

IVOR PHILLIPS

Game Design Portfolio



www.linkedin.com/in/ivor-phillips/

Table of Contents

Playable Narrative Design Sample — Dog Detective	4
<i>Interactive murder mystery Twine game with playable link, overview, design goals, writing samples, and design breakdown.</i>	
Overview	5
Design Goals	5
Player Experience.....	5
Story Map and Writing Sample	6
Design Breakdown	7
What this Demonstrates.....	7
Quest Design Brief — Witcher 3 Contract Sample	8
<i>Witcher 3-inspired side quest / monster contract focused on established lore, quest goals, narrative beats, and implementation notes.</i>	
Overview	8
Quest Goals.....	9
Narrative Beats	9
Implementation Notes.....	10
What this Demonstrates.....	11
Narrative Game Design Pitch — Imposter	12
<i>Original stealth-strategy game concept with player fantasy, core gameplay design, gameplay loops, level structure design, and example mission.</i>	
Logline	12
Player Fantasy	13
Core Gameplay.....	13
Core Loop.....	13
Level Structure.....	14
Example Mission	14
Possible routes:	14
Design Pillars	15
What this Demonstrates.....	15
Sequel Game Concept Pitch - XCOM 3.....	16
<i>Original sequel game design concept, with focus on franchise fit, maintaining and expanding franchise pillars, integrating established lore, creating and updating systems, and outlining the main story.</i>	
Logline	16
Franchise Fit.....	17
Player Fantasy	17
Narrative Premise	17
Rising Threat	17
Faction Conflict	18
Finale	18
Core Gameplay.....	18

New Systems	19
What this Demonstrates	20
Custom Enemy Design — Rotwing	21
<i>Rotwing — Fallout-4 inspired, original enemy concept with detailed visual design, gameplay role, and encounter design.</i>	
Overview	21
Design Goals	21
Visual Design	21
Gameplay Role	22
Behavior and Encounter Design	22
Loot and Rewards	22
What this Demonstrates	22
Quest Giver NPC Brief - Borderlands 2	23
<i>Nathan Maliwan, Borderlands 2-inspired quest giver NPC brief with focus on character role, gameplay function, and narrative design.</i>	
Overview	23
Nathan Maliwan, Character Role.....	23
Gameplay Function	23
Narrative Design	24
Reward Structure	24
Dialogue Samples	24
What this Demonstrates	24

PLAYABLE NARRATIVE DESIGN SAMPLE — DOG DETECTIVE



Interactive murder mystery Twine game with playable link, overview, design goals, writing samples, and design breakdown.

- Role:** Narrative Designer, Writer, Twine Implementer
- Tools:** Twine 2 / Harlowe
- Status:** Complete playable prototype
- Format:** Browser-playable interactive mystery
- Scope:** Approx. 20-minute playtime, four suspects, evidence review, branching interrogation paths, final accusation, and multiple endings.
- Link:** <https://storystackgold.com/portfolio/dog-detective/>

"I already said I didn't do it. Who says I did? Horse? Chicken? Snake? They're all liars just trying to save themselves."

Rat slams a cuffed fist against the table, causing the other officers to jump.

"I. Didn't. Do. It."

Interesting response

I was just testing you

We'll see about that

Back



Overview

In Dog Detective, the player takes the role of Detective Dog, Midnight City's top police detective. After homeowner John Gorilla is found dead during a burglary gone wrong, the player must interview four suspects, review crime scene evidence, compare conflicting testimony, and determine who killed Mr. Gorilla.

Design Goals

- Build a fair mystery where the correct answer can be deduced without guessing.
- Give each suspect a distinct voice, motive, and alibi.
- Use physical evidence and written reports to confirm, weaken, or complicate each suspect's testimony.
- Create a compact interactive story that allows the story to be played in any order.
- Make incorrect accusations feel plausible while remaining debunkable.

Player Experience

The game's core loop is:

Review evidence → question suspects → compare contradictions →
eliminate red herrings → submit final report.

Rather than forcing a fixed interrogation order, the game lets the player move between suspects and evidence freely while still presenting a suggested order. This structure allows the player to complete the story in any order while still supporting deduction by allowing players to revisit suspects and compare information at any time.

Take a closer look at the autopsy report



Design Breakdown

Design Element	Explanation
Core evidence	The autopsy and crime scene report establish indisputable facts that the suspects will indirectly confirm, explain, or contradict.
Suspect testimony	Each suspect frames their testimony to benefit themselves, by giving partial truths, withholding information, or shifting blame.
Red herrings	Each suspect is given at least one red herring that must be debunked to safely remove them as a murder suspect.
True solution	The easiest way to deduce the murderer is to determine who had access to their body after the fight.
Player skills tested	Careful reading, contradiction tracking, evidence comparison, and fine judgement are required to solve the game without brute-forcing the answer.

What this Demonstrates

This project demonstrates my ability to design and write compact fair interactive mystery with branching dialogue paths, distinct suspect voices, evidence-based deduction, clue pacing, red herrings, multiple endings, and a playable Twine implementation.

It also shows my ability to revise narrative content for continuity, player comprehension, and interactive structure.

QUEST DESIGN BRIEF — WITCHER 3 CONTRACT SAMPLE



Witcher 3-inspired side quest / monster contract focused on established lore, quest goals, narrative beats, and implementation notes.

Title: See You at Sunset

Format: Side quest / monster contract

Design Focus: Cursed reward twist, quest item logic, recurring monster encounter.

Overview

Geralt encounters a farmer on the road who begs him to kill a wraith haunting his home at sunset. He can't offer much coin but will pay the Witcher in his mother's old jewelry instead.

At sunset, Geralt enters the farmhouse and fights the duskwraith. During combat, the duskwraith curses the farmer as a coward, and a thief. Once the wraith is defeated Geralt takes the brooch as payment, but there is no body to loot. The farmer thanks Geralt as he leaves the house. If asked, he explains his mother was a vengeful woman and that she died resenting him for staying home while his brother went to war. He says the wraith started appearing after he sold most of her jewelry to buy new tools and repair the barn.

The next sunset the wraith reappears next to Geralt, attacking him. Geralt deduces the brooch is cursed and returns to confront the farmer. The farmer swears that he didn't know the brooch was cursed. Geralt says he won't slay the farmer and will cleanse the brooch in the forest, destroying the brooch in the process. Geralt can choose to accept or refuse the small amount of coin the farmer can find.

Quest Goals

- Give the player a contract mission with a twist.
- Use the duskwraith, a rare variant of nightwraith.
- Give some context about how the war is affecting farming families.

Narrative Beats

1. Contract Setup

- Poor farmer asks Geralt to kill a wraith appearing in his home at sunset

2. Fight

- Geralt enters the farmhouse at sunset and fights the duskwraith (normal version)

3. Payment

- Geralt receives the cursed brooch as an unsellable quest item and is thanked.

4. Curse Reveal

- Next sunset Geralt is attacked by the duskwraith (normal version). He understands that the brooch is cursed and acting like an anchor.

5. Confrontation

- Geralt returns to the farmer, accusing him of tricking him. Farmer pleads innocence. Geralt decides to cleanse the brooch.

6. Boss Fight

- Geralt cleanses the brooch in the nearby woods, summoning the duskwraith a final time (boss version)
- Once defeated it finally leaves a body behind which contains a duskwraith trophy.

7. Optional Payment

- Geralt returns to the farmer who offers Geralt a small amount of coins he could find around the house.
- Geralt can refuse the payment as he was promised the brooch, which he now has a cracked version of. Or he can accept it as full payment for finishing the quest.

Implementation Notes

Characters Required

- Geralt, farmer, duskwraith

Voice Acting Required

- Geralt, farmer, duskwraith

Reusable Assets

- Peasant asset for farmer, farmhouse model and interior, nightwraith combat animations.

New Assets Required

- Modified nightwraith model for duskwraith, cursed brooch quest item, cracked brooch misc item, duskwraith codex entry which is very similar to nightwraith entry, duskwraith trophy item and art.

Quest Item Behavior

- Can't be sold or dropped
- Triggers a duskwraith encounter after every sunset while carried until cleansed.
- The item is replaced with a cracked brooch version during the quest

Combat Design

- Duskwraith (normal) - same animations, health, damage, and behavior as a non-boss nightwraith. Starts combat incorporeal so they can say voice lines once.
 - Voice lines focus on cursing the farmer as a coward and thief. Wishes he died in war instead of his brother. Hates that he "stole" and sold her things.
- Duskwraith (boss) - same animations and behavior as boss version of nightwraith. Increased health and damage from normal form.
 - Switch voice lines to cursing Geralt for not killing the farmer.

Reward Design

- Final defeat drops duskwraith trophy (same 5% exp bonus from humans and nonhumans as noonwraith and nightwraith trophies)
- Cracked brooch misc item with massively lower sale value than quest item
- A small amount of money from the farmer for his gratitude if accepted by the player.

What this Demonstrates

This sample demonstrates my ability to design a compact RPG quest with a clear narrative twist, cursed item-state logic, encounter scripting, reusable asset planning, and a variable reward structure affected by player choice.

NARRATIVE GAME DESIGN PITCH — IMPOSTER



Original stealth-strategy game concept with player fantasy, core gameplay design, gameplay loops, level structure design, and example mission.

Genre: Top-down stealth / strategy game

Setting: Sci-fi espionage

Player Role: Superspy for hire

Design Focus: Disguise, stealth, infiltration, mission loadouts, replayable levels

Logline

Impostor is a top-down, real-time, sci-fi stealth game that combines Hitman-style mission freedom with the readability of top-down action games. Playing as a super-spy for hire, the player infiltrates secure criminal bases and futuristic labs to quietly complete their goals through stealth, high-tech tools, and copying the appearances of enemies.

Player Fantasy

Superspies are solo agents who win through stealth, pre-planning, and careful improvisation while appearing professional and in control. Players should feel clever when using stealth and slip-ups should be recoverable. Stealth and deception should be encouraged with direct violence as a risky, last resort.

Core Gameplay

Stealth games are inherently strategy games, because they're structured around the player finding solutions to overcome the set obstacles. Each mission should reflect this with a compact, purpose-made level design containing guards, civilians, turrets, doors, and other obstacles with multiple solutions. And once the player has completed the mission they have to pass through it all again to escape.

To help achieve their goals the player can:

- Knock out and impersonate enemies.
- Hack terminals, doors, cameras, and alarms.
- Sneak through blind spots, patrol routes, and vent systems.
- Use gadgets to distract enemies.
- Perform silent takedowns (lethal and nonlethal).
- Move and hide bodies.
- Steal items, money, and information.
- Use weapons to fight enemies when detected.

Core Loop

1. Choose Mission

- Select mission, adjust difficulty, and equip a custom loadout from a list of unlocked gadgets and tools.

2. Scout the Level

- Stealthily observe camera positions, guard patrols, locked doors, and objective locations.
- Use gadgets and tools to access enemy cameras, see power lines, or lure enemies

3. Infiltrate

- Sneak through missions, neutralize enemies, assume false identities, steal keys, hack vulnerabilities, and bypass security.

4. Complete the objective

- Steal target items, copy enemy plans, save hostages, plant surveillance tools, or kill enemy leaders.

5. Escape

- Finish any side objectives and escape the level.

Level Structure

The game is structured around self-contained missions that unlock linearly. To encourage replayability each mission should have: multiple ways to complete them, unique set pieces or puzzles to distinguish missions from each other, contain optional secondary objectives, and controlled variation to keep repeat runs engaging.

Like Hitman, the world should reward the player for engaging with it. Bringing specific items, listening to NPC dialogue, taking certain disguises, and completing side objectives should reveal unique solutions and challenges. Hitman is a memorable series because it allows for strange and varied assassinations on their targets, Impostor should do the same but for theft.

Example Mission

Mission Name: Targeted Withdrawal

Objective: Empty the criminal's deposit box and retrieve the client's stolen documents.

Brief: Your client has had key research documents stolen by an ex-employee. If not returned soon, internal delays will cost their company billions in lost deals. The bank manager is assisting the thief and hid the documents under a fake name. Discover what deposit box the documents are hidden in and return them to their rightful owner.

Possible routes:

- Sneak into the manager's office and use their computer records to identify the fake name and deposit box.
- Lure the manager to an isolated place and make them tell you where the documents are hidden.
- Review vault security camera logs to see where the manager moved the documents.
- Hack the vault's sprinkler system, forcing the employees to open the vault to see what happened.
- Make a phone call to the manager bragging that you've already stolen the documents back to make him open the vault to check.
- Impersonate the manager to access the vault for a last-minute deposit.

Design Pillars

Stealth over violence

- The player should be most powerful when undetected.
- Lethal takedowns of civilian and innocent guards should penalize the player to discourage such behavior.
- Small mistakes should be recoverable, but larger ones should be punished.

Real-time tension

- Enemies, cameras, and patrols should be predictable, but also mobile and reactive, to properly challenge the player.
- Enemy movement must provide the player opportunities and openings.

Multi-faceted and replayable

- Every objective should be completable or accessible in multiple ways.
- Player exploration and engagement should be rewarded.
- Mission objectives should be puzzles to solve.
- Optional objectives should be challenges.
- A degree of variation should be included to prevent each run from being exactly the same. Patrol variations, alternative item placements, and randomized puzzle solutions keep the game familiar, but unpredictable and interesting.

What this Demonstrates

This pitch demonstrates my ability to design a clear game concept around a central mechanic, connect gameplay systems with the player fantasy, structure replayable mission content, and describe a game in useful terms for designers, writers, and producers.

SEQUEL GAME CONCEPT PITCH - XCOM 3



Original sequel game design concept, with focus on franchise fit, maintaining and expanding franchise pillars, integrating established lore, creating and updating systems, and outlining the main story.

Genre: Turn-based tactics / strategic management

Setting: Post apocalyptic Sci-fi

Player Role: Tactical Commander of XCOM

Design Focus: Squad management, base building, geopolitical instability, faction interaction

Logline

After the events of XCOM 2, Earth has been liberated from alien control, but new problems arise. Human nations struggle to rebuild, alien remnants fight for survival, and a hidden enemy begins to stir beneath the ocean. The Commander must reform XCOM and stop the rising terror from the deep while preventing the world from tearing itself apart.

Franchise Fit

The XCOM series is built around strategic turn-based combat, tight resource management, squad maintenance, and combating an alien invasion. An XCOM sequel has to preserve these four pillars or risk fracturing the franchise. XCOM: Enemy Unknown expressed these pillars through a traditional military response, XCOM 2 expressed them through guerilla warfare, and XCOM 3 will express them through a black ops structure.

Player Fantasy

The player fantasy of XCOM 3 is commanding a covert military operation during a chaotic post-war transition. The player must navigate political instability, faction conflict, and alien relations while secretly defeating a new underwater invasion.

Narrative Premise

Two years after the events of XCOM 2, Earth is politically unstable. XCOM has been disbanded, world governments struggle to rebuild, and tensions rise between humans and the alien remnants. While world leaders debate humanity's future, isolated coastal settlements begin disappearing under mysterious circumstances.

The Spokesperson contacts the Commander and pushes for XCOM's reformation after receiving distress calls describing creatures emerging from the sea. During a world summit discussing the crisis, an alien doomsday cult called The Last Hope attacks, killing many of the world leaders. In response, XCOM is restored and tasked with investigating the disappearances and stopping the growing doomsday cult.

Rising Threat

Operating from a mobile aircraft carrier, XCOM publicly combats The Last Hope cult while secretly investigating the Terror from the Deep. Raids on cult strongholds reveal the cult is desperately attempting to escape Earth before it is devoured.

XCOM eventually uncovers abandoned Templar facilities containing records of strange psionic activity occurring at the bottom of the world's oceans. The Templars discovered their investigation teams had become compromised, and the dominated agents began abducting or killing their fellow operatives in an attempt to spread "the truth." The surviving Templars sealed themselves away in cryosleep, hoping their distress beacons would be heard.

Further investigation reveals the existence of underwater gateways connected to a massive psionic hivemind that abducts and mutates humans and aliens alike, using them as thralls to expand its reach and devour all life on Earth.

Faction Conflict

As panic and instability worsen due to increased Last Hope attacks, humanity begins to fracture into competing ideological factions, each wanting to influence humanity's future. As XCOM debates revealing the oceanic invasion to the world, both human and alien resistance factions contact XCOM offering their support to save the world.

The Commander must decide which factions to aid, integrate, or destroy. These decisions will decide the fate of humanity and aliens alike as XCOM fights to save the world.

Finale

XCOM eventually learns that this is the threat that the Etherials had been fleeing from and that the hivemind has been following them relentlessly, assimilating each planet they leave behind.

After recovering a sample of the hivemind with a drone, XCOM scientists discover that the enormous aquatic brain-like structures on the other side of the gateways are composed of single-celled psionic creatures. Research reveals that when surrounded by a mindshield the microscopic organisms become unstable and burst. If a planet-sized mindshield is created, XCOM can deploy and defend it on the hivemind's homeworld, eradicating the psionic threat once and for all.

Core Gameplay

Strategic layer:

- Rebuild XCOM's global network.
- Strengthen the new XCOM base.
- Manage funding from unstable nations.
- Keep the oceanic threat hidden.
- Balance public peacekeeping missions with secret cover operations.
- Research and build new technology.
- Recruit and train soldiers from different post-war factions
- Assign soldiers and squads to automatically complete secondary objectives.

Tactical layer:

- Deploy squad into turn-based missions.
- Use cover, flanking, abilities, consumables, and the environment to your advantage.
- Complete mission objectives.
- Fight human, alien, and hybrid enemies.
- Manage soldier health, ammo, death, and panic.
- Recover resources, rescue civilians, and destroy enemy supplies.

New Systems

Secrecy meter

- Tracks public knowledge about the Terror from the Deep.
- When the meter is filled, the world learns about the alien invasion and humanity succumbs to unrecoverable panic, causing the campaign to fail.
- A soft time limit which is progressed by time, failed missions, enemy actions, and a failure of public-covert mission balance. The timer is reversed by successful missions, mission rewards, and faction completions.

Faction diplomacy

- Factions issue missions instead of nations and if kept happy can give additional supplies per month.
- The only major faction is the Council of Nations, which issues repeating general missions, gives the most supplies based on its happiness with XCOM, and can never be destroyed.
- Minor factions are small independent story lines that focus on different choices for humanity's future. When a storyline is finished the player will choose to either integrate or destroy the faction in some way, affecting the game's ending.
- Some minor factions are exclusive to each other and prevent their opponent factions from being integrated into humanity.
- The planned minor factions and their roles would be:
 - Human Supremacists - Should alien species be enslaved, killed, or banished from Earth?
 - Old World Supporters - Should Earth return to how it was before the alien arrived?
 - Warlords of Earth - Should XCOM rule the world?
 - Reaper Survivalists - Should the ruined and corrupted cities of old Earth be retaken?
 - Advent Remnants - Should the Skirmishers and Advent soldiers be allowed to live?
 - Templar Survivors - Should humanity support or suppress their psionic potential?
 - Sectoid Hybrids - Psionic halfbreeds being culled by both humans and aliens. Should they be allowed to live?
 - Muton Martyrs - Mutons seeking redemption through death against the hivemind. Should the species be left to die out?
 - Viper Queen - The last Viper queen, seeking to cooperate and ally with humanity. If she is killed the species is unlikely to survive before a new queen is born. Should XCOM aid in her defense?

Public and covert missions

- Public and covert missions must be balanced to ensure neither threat succeeds.
- Covert missions differ from public missions in that they respond to the Terror from the Deep threats instead of Last Hope. These missions are often underwater, but not always.

- If one category of mission is ignored for three consecutive missions the secrecy meter will rise, due to unobstructed alien activity.

Mission rewards and consequences

- To minimize resource management frustration, each mission will give a small amount of money/supplies and allow the player to choose their main reward from a short list of options.
- Similar to XCOM 2, each mission will have a negative consequence if not chosen.
- To minimize poor mission management or bad luck the player will be able to send a second squad to the opposite type of mission. These missions (if properly staffed) will automatically succeed, increase soldier experience, prevent negative consequences, but not reward any money/supplies and produce heavy injuries.
 - These do not count toward the public-covert mission balance, as the Commander's attention is needed to reset the timer.
- Player difficulty will determine the amount of missions available per month, with higher difficulties increasing the mission maximum to six with players at most able to respond to two.

Underwater equipment

- Most standard XCOM equipment will not function under water and new equipment will need to be researched and made.
- With doubling the amount of autopsies and equipment research it may be beneficial to allow engineering to research equipment upgrades and technologies instead of the science department.

Limited recruitment

- Because of the world's instability, preexisting obligations, and XCOM's necessity for secrecy, a limited pool of soldiers can be recruited at any time.
- Mission rewards, monthly supplies, technology, and faction integration can increase the amount of available soldiers, but the risk of running out of men needs to remain as a second fail state for the player.

What this Demonstrates

This pitch demonstrates my ability to analyze an established franchise, preserve its core identity, and expand its narrative and gameplay systems through interconnected mechanics and strategic storytelling.

CUSTOM ENEMY DESIGN — ROTWING



Rotwing — Fallout-4 inspired, original enemy concept with detailed visual design, gameplay role, and encounter design.

Overview

The rotwing is a mutated scavenger bird enemy designed for Fallout 4. Inspired by crows, ravens, and carrion birds, rotwings function as swarming melee enemies that create large communal nests to store the food and items they steal.

Design Goals

- Create a low to mid tier wasteland creature enemy.
- Introduce a fast-moving and low-health swarm enemy to pressure exposed players.
- Reinforce Fallout's themes of mutation, scavenging, and environmental decay.
- Encourage players to find and clear rotwing infested locations and nests.
- An auxiliary source for rare junk items and crafting materials.

Visual Design

Rotwings are 2-3 foot-tall mutated carrion birds resembling mangy crows. Chronic radiation exposure has caused patches of the creature's black feathers to fall away, revealing the pale,

diseased skin underneath. Their enlarged talons and sharp beak allow them to hunt as effectively as they scavenge.

Gameplay Role

Rotwings are territorial pack hunters that form large groups called murders. Individually weak, they swarm together to attack isolated prey or defend their communal nests. Preferring swarm tactics, rotwings also have a habit of stealing valuable or shiny items for their nests.

Behavior and Encounter Design

- Prefer to nest in ruined urban environments, solitary buildings, and exposed rooftops.
- Frequently encountered near corpses, battlefields, and abandoned settlements.
- When attacking, rotwings dive and swarm their opponents, overwhelming them through numbers and disorienting movement.
- Because they are flying, rotwings do not trigger most traps and can directly target elevated players.
- Rotwing encounters are intended to create chaotic close-range fights, encouraging players to reposition, use fire discipline, and utilize melee weapons.
- Standard rotwings should have a small health pool and moderate damage, allowing players to effectively clear swarms with melee weapons and explosives.
- Nest guards are noticeably bigger and tougher than other rotwings and should have high health and high damage as the birds' last line of defense for their homes.

Loot and Rewards

- Rotwings only drop miscellaneous junk goods like irradiated feathers or crafting materials like rotwing talons (bone and leather) and bird droppings (fertilizer).
- Small independent nests contain food, bones, and rare crafting materials and sometimes weapons and jewelry.
- Large communal nests contain lots of food, bones, and crafting materials in addition to jewelry, unlooted enemy corpses, stolen safes and lockers, and large rotwing eggs.

What this Demonstrates

This sample demonstrates my ability to design enemies that combine visual identity, environmental storytelling, and gameplay functionality while fitting an established franchise's tone and worldbuilding.

QUEST GIVER NPC BRIEF - BORDERLANDS 2



Nathan Maliwan, Borderlands 2-inspired quest giver NPC brief with focus on character role, gameplay function, and narrative design.

Overview

This sample explores a recurring NPC concept designed for Borderlands 2. The character is intended to support the franchise's comedic tone, exaggerated personalities, and pre-existing mission structure through escalating combat quests.

Nathan Maliwan, Character Role

- Hostile recurring quest giver
- Miniboss designer
- Comedic antagonist

Gameplay Function

Nathan Maliwan repeatedly challenges players to beat his experimental eridium-powered combat robots. Each encounter escalates the complexity, danger, and instability of Nathan's designs as he desperately tries to prove himself and kill the players.

Narrative Design

Nathan is an arrogant Maliwan technician obsessed with surpassing Hyperion's robot designs through reckless experimentation with eridium. He views the players as disposable test subjects and is increasingly frustrated at their continued survival and destruction of his robots.

Reward Structure

- Experimental Maliwan technology
- Guaranteed eridium drops

Dialogue Samples

- "I am Nathan Maliwan, a technician from Maliwan industries and cousin twice removed from the current CEO."
- "I require assistance. You seem brutish enough to help."
- "You mouth-breathing simpletons! Do you know how much money it takes to design and build a robot remotely?"

What this Demonstrates

This sample demonstrates my ability to design NPCs that combine quest integration, gameplay functionality, and franchise-appropriate tone and dialogue.