

REFLECTION

Feedback Report

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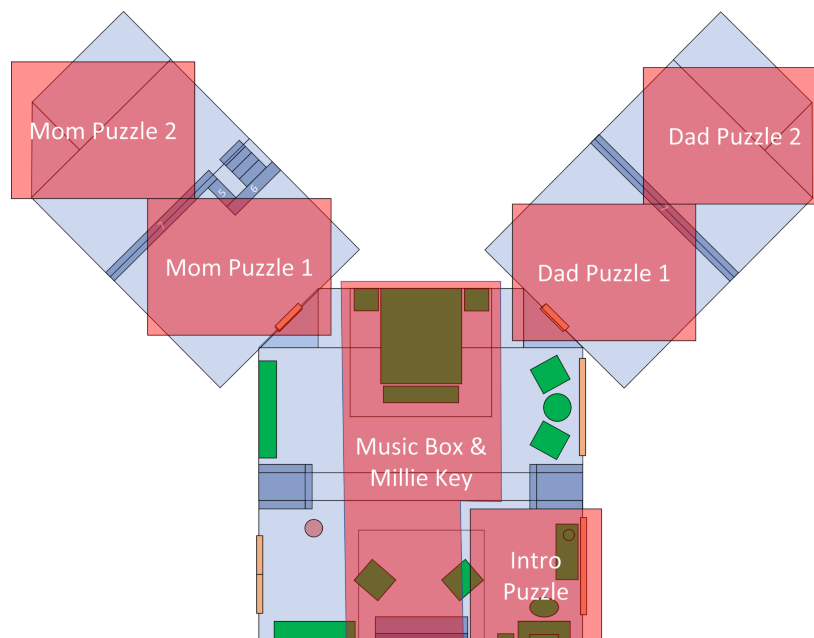
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Introduction

This document includes the cumulation of all playtests feedback following the Alpha build of *Reflection*. It includes the methods of testing as well as an analysis and outline of the changes made as the result of this feedback to be included for the Beta release.

Game Structure for Reference

The development of our game was one level at a time, the levels were released in this order:



- ♦ **March 4th:** Intro Puzzle 90%, Mom1 20%
- ♦ **March 7th:** Intro Puzzle 100%, Millie Key & Music Box 100%
- ♦ **March 11th:** Mom2 95%
- ♦ **March 17th:** Mom1 100%
- ♦ **March 19th:** Mom1 (Redesign) 100%
- ♦ **March 25th:** Dad1 100%, Dad2 95%

Motivation after the Alpha Demo

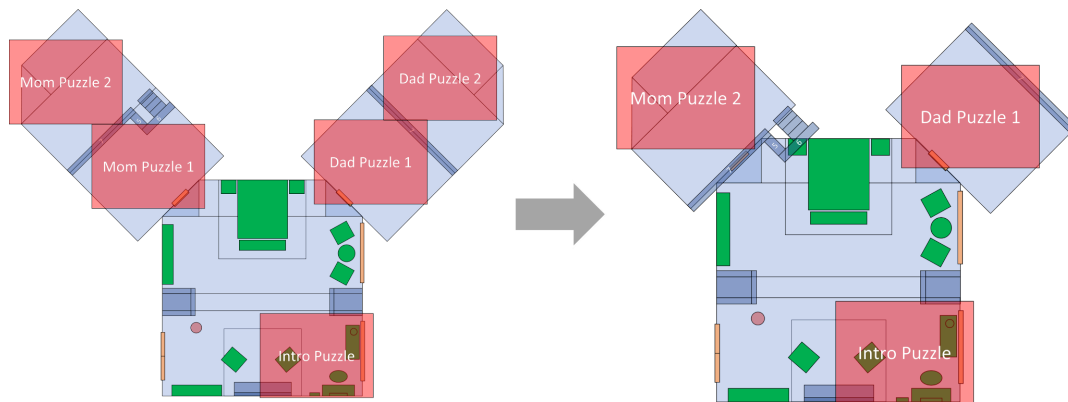
Feedback and testing for *Reflection* were crucial to how we would have finished the game as well.

The Alpha contained more of a display of what's to come in *Reflection* thematically. Throughout development, it was clear to see that *Reflection* would be a game of many

things. This might have meant we wouldn't be able to finish everything we have planned. Although thought to be essential, there might be the case that we'd have to reduce our scope in puzzles to ensure *Reflection* would still feel complete. One piece of advice from our play-testers was that ultimately, they'd rather play a small but complete game than have a large but less cohesive experience.

Timeline Changes

Taking this advice into consideration, our team has decided on two key dates, March 7th and March 15th.



On March 7th, our developers would see if they can finalize the mirror mechanic so that we'd have that complete. This is was our key mechanic and it would have been important that we spend time and fix the bugs in the Alpha.

By March 15th, we had aimed to script Mom Puzzle 2 and Dad Puzzle 1 completely with gameplay, narrative, and puzzle systems. If these tasks were not completed by March 15th, there would have been scoping reduction. In this case, our new goal will be to refine the puzzles we already have and to include some connections to these closets in the main room somewhere.

This would have guaranteed that we keep the game completed and a fun experience for the player.

Feedback Sources

Alpha Guests

March 4th (~30 minutes) - On the initial day of our Alpha release, guests who are currently working as game developers in the industry looked and played through the

March 17th (~15 minutes) – After completing the Mom1 puzzle, we offered it to Steve during office hours to look over and give feedback. This testing was done as if he was playing through our game for real, stopping at around the 10-15 minute mark.

Friends & Classmates

March 12th onwards (~varying time) - Planned play testing offered by the course had been exhausted and more testing was required for more feedback. The team was encouraged to offer our latest build to have their friends test given a standardized method. They played varying progress points of the game from just the Intro Puzzle to up to Dad2.

Testing Procedure

The main difference between our testing fell under two-time limits. The official guest demos from Alpha, Ubisoft, and Steve had tested our game given a time limit of 10-20 minutes. Unofficial playtesting was given as much as needed to play through the game as they needed to provide complete feedback.

Introduction

Players were given the same introduction as stated on the itch.io page. Specifically, they were introduced to the game with the Synopsis,

Reflection follows the story of Millie as she returns to her childhood home after the passing of her mother. When Millie enters the master bedroom to begin cleaning her parent's room, she discovers the door has been locked behind her and she is trapped within. To escape, Millie must relive the memories and childhood trauma that happened within her family. Only through the process of self-reflection can Millie truly escape the bounds her family placed on her, come to terms with her grief and leave her past behind.

Given the controls of the game,

The controls of *Reflection* are very simple, it plays like your normal first-person game,

- **WASD** to move Millie around
- **Scroll Up/Down** to Zoom in and out
- **F** to interact/pick up items
- **SHIFT** to open your inventory
- **SHIFT + Scroll Up/Down** to cycle through items in the inventory
- **E** to use items in your inventory

And finally, given an explanation of the Reflection mechanic.

The player's main tool to their disposal will be to travel through mirrors, seeing the same room they are in but 20 years in the past. For this, the player can:

- See a mirror that shows a reflection in the past.
- The player will be prompted to "visit" the past when near a mirror.
- Then, they will be transported to the mirror world.

Gameplay

Throughout playing the game, participants were requested to stream their POV and voice what they were thinking about in their heads as they played.

During these playtests, we preferably wanted to have three people performing three roles:

1. One would talk with the player to give any hints and or guidance the player would want if they got too confused.
2. Another would ask questions to the player to help them voice their concerns. Especially, if it got too silent, we'd know the player would be thinking about stuff that we'd love to listen to.
3. The last person would be writing down notes describing in text what the player would be doing and is concerned about. Occasionally specifics would be noticed such as, the player would enter the fuse box reflected and not know what to do after.

End-of-Test Thoughts

Concluding the tests, some players were asked a few questions about the game and their experience.

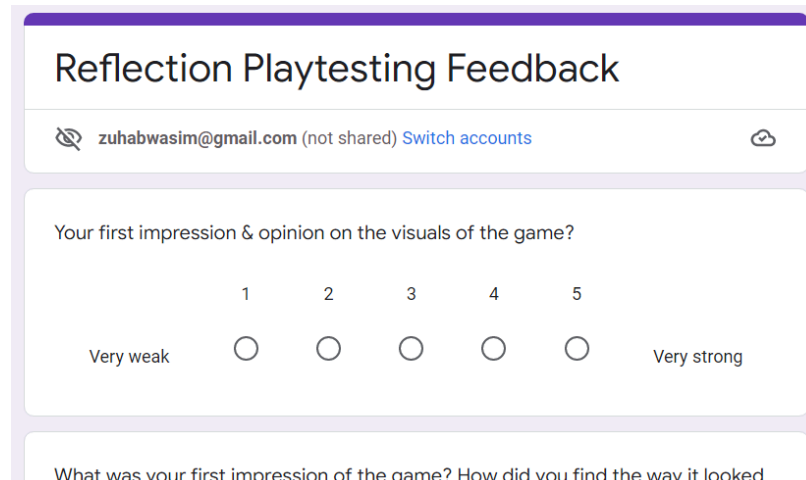
- What did you find challenging about the game?
- What did you find easy about the game?
- If you could tell us to focus on something, what would it be?

Some were given more specific questions too.

- We noticed that at this point when ____, you were having trouble, what was your thought process here?

Post Survey

Players following their playthrough were given an optional survey to fill out on Google Forms.



The screenshot shows a Google Form titled "Reflection Playtesting Feedback". At the top, it displays the email "zuhabwasim@gmail.com (not shared)" with a "Switch accounts" link. The first question is "Your first impression & opinion on the visuals of the game?". Below the question is a horizontal scale with five radio buttons labeled 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. The scale is anchored by "Very weak" on the left and "Very strong" on the right. Below the scale, there is a text input field with the prompt "What was your first impression of the game? How did you find the way it looked".

The survey is Linked Above

Results

Our game *Reflection* is a narrative, puzzle game on top of the actual reflection mechanic. This means that testing would give us feedback on not only the reflection mechanic but also the flow of the puzzle and story.

Alpha Feedback

Link for the raw notes available here: [Alpha Feedback](#)

General

- ♦ The Alpha playtesters found that the game was too quiet and didn't have a lot of sound going for it. If the game we're going for is supposed to be atmospheric and immersive, we'll need to have responsible effects.
- ♦ Make the interactables outlined or give a visual indication to make pick-up-able items more obvious.
- ♦ Steer away from distracting visuals. That is visuals that aren't relevant to the mechanics.
- ♦ Like *Gone Home*, the whole level is available first, but not everything is explorable or useful at first. Avoid preventing the play from the interaction.

- ♦ Great aesthetics, the scope is a little too large
- ♦ The first puzzle takes too long to complete, probably because the room is too large and will be explored.
- ♦ People will get stuck, you should figure out a way to help players.
- ♦ Some of the audio should be general, lines that generally tell the player hints.
- ♦ Assuming things go badly, it's better to have one amazing room than three okay rooms.

Intro Puzzle

- ♦ The code is not reflected
- ♦ It's hard to tell what to do at the level

GDD Club Feedback

Link for the raw notes available here: [☰ GDDC Playtest Notes](#)

General

- ♦ Visually put the messages somewhere, maybe subtitles?
- ♦ The lighting and visuals are good
- ♦ Controls are intuitive
- ♦ Can't see your reflection, "Is she a vampire"
- ♦ Object collision issues
- ♦ No clear direction when lost, no hints either
- ♦ Needs deterrent dialogue "I can't interact with this, yet"

Intro Puzzle

- ♦ Item naming issues
- ♦ UI Interaction icons are shown even when the player can't interact with them
- ♦ Needs some indication when Millie reflects for the first time
- ♦ Visually show when items are being used
- ♦ Handkerchief needs to be seen more easily
- ♦ It should be less about hunting things down and figuring out the interactions
- ♦ A good amount of intuition and logistics in the solution
- ♦ Prevent the player from going back through the fireplace
- ♦ Use an electrical sound instead of a clank for lights turning on
- ♦ Too bright in the past

Mom1 Puzzle

- ♦ Too much going on and is immediately cluttering/overwhelming for the player

Ubisoft Feedback

Link for the raw notes available here: [Ubisoft Feedback](#)

General

- ♦ All nightstands should be interactable despite not having anything
- ♦ Why are the closet doors locked from the inside?

Intro Puzzle

- ♦ Made sense and was played through pretty quickly with the new voice lines
- ♦ Need to see the notes writing

Millie Key & Music Box

- ♦ The fireplace should have some hints if it's interacted with before the box
- ♦ The fireplace is too close to the music box, two interactables on top of each other make it difficult to discern and the fireplace can be skipped.
- ♦ Not clear you can reflect through the mirror
- ♦ Controls are funky with the mirror

Mom2 Puzzle

- ♦ Blocked mirror is hard to understand why it is blocked, to begin with
- ♦ It's hard to tell the box the two mirrors are standing on can be moved
- ♦ The safe can be opened in the past which is confusing
- ♦ They're okay that the safe doesn't have an input system

Steve Playthrough

Link for the raw notes available here: [Steve First Playthrough Feedback](#)

General

- ♦ Mouse sensitivity is awful, make a slider
- ♦ A backlog of journals for what you're doing, or current objectives to remind the player.
- ♦ Need object highlighting, it's hard to figure out what you're pointing at

Intro Puzzle

- ♦ Continuous hints would be nice, if a player took too long, playing audio that says “maybe I should look at the lamp” or “the fusebox is to the left of the fireplace”
- ♦ The note needs to pop out to be able to read
- ♦ Feedback for the wrongly reflected code. “This doesn’t quite look right”

Millie Key & Music Box

- ♦ Millie key SFX is too loud, need to rebalance
- ♦ Can’t interact with drawers in the past, but you should
- ♦ Symbols for interacting with the vanity in the past
- ♦ There is a desire to interact with everything that was interacted within the present
- ♦ Footsteps shouldn’t be high heel clicks if Millie is 12 in the past

Mom1 Puzzle

- ♦ Framerate because of these mirrors is way too low, should only activate some mirrors at a time
- ♦ Too many physical barriers and too much about positioning
- ♦ **Heavily stressed that there shouldn’t be a sliding puzzle**
- ♦ Staircases need to be easier to use

Friend & Classmate Playtesting

There is no direct link for these as the results occur in the discord #play-tests channel. Hard specifics weren’t included for clutter. Notes are in the Appendix.

General

- ♦ Needs an indicator for opening inventory
- ♦ Enjoyed visuals
- ♦ Should open notes automatically
- ♦ It’s too dark in the main room
- ♦ The orientation of the reflection is confusing and hard to grasp
- ♦ The fog is too strong
- ♦ Reflections are still a bit buggy
- ♦ Lampshades in the build are non-existent
- ♦ Always asked “Am I stuck”

Intro Puzzle

- ◆ Initially confused by the switchboard numbers but the clue helped
- ◆ Excited when teleporting into the past, the lighting is great
- ◆ Did not figure out the Fireplace was teleporting able
- ◆ Needs to be more intuitive to read the code right to left

Millie Key & Music Box

- ◆ Tried to use Millie's key on the doors
- ◆ The mom and dad doors should be coloured differently
- ◆ The past room doesn't have much lighting

Mom1 Puzzle

- ◆ Wanted pivot points to know where they are when reflected
- ◆ Think they're stuck when pushing the mirror through the hole

Mom2 Puzzle

- ◆ Can be bypassed by climbing on dividers
- ◆ Mom key makes unintended drawer sounds

Dad1 Puzzle

- ◆ The door should be automatically closing but doesn't
- ◆ Need queues for brushes you've already wet with paint
- ◆ Placing and climbing the bucket is hard
- ◆ If you can climb on the bucket you pick up you should be able to climb them in the corner
- ◆ Deterrent dialogue for not being able to reflect through the spillage
- ◆ Shelf too high audio doesn't play for all book slots

Dad2 Puzzle

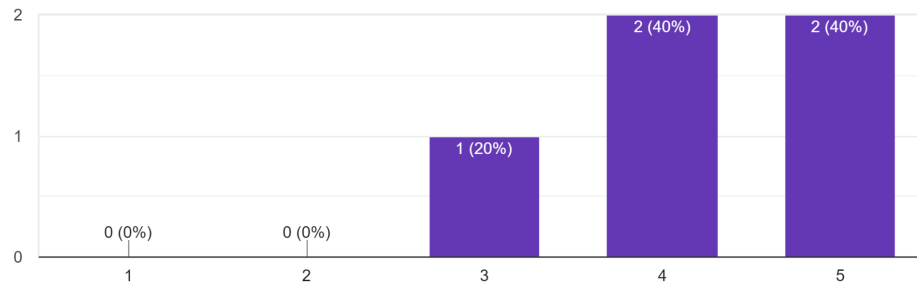
- ◆ Don't say the audio whenever painting canvases
- ◆ The lights aren't off
- ◆ Needs more audio queues for the safe code
- ◆ Spotlight doesn't need the light bulb
- ◆ Mirrors can be teleported through even after the puzzle is complete
- ◆ Way too difficult and difficulty increases way too much from the beginning

Analysis

Aggregating all of this feedback, our team had recognized the following.

Your first impression & opinion on the visuals of the game?

5 responses



Likes

Firstly, all players across the board had positive feedback regarding the lighting of the game. Once the audio of the ambience and dialogue was added too (following the Alpha), players enjoyed the atmosphere and could get immersed into the game pretty easily.

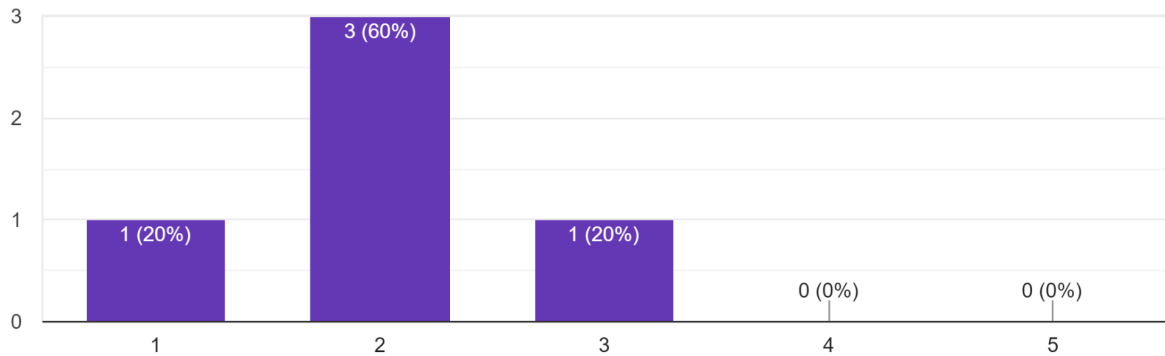
Players enjoyed exploring the past and present main rooms and were all interested in being able to go into the past. A lot of players spent time just going back and forth to see visual differences as well.

Many players enjoyed and were caught by the story, they enjoyed hearing the dialogue and being able to play through the lens of Millie.

The controls were something a lot of players found intuitive and easy to understand. Some said the controls follow exactly what they thought they would be for a first-person game like this.

How challenging did you find the opening puzzle?

5 responses



One thing many enjoyed is when the balance of intuition and thinking complimented the mechanical difficulty of the puzzle. The intro puzzle specifically was interesting as changing your frame of reference to understand that things in the opposite world are reflected sufficiently came into play.

Dislikes

Players heavily enjoyed the lighting of the game but were disappointed when the lighting wasn't pushed further to exemplify what the player needed to do or where the player needed to go. The **lighting** was a mechanic that **wasn't used enough**.

The players also did not like things that would **break them out of their immersion**, this would be item naming issues, object collisions and bugs, and surprisingly enough, the mirrors. This was not explicitly said until one playtester had mentioned it; the **mirrors** flipping the orientation **often disorientated** most players for which most had probably thought this was their confusion.

The difficulty was also a big issue for many players. If there were too many things to do, the player would be overwhelmed, but if the player was **prohibited from interacting** with things, they wanted to know why otherwise it **felt debilitating**. If the player was unsure of what to do, they wanted the game to give them hints or better direct them on what to do.

The need to balance puzzles on conceptual thinking as well as mechanically doing was a **major** component. The Intro Puzzle balanced this well but the original **Mom1 Puzzle** did not. It actively **frustrated** players as it was a puzzle that **took away from the mirror mechanic** and broke immersion.

Additionally, the **Dad2** puzzle more recently figured out was too **hard** for players to understand and the **difficulty increase** from Dad1 to Dad2 was **too steep**.

Relating to difficulty, lack of direction was what most players were concerned with. This relates to no clear objectives on what to do at any given time, it makes it hard to keep track of what to do. The inventory would be cluttered and hard to see what their next steps are. The UI didn't offer much help to the player due to its way of showing the wrong icons on certain objects, and the text often confused the player as to if they should be 'Interacting' with something or 'Moving' it.

Finally, narrative gaps took away from the players' immersion as well. Some things like why certain things can be climbed on and others can't. Or why things are happening such as the closets being locked from the inside. At the time, the narration although a heavy component felt bare due to the lack of implementation.

Potential Outlier Feedback

There was some advice that the playtesters had that seemed a bit unique regarding their experience. Advice relating to flipping the mirror world to be the same orientation as the regular world was suggested, however, all other playtesters explicitly understood why this was the case.

Another one was the clash between whether an area was too dark or light to see. Generally, the main room being dark would be necessary for the light indication of the Intro Puzzle, which many agreed with.

Changes since the Alpha

These changes are all available to test with [Beta Release v4](#).

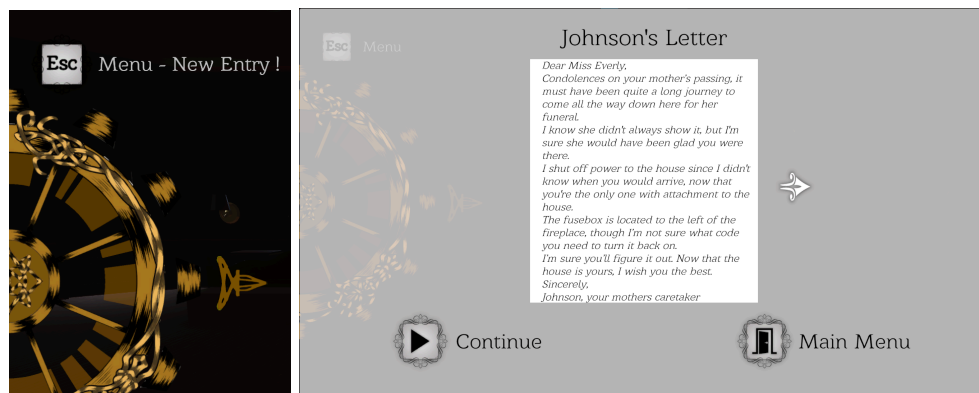
General

Performance has been heavily increased, mirrors are disabled when not directly used in the Puzzle, leading to doubling to tripling the framerate.

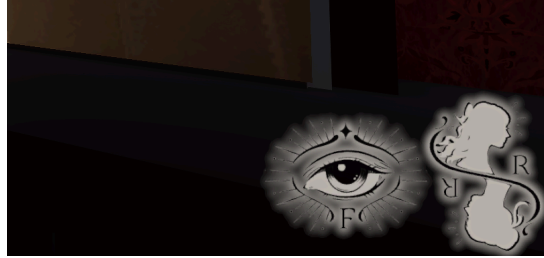
Players thought the light indication was weak at the start, making it hard to tell where to go. We made the present time's initial lighting darker to show where exactly they'd need to go. Additionally, when the player is not meant to interact with something at the time, the deterrent dialogue will be played on most things to direct the player.



Players now have a backlog of all the notes they collect that help push the narrative aspect of the game and also have a record of what the player needs to do. This is coupled with an objectives feature that has been coded programmatically, although not able to be displayed for the Beta Release



Players enjoyed the immersion of the game so we have included sounds to most things that should be interactable in the Main Room and the Mom Closet. The Dad Closet sounds have not been made but are planned to. The UI has been refined to now separate **E** to use items and mirrors to instead have **R** to reflect. The player has listed out everything they can do with objects and dialogue will play for whether they can or cannot do those actions.



Responsive-ness to expected incorrect actions by the player to notify them to ‘think with reflections’



Reflecting through the past and present has been made simpler by taking away any camera re-orientation. This allows the player to ‘Phase’ through mirrors instead which adds to the mirrors even more. Exploration is more encouraged as anything that is currently moveable should be moveable in every instance.

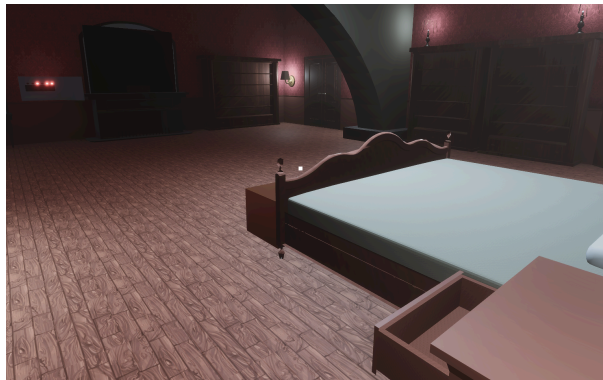


The difficulty of puzzles has been significantly decreased which will be discussed below. Also, most interactables have dialogue that further pushes the story, so the player can stay immersed and learn about the world through exploring.

Intro Puzzle

Fixed the minor issues people were facing when completing the puzzle such as item names, positioning of items, positioning of the code, and lighting that has been discussed above.

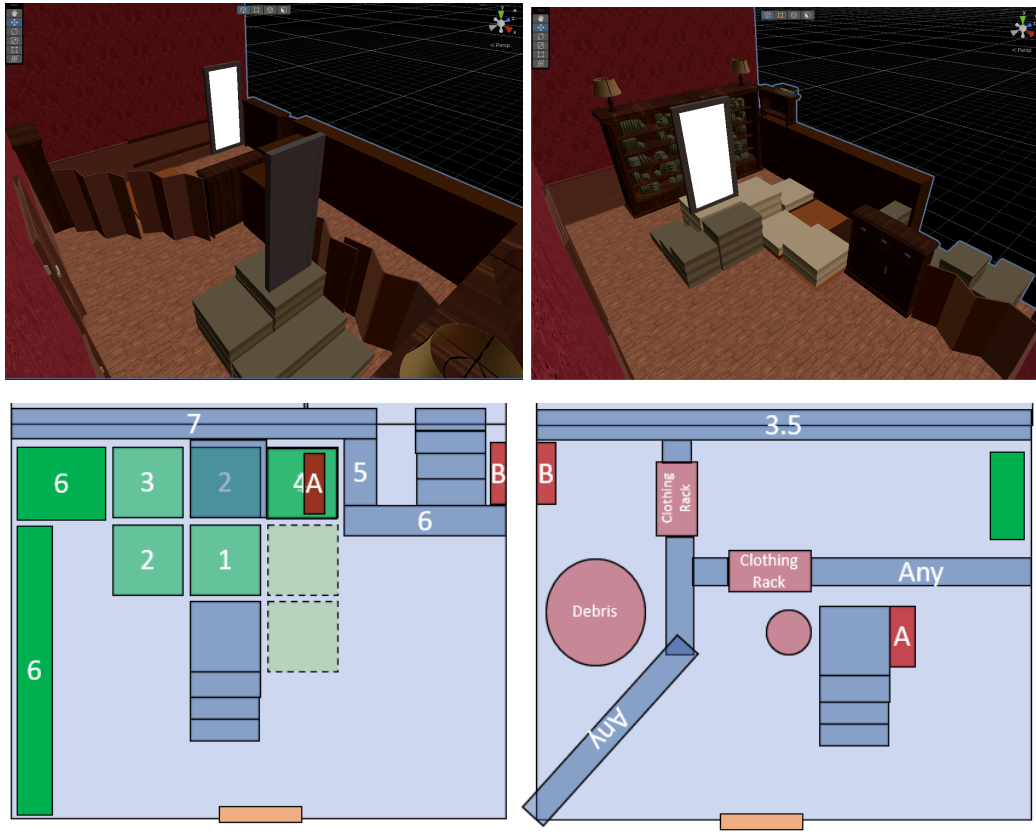
Millie Key & Music Box



Made the process more fun, encouraged the players to explore more and provided more interactivity as well as deterrents to ensure what they need to do. Added dialogue now guides them from the Key to the Music Box, for which dialogue and the fireplace mirror turn on only after using the music box to show the player the changing state.

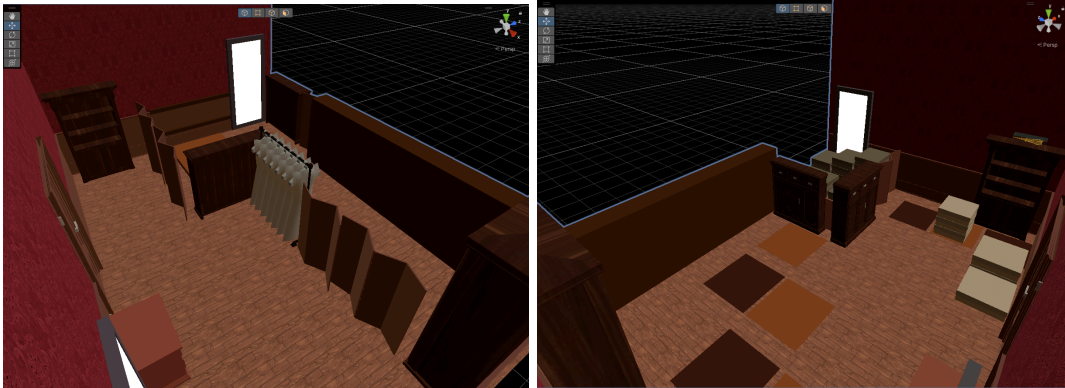
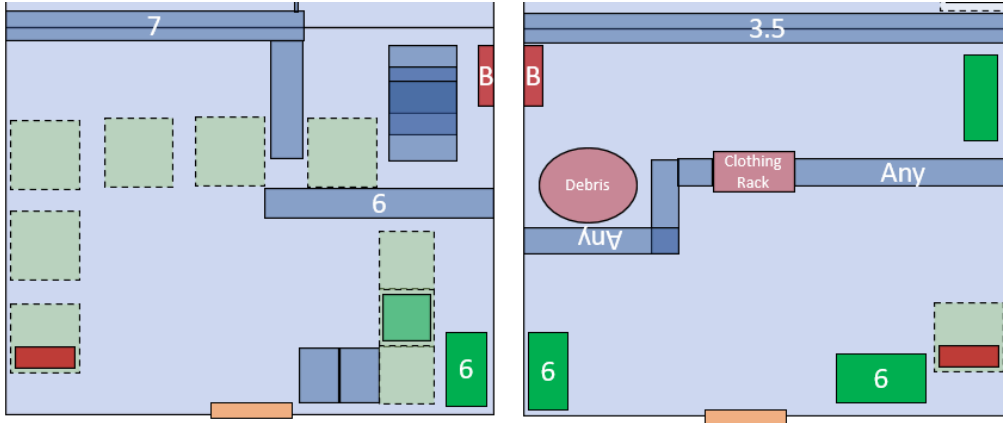
The past is now more interactive as well. The player also gets locked inside the closets to make sure they are not overwhelmed with possibilities in each puzzle.

Mom Closet



Previous Mom1 Puzzle Design

Mom1 was a pain point for most players. As such, a complete overhaul was done from the Alpha to the Feedback Adjusted Build. Specifically,



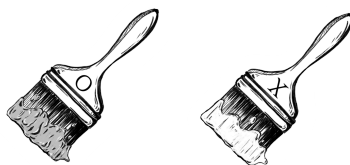
Newly Designed Mom1 Closet

The amount of clutter was significantly reduced, which makes the players less overwhelmed. The sliding puzzle that was hurting the gameplay has been taken out, in favour of simply introducing to the player that they can move objects.

The elevation of the puzzle has been replaced with a simple staircase that ensures the player understands elevation exists.

Dad Closet

Differentiating the Dad closet brushes to ensure the player knows which brush they have was made through the icons.



Dad Closet has been tested but due to its late release, the below changes have not been completed for the Beta. The planned changes are the following.

The difficulty of the Dad2 puzzle has been noted and the replanning of the puzzle is done to reduce the number of canvases to be painted. The light puzzle is difficult in it and this will ensure the conceptual difficulty and mechanical difficulty are balanced well.

Future Refining

As we get to the polishing state of our game, we want to ensure a consistent flow of polishing is done as more individuals test the game.

To help with this, we have created a #playtests Discord channel to copy raw data of playtests and are using the #task-board channel to have a To-do list for the Team to keep refining the little things as we prepare for the final release.