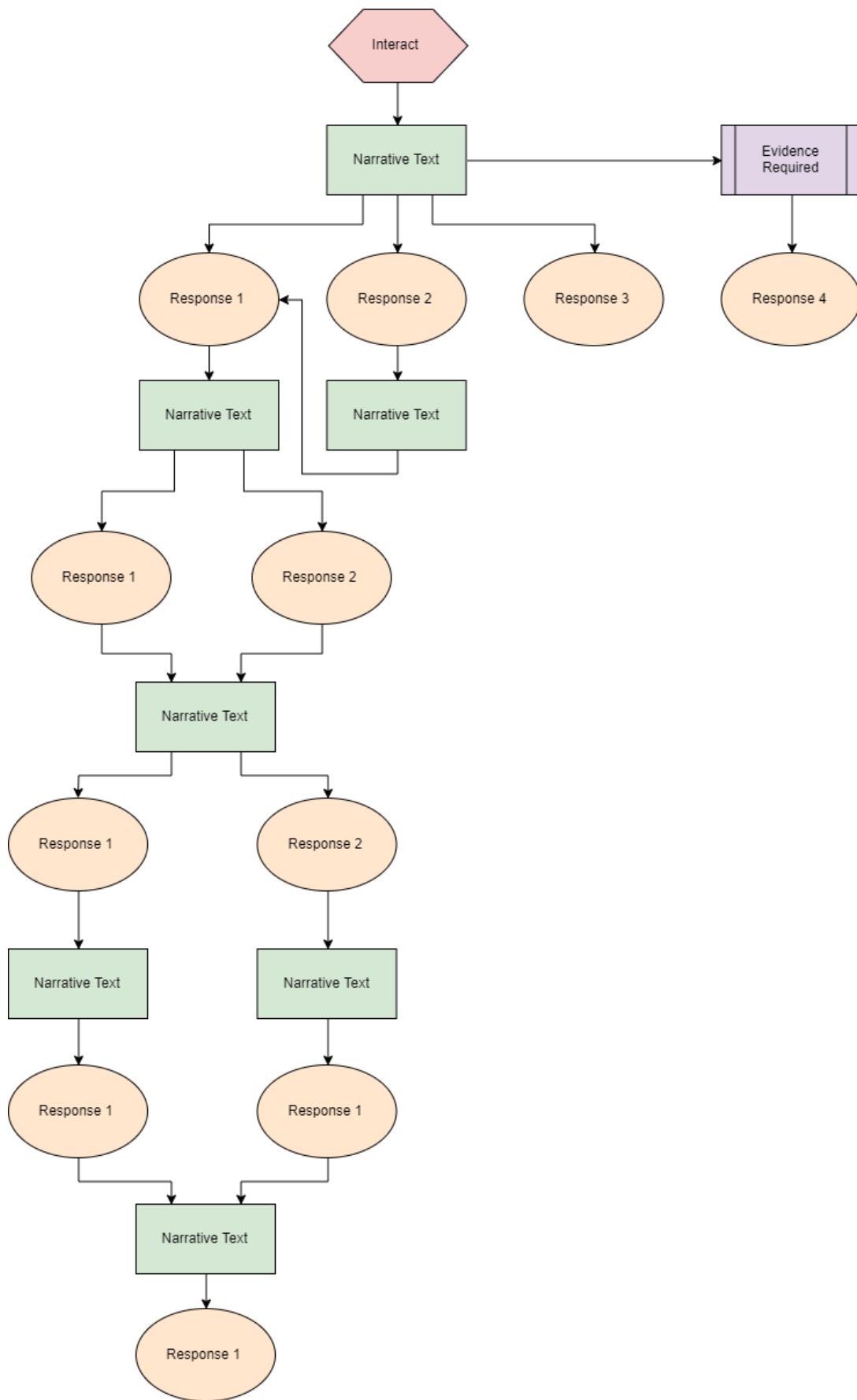
Player:

- “Thank you, I'll get the bottom of this don't worry.”
- “I found this notebook, so kind of you to write down all of your incriminating deeds in one place.”

Mayor:

- N/A
- “What? How did you... you can't prove anything you dog. I'm the law of this town, no one will believe you.”

Drunk Main Dialogue



Drunk:

“The hell do you want?”

Player:

- “Relax, I just want to ask you a few questions.”
- “For you to confess!”
- “Nothing from you Pleb.”

Drunk:

- “Only if you bring me a drink.”
- “Piss off, I’m busy.”

Player:

- “I’m not sure that’s sure that’s such a good idea, maybe you could just tell me a bit about the disappearances?”
- “What do you know about the disappearances? This is no time for drink!”

Drunk:

- “Disappearances? I don’t *Hick* know what you mean.”

Player:

- “Look, I know you saw something just tell me and it’ll be so much easier?”
- “Listen hear you degenerate, if you don’t tell me what you know I’ll make sure you won’t be able to pick up a bottle let alone drink from it.”

Drunk:

- “Nope, I didn’t see nothing, I was minding my own business. Went for a walk in the forest I did.”
- “Oh, please no, drink’s the only thing I have since Lydia died. I promise I don’t nothing about no disappearances, can’t blame people for trying to run away from this end of the world town.”

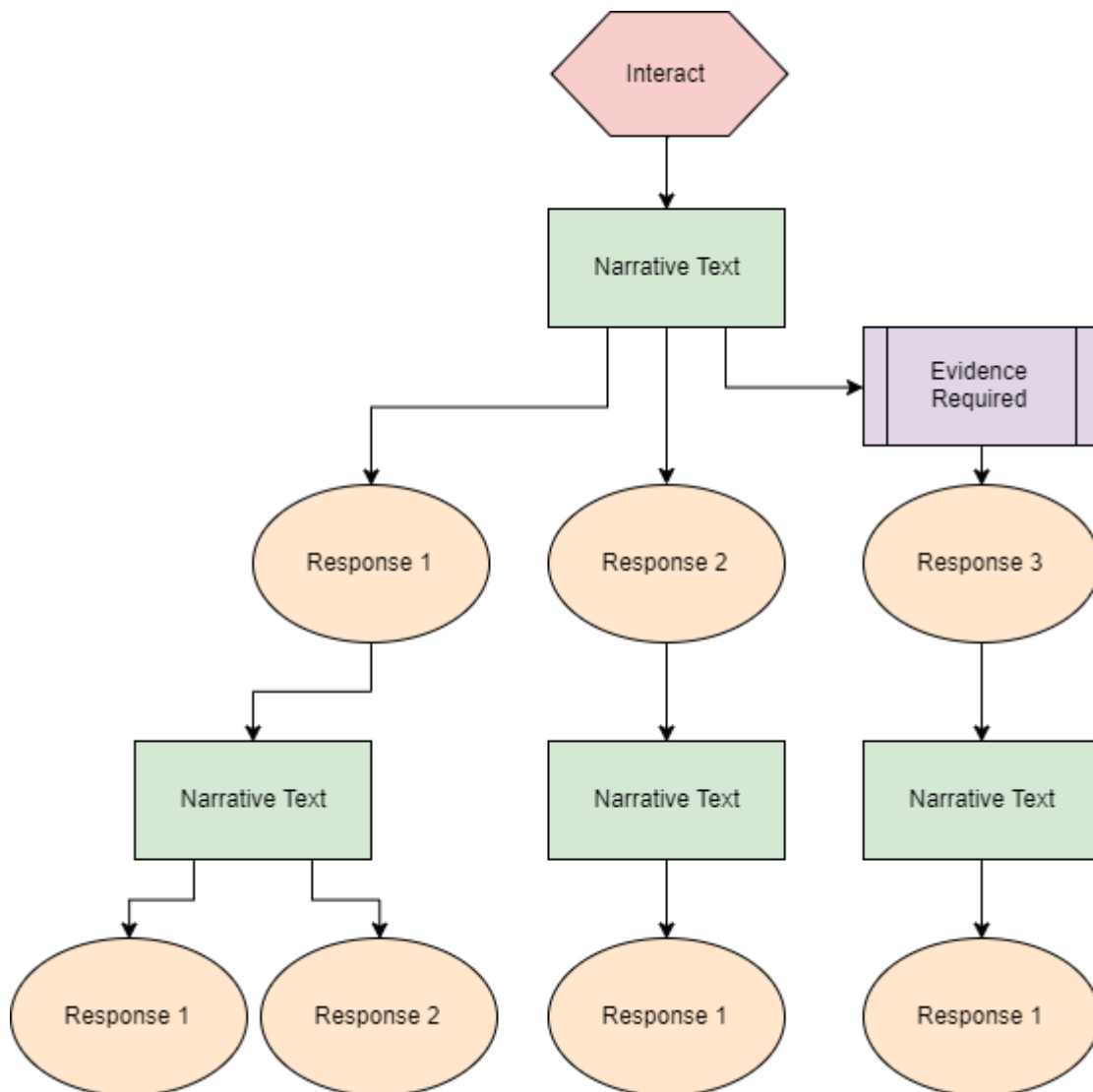
Player:

“You must have seen something? Think.”

Drunk:

“I haven’t seen a thing, just them creepy ruins in the woods that’s all but they’ve been there for years.”

Drunk Secondary Dialogue



Drunk:

"You're back? I've told you everything I know, I swear."

Player:

(1) *Requires Broken Bottles evidence.*

- "I believe you don't worry; I was just wondering where you said the ruins we're again?"
- "I doubt that, you're a piece of dung and I'm not through with you yet. Tell me where the ruins are!"
- "(1) I found broken bottles littering the crime scene, whoever did this was clearly a heavy drinker. have you anything to say in you defence?"

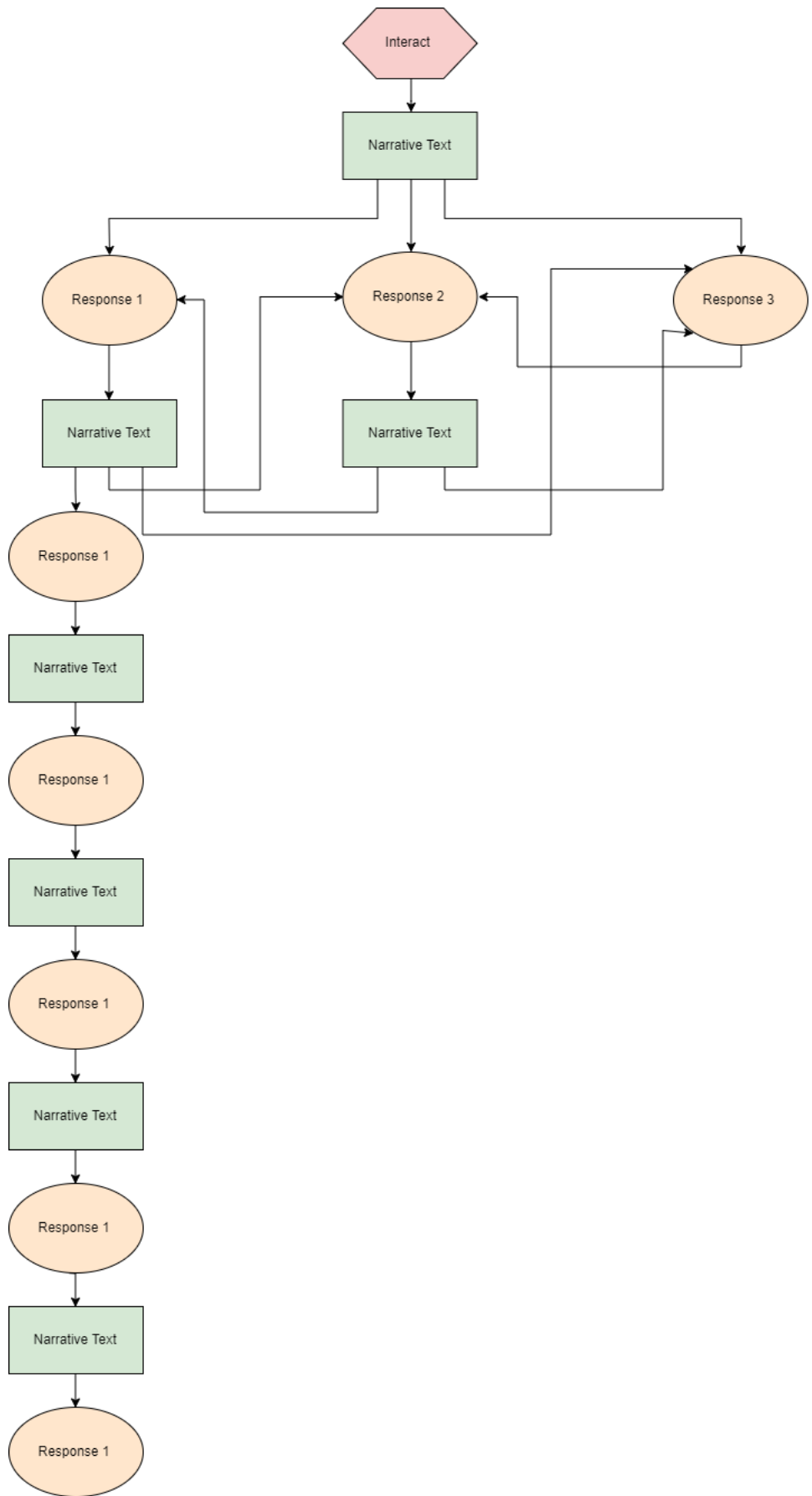
Drunk:

- "In the forest at the base of the cliffs, if you're going in there be careful. It's dark, take a torch."
- "In the forest! In the forest! Now just leave me in piece."
- "No, it wasn't me! I swear it wasn't me!"

Player:

- "Thank you Cotter"
- "Stay out of my way Drunk, you don't want any more trouble."
- "Fine, you best be telling the truth, or I'll be back."
- "Tell that to the Hangman, it's time for you to pay for your crimes."

Blacksmith Main Dialogue



Blacksmith: “You’re the one looking into the disappearances aren’t you? Good they’ve been going on for so long I’m glad someone is doing something”

Player:

- “I am, I saw the notice the Mayor put up”
- “How long have they been going on for?”
- “Why hasn’t anyone done something before?”

Blacksmith:

- “It took him long enough, but I’m glad it worked at least”
- “Too long, over a month”
- “Some of us tried; Stannig and Margarete went missing and everyone thought it was just them running away together. Those who knew her closely had heard Margarete mention it once or twice, but when Jorlan disappeared we knew something was wrong. The Mayor said he must’ve wandered off during the night, “He was old and senile, it was bound to happen sooner or later”. Most of the folk here accepted that Jorlan was an old man, but I’ve shod his horses for the last 8 years and not once was that man ever senile, he was sharp as a blade. Elena disappeared a week later, and we pushed the Mayor to write to the Thane, to send for help, he was reluctant, saying the wolves must have got her “a tragedy but not unheard of”. It wasn’t until her father and brothers went to search for her a few days past and didn’t return that he finally saw sense and asked for help.”

Player:

- “Sounds like you and he don’t agree, what’s your problem with him?”

Blacksmith:

- “The man’s a damn fool, if he’d have been faster asking for help instead of blaming the gods and fate we might still have half a village.”

Player:

- “So, he’s a religious man then?”

Blacksmith:

- “Very, he’s always at the shrine and runs the village sermon.”

Player:

- “The shrine, where is it?”

Blacksmith:

- “It’s in the forest, he used to pray there every morning, but he got into a fight with Cotter a while ago after that drunk vomited all over it, he hasn’t been back since.”

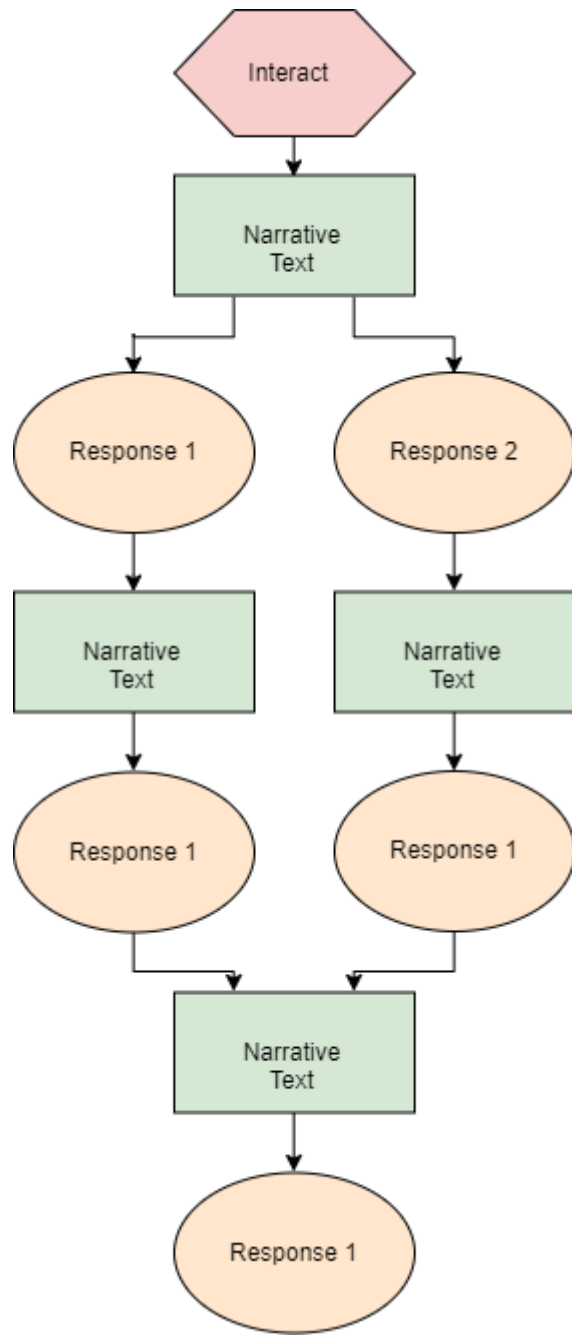
Player:

- “Thank you, you’ve been a great help.”

Blacksmith:

- “I hope you catch whatever did this and be careful, something around here is very good at staying hidden.”

Blacksmith Secondary Dialogue



Blacksmith:

“Any luck finding out what's happening?”

Player:

- “None yet I'm afraid, I'll get to the bottom of it”
- “Some, I have my suspicions”

Blacksmith:

- “Damn. Please hurry, people are scared and there aren't many of us left. Is there something I can help you with?”
- “Well I hope you get whoever is doing this, it has to stop. Anyway, why are you back, is there something else I can help you with?”

Player:

- “You mentioned a shrine, where was it again?”
- “Yes actually, I was wondering if you could tell me where that shrine is again?”

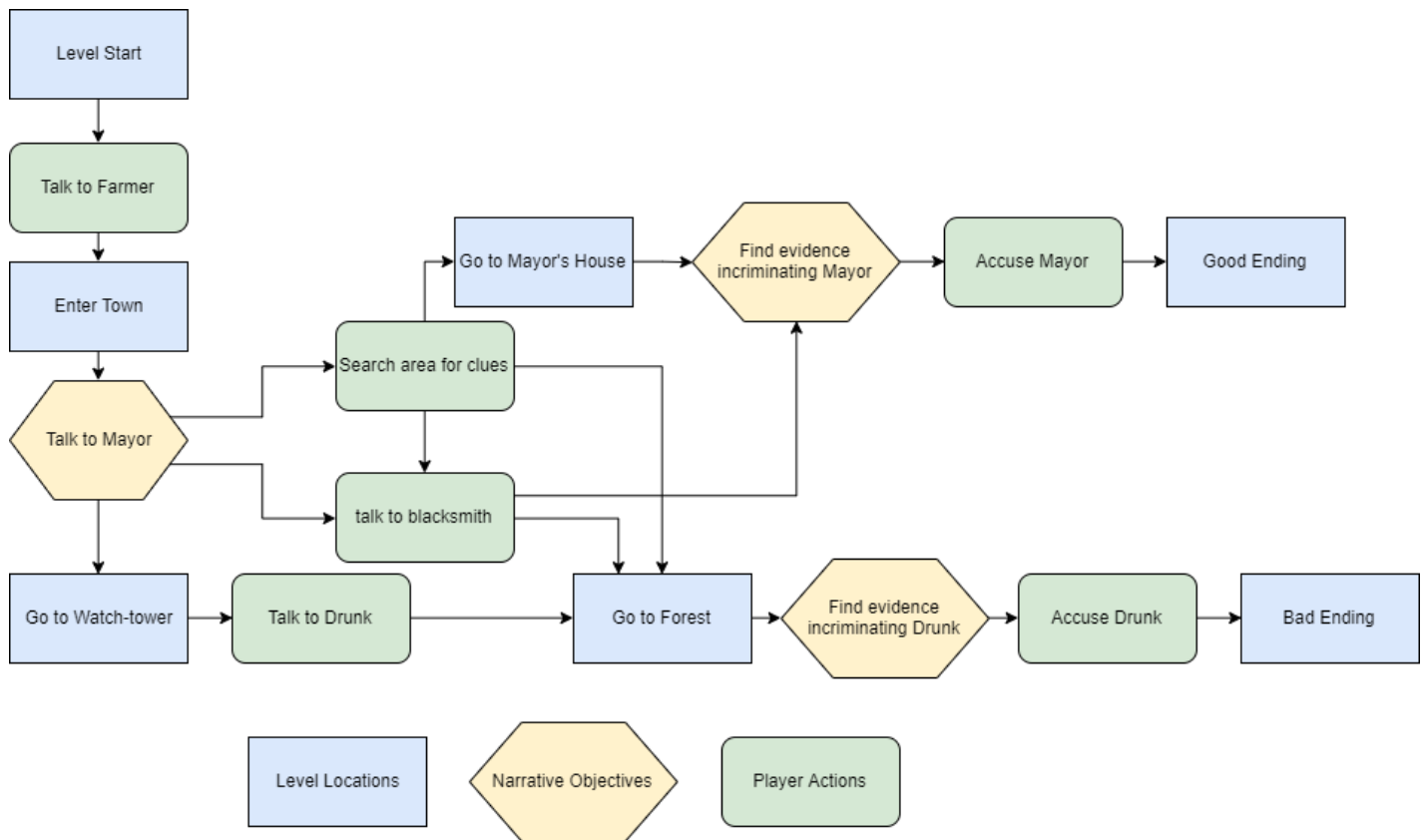
Blacksmith:

“It's in the forest, near the centre. Be careful in there, strange things are afoot.”

Player:

- “I will, thanks again”

Level Flow



Level Main Objectives

- Talk to Mayor
- Find evidence on who is behind the disappearances
- Accuse someone

Level Production

Concept

Set in a dark fantasy land (equivalent to the medieval period), the player begins on the road at the outskirts of a small town that has been plagued by mysterious disappearances.

Setting/Theme

Key locations:

- The Farmer's Shack
- The Mayor's House
- The Blacksmith
- The Watch-tower
- The Forest shrine

Theme:

- Dark Fantasy
- Set at dusk, with heavy mists
- Grassland and Forest environments
- Medieval/Viking Aesthetic

Environment Research



A collection of screenshots from other games and projects which capture the medieval dark fantasy aesthetic of *Guilty?*

Focal Points

A few of the key areas of focus with the level are;

- The Farmland
- The Town
- The Watch-tower
- The Forest Shrine

The Farmland:

- This is where the player will start and will encounter their first NPC, it serves to guide them towards The Town using roads and torches along the route.

The Town:

- This is where the bulk of the game takes place, home to most of the NPCs the player can interact with, the area is filled with environmental storytelling/narrative meshing, as well as hiding some key gameplay secrets for the player to explore and find.

The Watch-tower:

- The tallest structure in The Town and the location of Cotter the Drunk (one of the narrative's most key NPCs), players are directed here in dialogue with the Mayor.

The Forest Shrine:

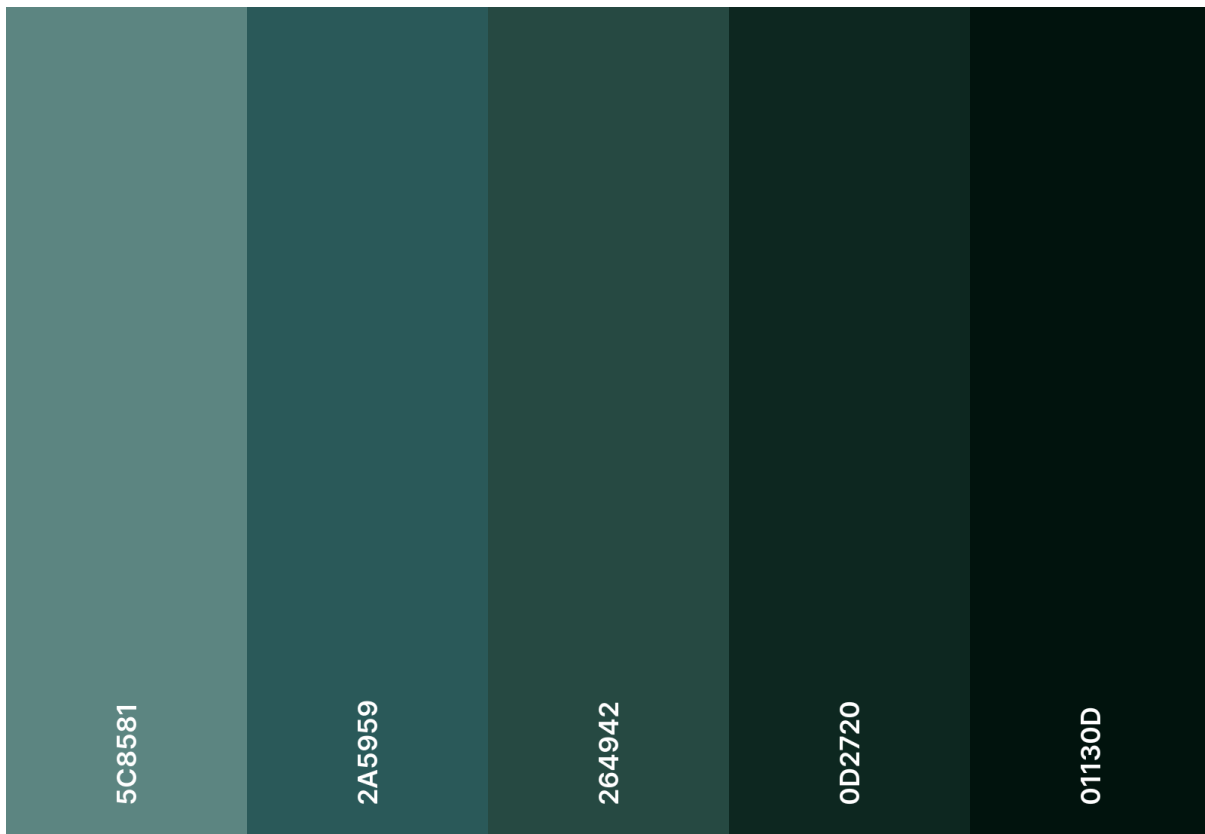
- The missing link to the disappearances plaguing The Town, it's here that the player will find several pieces of evidence incriminating NPCs. They are directed here by the Blacksmith and the Drunk. As well as this, the road leads most of the way there, encouraging players to explore when it ends abruptly near a cave.

Lighting

The time of day within the level is late evening/night with a heavy fog in the distance. As such there will be a lot of torches and fires to create ambient light for the player. Additionally, the player carries their own torch to help explore the darker areas in the level (e.g. the forest).

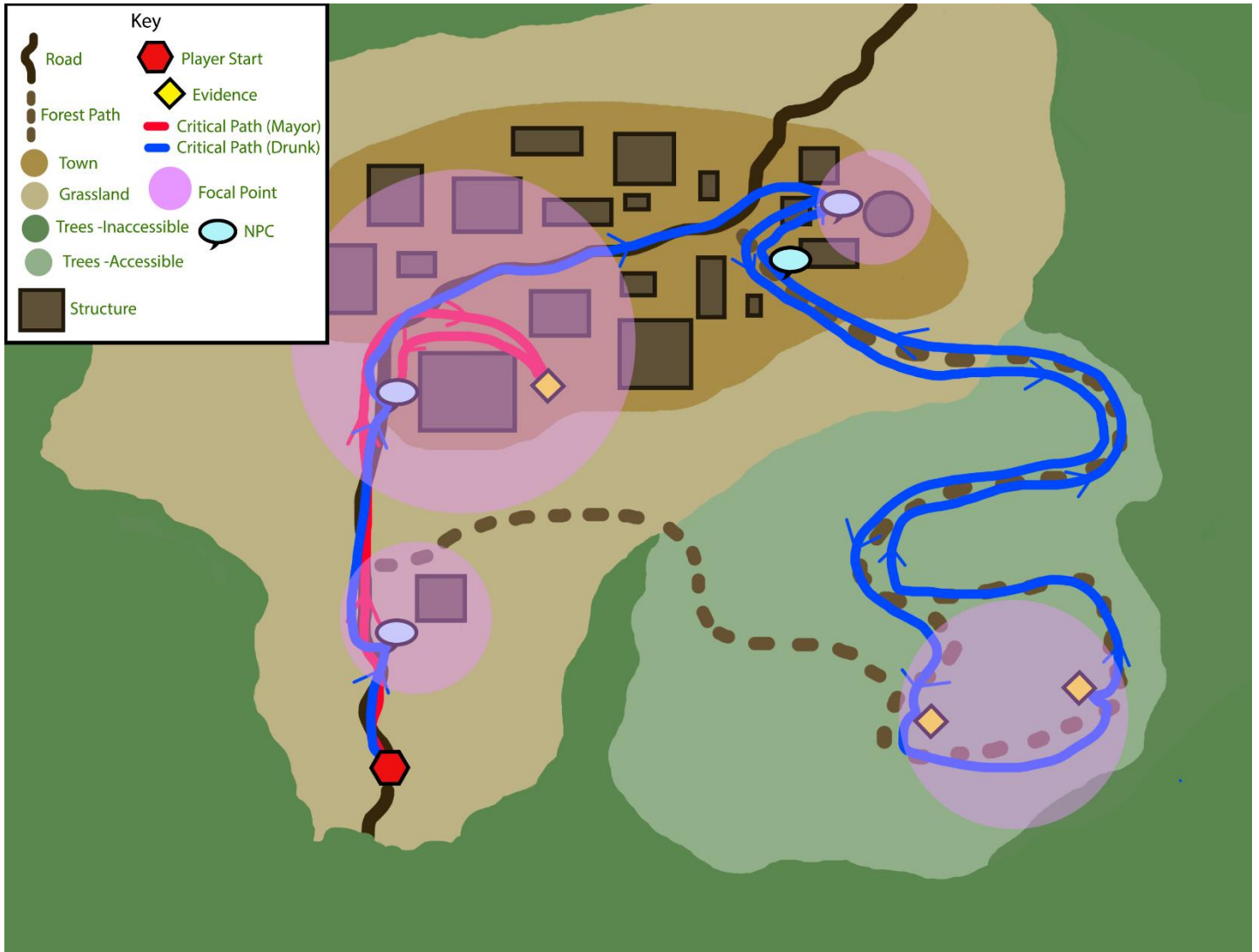


Colour Palette

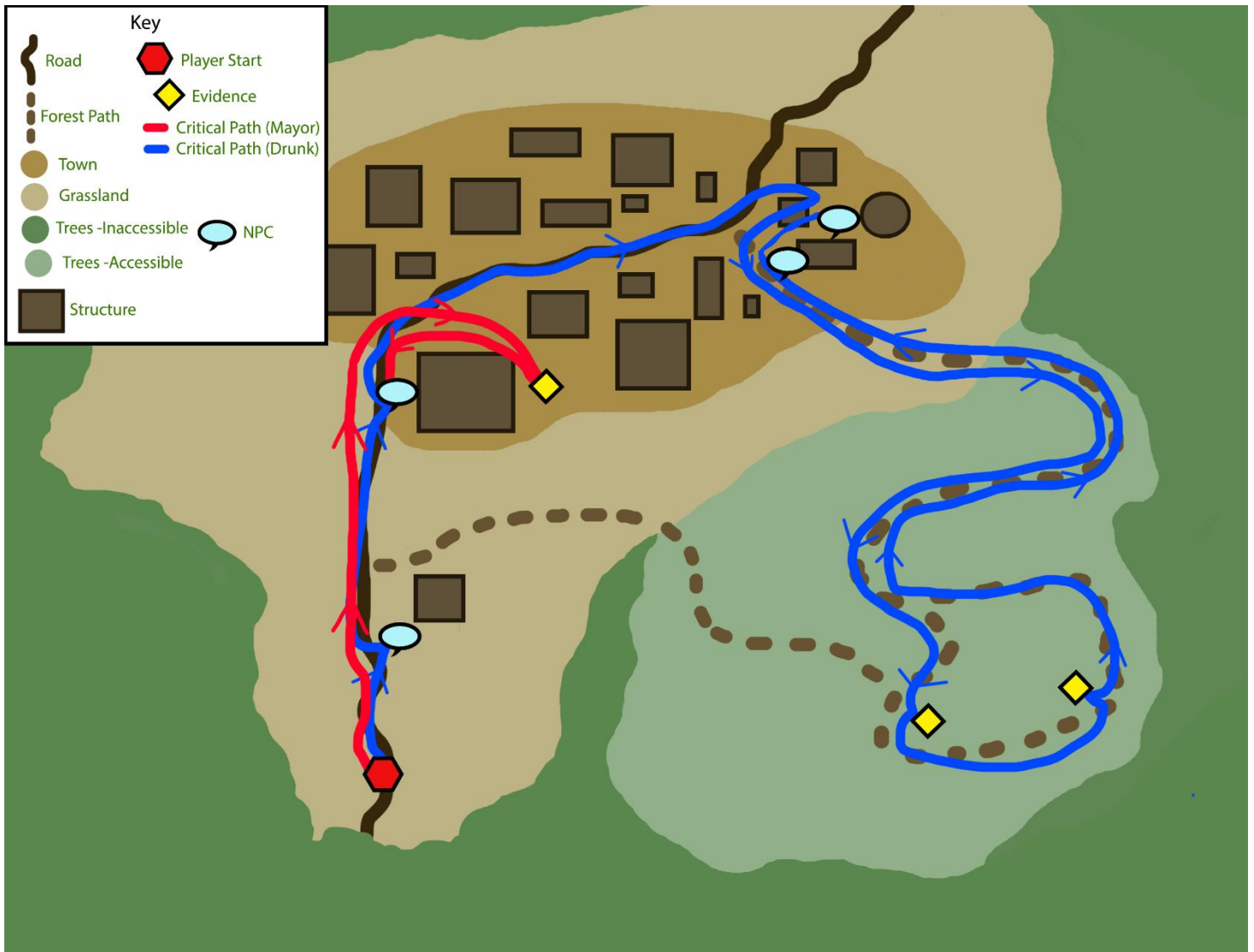


Top Down Level Maps

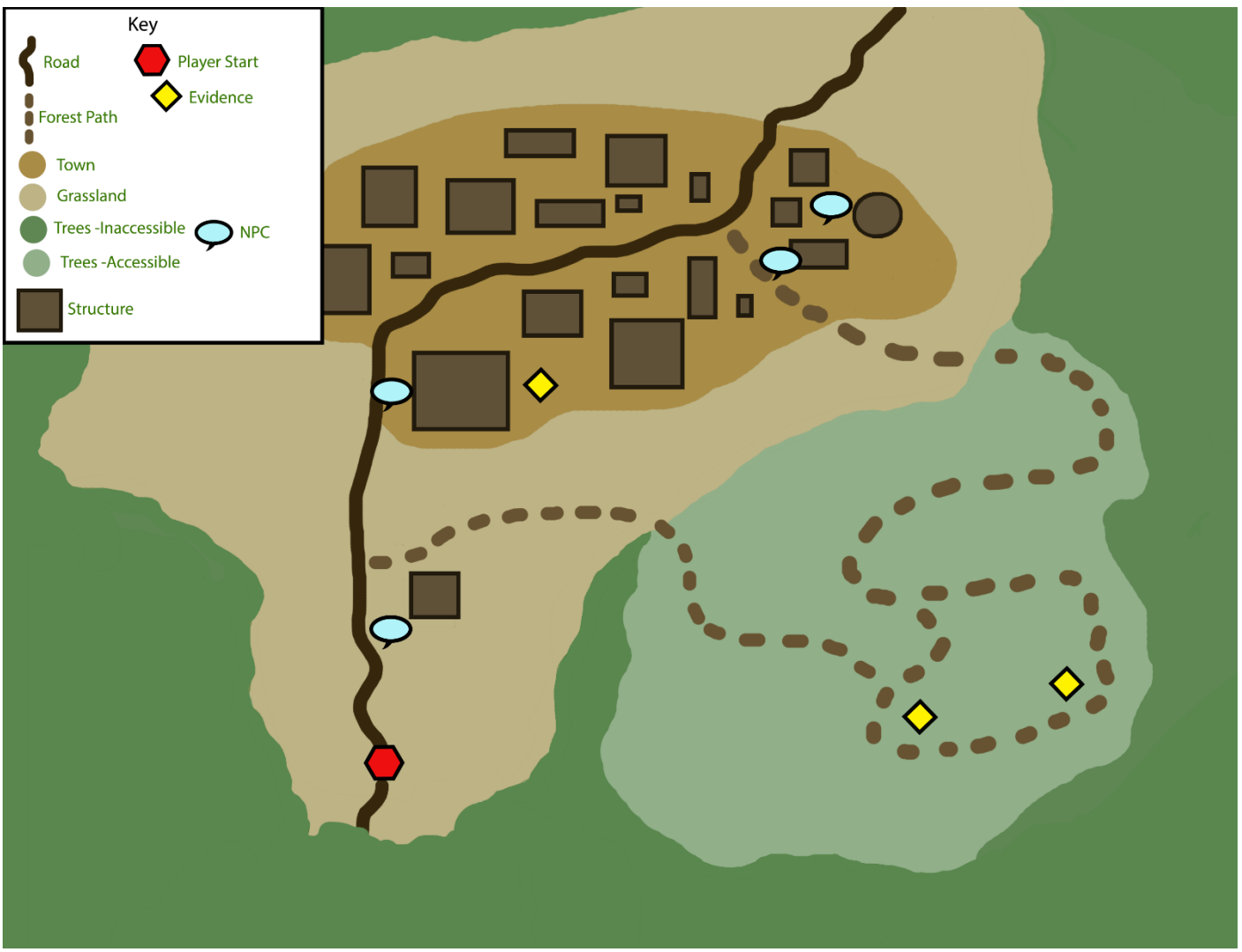
Full Map



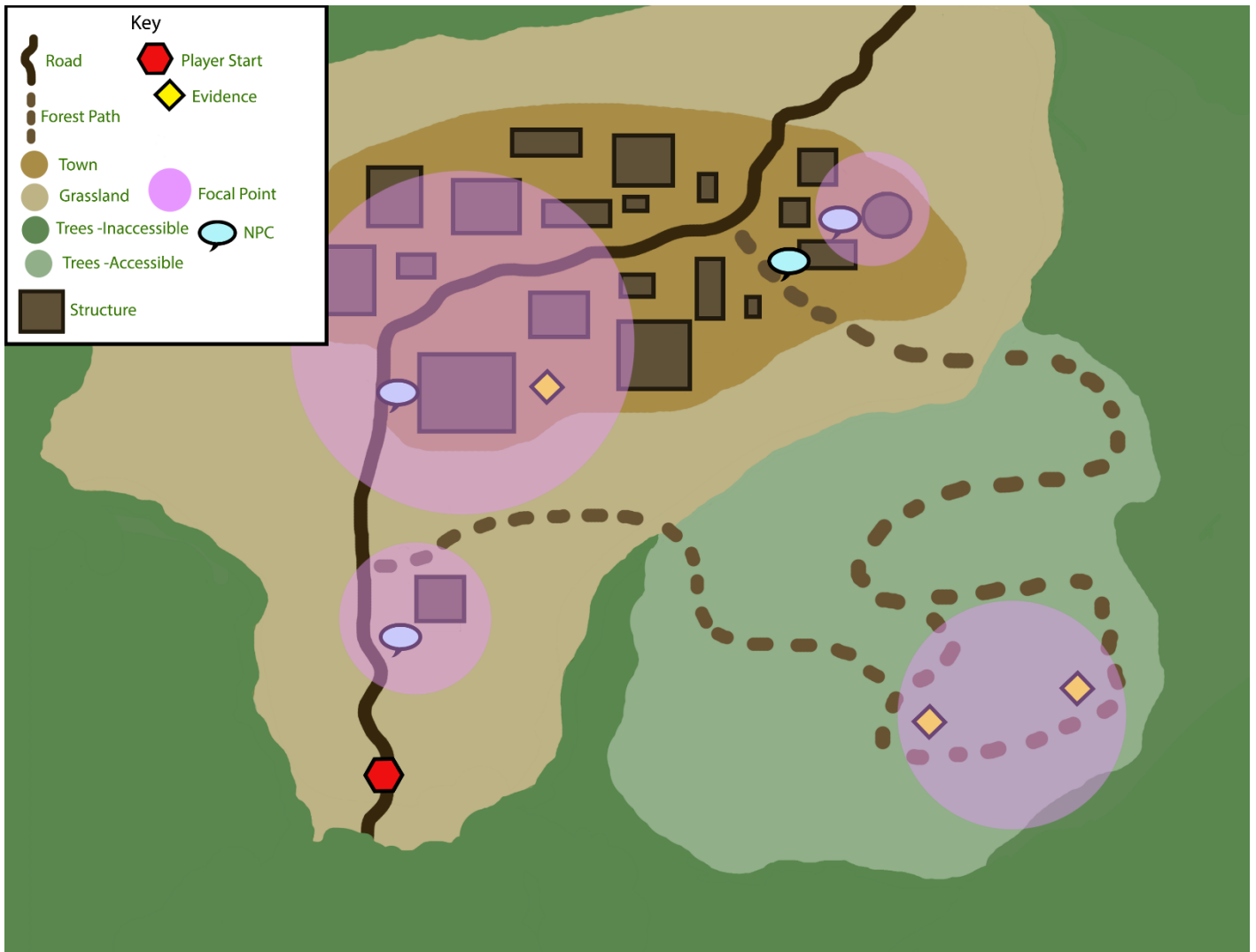
Critical Path map



Objectives map



Focal Points map



Asset Packs

A great many assets used in the level are from the Synty Stores POLYGON packs, specifically;

- POLYGON – Farm Pack
- POLYGON – Western Pack
- POLYGON – Fantasy Characters
- POLYGON – Vikings Pack
- POLYGON – Knights Pack
- POLYGON – Adventure Pack

In addition to Synty Studios' work other packs were utilised in the creation of this project, these were;

- Generic NPC Anim Pack – by Siarhei Chekolian
- Quest Journal – by REXARD

Links

<https://syntystore.com/collections/frontpage/products/polygon-farm-pack>

<https://syntystore.com/collections/frontpage/products/polygon-western-pack>

<https://syntystore.com/collections/frontpage/products/polygon-fantasy-characters-pack>

<https://syntystore.com/collections/frontpage/products/polygon-vikings-pack>

<https://syntystore.com/collections/frontpage/products/polygon-knights-pack>

<https://syntystore.com/collections/frontpage/products/polygon-adventure-pack>

<https://www.unrealengine.com/marketplace/en-US/product/generic-npc-anim-pack>

<https://www.unrealengine.com/marketplace/en-US/product/quest-journal>