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Pre-production of a game's  
opening cinematic:  
Company of the Golden Rose

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<p>Tämä opinnäytetyö pyrki löytämään vastauksia liittyen nykyajan pelien välänimaatioiden luomiseen, läpikäyden tarinankerronnan, hahmosuunnittelun, visuaalisen esittämisen ja pelaajaimmersion aihealueet. Opinnäytetyö kävi läpi myös visuaalisen tarinankerronnan ja välänimaation teoriaa. Opinnäytetyön ohessa toteutettiin projekti jossa kerättyä teoriaa koeteltiin käytännössä.</p> <p>Tähän opinnäytetyöprojektiin kuului esituotantoprosessi sisältäen käsikirjoituksen luomisen, hahmojen suunnittelun, kuvakäsikirjoituksen luomisen pelikonseptin alkuanimaatiota varten. Lopputuloksen oli tarkoitus toimia perustana viimeistellymmän lopputuotteen luomiselle. Tuotantoprosessissa tarkasteltiin kuinka olemisen osana videopeliä vaikuttaa itse tuotantoon ja päätöksiin joita sen aikana tehdään.</p> <p>Pelien välänimaatiot ovat suhteellisen uusi aihealue ja täten vain vähäisesti tutkittu, mutta tarinankerronnalla, elokuvalla ja hahmokehityksellä on takanaan vuosikymmeniä akateemista tutkimusta.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyön tuloksena syntyi esituotantomateriaalia joka on sisällytetty liitteisiin.</p>		
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<b>Abstract</b>		
<p>The thesis aimed to answer questions concerning cinematic creation for modern games, covering the topics of storytelling, character development, visual presentation and player immersion. The thesis covered the theoretical part of visual storytelling and cinematic production. A project was created to test the gathered theory in practice.</p> <p>This thesis project consisted of the pre-production process including writing a script, designing characters and making a storyboard of an opening cinematic for a game concept. The result was intended to work as the foundation of the final production, an opening scene animatic. The process of production was observed from the point of view of it being part of a video game and how this affected the decisions taken during production.</p> <p>While cinematics in video games are a relatively new subject and have little academic research covering them, storytelling, cinema and character development have decades, even centuries, of research to back them up.</p> <p>As the result of the thesis, an amount of pre-production material was produced. The produced material is included in appendices.</p>		
<b>Keywords</b>		
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Cinematics are a common storytelling tool used in video games. They typically divert from in-game storytelling to employ more traditional film means such as camera angles, lighting and focus to deliver a more cinematic experience. Cinematics usually either limit or completely take away player controls in order to remove distractions while presenting important plot points.

Cinematics and their usage have been a debated topic for a long time and their style and execution has varied over the years. While originally cinematics were short and usually done with the same camera angles and assets as the game itself, over the years they evolved to pre-rendered cinematics that looked distinctly different from the gameplay. In recent years game series such as *Uncharted* and *God of War* have made successful efforts to make the switch between in-game graphics and cinematics seamless.

However, the debate around cinematics and their use continues. As Lee Sheldon argues in his book *Character Development and Storytelling for Games (2013)*, many designers believe that cinematics are the best way to deliver story. They are especially prominent in story-heavy games but can easily fall in the trap of running too long. (Sheldon, 2013, 191-192.)

The cinematic continues to be a staple of the game developer's toolkit as it is a flexible storytelling tool and general audiences understand the traditional means of cinema, even if video game narrative is still seeking its form.

The thesis aims to answer questions concerning cinematic creation for modern games, covering the topics of storytelling, character development, visual presentation and player immersion. The thesis first covers the theoretical part of visual storytelling and cinematic production. A project was created to test the gathered theory in practice.

This thesis project consists of the pre-production process including writing a script, designing characters and making a storyboard of an opening cinematic for

a game concept. The result is intended to work as the foundation of the final production, an opening scene animatic. The process of production is observed from the point of view of it being part of a video game and how this affects the decisions taken during production.

The game concept synopsis is as follows: A dungeon delving adventure set in a fantasy world where the archetypical character classes are represented by animal characters. As such the opening cinematic must establish the world, the characters and the story, in this case why these animal characters are going for a loot-filled adventure underground.

The main risks involved are the size of the project in the given time-frame and the author's relative lack of experience in this subject matter. While cinematics in video games are a relatively new subject and have little academic research covering them, storytelling, cinema and character development have decades, even centuries, of research to back them up. This poses the risk of the thesis expanding too wide and covering too many topics to give any meaningful insight into cinematic creation.

## 2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES AND FRAMEWORK

The main research part of the thesis involved studying literary sources dedicated to the subject of visual storytelling, and watching and analyzing cinematics from both older and newer video games. The key methodology employed was an iteration of production material.

The thesis project and overall subject of Game opening cinematics is examined from three perspectives: Video Game aspect, narrative aspect and cinema aspect (Figure 1).

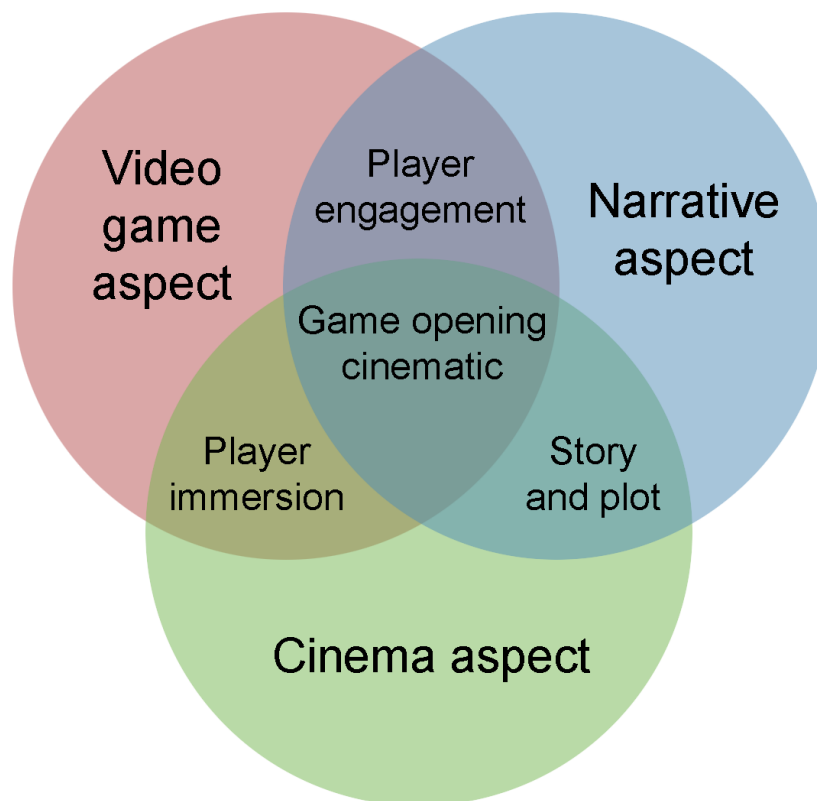


Figure 1. Framework of the project. (Simanainen 2018)

The narrative aspect covers the storytelling features of the project, such as the plot, character arcs and what makes the player invested in the story. The video game aspect covers the ways in which being part of an interactive media dictates storytelling and visualization for the final product. Finally, the cinema aspect covers the actual presentation of the story in visual form: finished script, camera angles, cuts etc.

How these different aspects of the project development interact with each other is visualized in Figure 1. Cinema and Narrative together form the story and how it is presented to the player. The aspects of Cinema and Video Game together attempt to create player immersion and emotional investment in the story. Finally, the Narrative and Video Game aspects blend together to allow the player choices and actions that shape the story. This allows players to feel more immersed in the gameplay as they have an impact on the story unfolding, rather than being passive spectators. This might, for example be as simple as showing the player's current character in the background of a cinematic.

### **3 OVERVIEW OF CINEMATICS**

In principle, game cinematics are non-interactive parts of video games commonly used as a storytelling tool. The player usually has no control over the events unfolding.

While cut scenes and cinematics share many similarities there is also an important distinction between the two. A cinematic is usually pre-rendered and often employs techniques and visual presentation similar to films. Thus, cinematics often require longer development time and tend to be developed and finished separately from the game itself. (Heussner 2015, 186-187.) As a result, high-quality cinematics are often not directly related to any specific game events as late changes to levels or script might make the whole scene redundant, so are instead used as promotional trailers or for communicating the theme and atmosphere of the setting or scene.

Cut scenes on the other hand are used as relatively quick in-game events or scenes woven into the gameplay. A common method employed in cut scenes is to only disable the player controls and then change the camera angles to show that there is an important event taking place while keeping the environment and state of the characters the same. This type of storytelling should not be used too frequently however, as it directly takes control away from the player, therefore disrupting the gameplay.

### 3.1 History

Cinematics and cut scenes have their roots in the arcade machine years of the 80's and early 90's. These game machines had limited in-game graphical capabilities; yet they still had to attract paying customers. When an arcade cabinet was not occupied, it played a demo to showcase characters, environments and gameplay. These demos had far better visual fidelity than the games they were promoting and set the first steps for cinematic storytelling. (Duwell 2014.)

After home consoles, such as the Nintendo Entertainment System, began to gain a foothold in households the nature of these cinematics changed. Cinematics were no longer needed to promote the product, as at that point it had already been purchased, instead they could be used to introduce the setting and the story to the players. This was used to great effect by early console games like Mega Man 2 and Final Fantasy. By the late 90's and early 2000's, cinematics had found larger usage in games such as Final Fantasy VII and Warcraft 3. Technological progress allowed for even more elaborate and cinematic presentation of a story and was capable of visualizing events in a way that was not usually possible with an in-game engine (Figure 2). (Duwell 2014.)

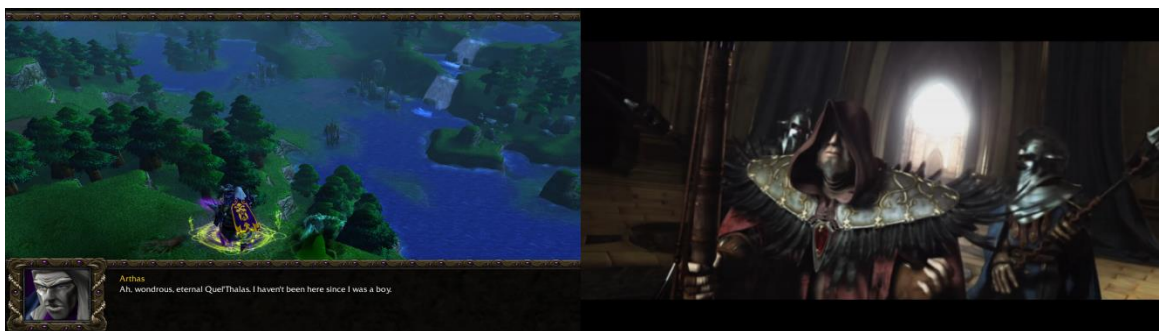


Figure 2. The difference between the in-game and cinematic graphics in *Warcraft 3* developed by *Blizzard Entertainment*. (Simanainen 2018)

In 2007, a game named *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, developed by Naughty Dog and published by Sony, was released and in following years the franchise had a huge impact on how storytelling in games would be handled. The game heavily borrowed methods from traditional cinema to show emotions and atmosphere.

Technological progress in facial animation allowed characters to convey emotions without talking. The storytelling also continued outside of cinematics as characters would talk to each other without taking the control away from the player. In the franchise's fourth instalment *Uncharted: Thieves' End* cut scenes blended seamlessly in to gameplay, breaking new ground in game storytelling. (Haske 2016.)

### 3.2 Modern usage

Currently cinematics are used in a variety of ways in games. Some games like the previously mentioned *Uncharted* series use cinematics to show emotion, mood and subtle character interaction (Figure 3). Other games such as *Bioshock: Infinite* use cinematics to show action scenes where player interaction is disabled for storytelling reasons. Another example is *Half Life 2*, developed and published by Valve, that uses cut scenes where Non-player characters are talking while the player is free to wander around and interact with the environment to some extent. (Bitmob 2010.)



Figure 3. Example of facial emotion used in *Uncharted: The Nathan Drake Collection*. (Naughty Dog 2015)

A common usage of the cinematic is at the beginning of a game. When the player first starts up a new game the world, the characters and the initial situation are

typically introduced through a cinematic. Cinematics are also used to mask loading of a new area or as a transition between levels. Games that have their levels rigidly separated use cinematics to give the story context and continuity. (Sheldon 2013, 190-194.) The project created for this thesis is intended as a base for this use.

## **4 PROCESS OF CREATING A CINEMATIC**

While a cinematic can be just a short film played between levels, creating one is still a vastly different process from creating a traditional film. While films are by definition linear in their presentation, cinematics have to consider the context in a completely different way. The amount of characters and their appearance might change depending on events before the cinematic. Location and time of day are also variables that depend on circumstances outside of a cinematic. In addition, video games provide developers with many ways to present the story to players through audio logs, environmental storytelling, discoverable side plots and dialogue between characters. All these are methods that might alter the context of a cinematic. (Caputo 2003.)

### **4.1 Pre-production**

Pre-production is the first phase of the cinematics' development. The Pre-production process covers deciding and designing everything ready for the actual production phase. (Milic & McConville 2006.) It includes but is not limited to scriptwriting, storyboarding, gameplay, character and environment designs. (Caputo 2003.)

#### **4.1.1 Character design**

A story cannot be told without characters, as without them the audience cannot be immersed into the plot or root for the characters and see how what is happening will affect them. Knowing this the pre-production should be started with designing the characters to star in the story. In the case of video games, the characters have quite likely already been designed for the actual gameplay. Alternative versions might be needed for cinematics or later stages, including

instances such as a different outfit, a worn appearance or a younger version of the character in case of a flashback scene. (Sheldon 2013, 155.)

Characters and story should be designed in tandem so both can benefit from each other. Respecting the characters as living entities inhabiting a fictional world makes it easier to design a believable and interesting story. This in turn helps in creating a story with a strong theme and meaning thus strengthening player immersion. (Sheldon 2013a, 183.)

Characters should be designed keeping in mind that they should have a purpose beyond the story or plot's convenience. Creating well rounded characters with strengths and weaknesses makes it easier to tell a story, as the character's reactions are more predictable and lend themselves to more interesting storytelling. (Sheldon 2013b, 183.)

#### **4.1.2 Scriptwriting**

A script is the foundation of visual storytelling and requires additional care and consideration as even small decision at this phase have enduring consequences during the whole production. For the purpose of a cinematic, a script is a tool used to quickly describe what is supposed to be an audiovisual presentation. (Bluth & Goldman 2004, 19.)

As video games are primarily a visual medium, a script should show what is happening in the story, not tell. If a character is cruel or courageous, it should not be told in a dialogue or a text box but rather be shown by their actions (Skolnick 2014, 57). The character's inner struggle and emotions should be conveyed through acting, environment and camera angles rather than through dialogue. (Moreno & Tuxford 2018.)

52 LILYANA QUILLPAW  
How did it all lead to this...?

Lilyana stares at the painting for a while. Then she opens a drawer and grabs a skin. Removing the cap

53-62 she tries to fill a cup but only a single droplet of wine pours out. Lilyana drops the skin on floor and

63-64 buries her face in her paws.

Scene fades to black.

INT. HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMPANY OF THE GOLDEN ROSE – MORNING.

Loud knock on the door startles Lilyana from her

65-66 sleep at the desk. Light is bleak and sound of raining outside can be heard.

LILYANA QUILLPAW  
Um, wha-...! Yea, yea, come on in!

The door opens and the badger leans in. She seems

67 slightly nervous.

Figure 4. Example of an extract of a screenplay. (Simanainen 2018)

A script is composed of different elements such as scene headings, sub-headers, action, character names and dialogue (Figure 4). These elements detail the main flow of scenes, environment, atmosphere, soundscape, character expressions and dialogue. Typically, when a script is taken into production a version called the shooting script is made. This script includes technical details for shooting such as editing notes, shots and camera angles. (Moreno & Tuxford 2018.)

#### 4.1.3 Environment design

Games usually include a selection of different environments, anything ranging from urban houses to woodlands, mountain peaks and alien planets. Having a diversity of environments in one game creates variety in the gaming experience and allows the player to explore the game's world in a broader scale. (Skolnick 2014, 148.)

Primarily environments work as playable areas for a player to move around, however they also serve a major narrative role. Environments with details such as graffiti, posters and additional props not only make it seem more believable for the player and thus help with immersion, but also allow for another channel of

storytelling. An environment's general layout, props and items can subtly tell a lot about its inhabitants and culture, even foreshadowing future events. When creating environments extra care should be taken to ensure its internal logic is sound. Buildings should have logical floorplans and believable architecture, otherwise the player might be bothered by these inconsistencies leading to a break in immersion. (Skolnick 2014, 149-150.)

#### **4.1.4 Storyboard**

A storyboard is a sequence of sketches used to form a view of the narrative. This tool is used to visualize how the final product might look and is commonly utilized in film, website and graphic novel production. The storyboard is often developed alongside the written script as both usually require changes during the production process. It is recommended that storyboard panels are drawn quickly and loosely to allow easy and painless revisions to the whole sequence. (Gurney 2009, 32-33.)

Storyboard panels can also be drawn in color, which is beneficial when designing a story with a certain emotional impact. It is also beneficial for exploring lighting, composition and mood of specific scenes or even shots to ensure consistency and credibility throughout the story. Creating the whole storyboard in color also gives a valuable overall look to the entirety of the story and how atmosphere and intensity of it changes over time. (Gurney 2009, 34-35.)

In video game development the cinematics are typically the only parts of the whole product that can be storyboarded in a timely manner. The player agency within a game creates a considerable amount of variables and thus makes storyboarding player-driven sections a hard task. (Caputo 2003, 59.)

## **4.2 Production**

Once the pre-production phase of the cinematic has been completed the project moves to the actual production of an animatic. The production includes creating

the art for backgrounds and characters, visual effects, animation, sounds, music and recording voice acting. (Acantor 2017.)

An animatic is a sequence of pictures timed with a voice over and a sound track to preview how the pacing and visuals come together to deliver the story. It is a commonly used tool in film production but has also spread to other visual media such as advertisements and video games. An animatic helps defining the desired visual look of the product and identifying scenes that might not work as intended in the script. (Guerin 2016.)

Producing an animatic begins by creating the artwork. The art style affects both how the story is told and how the viewer perceives it. The art for an animatic can be done both in 2D, 3D or in a mix of both, such as creating the background in 3D and using 2D animation for characters and props. The advantage 3D has in this phase is that camera angles can be revised with relative ease while 2D might require drawing the whole background again. (Acantor 2017.)

The voice over, music and sounds should be produced around the same time as the artwork is being worked on as especially the voice acting might influence the workflow and timing of the art produced. (Egan 2016.)

Typically the first time that any project elements are being animated is once some if not all artwork is finished. Where a storyboard helps perceiving the whole cinematic, an animatic aids in analyzing if the scene transitions, character animations, audio and pacing work as intended in pre-production. (MOWE Studio 2015.)

For animating 2D elements the actual animation can be done with programs such as After Effects or Flash animation, both developed by Adobe. Most 3D modelling programs, such as Blender developed by Blender Foundation, have built-in animation tools, as do many game engines. It is also possible to utilize motion capture technology if the animatic requires realistic and fluid animation. Once the animation, audio and effects are in place the animatic is test screened with a test

audience to analyze if it communicates clearly and meets its goals. (Acantor 2017.)

## 5 THESIS PROJECT PRE-PRODUCTION PROCESS

This project started from the author's personal idea some time before the thesis work began. The core concept was based around imagining the classic role-playing game character classes as animals (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Original character silhouette sketches. (Simanainen 2017).

Character classes in fantasy were first used in 1974 in a tabletop role-playing game *Dungeons & Dragons* made by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson. The character class system has become a staple in games since thanks to its flexibility. For this thesis four class archetypes were picked: Fighter, cleric, sage and thief. These archetypical classes allow players to find their own preferred role within the party. (Player's Handbook. 2014.)

An important part of these early character silhouettes was that both the animal and their role would have to be clearly readable in order to establish strong character personalities. (Tillman 2003.)

The game is intended to heavily focus on teamwork and thus a diverse cast of characters was required. Along with colorful characters was also needed a compelling story and a strong theme to keep players interested.

## 5.1 Story

The core idea, animal heroes seeking treasure, raised several questions that needed an answer:

- Why are they doing it?
- Where are the characters adventuring?

As Evan Skolnick argues in his book *Video Game Storytelling: What Every Developer Needs to Know about Narrative Techniques* (2014) a story needs a conflict, maybe even more than one. In this case, conflict would be the answer for the *why* question. The characters of an Adventuring Guild are required to adventure into dangerous places to collect treasures because they need it for purpose. This caused more questions mostly related to the character backgrounds and motives that helped to shape them as individuals. The most important question raised was the following: what do they ultimately need that treasure for?

The diverse cast of characters posed some problems in storytelling. All characters were intended to be playable but the story was clearly making some characters more central while others were delegated as background decorations. Besides, each character having their own personal motives for amassing wealth made their intended co-operation in game feel tacked on and out-of-character.

A set of Non-playable characters, NPCs, were created to solve this problem. The story was changed to tell a tale of a once prestigious mercenary company now teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. An NPC named Lilyana was made the central character of the story and playable characters only served as the rank and file of the company. This opened up possibilities for a much more detailed and carefully crafted story arc as for example it would not have to be taken in to consideration which character the player was controlling.

## Three-Act Structure

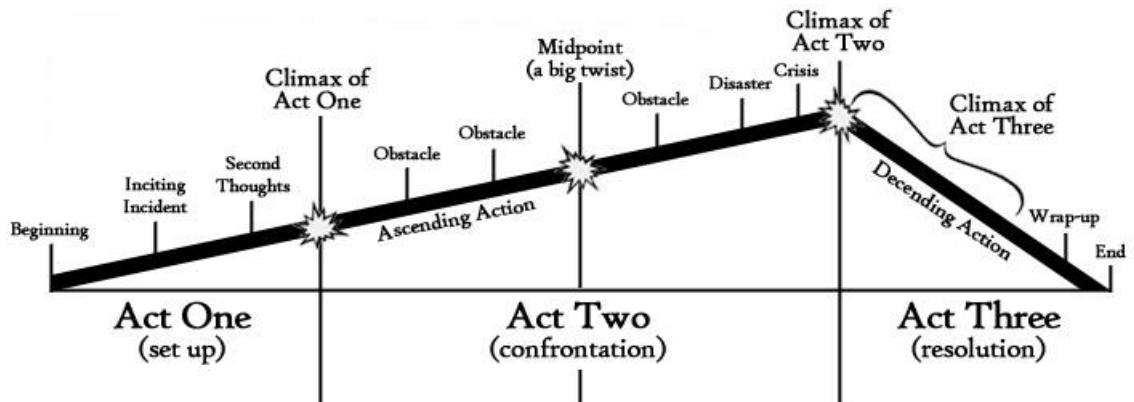


Figure 6. The Three-Act Structure. (Williamson 2012).

According to Skolnick all complete stories are built of three distinct phases; beginning, middle and end, also named as setup, confrontation and resolution (Figure 6). As this thesis covers the topic of creating an opening cinematic animatic it's mostly concerned with the beginning, though as mentioned earlier a story can have several conflicts. While the animatic as a whole is mainly delivering the setup for the overarching story, it can still contain smaller stories within it.

The setup of our story is that it establishes the starting situation for our characters: they are members of an almost bankrupted mercenary company. Our protagonist is struggling with the debtors and is looking for ways to keep the company afloat even if for just a little longer. Through a dialogue with other characters and the actions Lilyana takes during the first couple of scenes we get a feel for her current life situation (which is not very good). This is the starting point before the main conflict is presented. For the viewer it is important to understand where the characters are starting from so there would be a contrast with their later change and character development. It is also important to know why the protagonist decides to confront the conflict at all, as the conflict is usually something unpleasant or dangerous. In our story Lilyana is trying to keep the *status quo*, for if the situation should progress further the company would go bankrupt. Through the dialogue she has with the characters of Folcard, Sophia

and Cassius it is revealed that she is actively working to improve the situation but these efforts are in vain. The *Inciting Incident*, an event or occurrence that presents the main conflict to the protagonist, is an important part of the setup. In the thesis story this incident is presented by an angry merchant in the form of a strict deadline that our protagonist is desperate to meet by any means necessary. As can be seen from this, the setup phase is filled with important elements that work as the foundation for the rest of the story and foreshadow future events. (Skolnick 2014, 12-14.)

Following the three act story structure before entering the middle/confrontation part of the story there has to be a climax to the setup called a *Plot Point*. In the thesis story this climax is where Lilyana slams the door to the merchant's face, an act that reveals some of her personality to the viewer.

The middle part of the story is typically far larger portion of the overall story than the first or third part. Most of the action is situated in the middle part as the setup has been done and the protagonist seeks to resolve the conflict (Figure 6). The middle part is where the protagonist is confronted by obstacles that prevent them from reaching their goal. This portion of the story also introduces the source of conflict, which typically is represented by an antagonist and the obstacles are their henchmen. This is not always the case, however, as the source of conflict can be a more abstract matter, not represented by any single individual. (Skolnick 2014, 14.)

In the thesis story Lilyana seeks to resolve the conflict of debts by accumulating money but she is met by several obstacles:

- Sophia informs her that they received food and other goods instead of cash for their mundane work.
- Cassius tells her that they were not hired to protect the caravan to Highwall due to the company's stained reputation.
- Her office gets even messier when the pile of bills topples over.
- She runs out of wine to drown her sorrows in.

All these obstacles, large and small, pile up to create pressure on Lilyana and her personality is reflected in how she handles these situations. The source of conflict

in the story is an abstract as the creditors themselves don't fit the role of an antagonist. They are merely trying to get back what they were promised and rightfully so.

While traditionally the three-act story is divided into three parts, it is also common to cut the middle part in half as the story can easily begin to lose momentum from the setup climax. This halfway point of the middle act is called a *Midpoint* and it serves both as a Plot Point and a halfway point of the whole story. The Midpoint's function is to provide something unexpected to the story and spin it to a new direction. (Williamson 2012.)

In the thesis story's case this Midpoint is in scene 4 when the city guards show up to take Lilyana to meet the Captain of the Watch. The arrival of the guards is foreshadowed by Folcard in Scene 1 where he threatens Lilyana after she slams the door shut in front of him, yet it is a rather unexpected turn of events.

Typically the tension and stakes are raised throughout the middle act to make the climax at the end of it dramatic. The climax often results in the protagonist discovering a way to resolve the conflict. When Lilyana meets Cornelius she assumes the issue regards the company's debts and is ready to negotiate and wriggle her way out of this situation. She then receives an urgent job offer from Cornelius and outright refuses as she sees no reason to agree to something she regards as a suicide. After Cornelius' blackmailing, persuasion and bribing she reluctantly gives in and accepts the job. Many of the obstacles presented in setup and middle part are now known to be solvable. (Skolnick 2014, 14-15.)

The last act, known as the resolution, is where protagonist has finally successfully solved the conflict. If the conflict is intended to have a happy conclusion, the protagonist should succeed in a way the viewer was not expecting in the beginning as this provides a far more satisfying ending. Lilyana is shown to gather up her troops and present them with the new job they have received. This job solves the main conflict of the story, quickly acquiring wealth, that was presented by Folcard during scene 1. It also answers the question of

where the characters will be adventuring. While this one cinematic story follows the three-act structure, the opening cinematic as a whole also works as a setup act for a larger story arc. (Skolnick 2014, 15.)

## **5.2 Script**

The script was written in a screenplay format as an animatic is a non-interactive product and thus can be written in a traditional screenplay manner. The script was used to lay out the character actions and dialogue to form a final format to be used in storyboarding. As the same person was doing both the script and the storyboard it was considered redundant to include camera angle instructions in the script.

The script was started from the beginning by introducing the location. In addition to describing the visuals the script also includes mood and audio notes to aid in the storyboarding phase. The medieval city of Wolfport is described as a large, busy harbor town where seagulls and church bells can be heard in the background.

After the initial location setup, the script describes the characters present in detail, such as age, race, appearance and general mood. Characters are described right as they enter the scene, and if they enter simultaneously, as is the case with Folcard and Lilyana, then they are in order of dialogue.

Folcard's and Lilyana's conversation contains a lot of dialogue broken up by short descriptions of action. Their conversation is made to be almost without a pause unless they interrupt each other. This conversation gives a lot of background into the world and initial situation of the characters (Figure 7).

to the large abandoned building. A wooden crest depicting a golden rose hangs by the door. Lilyana walks up few stone steps to the door and reaches for her keys. Folcard follows right behind her.

FOLCARD WENGER (CONT'D)

I'm not even the only one dunning for my coins. I know there are quite a few merchants and guilds in this city to which the Company owes literal fortunes.

Lilyana starts unlocking the door.

LILYANA QUILLPAW

And that's none of your business! The Company deals with its finances as it sees fit and no one, least a measly merchant, has anything to say to it. You should be thankful you have as prestigious client as us!

Lilyana opens the door and slips inside, trying to close the door behind her. Folcard pushes the door with his right hand and kicks his feet between the door and the frame.

Figure 7. An excerpt of the script. (Simanainen 2018).

Some scenes had very little dialogue and instead relied on character acting and expressions to deliver the story and character's inner mood. A good example of this is scene 3 where Lilyana sits in her office contemplating the hopeless situation she and the whole company have ended up in. Showing her silent exhaustion and desperation is far preferable to her making a full-length explanation of the situation to some other character. (Skolnick 2014, 57.)

The script was updated throughout the project and certain scenes were revised based on third-party feedback. In the original script Lilyana meekly thanks Cornelius at the end of scene 5, but this was noted to feel out-of-character, based both on Lilyana's personality and the circumstances (mainly her being blackmailed). Changes were made to show Lilyana's hesitation as she ponders what she should think of Cornelius. Similarly, some lines differed in tone and language from the way the characters usually talked and had to be fixed.

### 5.3 Characters

The project required a cast of characters to be designed. The most obvious ones were the playable characters, PCs, as they were the main characters for the

player. From early on most of the PC cast were designed as antiheroes. They were not in the dangerous profession of a mercenary out of passion but rather out of greed and desperation. All the characters were originally very flawed but this design had to be dialed back slightly as the group dynamics seemed unconvincing. These PCs required a supporting cast of NPCs to tie the storyline around and so the design work began with the main NPC Lilyana.

In the early first sketches Lilyana resembled a regular housecat and was a far more imposing figure (Figure 8). Once the story and her background were more developed she was changed to an Iberian lynx so the larger paws and shorter silhouette made her first appearance deceptively unassuming, contrasted by her fiery temper and snappy tongue. As the character with the largest story arc and being of central importance, she holds the role of the hero, though a very flawed one. (Skolnick 2014, 38, 45.)



Figure 8. Early Lilyana Quillpaw concept art. (Simanainen 2017).

A proper character sheet for Lilyana was created. This sheet includes the character's full name, her background, a cleaned character illustration with and without a cloak (as her cloak covers the rest of her outfit), some expression sketches and color scheme. (Figure 9). The same template was used for the rest of the NPCs present in the story; Folcard and Cornelius.



Figure 9. Finished Lilyana Quillpaw character sheet. (Simanainen 2018).

Lilyana's color scheme of grey and reddish brown make her appearance earthy and humble, but her narrow and contrasting yellow eyes signal intellect and caution. (Tillman 2003, 110-113.)

On a detail level Lilyana, as all other characters, was kept simple and resembling an animation movie look as the characters would have to be drawn many times for the production of the animatic. Lilyana, like most characters, was given a few defining details to make her stand out as an individual such as the dots next to her muzzle, the clasp of her cloak and the white fur of her facial features. (Tillman 2003, 120-122.)

Cornelius Belmont has the second largest role in the story as he both causes two Plot Points and fills the role of a mentor as he advises Lilyana. Cornelius' was

made an old rabbit to emphasize that he leads by example and legal authority rather than by brawn.

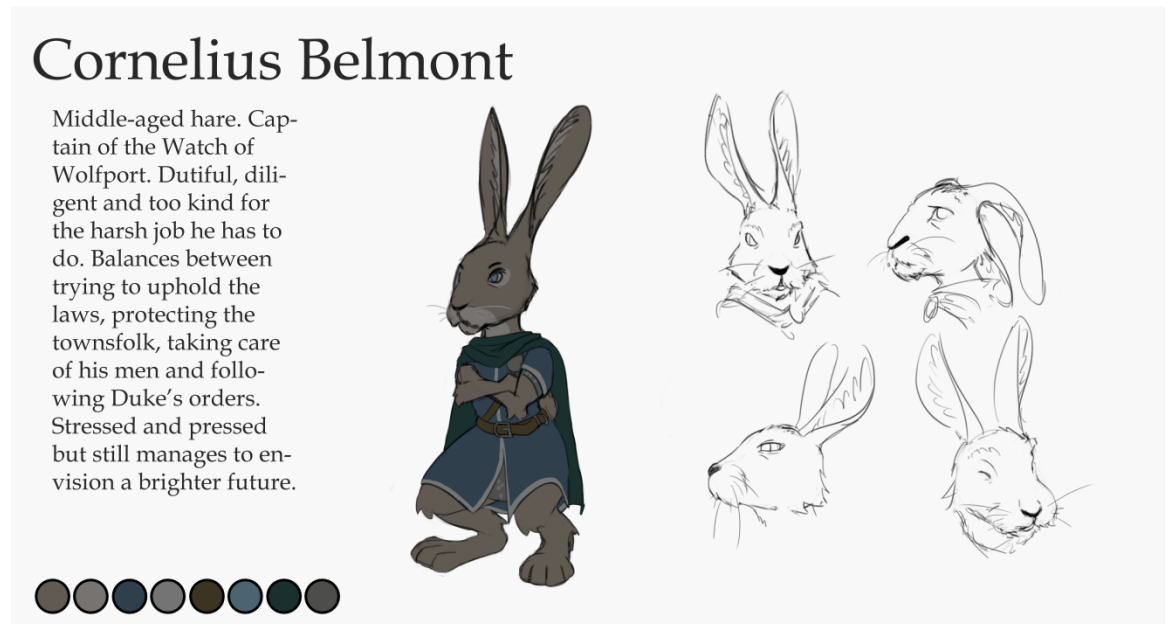


Figure 10. Finished Cornelius Belmont character sheet. (Simanainen 2018).

His color scheme is similar to Lilyana in that his fur is grey, though for him it is a sign of an old age more than anything. The blue and white on his clothing convey his loyalty, integrity, wisdom and goodness (Figure 10). (Tillman 2003, 110-113.)

The NPCs who have the most dialogue in the animatic were given more detailed character sheets. The playable characters, however, had a far smaller role in the story and as such only required a simple sheet to note down their name, background and a single illustration.

The PCs had to be designed slightly differently from the NPCs. The PCs are representing the archetypical RPG classes and as such are often associated strongly with certain equipment, arms and armor. They would not be carrying those in the animatic set in an urban environment though and as such the playable characters had to be designed as adventurers taking some time off. Their occupation would have to still show though and for this the original silhouette sketch was a great help (Figure 5).

Cassius was the first of the PCs to be illustrated and he set the general style by which other PCs were presented. An attempt was made to convey the character personalities through character stances and attitudes rather than solely by text. The background text serves mostly as a brief note of the character's role within the party (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Finished Cassius and Sophia character sheet. (Simanainen 2018).

Cassius' casual lean and cheerful smile make him seem like a lively and mischievous person. His purple and dark clothing counter this by making him appear untrustworthy and mysterious. His name also stands out as foreign when compared to most other characters. These features, along with his preference to climb to high places, establish him as an archetypical thief character. (Tillman 2003, 110-113.)

Sophia is almost the polar opposite of Cassius. Appearing intimidating and hostile her strong and stable silhouette makes her an archetypical fighter. This is further reinforced by her contrasting color palette. The crimson red bolsters her aggressiveness as do the dark stripes going over her eyes. (Tillman 2003, 110-113.)

To keep the character size differences consistent during production a height scale picture was created (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Character height scale. (Simanainen 2018).

The greyscale height scale was also utilized to ensure that the characters had enough contrast on their own as well as between each other. For the audience it is faster to recognize a character by merely glancing if it has enough contrasting elements, while having variance between characters make it easier to tell them apart.

#### **5.4 Storyboard**

The storyboarding process began once the script was through the first draft. Creating the storyboard involved reading through the script and imagining it as a visual product. Camera angles and framing had to be considered in great detail to ensure the desired atmosphere and emotional impact.

The first draft of the storyboard was done as loose sketches to get a general idea of pacing and length of each scene. At this stage the storyboard changed a lot and most frames were revised at least once or twice. In some cases the storyboard drawing might have shown how certain frames or moments didn't work as intended and the script had to be revised.



Figure 13. Storyboard excerpt, first draft. (Simanainen 2018).

In this storyboard excerpt can be seen how the first draft of the storyboard looked. Characters were simplified to only show the most basic gestures and expressions, backgrounds were quickly sketched and props were few. (Figure 13).

As the first draft was being worked on, the script saw some changes too. The script received a running column on the left side to help navigating between the script and the storyboard (Figure 14).

52	<p>LILYANA QUILLPAW How did it all lead to this...?</p> <p>Lilyana stares at the painting for a while. Then she opens a drawer and grabs a skin. Removing the cap she tries to fill a cup but only a single droplet of wine pours out. Lilyana drops the skin on floor and buries her face in her paws.</p>
53-62	
63-64	<p>Scene fades to black.</p>
<p>INT. HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMPANY OF THE GOLDEN ROSE – MORNING.</p>	
65-66	<p>Loud knock on the door startles Lilyana from her sleep at the desk. Light is bleak and sound of raining outside can be heard.</p>
<p>LILYANA QUILLPAW Um, wha-...! Yea, yea, come on in!</p>	
67	<p>The door opens and the badger leans in. She seems slightly nervous.</p>

Figure 14. An excerpt of the script with the frame column. (Simanainen 2018).

As described by the script the story begins with a panoramic opening shot over the city of Wolfport. The sun is setting and the buildings are bathing in a strong red light to add a feeling of drama and pressure to the scene. The opening shot is an important decision as it presents the audience with the basic narrative frame and emotional tone. (Mateu-Mestre 2010, 38.)

The story involved several indoor scenes where the camera changes position many times and this provided some problems in the storyboarding phase. The layouts of the rooms were designed to keep the indoor scenes consistent and to explore some of the internal logic of the buildings (Figure 15). While the Company's main hall is large, it is still cramped with all kinds of furniture, equipment and junk as it serves as a kitchen, barracks and leisure-room at the same time. It has a cozy feel to it however as the walls and floor are made of wood and provide warm colors to the scene.

Lilyana's office is also cramped, though instead of junk it is filled with bills and notes that are overflowing from every drawer, closet and cabinet scattered around the room.

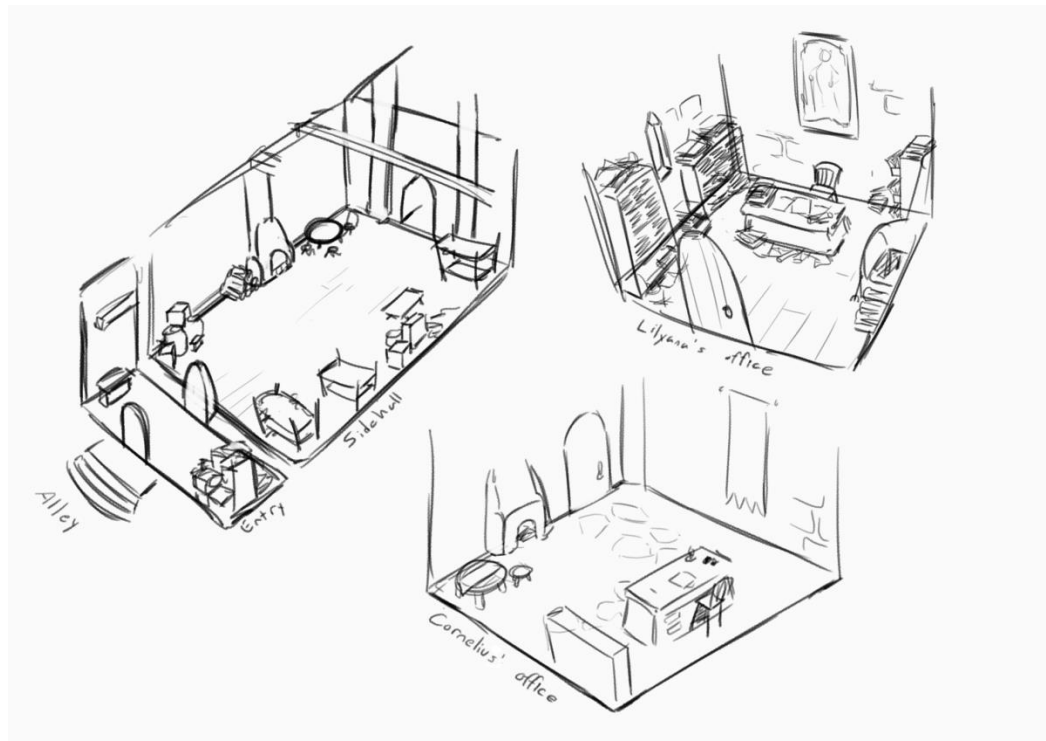


Figure 15. Environment layouts. (Simanainen 2018).

The company's unorganized quarters are contrasted by Cornelius' tidy and orderly office (Figure 15). As a diligent and hard working official Cornelius likes to keep himself organized, so this is reflected in his surroundings.

The storyboard draft was then painted in greyscale blocking out simple shapes to explore the lighting and composition of each scene (Figure 16).

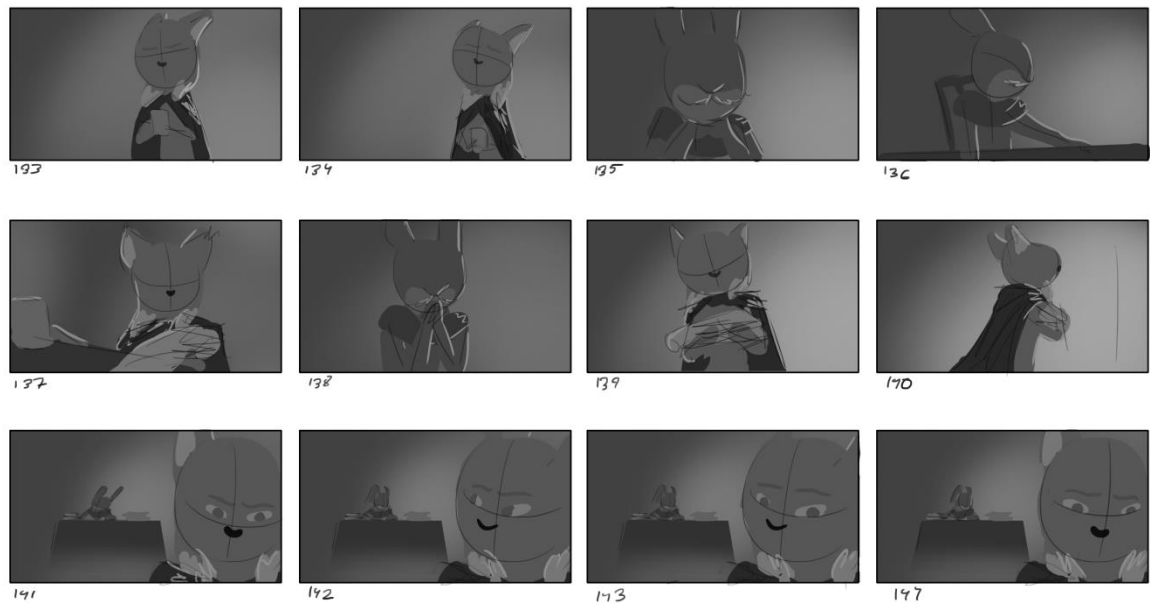


Figure 16. Grayscale storyboard. (Simanainen 2018).

Many backgrounds, especially those in scene 5, were kept blurry and indeterminate to direct the focus on the characters and their acting and expressions.

The storyboard was then colorized with adjustment layers to explore the different effects and moods they create. The first scene has a strong contrast between the reddish light and blue shadows, making the scene dramatic. The color palette then shifts slightly into orange to create a cozier atmosphere (Figure 17). When Lilyana walks through the non-inhabited portions of the headquarters the visuals are strongly blue, making the mood melancholic and sad.

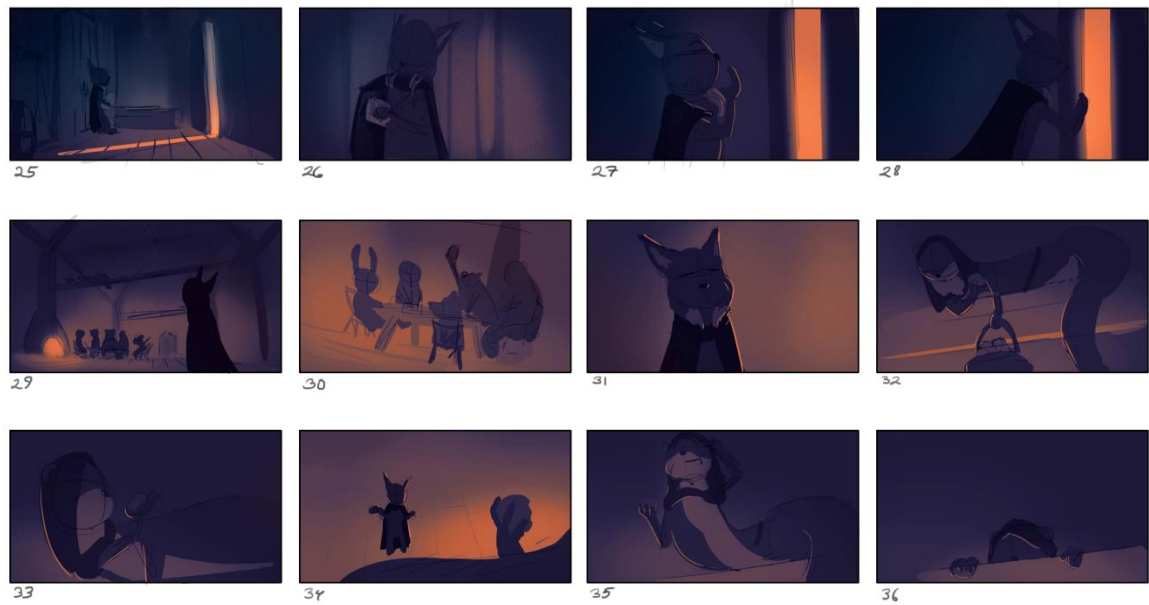


Figure 17. Colorized storyboard. (Simanainen 2018).

Scene 4 begins as a dark blue palette and then turns paler, signifying something fateful happening. Scene 5 begins in a somewhat cozy lighting compared to the previous scene, and as the tense situation is discharged by the guard the scene turns brighter and less menacing. Finally, scene 6 has a clear yellowish hue signifying the hopeful mood.

## 6 RESULTS

In the end, this project yielded a considerable amount of pre-production material for an animatic, such as pages of a script, character and environment sketches, character designs, environment layouts, storyboards and a scale chart.

The finished script is approximately 12 and a half pages long and covers character actions, dialogue and environments. The script was revised several times and now the characters behave consistently and believably.

Character designs were mostly finished, some tweaking on details and refining the visual presentation would be in order. The project resulted in six character sheets with a total of nine characters on them. The character designs meet their

expected requirements as a workable foundation for the continuation of the project.

The storyboard resulted having a total of 13 and a half pages. The colorized pages convey the intended mood and atmosphere of scenes and the overall flow from scene to scene can be considered natural and logical.

Producing an animatic with voice overs, sounds, music and polished artwork is attainable if based on the pre-production material created for this thesis. To take the project further it would be advisable to create character sheets for a few missing minor characters, such as the town guards, and to start immediately looking for voice actors. Properly handled the project could lead to the creation of an animatic with good production values.

Further development of the animatic could see it turned either into a finalized 2D animation or work as the foundation for a 3D cinematic.

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

As predicted in the introduction of the thesis, the sheer size of the project and the author's relative lack of experience in the subject matter had an impact on the final product. The scheduling did not hold and thus some of the material was left in a less polished state than intended. Nevertheless the main goals were reached as the pre-production material is plentiful and most of it is acceptable quality to continue the project in the future.

The research questions concerning how being part of a video game affects the pre-production, storytelling and planning of an animatic have been successfully discussed in detail. As video games have so many other tools at their disposal for telling a story, be it through in-game dialogue, environmental storytelling or audio logs, the cinematic can focus on delivering the subtler portions of the story.

The author considers this project to have given the author a lot of valuable knowledge and practice in the fields of video game storytelling, character design

and storyboarding. The positive feedback received from third parties has reassured the author that some of the material created was of acceptable quality.

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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Framework of the project. Simanainen 2018.

Figure 2. The difference between the in-game and cinematic graphics in Warcraft 3 made by Blizzard Entertainment. (Simanainen 2018)

Figure 3. Example of facial emotion used in Uncharted: The Nathan Drake Collection. (Naughty Dog 2015) Original Image available at: <https://www.ebgames.co.nz/ps4-210351-Uncharted-Nathan-Drake-Collection-Special-Edition-PlayStation-4> [Accessed 30 May 2018].

Figure 4. Example of an extract of a screenplay. Simanainen 2018.

Figure 5. Original character silhouette sketches. Simanainen 2018.

Figure 6. The Three-Act Structure. Williamson, J. 2012. Original Image available at: <http://goteenwriters.blogspot.fi/2012/09/understanding-three-act-structure.html> [Accessed 16 May 2018].

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Figure 17. Colorized storyboard. Simanainen 2018

EXT. CITY OF WOLFPORT - EVENING.

1           Panoramic view over the medieval port city of Wolfport, showing rooftops, belfries, the port with docks and ships and the overlooking citadel across the bay. In the cool evening air can be heard the sounds of seagulls and distant church bells.

2           Camera looks down from the rooftops and shows a small square in front of large seemingly abandoned building. Two figures walk past its doors towards an alley.

3           Camera switches to a dark alley, looking towards the square. The sounds of footsteps and arguing come closer as the two figures step on the alley and walk towards camera.

          The taller figure is male, orange furred fox around his thirties. He is clad in fine clothes and waving around a pile of papers while loudly speaking to the other figure.

4           FOLCARD WENGER  
          You HAVE to understand that my patience will not last forever. I loaned those fortunes in good faith and believing that one could still trust the Company. Oh, what has it become! Robbing honest merchants of their hard-earned coins and never paying back!

          The smaller figure is a female Iberian lynx, aged somewhere 25 to 30. She wears a long, worn tunic, sandals and a black cloak. She tries her best to ignore the merchant.

          LILYANA QUILLPAW  
          Oh don't be so dramatic Wenger! I've said a million times that the company will pay back its debts. We just have some... issues right now.

5           FOLCARD WENGER  
          I've been hearing you say that for two YEARS now! And looking at the company's recent exploits I doubt it's not getting better anytime soon. Do you have any intent to actually ever pay me back?

6           The figures arrive at a small side door that leads

to the large abandoned building. A wooden crest depicting a golden rose hangs by the door. Lilyana walks up few stone steps to the door and reaches for her keys. Folcard follows right behind her.

FOLCARD WENGER (CONT'D)

I'm not even the only one dunning for my coins. I know there are quite a few merchants and guilds in this city to which the Company owes literal fortunes.

7

Lilyana starts unlocking the door.

LILYANA QUILLPAW

And that's none of your business! The Company deals with its finances as it sees fit and no one, least a measly merchant, has anything to say to it. You should be thankful you have as prestigious client as us!

8-9

Lilyana opens the door and slips inside, trying to close the door behind her. Folcard pushes the door with his right hand and kicks his feet between the door and the frame.

10

FOLCARD WENGER

You should really think how you talk to those whom you owe money. Not all merchants are as lenient or patient as I am.

11

Folcard throws the big pile of papers to Lilyana's hands.

FOLCARD WENGER (CONT'D)

You and your precious Company are running out of time, young lady. I expect to see my money by the autumn fair next month.

12

Lilyana narrows her eyes and smiles to Folcard.

13

LILYANA QUILLPAW

But of course! I'll make sure you'll get your pennies by then. And now... GET! LOST!

14-17

Lilyana stomps on Folcard's feet as hard as

she can. He exclaims in pain and stumbles back as Lilyana slams the door shut. He shakes his fist to the door and shouts.

FOLCARD WENGER

You better keep your word this time! The city watch will hear of this!

18

Folcard walks back towards the square and mumbles as he goes.

19-23

Inside Lilyana leans with her back to the door and listens the fading footsteps. She sighs and glances at the papers Folcard handed to her. They are accounts of the Company's debts and bills.

24-28

Lilyana is snapped out of her thoughts by a burst of laughter heard from the next room. She puts the papers to a pocket inside her cloak and draws breath while stepping through the second door.

29

Inside there is a larger hall illuminated by a fireplace and some candles. The wooden floor creaks as Lilyana walks towards a round table at the corner. There are several people gathered around to eat, play cards and they seem to be in rather cheery mood.

30

A large badger notices Lilyana and raises her mug. Everyone else turn to look at Lilyana.

SOPHIA

Oi! Boss! We finished digging that ditch for Ol' Samuel. He couldn't pay us much as he promised but we got some fresh bread and even something to drink for our troubles.

31-32

Lilyana lets out a feeble sigh and nods. A cheery weasel peeks from atop of ceiling beam. He is eating an apple.

CASSIUS

33

I managed to find some cheap apples at the market. These might be a bit old though...

The weasel looks at his half eaten apple suspiciously. Lilyana talks to him.

LILYANA QUILLPAW

34           What about that caravan? Is it still leaving tomorrow?

35           The weasel scratches back of his neck nervously.

CASSIUS

Oh, that one? Ee-eeeh, well... they did say they had a need for some guards on the road to Highwall, but... when I offered our Company's services they burst out laughing...

36           The weasel's voice fades towards the end and he backs out, only eyes peeking over the beam.

Lilyana rubs a spot between her eyes.

LILYANA QUILLPAW

37           Alright. Alright... I thought we could have paid next week's expenses with that gig. Oh well! I have to figure out something else then.

38-39       Lilyana grabs a candle from the table and walks towards another door at the back of the hall. A huge bear from the back of the group mutters.

ROLAND

I just hope we don't end up emptying dunghills again.

40-42       Lilyana walks down a dark corridor and up several stairs, passing barred doorways. Finally she arrives to a small chamber deep within the building.

43           The room has a large desk at the back, a fireplace to the right and lots of papers, scrolls and parchments littered all around. Evening sun sends an orange ray of light from window to the left. A large portraiture hangs on the wall behind the desk.

45-48       She places the candle on the desk and puts the new papers on top of some old ones. The pile collapses and she tries to catch it in vain.

Lilyana slumps on a wooden chair and lets out a deep sigh of exhaustion.

49-51

After a moment she leans far back on her chair, looking up to the painting. The portrait depicts aging wolf in fine clothes, right arm holding a gilded rose.

52

LILYANA QUILLPAW

How did it all lead to this...?

53-62

Lilyana stares at the painting for a while. Then she opens a drawer and grabs a skin. Removing the cap she tries to fill a cup but only a single droplet of wine pours out. Lilyana drops the skin on floor and buries her face in her paws.

63-64

Scene fades to black.

INT. HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMPANY OF THE GOLDEN ROSE – MORNING.

65-66

Loud knock on the door startles Lilyana from her sleep at the desk. Light is bleak and sound of raining outside can be heard.

LILYANA QUILLPAW

Um, wha-...! Yea, yea, come on in!

67

The door opens and the badger leans in. She seems slightly nervous.

SOPHIA

Mornin, boss! Umm, you are kinda needed at downstairs.

LILYANA QUILLPAW

For what? Don't tell me that fool Folcard is here this early to whine and complain.

SOPHIA

No.. there are some city guards..

68-74

Lilyana gulps and hurries downstairs. Everyone else is gathered to loiter around the outer door. Two grumpy looking guards stand outside. As Lilyana arrives one of them says

75

GUARD 1  
Are you Lilyana Quillpaw?

Lilyana startles a bit at such abrupt question.

76

LILYANA QUILLPAW  
Why yes I am. And whom do I have the honour to sp-.

GUARD 1  
The Captain of the Watch wishes to see you.

77

LILYANA QUILLPAW  
Now?

78

GUARD 1  
Now.

Lilyana looks behind to members of her Company, shrugs and walks away with the guards.

79-80

INT. HEADQUARTERS OF THE CITY WATCH – MORNING.

It's raining heavily as Lilyana enters the base of the city watch.

81

Lilyana enters Captain's office, fireplace and candles shed light in dim room.

82

GUARD 1  
Captain? She's here.

At the back of the room there is a big desk and an aging hare sits behind it, writing on papers. He looks up.

CORNELIUS BELMONT  
Hm? Alright let her in.

83

LILYANA QUILLPAW  
Your guards don't seem to be very friendly these days, Belmont.

84

CORNELIUS BELMONT  
Good to see you Lilyana. And forgive the lads, they

85

they have to be in that foul weather all day.

LILYANA QUILLPAW  
That's no excuse.

Lilyana looks up to Cornelius.

LILYANA QUILLPAW (CONT'D)

86

Why did you call me? If it's because of Folcard you can just ignore him, I told him the debt is being taken ca-.

87

Cornelius raises his paw.

CORNELIUS BELMONT

No, no, no. This has nothing to do with him. It's a bit more... complicated issue.

88-89

Cornelius grabs a scroll from his desk, glances at it and passes it to Lilyana. His expression shifts to serious.

CORNELIUS BELMONT (CONT'D)

90-91

Few days ago Heimerich Wieck, you know the fur trader, was on his way here from Highwall. Alas, he had his family with him and they were waylaid by some brigands. As he and his guards were no match for the group, Wieck had to hand over all his valuables, as well as his both children as hostages. Now the bandits are demanding outrageous ransom that he won't be able to afford.

LILYANA QUILLPAW

92

Can't afford? Can't he just sell his goods or take a loan? He's a bloody merchant and not very poor from what I've understood.

CORNELIUS BELMONT

93

You know yourself that coins are tight these days, even for someone like Wieck. Paying that sum is no option for him and the bandits won't lower their price.

94

LILYANA QUILLPAW

Well, what did you do then?

CORNELIUS BELMONT

95

Well, as this seemed a very dire situation I took some lads with me and went to track down these brigands. It wasn't terribly challenging, they weren't exactly covering their tracks. And just like we suspected those tracks led to the old caves on the hills northeast of here. Those tunnels have housed smugglers, thieves and other outcasts for several years now.

LILYANA QUILLPAW

And? Did you manage to drag them out?

Cornelius smirks.

CORNELIUS BELMONT

96

Ha! I wish! We descended to the dark but turned back after a few hundred meters when the tunnels kept branching. I have no idea how deep those passages go but that's for sure they join the abandoned mines to the north and gods only know where else.

LILYANA QUILLPAW

97

Interesting story sure, but I still don't see why you had to tell me about this.

CORNELIUS BELMONT

98

You should have it figured out by now. Those kids have to be rescued. I won't be sending my men down there. But you and your Company...

Lilyana looks stunned.

99-100

LILYANA QUILLPAW

What?! That's not even close to our field! We're blades for hire, not some ignoble grave robbers or adventurers!

Cornelius leans forward.

CORNELIUS BELMONT

101

Hmm? You seem very sure of that. What I've heard the Company isn't doing very well. No clients, last competent soldiers resigning and the

remaining men working odd jobs to feed themselves.

Lilyana looks offended

102

LILYANA QUILLPAW

How do you know of this?!

CORNELIUS BELMONT

103-104

Oh, one hears many rumours in this job. But please, Lilyana listen! I'm trying to make you understand this offer. City watch will of course be paying well for Company's services and I'm sure Wieck will also show his gratitude in plenty.

105

LILYANA QUILLPAW

This is nonsense! You know I won't accept this hopeless suicide job even if it would result the Company swimming in gold. You should know better than that!

106-107

Cornelius looks indifferent as Lilyana speaks and opens a drawer in his desk.

108

A thick pile of parchments drops on the desk with a heavy thump. Lilyana looks confused and points the papers.

109

LILYANA QUILLPAW (CONT'D)

What's that?

110

Cornelius pats the papers.

CORNELIUS BELMONT

These. These are all the formal complaints, suits and requests of arrest concerning the Company for the past ten years. All of them missing only the signature of the Captain of the watch and the seal of the Duke.

111

Lilyana squints her eyes.

LILYANA QUILLPAW

Are you blackmailing me?

CORNELIUS BELMONT

112

No. I'm merely trying to make you understand your situation. You can either say goodbye to the Company or accept the opportunity I offer you.

113

LILYANA QUILLPAW

I expected more than this from you, Belmont.  
Cornelius looks visibly uncomfortable.

114

CORNELIUS BELMONT

Believe me; it wouldn't come down to this if I'd get to choose. I've already stretched my mandate with these papers perhaps too much.

115

A knock on the door, a guard leans in.

116

GUARD 3

Sir? Your drinks.

117

CORNELIUS BELMONT

Thank you Will, just leave it there.

118-120

The guard gives Lilyana a mug filled with steaming liquid, puts another on the desk and leaves.

121

LILYANA QUILLPAW

But why? Why have you been ignoring all those demands? What are you gaining from this?

122

Cornelius sips from his mug.

123

CORNELIUS BELMONT

Peace of mind. Maybe. Hopefully. It would be a shame to see Archibald's legacy disappear, considering everything he did for this city.

124

Lilyana doesn't answer, only tastes her drink and nods to Cornelius to continue.

125

CORNELIUS BELMONT (CONT'D)

I was there, 15 years ago.

126

LILYANA QUILLPAW

At Greenvale?

Cornelius nods.

127

CORNELIUS BELMONT

At Greenvale. *Where kings fell and empires crumbled.* Or so the songs go, though those tales

are far grander than what I ever saw. I marched in the forces of the late Duke. When everything collapsed I was in the rear guard trying to protect the retreat, thought back then the situation was bloody hopeless. We would had surely all perished, Duke included, if it wasn't for Archibald. He and his cadre charged down the hill to delay the pursuers. A fitting end, though probably not the one he hoped for.

128

Cornelius looks out the door.

CORNELIUS BELMONT (CONT'D)

129-131

I and most of the Old Guard here owe our lives for what he did, what the Company did. For a mercenary captain he sure had good deal of honour and loyalty. Don't think everyone in this city have forgotten him. I've hoped the Company to get back to its feet and I've done what I can by delaying taking any actions. But it looks like it's not going to happen.

Cornelius stares at Lilyana.

CORNELIUS BELMONT (CONT'D)

132

The company has to try something different, Lilyana. You know it yourself. I'm offering you a risky but well-paying job. Not to mention that the Company appears to owe quite a bit for Wieck also, so his reward will surely be worth it alone.

133

Lilyana remains silent, reading the scroll again. She shrugs.

134

LILYANA QUILLPAW  
When do we start?

135

Cornelius smiles, wrinkle's on the old hare's face smoothing.

136

CORNELIUS BELMONT  
Excellent! Oh, and you'll also need these.

137

LILYANA QUILLPAW  
What's this?

CORNELIUS BELMONT

138

Maps, some notes and others information you'll might need. Remember, your task is to bring those kids home safely and I don't exactly care how you will accomplish it. Well, I guess you have everything now. Get your men and equipment ready, I'll send one of my lads to guide you to the cave in couple of days.

139-145

Lilyana takes the papers and walks to the door. At the door she halts. She is about to say something but changes her mind and walks out the door.

INT. HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMPANY OF THE GOLDEN ROSE – AFTERNOON.

146

A large hall inside the headquarters. The middle section of the floor is slightly lowered and mostly covered by a massive wooden table. Members of the Company loiter around the room.

147

CASSIUS

Whew! That was quite a task.

148

SOPHIA

I wonder why boss ordered us to clean this place anyway. This war room hasn't been used since, well ehm, quite a long while ago.

149

CASSIUS

I bet she has something big to tell us!

ANNE

Or something really bad.

ROLAND

Nah, probably just needed us to do atleast something so we wouldn't pass time by drinking.

150

SOPHIA

Doesn't sound like boss, she is probably looking to sell something from here.

151

CASSIUS

Like what? Rotten chairs and ramshackle tables?

152           The conversation is interrupted when door Creaks  
and Lilyana steps in. Everyone jumps on their feet.

153           LILYANA QUILLPAW  
Everyone's here?

154           SOPHIA  
Ai, boss!

155           LILYANA QUILLPAW  
Good, because we have a lot to discuss and we need  
everyone.

SOPHIA  
Oh. Has something happened?

156-160       Lilyana walks at the table and puts the scrolls on  
it. Everyone gathers around the table. Lilyana looks  
around.

LILYANA QUILLPAW  
Ladies and gentlemen; We have a job.

161-162       Lilyana opens the scrolls on the table. Screen  
fades black.

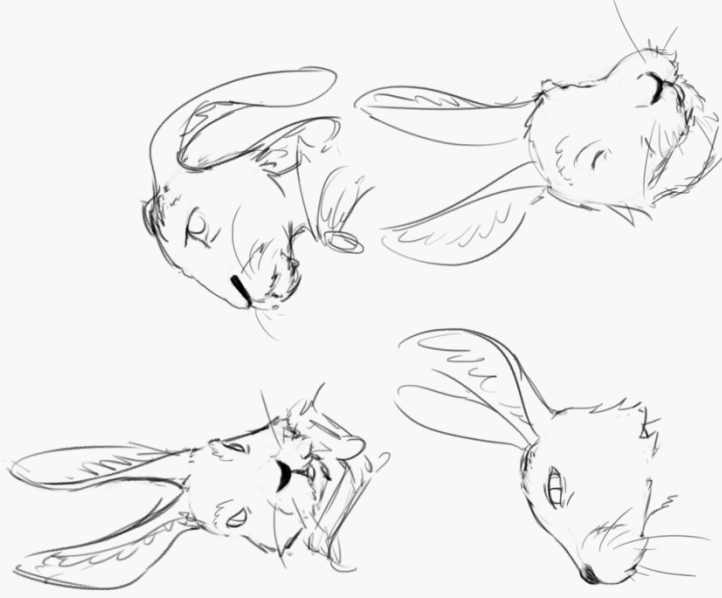
# Lilyana Quillpaw

A young Iberian Lynx.  
A former accountant,  
now the Grandmaster  
and leader of the Com-  
pany. Knows nothing  
about leadership. Devot-  
ed to keep the Compa-  
ny afloat by any means  
necessary. She is a  
clever thinker and  
decent negotiator but  
also nervous and volati-  
le what it comes to the  
Company. Has a drin-  
king problem.



# Cornelius Belmont

Middle-aged hare. Captain of the Watch of Wolfport. Dutiful, diligent and too kind for the harsh job he has to do. Balances between trying to uphold the laws, protecting the townsfolk, taking care of his men and following Duke's orders. Stressed and pressed but still manages to envision a brighter future.



# Folcard Wenger

A fox on his thirties. A somewhat wealthy merchant living in Wolfport. Has sold goods for the Company for years and has recently began to try to claim his money back. Keen businessman and usually somewhat kind person but like most others was deceived by the Company's past prestige.



# Cassius

Young weasel. Always chirpy, carefree and ready for an adventure. Cassius' dexterity with his paws might not be legendary but his way of simply ignoring anything that might endanger him or prevent him from having a good time surely is. Inherently carefree or merely hiding a dark past behind a merry smile? Only Cassius knows the answer.



# Sophia

As the last mercenary with any actual experience left in the Company, Sophia acts as Lilyana's right hand. Keeping others in check and providing valuable advice for the novice leader she is in more influential position than ever before. Though her rowdy behaviour and greed for gold were not considered weaknesses in the Company. Rather it was her lack of discipline in battle as she tends to go full berserk in the thrill of combat.



# Roland

A bear on his thirties. A former poacher, didn't know which end of a sword to hold when he joined the Company. Has known Anne for years. Blessed with iron guts. Roland is able to keep his head calm even in the direst situation. His ever present dry optimism is only rivaled by his renowned appetite.



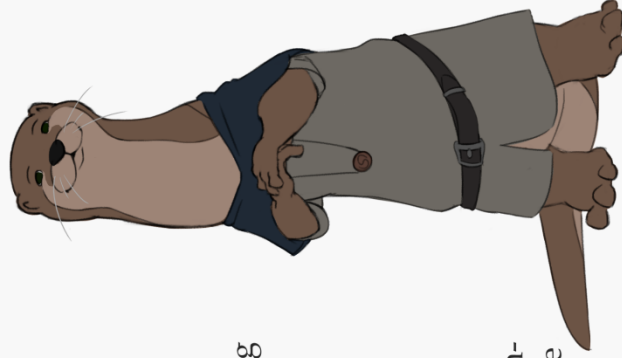
# Anne

A hare on her thirties. A former poacher like Roland and has been in his company for years. Also a complete opposite of him. Years of avoiding law enforcement have made her uneasy, pessimistic and always expecting the worst to happen. Her steady hand and keen eye make her an excellent huntsman however.



# Terry

A young otter. A former acolyte, he was thrown out of the temple for his excessive curiosity of the old gods. The curiosity turned into an obsession and Terry spent his meager savings on finding old scriptures and tomes telling of the old times. Now poor he has ended up in the Company and spends his time fixing bruises, fractures and wounds of the other members. His great knowledge of healing herbs and plants comes handy.

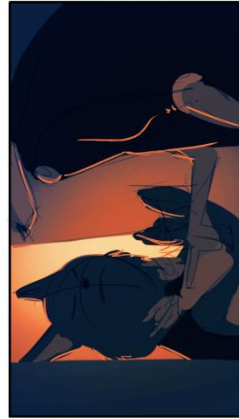
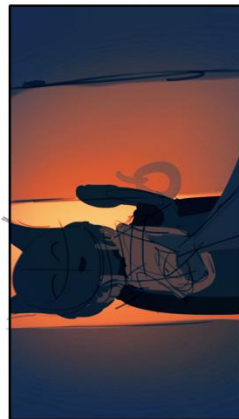
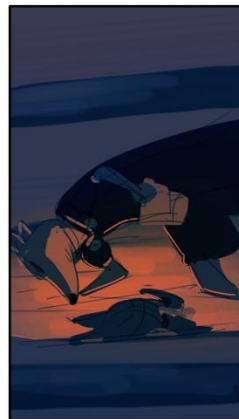
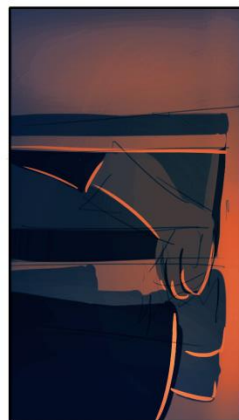
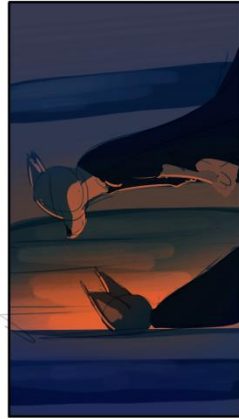
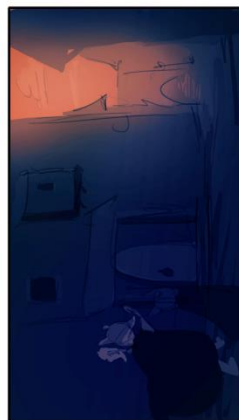
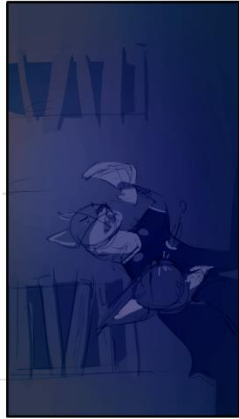
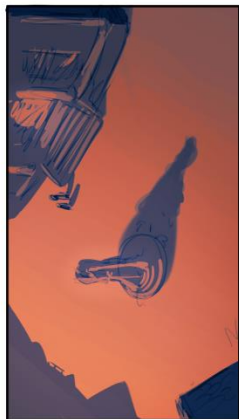
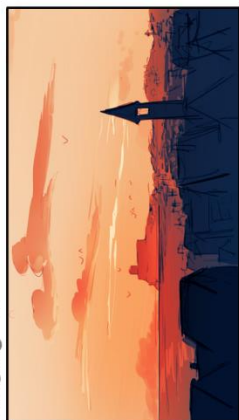


# Constantine

A middle-aged mouse, Constantine has failed his apprenticeship under three different sages and now seeks a shortcut to mastering the arcane arts. He is impatient, withdrawn and most of the time grumpy. Constantine's basic knowledge of arcane is beneficial for the Company and he takes great pride in sensing the otherworldly waves of magic that others don't even recognize.



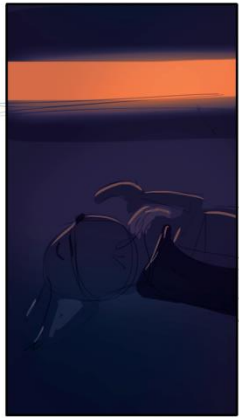
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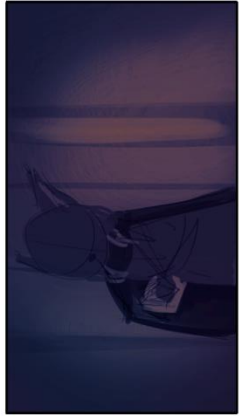




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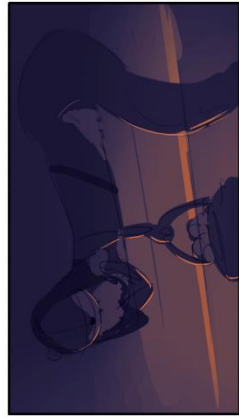
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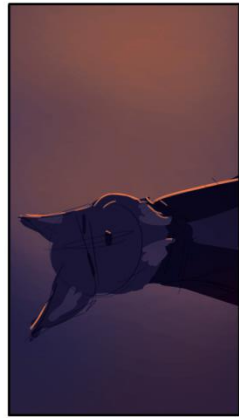
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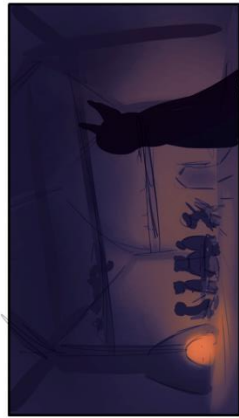
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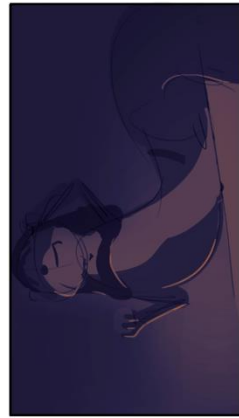
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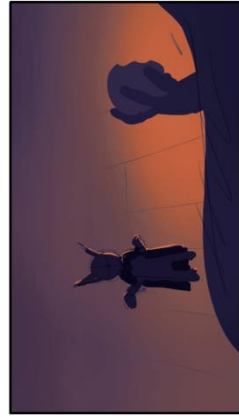
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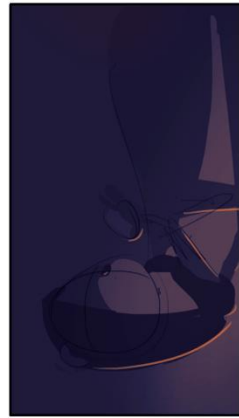
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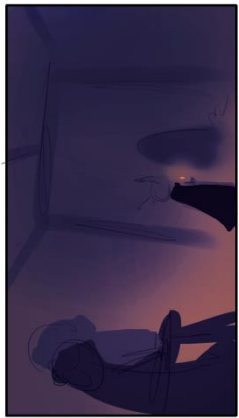
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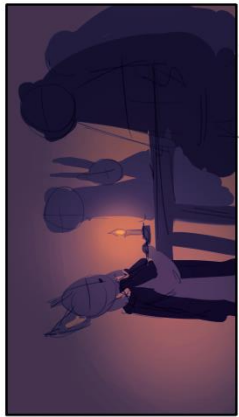
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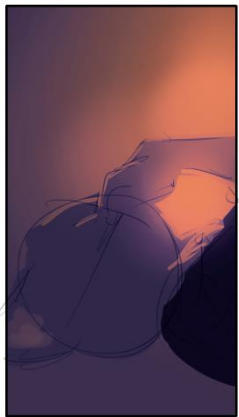
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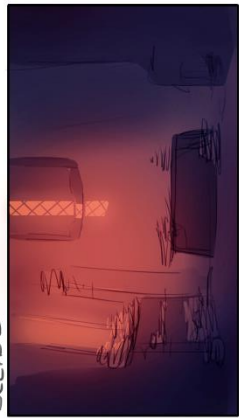
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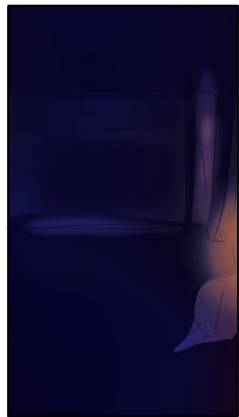
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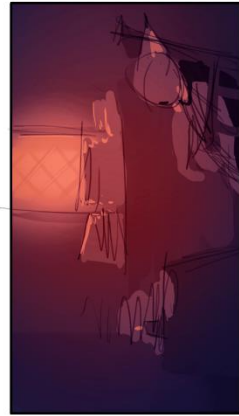
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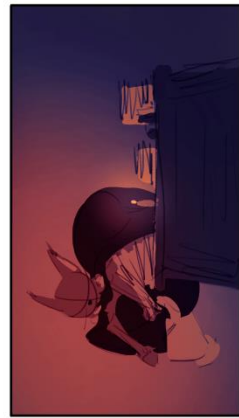
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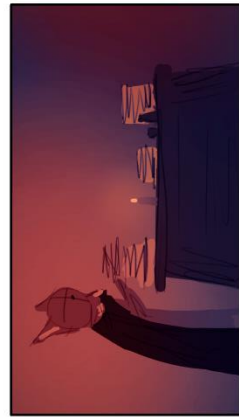
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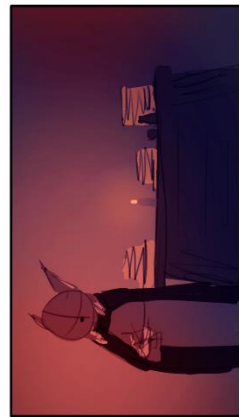
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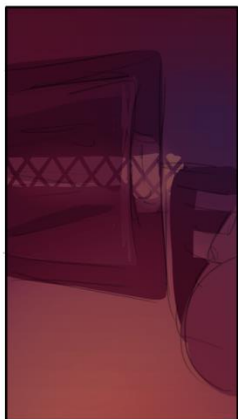
Scene 3



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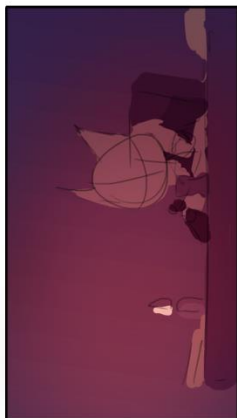
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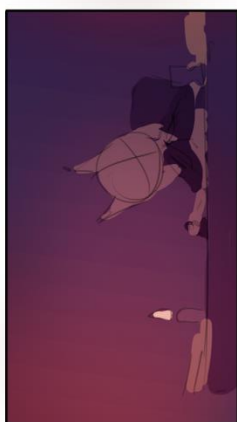
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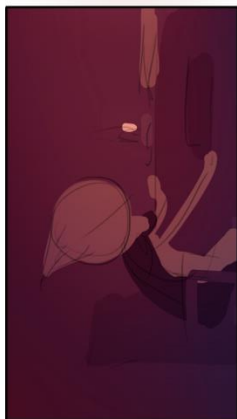
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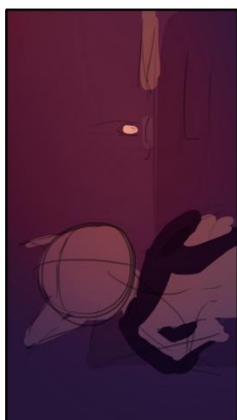
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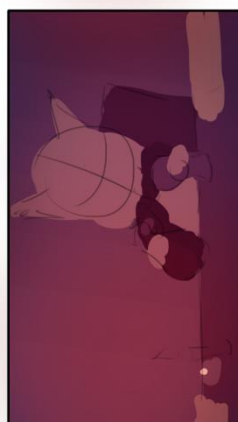
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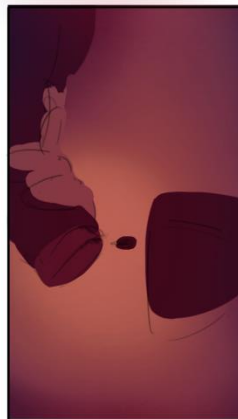
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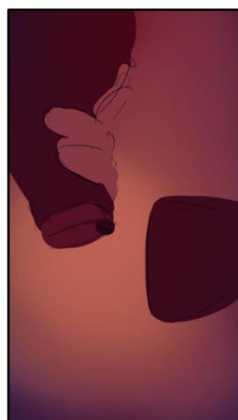
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Scene 4



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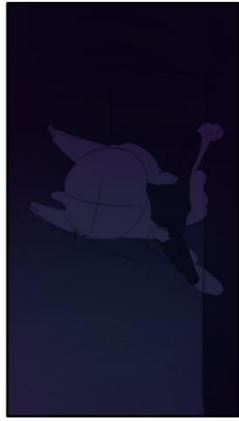
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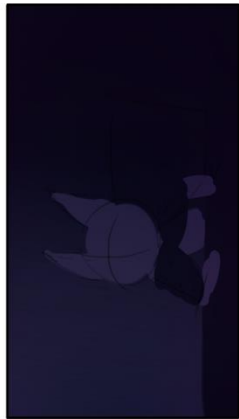
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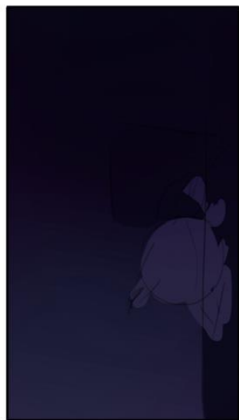
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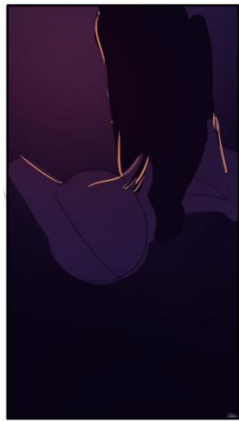
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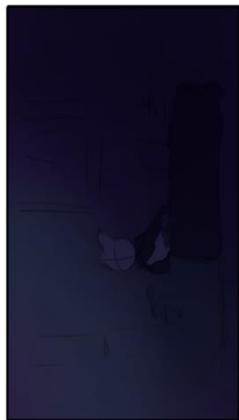
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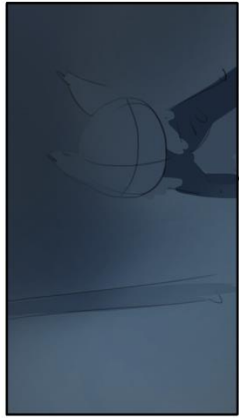
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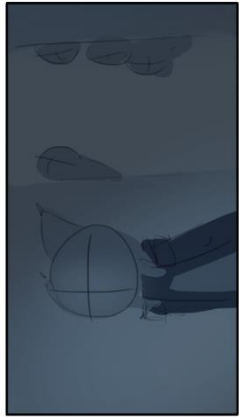
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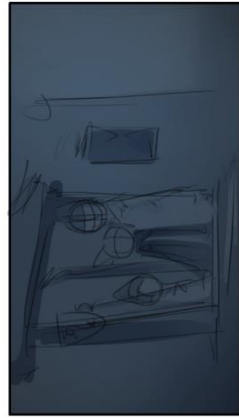
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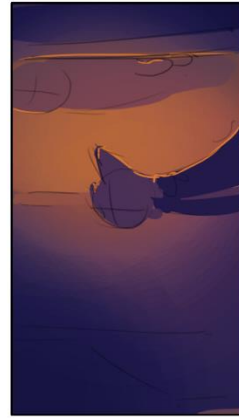
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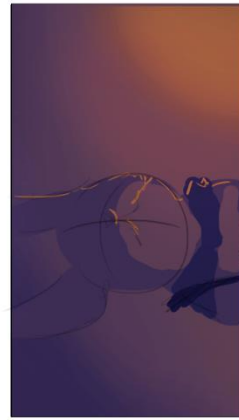
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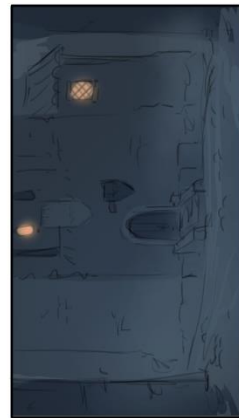


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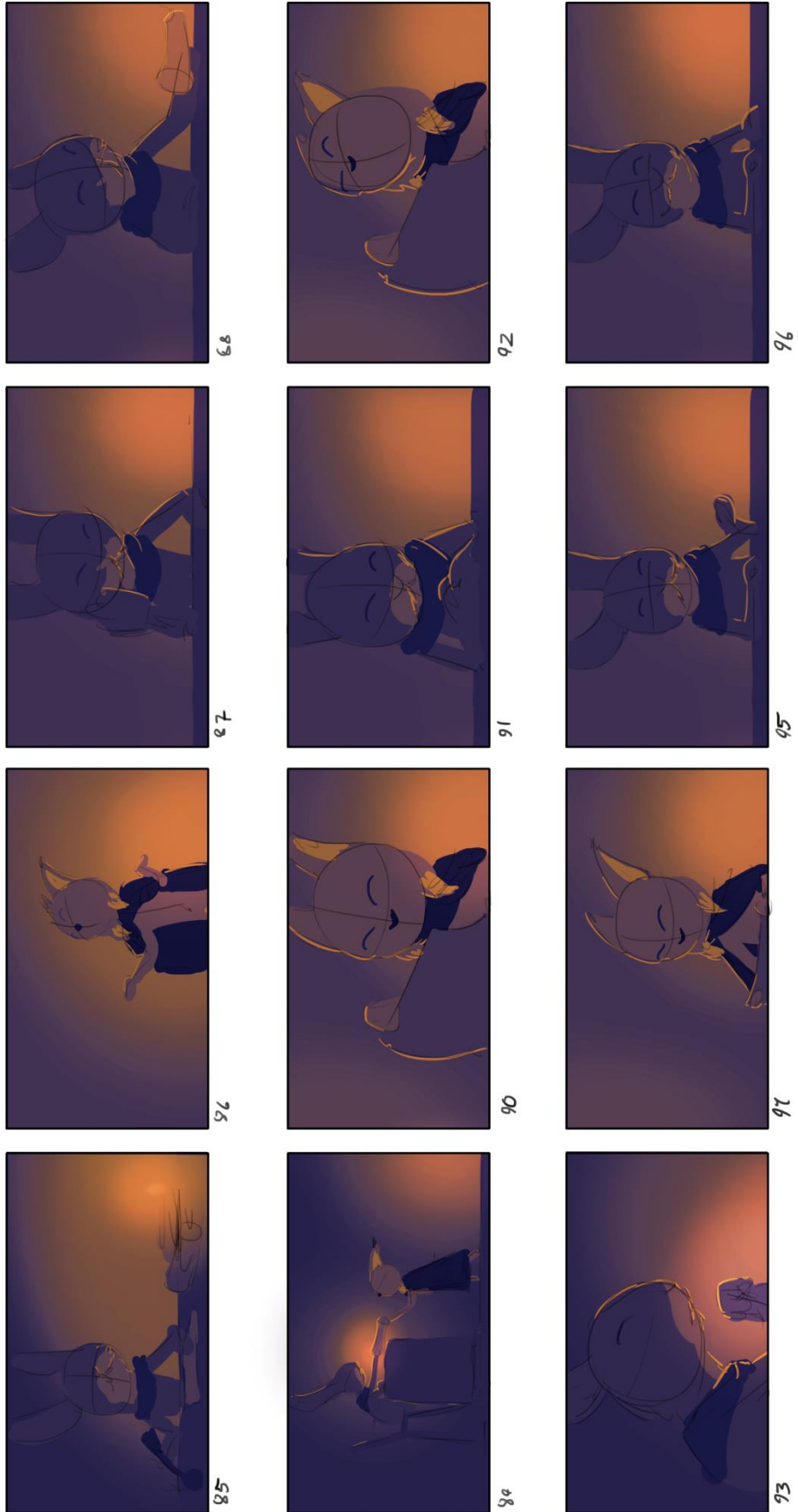


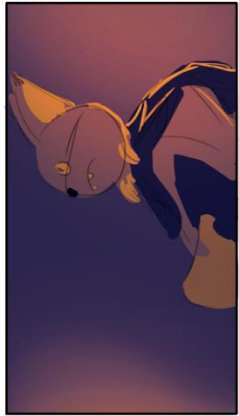
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Scene 5



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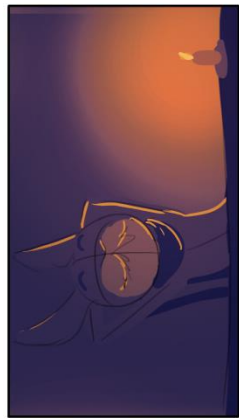
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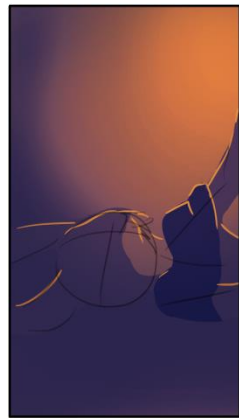
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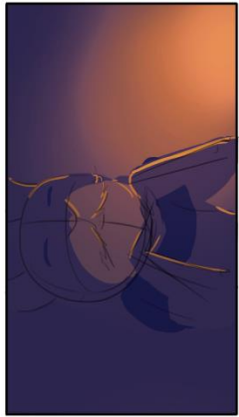
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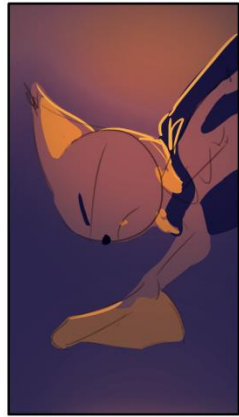
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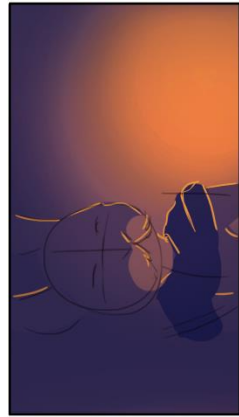
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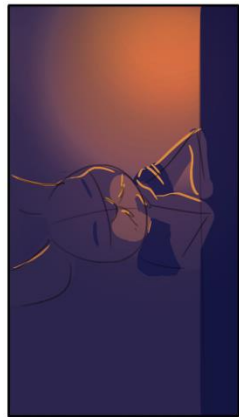
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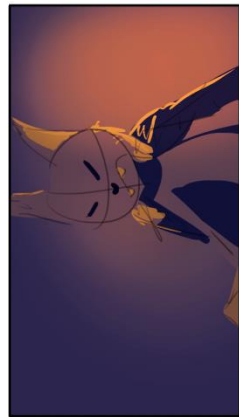
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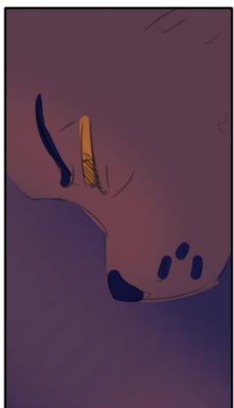
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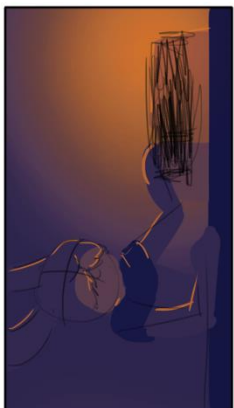
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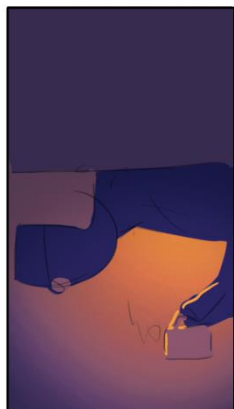
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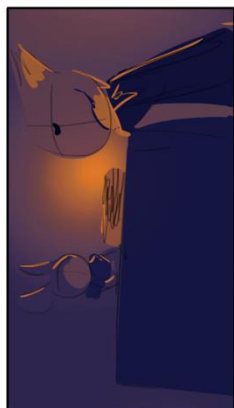
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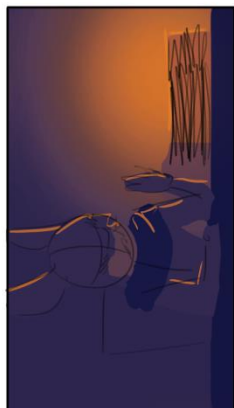
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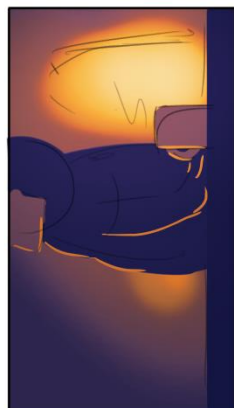
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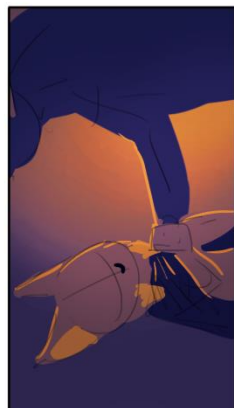
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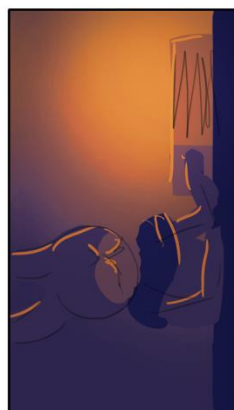
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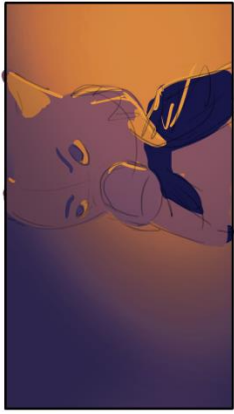
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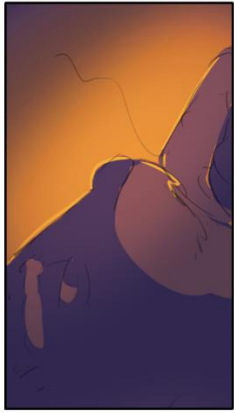
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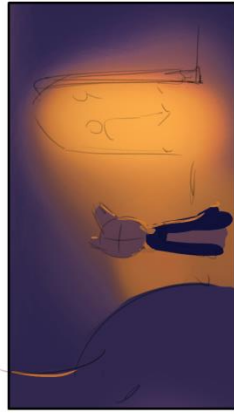
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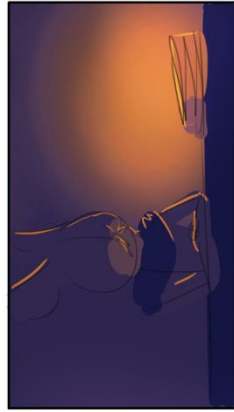
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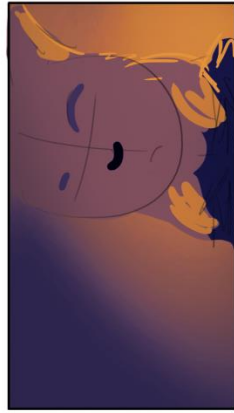
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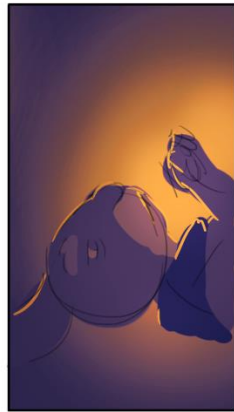
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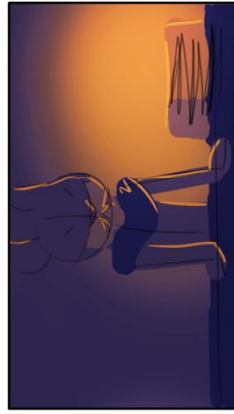
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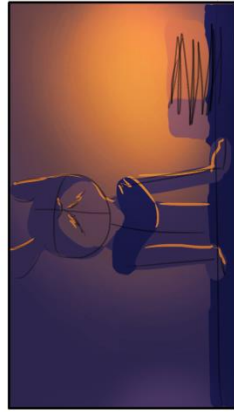
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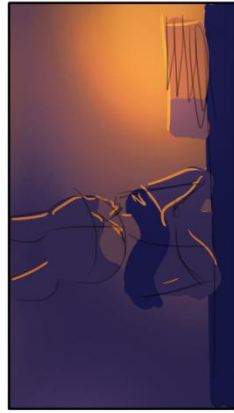
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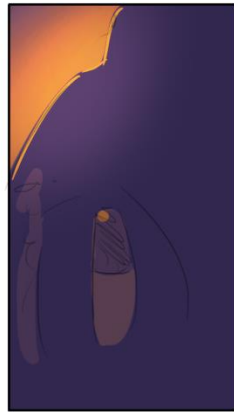
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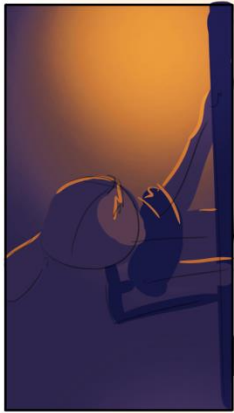
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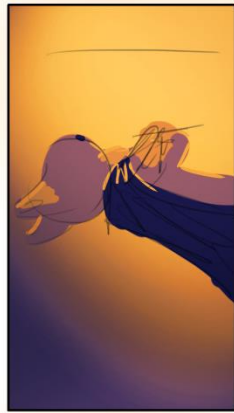
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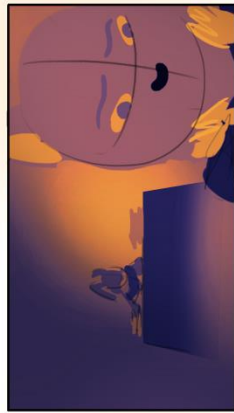
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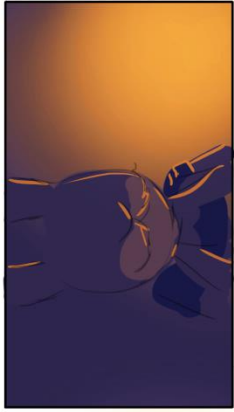
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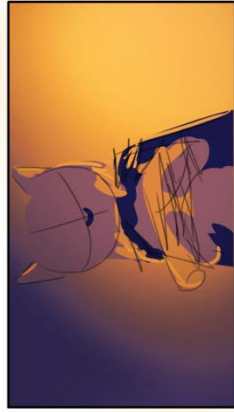
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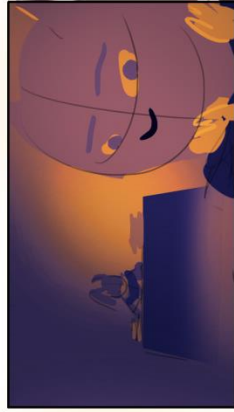
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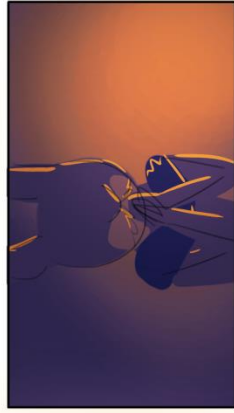
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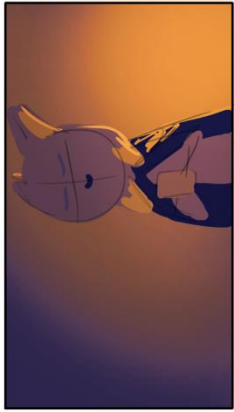
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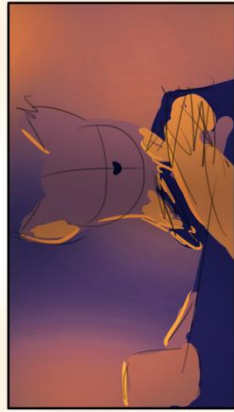
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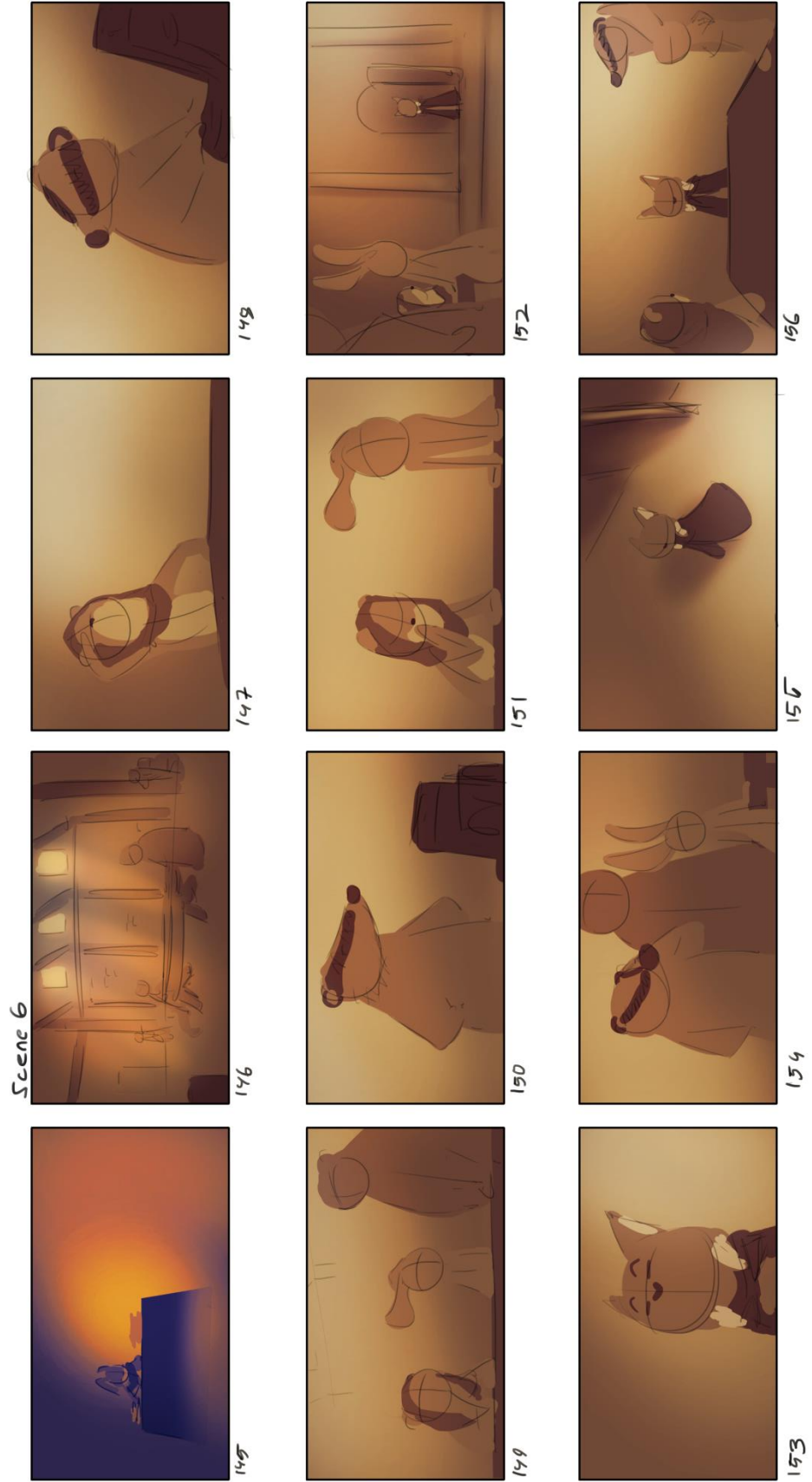
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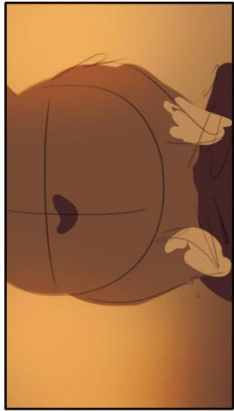


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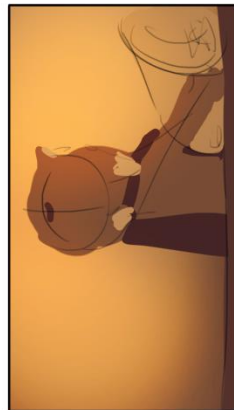
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