



Table of Contents

Game Title: Gambling With The Villainess!.....	1
Overview.....	3
Introduction.....	3
Description.....	3
Theme.....	3
Setting.....	4
Characters.....	4
Main Characters.....	5
Side Characters.....	8
Story.....	9
Introduction.....	9
Chapter 1 The life of a Vilainess.....	9
Chapter 2 Lies and Deceit.....	10
Chapter 3 Afternoon Tea.....	12
Chapter 4 The Grand Hall.....	13
Basic Movement.....	14
Core Gameplay Mechanics.....	15
Level Design.....	19
User Interface Concepts.....	21
Main Menu.....	21
Pause Menu.....	21
Platforms/Specifications.....	22
HUD.....	23

Overview

Introduction

Gambling With The Villainess! Is a third-person AAA story-based game, where you play as Lyvanna Leonore- the villainess from a novel you once revered. Embodying a misunderstood character you once admired, you must mask your identity and navigate a perilous path in a dark empire ruled by your father, the emperor. In a brutal competition where the most sinister sibling wins favor, you are forced to commit evil deeds to survive while grappling with your own well-intentioned nature. As you attend the emperor's weekly meetings, blending in to protect yourself and uncovering the hidden depths of the original Lyvanna's life, you must decide: will you be the one to make up for your evil deeds, or will you embrace your father's malevolent rule?

Players experience the unique premise of reincarnating as the villainess from a novel, allowing them to rewrite a predetermined story and shape their own fate. The player is then introduced to their salvation- gambling-which will be a reoccurring theme throughout the game. The gambling session introduces a strategic mini game where players must outwit rivals, merging traditional storytelling with engaging gameplay mechanics that test players' decision-making skills. Players face morally challenging decisions that explore themes of loyalty, betrayal, and power dynamics, making each choice impactful and thought-provoking.

The artistic transition from a vibrant 2D animated intro to immersive 3D environments creates a visually striking experience that enhances storytelling. The game immerses players in a detailed modern fantasy setting filled with lore, secrets, and intricate social dynamics, enhancing the overall narrative experience.

Description

"Reincarnated as Lyvanna, the villainess from a novel you know all too well, you must navigate a perilous path to escape your destined execution. In a country ruled by an evil emperor, survival hinges on mastering the dangerous game of chance while uncovering your family's dark secrets and confronting or.... embracing your father's malevolent rule."

Theme

Gambling With The Villainess! introduces a multitude of different themes including: Historical, Fantasy, Mystery and Thriller. A blend of 2d and 3d art is presented throughout the story to emphasize past memories and the present. Sub-genres include political intrigue, dark fantasy, and horror.

Development Team/Goal

Games Designer Selena Todea 3rd year final major project solo development. Lyvanna's dresses provided by Bambi Soleye . Voice Talent: Jake Forman, Bambi Soleye, Madeline Drought and Conrad.

Type

Gambling With The Villainess! is a third-Person AAA story-based game.

Target Audience

PEGI 16 (Strong Language, Blood, Physical Abuse, Violence), Manhwa & Light Novel Readers, Historical Enthusiasts and Story-Game fans will enjoy the game as it is a perfect blend of the three categories.

Platform

Currently, the game is designed for PC only, targeting mature audiences (16+) who are interested in story-rich, character-driven narratives. With complex themes of moral ambiguity, power struggles, and self-reflection, it appeals to players who enjoy exploring multifaceted characters and making difficult choices.

World and Timeline

Set in the fictional empire of the book "The Beauty and The Blade", the world combines dark fantasy and political intrigue. This world's empire is ruled by a rigid hierarchy where nobility and loyalty shape destiny, and whispers of rebellion simmer beneath a polished surface. Within the Leonore castle, power dynamics are in constant flux, with political maneuvers and family loyalty tested. In this setting, characters are constantly navigating allegiances, and Lyvanna's personal journey unfolds amidst a web of secrets and deadly politics.

Antagonistic Forces

Lyvanna faces both external and internal conflicts. Externally, she contends with other nobles who distrust her, a powerful Emperor who holds her fate, and servants who either fear or loathe her. Internally, she wrestles with her own fractured identity, torn between her past life and her new role as a villainess. This dual struggle propels her journey, forcing players to decide whether Lyvanna will accept her role or attempt to change her path. Some of the characters Lyvanna has to keep an eye on include, but are not limited to: Nobles, Servants, Family members. Lyvanna's biggest enemy starts with the Emperor, and branches out to other characters as the story progresses.

Setting

The game is set during the Age of Imperialism, which spanned from the 15th century to 1914. Imperialism refers to the policy or practice of extending a nation's power, especially through territorial acquisition or by exerting political and economic control over other regions. During this period, power, wealth, and territory were mainly accessible to imperial and royal families. *Gambling With The Villainess!* takes place in a time of power imbalance, tyranny, and slavery. The characters reflect their circumstances, and the world is designed to mirror the historical context.

Characters

Main Characters:

- The reincarnated is the person who previously read the original novel, and the person to reincarnate into the novel as the villainess. A brief backstory of the reincarnate is given, although their name is unknown, as they immediately take the identity of the villainess. Their appearance is briefly shown to the viewer. She is seen reading the book in her room.



Age: 30

Height: 1.52

Nationality: Korean

Job: English Teacher

- Lyvanna Leonore is the playable character for the game. She is the villainess of the novel “The Beauty and the Blade”, and the first princess of the Leonore Kingdom. The player discovers Lyvanna’s personality through exploring her room. She is a young, beautiful and cunning villain, who stops at nothing to get what she wants. Her sharp tongue and wit made her an exceptional villain. In the end, Lyvanna meets her end in the novel after trying to murder the heroine.

Age: 20

Height: 1.75

Nationality: Leonorian

Role: Villainess



- Violet Wisteria is the original heroine in “The Beauty and the Blade”. She is a kind, soft spoken and well-natured young lady. She is initially introduced as a commoner in the novel, although upon catching the emperor’s eye, she gains the title of “Baroness” and ultimately the title of “Empress of Wisteria”. Violet endures the ridicule of the public, the royal families and most of all Lyvanna’s wrath due to her status. Despite it all, she remains the epitome of grace and elegance no matter the circumstances, fitting of a heroine in a novel.



Age: 18

Height: 1.60

Nationality: Wisterian

Role: Heroine

- Arthur Leonore is the first prince of the Leonore Estate. He is sarcastic, reckless, aggressive and rigid. His hatred for Lyvanna stems from the fact that her existence threatens his position as the crown prince and the next emperor of Leonore. He appears in the weekly meetings with the Emperor and is seen threatening Lyvanna and questioning her authority and eligibility for the throne.

Age: 24

Height: 1.80

Nationality: Leonorian

Role: First Prince



- Alice Leonore is the youngest princess of the Leonore kingdom, and Lyvanna’s sister. Due to the nature of the family, she grows up to be spoiled, ruthless and detached from reality. She finds entertainment in the arguing of her siblings and tries to push Lyvanna and Arthur to argue for her entertainment. Due to her young age, she is not eligible to be in line for the throne, and as a result no further education was provided for Alice, which is a source of contempt for her towards her siblings.



Age: 13

Height: 1.50

Nationality: Leonorian

Role: Second Princess

- Lucius Leonore is the current emperor of the Leonore Kingdom, and the father of Alice, Arthur and Lyvanna Leonore. He ascended to the throne by murdering his brothers and father, and ultimately legalized slavery, drugs and created the gap between the poor and the rich. Lucius is calculated, arrogant, greedy and his word is absolute. His favourite method of asserting obedience is to punish, interrogate and even kill whoever does not comply with his rules.

Age: 55

Height: 1.95

Nationality: Leonorian

Role: Emperor



- Isla Wills is Lyvanna's lady in waiting and personal maid. Due to the negative aura in the castle, a limited amount of staff are able to enter the castle and as such, Isla has 2 roles within Lyvanna's castle. Isla is a commoner born in Kingdom Leonore. As a commoner, she is not given any freedom besides completing chores for Lyvanna. As one mistake can cause Isla her life, she is docile, quiet and obedient with impeccable manners and etiquette. She is a sharp individual, hence why her fate is to become Lyvanna's pawn. Isla's character develops as the reincarnated Lyvanna starts treating her with respect.



Age: 17

Height: 1.55

Nationality: Leonorian

Role: Lady In Waiting/Maid

Side Characters:

- Rubia Leonore is the current empress of the Leonore Kingdom. She does not make any appearances except for the court meetings, which she is expected to attend. Rubia does not speak, as she is not in agreement with the evil deeds of Lucius and her children. Rubia is a kind woman in a difficult situation, with no way to change the evil ways of the emperor.

Age: 34

Height: 1.70

Nationality: Leonorian

Role: Empress



- Lady Seraphine is a lady from the royal family of Wisteria, and Violet Wisteria's lady in waiting. She only appears at events with Lady Violet, and is a frail, loving, loyal and sympathetic person. She is particularly scared of Lyvanna's harsh words.
- Lady Margoux is a royal from House Emberwing with connections to the imperial family. Because of the nature of House Emberwing, she is not allowed to share any information to outsiders about the kingdom. She is a fair, civil and firm person with a strong sense of justice.
- Alaric, the Head Butler is an older, stern, and highly respected servant of the household, respected by Lyvanna and other members of staff. He is known for his loyalty to the family, but also for his stern attitude.
- The maids serving Lyvanna are young women from either commoner backgrounds or low-ranking nobility, such as baron families. Terrified of Lyvanna's reputation, they see their positions within the Leonore household as the only safeguard against harsher fates, as their work within the castle offers a semblance of security and protection from potential harm.
- The Emperor of Wisteria, husband to Violet Wisteria and the one who ultimately executes Lyvanna, is known as a fair but powerful ruler. Guided by a strong moral compass, he commands respect across his realm. However, his sense of justice and disdain for Lyvanna's transgressions are so intense that, following her death, he extends his wrath to her entire family, ordering the complete destruction of the Leonore line.

Story

Introduction

In her past life, the reincarnate was a dedicated teacher burdened by her parents' mounting debts. In an effort to alleviate their financial struggles, she learned the art of gambling, consistently bringing home money that her parents then spent on frivolous luxuries. The sole source of solace in her life was her passion for historical novels, her favourite novel being "The Beauty and the Blade".

This novel tells the tale of Violet Wisteria, a commoner who triumphed over adversity to become the empress of the great empire of Wisteria, one of the four Royal Houses. At the centre of the story lies the villainess, Lyvanna Leonore, a character despised for her ruthless schemes to harm, poison, kidnap and kill Violet. Yet, despite Lyvanna's notorious reputation, she was the reincarnate's favourite character. The reincarnate perceived her as a misunderstood figure, embodying the poise, beauty, and sharp wit she aspired to possess. As she recalls this narrative, the reincarnate is acutely aware that Lyvanna ultimately met her demise in the novel, executed for her sins by the emperor of Wisteria, Violet's husband.

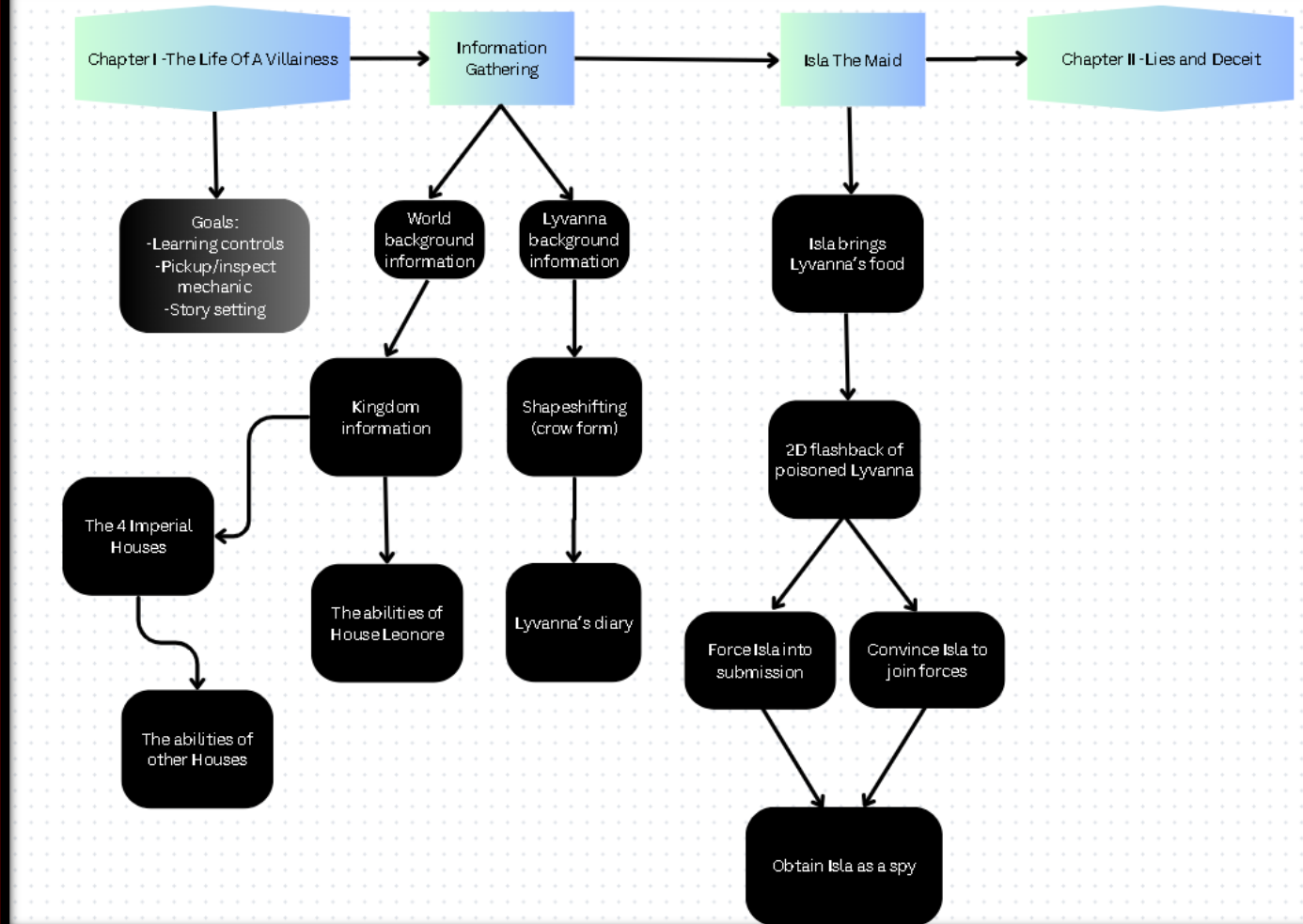
One night, the tired teacher lay in her hospital bed, exhausted and helpless, reading the conclusion of the novel. Lyvanna's end was an unsatisfying one for her. It wasn't fair. Violet only triumphed because she was the protagonist. As her eyes grew heavy and her heart sank, she closed them - only to awaken as Lyvanna Leonore.

Chapter 1-The life of a Villainess

The reincarnate explores Lyvanna's room to gather more information. She picks up various objects like letters, work documents, jewelry, tea, and books, which provide further insight into Lyvanna's life and the world she used to inhabit. The most important pieces of information are as follows: There are 4 main houses in this continent: House Leonore, House Wisteria, House Greymane and House Emberwing. Each of the houses were bestowed a power by the gods, and Leonore's gift was shapeshifting and House Wisteria was granted healing abilities. The rest of the abilities are unknown to the public. The Reincarnate learns that Lyvanna has the ability to shapeshift into a crow. The Leonore lineage was blessed by the Gods, each member receiving a spirit animal at birth. In the novel, Lyvanna was ridiculed by her family for being bestowed a raven, an animal deemed weak. Her family received the following gifts: The emperor may shift into a lion, Arthur has been granted the power of the snakes, Alice may transform into an eagle and Empress Rubia into a cougar.

A new character is suddenly introduced, Isla the maid and lady in waiting. Isla opens the grand door and brings out a tray with food and water for Lyvanna. The player and Isla engage in brief conversation, some dialogue choices being presented to the

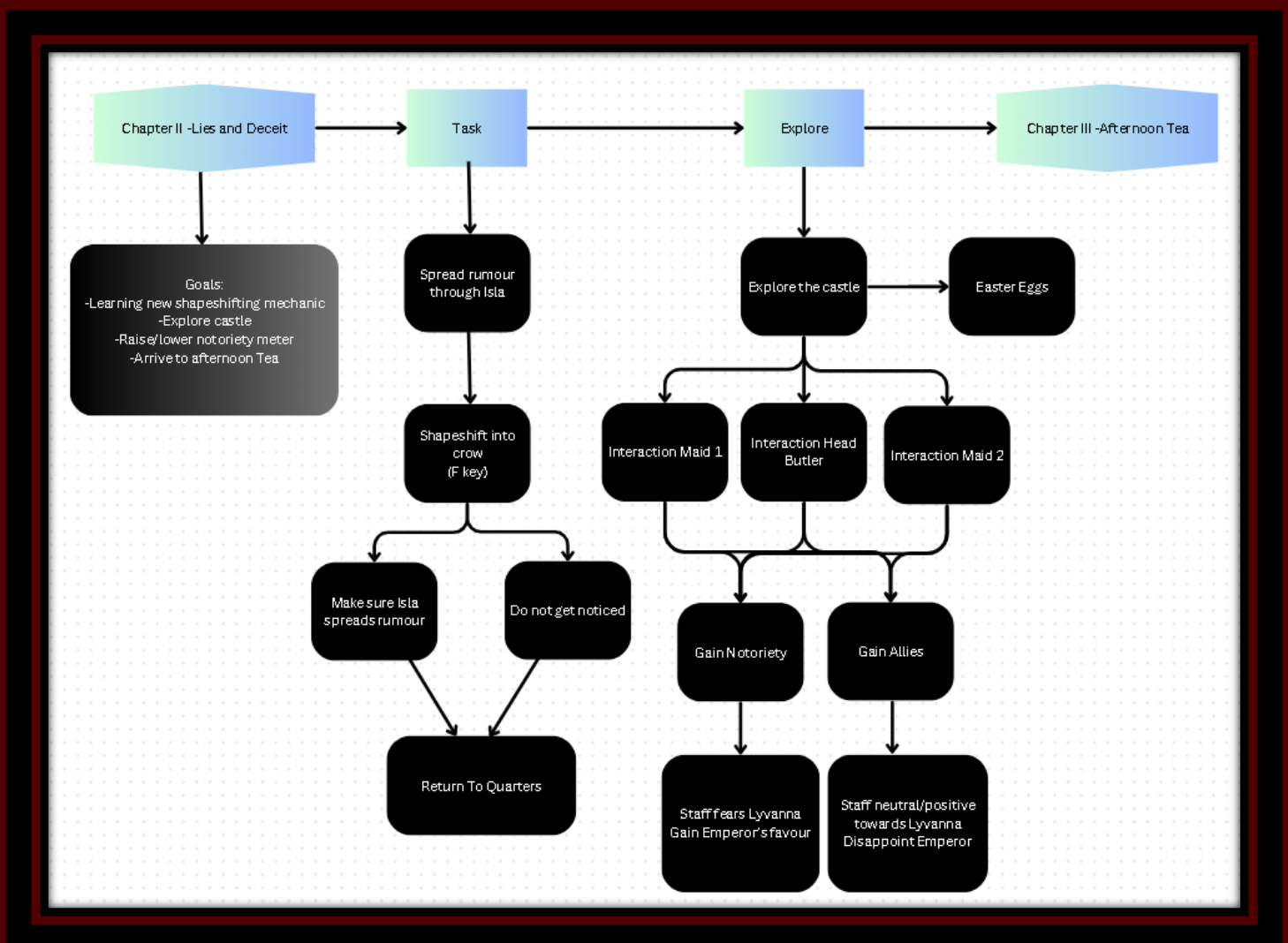
player. Finally, Isla offers Lyvanna her food and attempts to take her leave. The memory of the novel flashes before Lyvanna's eyes—Lyvanna, weakened and bedridden for weeks after consuming poisoned food. Lyvanna takes advantage of the situation and after threatening Isla, the interaction culminates with Isla being forced to do Lyvanna's bidding. The first task she receives is to spread a rumour that Prince Arthur was the one who attempted to poison Lyvanna, which Isla hurries to do.



Chapter 2-Lies and Deceit

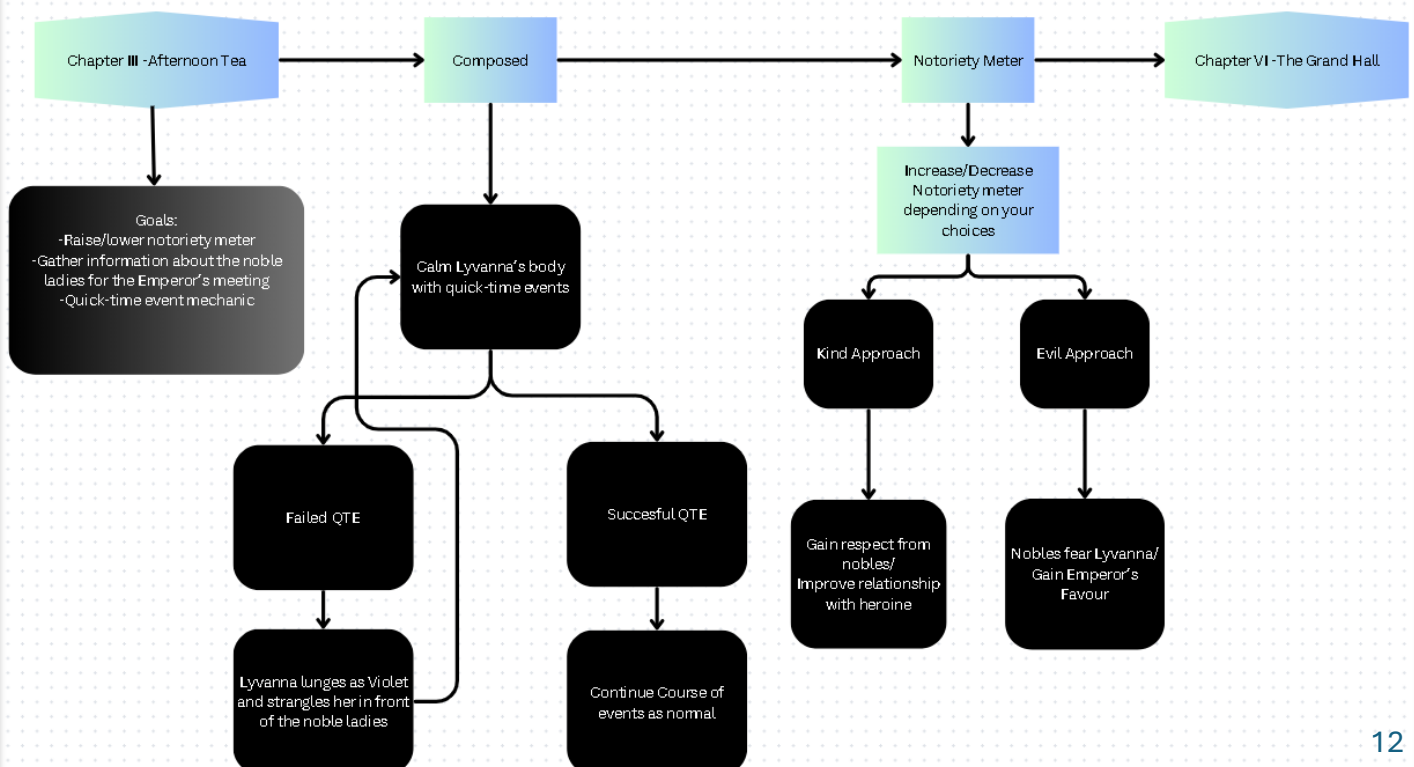
The reincarnate learns how to shapeshift into a crow and leaves out of the window to make sure Isla completes her task. Isla hurries through the corridors, intent on spreading the rumor as instructed. Lyvanna, now in her crow form, takes to the air, following Isla discreetly and hiding behind trees so as to not be seen. Isla completes her task successfully and convinces a fellow servant to spread the word. In her quarters, Lyvanna takes a moment to marvel at her newfound powers, the thrill of shapeshifting still fresh. She lets herself feel a sense of satisfaction—Isla has done exactly as commanded, and the rumors are spreading. But she also senses a shift around her; the

atmosphere in the castle feels heavier all too sudden. The servants she passes on her way to the hall avert their gaze or hurriedly whisper, their heads bowed. Lyvanna realizes that her reputation precedes her, but there is still much to learn about her new life as the imperial princess. Her purpose now is twofold: to study the relationships the former Lyvanna had fostered among the castle's staff and nobles, and to reacquaint herself with her imperial duties. As she wanders the halls, she encounters the castle's esteemed head butler. His approach is calm but watchful, a man who embodies respect but clearly takes note of every detail around him. After a conversation, she meets some of the maids and inspects their reactions to her. The final task is to head to the palace garden to join the other royal ladies, who are gathered for afternoon tea—a meeting initially organized by the original Lyvanna.



Upon arriving, Lyvanna spots the protagonist, Violet Wisteria. As she approaches, voices urge her to kill and humiliate Violet, remnants of the old Lyvanna resurfacing. The reincarnate must help Lyvanna regain composure through quick-time breathing events, symbolizing her struggle between her vengeful instincts and her desire to stay poised

and dignified. Lyvanna arrives at the tea party she has organized, and the moment she enters the garden, the noblewomen rise from their seats, lowering their heads respectfully. Violet Wisteria, Lady Seraphine, and Lady Margaux stand to greet her. There is an air of formality as they acknowledge Lyvanna's high status and potential to become empress. Despite the formalities, the atmosphere remains tense, particularly due to Violet's lapse of judgement. Violet is the only Lady who forgets the formal greeting required upon meeting a noble of higher standing. Once the pleasantries are exchanged, the dialogue reveals the delicate power dynamics at play. The noblewomen, knowing that Lyvanna is a powerful figure with ambitions to rise to empress, speak carefully, choosing their words to avoid provoking her. Violet's apparent lapse in formal greeting sets the stage for Lyvanna to assert her authority—either through a formal correction or a more diplomatic response. Regardless of the choice, Violet's nervousness is evident, and the tension in the air grows palpable. Violet, anxious but trying to maintain her politeness, praises Lyvanna's strength and grace. However, Lyvanna's sharp gaze and the unease in the air suggest that the others are walking on eggshells around her. The tea party ultimately concludes with Lyvanna gracefully excusing herself, reminding the others of their roles in upholding the empire's dignity and maintaining vigilance. The tone of the gathering, while outwardly civil, has been defined by Lyvanna's silent dominance. As she takes her leave, she makes it clear that her leadership is not to be taken lightly, leaving behind an air of unease and uncertainty among the other women, particularly Violet. As the event ends, the weekly meeting proposed by the emperor approaches. Lyvanna enters a carriage and is transported to the emperor's castle.



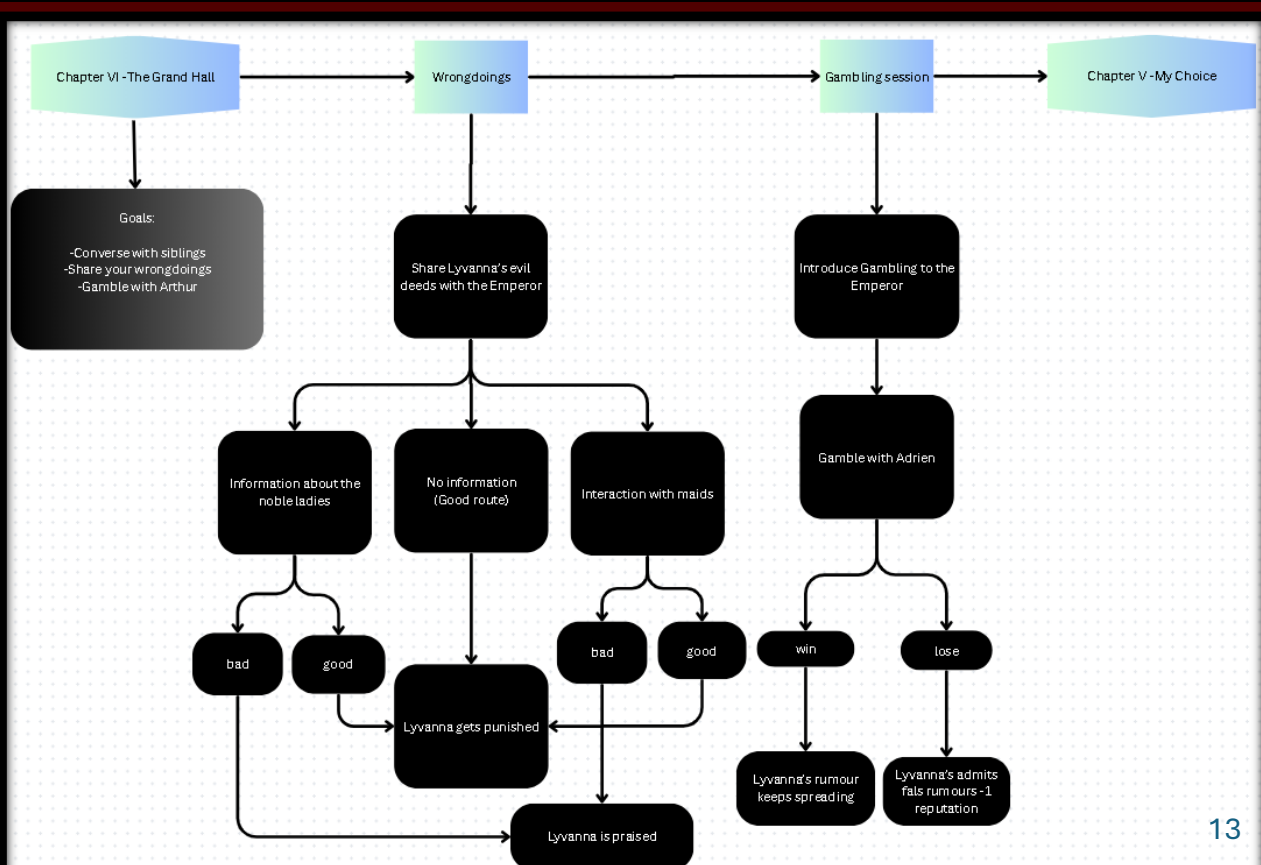
Chapter 4-The Grand Hall

Lyvanna enters the grand hall to join the emperor and his children, where tension is palpable. She arrives late, prompting a stern rebuke from the emperor, to which she responds calmly, apologizing for her delay due to important family matters. Her brother, Prince Arthur, confronts her with accusations of treachery, but Lyvanna dismisses the rumors, suggesting they settle the issue quickly before it worsens.

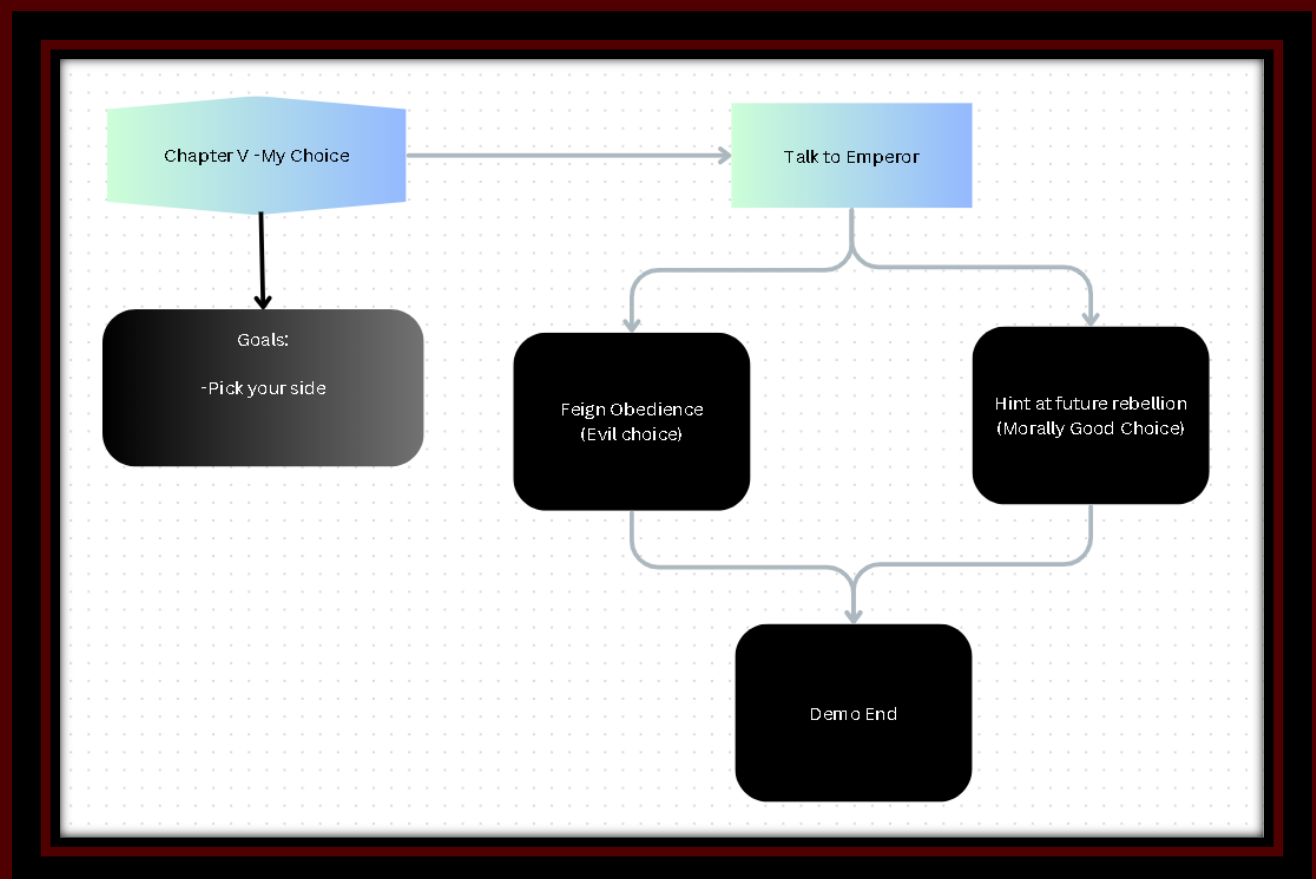
The emperor intervenes, ordering them to focus on their reports. Lyvanna, however, takes a bold approach by proposing a "game of chance," where the stakes are everything—wealth, status, and even life itself. The emperor, intrigued, asks for details, and Lyvanna hints at the game's high-risk nature.

Arthur, seizing the opportunity, challenges Lyvanna to a wager: if she wins, the rumors will end, but if she loses, she must publicly confess her deceit. Lyvanna warns him that he may have nothing left to wager. The emperor allows the challenge, adding that if Lyvanna entertains him, she will be permitted to make the game public, with severe consequences if she fails.

A brief flashback of Lyvanna being punished highlights the high stakes of her involvement in this dangerous gamble. Despite the risks, Lyvanna agrees, signaling the start of a high-stakes game that will test her cunning and composure. Winning the game reinforces Lyvanna's reputation as a clever and dangerous adversary, while losing forces her to confront the consequences of her actions.



Lyvanna is the last sibling remaining at the table after the gambling session. The atmosphere is heavy with tension as the emperor speaks to her privately. He acknowledges her composure during the day's trials but presses her with a stern question: is she truly ready to do whatever it takes to secure her place in the family—and possibly on the throne? His words suggest he's testing her resolve, pointing out her silence and obedience, which he despises as weakness. The reincarnate is then faced with a crucial choice: either pledge loyalty to the emperor or subtly hint at the possibility of rebellion. This decision shapes the emperor's perception of Lyvanna and sets the stage for future conflict within the family. As Lyvanna reflects internally on whether to feign loyalty or start her ascent to power, the screen fades to black.



Basic Movement

WASD -Movement of player

Mouse- Look around

F-Shapeshift

E-Interact

R-Check Reputation Meter

Gameplay Mechanics:

- **Exploration and Interaction:** Players control Lyvanna as she navigates her castle and interacts with NPCs to learn more about her character's backstory. Exploration is pivotal, allowing players to uncover hidden motives, secrets, and power structures within the castle. Lyvanna is also able to pick up and inspect items for more context. Players can freely explore Lyvanna's castle and the surrounding court, uncovering secrets about the Leonore family's past through interactions and hidden lore. NPC interactions reveal past relationships and provide insight into Lyvanna's complex role as a noblewoman and "villainess."
- **Choice and Consequence:** Decisions impact Lyvanna's reputation, altering her relationships with other characters and affecting how NPCs perceive her. Choices may also unlock new storyline branches, leading to different outcomes that reflect the player's chosen path for Lyvanna—whether one of redemption or ruthlessness.
- **Mini-Games:** Stealth mini-game where Lyvanna shapeshifts into a crow to spy on adversaries, add variety and emphasize the game's espionage and secrecy theme. Other potential mini-games might include conversational gambits at social gatherings, where players must navigate hidden rivalries.
- **Reputation System:** Each dialogue and action taken affects Lyvanna's reputation among the nobles and staff, subtly influencing future events and interactions. Choosing empathetic responses can increase Lyvanna's standing with the servants, while calculated ruthlessness might inspire respect or fear among the nobles. The reputation system shapes NPC reactions, determining potential allies or enemies as Lyvanna maneuvers through Wisteria's web of power.
- **Gambling Minigame:** The game includes a high-stakes gambling mechanic where players compete by placing a combination of ravens—gold, silver, and bronze—onto a scale without exceeding a weight limit of 10 grams. Each raven type has a specific weight and hierarchical strength, with gold outranking silver, and silver outranking bronze. After matching weights, players enter a betting phase, wagering chips until one player calls. At the reveal, the player with the stronger hand wins the round and the wagered chips. The game continues until a player runs out of chips, encouraging strategic weight management and bluffing.

1. Gambling Minigame

Starting Kit:

Both players start with 3 differently coloured ravens, a scale, and 20 chips to bet.

The ravens can be bronze, silver and gold. The order of strength is gold>silver>bronze, no matter the amount. No amount of silver ravens can beat 1 gold raven, and no number of bronze ravens can beat a silver raven. Every player starts with:

3x gold ravens -> 1 gold raven weighs 3g

5x silver ravens -> 1 silver raven weighs 2g

15x bronze ravens -> 1 bronze weighs is 1g

Initial Placement:

The first player places a combination of ravens on the scale, ensuring the total weight does not exceed 6g. The second player must match the weight. The weight is now revealed, but the type of ravens placed are not.

Weight Reveal:

Once Player 1 has placed their raven combination, the total weight is revealed to Player 2. At this point in time, Player 1 is NOT allowed to change their combination. After Player 2 makes their combination, the game starts- the types of ravens used remain hidden.

Betting Phase:

Players start with a minimum bet of 3 chips.

Players take turns raising their bets. They can choose to call or raise.

The betting continues until one player calls the final bet.

Reveal and Win:

Upon calling, both players reveal their ravens.

The player with the stronger combination wins the round and takes all the chips wagered.

The Ravens are then hidden and the game continues. This adds an element of memory strategy to win.

Continued Play:

Players continue to play rounds until one player has no chips left to wager.

Ravens:

Each raven can be used only once per game, emphasizing strategic placement and betting.

Strategy Tips

Weight Management: Be mindful of your weight when placing ravens; don't exceed the limit, and consider how your opponent might react.

Bluffing: Use your bets to mislead your opponent about the strength of your ravens.

Observe Betting Patterns: Pay attention to how your opponent bets; it can give clues about the strength of their hand.

2. Detection Meter

The **Detection Meter** serves as a tension-building mechanic during key dialogue sequences. As the meter fills, it indicates that Lyvanna's behavior is becoming increasingly suspicious. If it reaches the red threshold, the conversation is abruptly cut off, introducing stakes and urgency. This system encourages players to carefully consider their dialogue choices, adding a strategic layer to social interactions.

3. Crow Shapeshifting Mechanic

Players can **shapeshift into a crow**, enabling stealth-based gameplay. This mechanic allows access to restricted areas, environmental traversal from alternative perspectives, and eavesdropping on NPC conversations. It provides narrative and gameplay depth by offering a non-intrusive method of information gathering and exploration.

4. Item Interaction System

Players can **interact with a range of objects** in the environment, which are categorized as:

- **UI-based interactions**
- **Sequence-triggered interactions**
- **Inspection-based interactions**

These interactions trigger narrative events, environmental changes, or unlock additional UI elements. Item interactivity promotes environmental storytelling and enhances player agency. The system has been designed for modularity and reusability, with scalability in mind for future expansion under time constraints.

5. Dynamic Audio System

The sound system enhances immersion by using **custom events and functions** to control background music and ambient audio. Built-in functions such as **Play, Pause, Resume, and Stop**, with fade-in/out transitions, allow smooth control over musical cues and emotional shifts between scenes. Audio feedback also plays a role in gameplay, signaling danger, success, or narrative transitions.

6. AI Spline Systems

AI movement for animals and NPCs is handled using **spline-based systems**, creating the illusion of a dynamic, lived-in world. These AI paths contribute to the realism of the environment and are especially relevant during stealth segments, where Lyvanna (in crow form) must observe unnoticed. The system enhances environmental storytelling and spatial awareness.

7. Environmental Interactables

Key environmental objects such as **bookshelves, doors, and collision-triggered objects**, can be interacted with or manipulated to reveal hidden paths, secrets, or trigger narrative events. These objects form the backbone of exploration and puzzle-solving mechanics.

8. Dynamic Fog System

A custom **Blueprint-driven fog system** adds atmospheric tension and visual depth. This **dynamic fog** changes shape and placement contextually, enhancing stealth gameplay and emotional tone in key areas. It serves as both a visual guide and a mood-setting tool, especially in scenes involving secrecy or danger.

9. Quest System Integration

The game's **quest structure** is built using **Epic's Narrative 3 plugin**, supporting both main and side quest functionality. Tasks are developed as modular Blueprint scripts and assigned to quests using the plugin's framework. These quests are contextually triggered based on:

- Player proximity
- Environmental interactions
- Narrative progression

Implemented quest types include:

- Navigating to key locations
- Locating hidden objects

- Discovering points of interest within proximity

This system allows players to explore the story in a nonlinear way while ensuring progression and engagement through structured goals.

Level Design

2D Top-Down Layout Planning

Initial Structural Layout

The level design process began with **2D top-down layouts** of the castle and surrounding areas. These early drafts focused on establishing a logical, navigable structure that felt authentic to the game's setting. Key considerations included:

- **Functional spatial flow** (hallways, courtyards, chambers)
- **Accessibility of story-relevant areas**
- **Visual and narrative landmarks** to aid orientation

Each section was carefully placed to simulate a real, lived-in space while allowing for optimized player movement and exploration.

Gameplay Element Integration

The second iteration of the layout incorporated core **gameplay mechanics** and **narrative triggers**:

- Placement of **NPC interactions**
- Locations for **UI-based events and interactables**
- Defined **player pathing** to guide movement without linear restriction

This stage ensured that environmental design aligned with player progression and narrative beats, creating a cohesive and rewarding player journey.

Pacing & Audio Design

A third layout was produced to plan **pacing and environmental storytelling elements**, such as:

- **Audio triggers** to build atmosphere (e.g., creaking doors, distant whispers)
- **Gameplay and cutscene transitions** placed at natural breaking points
- **Camera trigger volumes** to ensure cinematic flow during key moments

This blueprint helped control tension and rhythm, ensuring a dynamic experience throughout each scene.

Visual and Architectural Research

Before asset creation, I curated an extensive **reference board using Milanote**, combining:

- **Architectural imagery** of European castles and aristocratic estates
- **Moodboards** for lighting and color palettes
- **Visual themes** blending historical realism with subtle fantasy

This research guided the final aesthetic, striking a balance between grounded realism and the magical tone of the game's narrative world.

Final Environment Design

With foundational plans and visual style established, I began building out the final levels in-engine. Key areas were expanded and refined to reflect both functionality and lore-rich storytelling:

- **The Garden**
A narrative-critical space used for the **tea party scene**, the garden combines scenic tranquility with high social tension. It functions as both a player choice environment and a subtle tutorial in social reputation systems.
- **The Servants' Quarters**
Designed to contrast the opulence of the main castle, these spaces reflect class division and provide an opportunity for world-building through ambient storytelling and dialogue.
- **Interior Rooms and Secret Passages**
Each room includes multiple interaction points and environmental cues. Hidden corridors and locked areas reward exploration and serve as puzzle or stealth components depending on the player's chosen path.

Design Principles and Intentions

Throughout the level design process, I remained focused on the following core goals:

- **Narrative Integration:** Environments support and reflect the character arcs and evolving storylines.
- **Player Freedom:** Levels are semi-linear with optional paths and secrets, enabling varying play styles.
- **Atmospheric Immersion:** Each space is crafted with lighting, sound, and layout choices that evoke a specific mood, whether mystery, danger, or serenity.

User Interface Concepts

The User Interface (UI) design in *The Beauty and the Blade* prioritizes immersion, readability, and thematic consistency with the game's narrative tone. All interface elements were designed to maintain player immersion while ensuring clarity of interaction and accessibility across supported platforms.

The Main Menu acts as the player's first point of contact with the game. It sets the tone through ambient music, animated UI elements, and a background scene taken from a key in-game location.

Features:

- **Start New Game / Continue:** Starts a new playthrough or resumes progress.
- **Load Game:** Allows players to select from previously saved game slots.
- **Settings:** Includes options for audio, graphics, keybindings, and accessibility.
- **Credits:** Lists contributors and studios involved.
- **Exit:** Closes the game and returns to the desktop or main console menu.

Design Considerations:

- The UI uses a minimalist layout with ornate framing to match the gothic-fantasy aesthetic.
- Buttons feature subtle animations and sound feedback to reinforce interactivity.
- The camera slowly pans across a castle interior or garden scene to introduce atmosphere.

Pause Menu

The Pause Menu allows players to halt gameplay and access essential features without disrupting narrative immersion.

Features:

- **Resume:** Unpauses the game and returns to gameplay.
- **Quit to Main Menu:** Returns the player to the title screen.

Design Considerations:

- Semi-transparent backdrop to keep the player grounded in the current environment.

- Pausing fades out music slightly and introduces a soft ambient tone to indicate the break in flow.
- Menu navigation is controller and keyboard/mouse friendly.

Platforms/Specifications

Target Platform:

- PC (Windows)

Engine:

- Unreal Engine 5

Minimum System Requirements (Target):

- OS: Windows 10
- CPU: Intel i5 / AMD Ryzen 5
- GPU: GTX 1060 or equivalent
- RAM: 8 GB
- Storage: 10 GB

Recommended Specs:

- OS: Windows 10/11
- CPU: Intel i7 / AMD Ryzen 7
- GPU: RTX 2060 or higher
- RAM: 16 GB
- Storage: SSD with 10+ GB free

Control Schemes:

- Mouse and Keyboard
- Gamepad (Xbox/PlayStation)

Accessibility:

- Subtitles
- Color-blind friendly palette
- Scalable UI elements (for future implementation)

HUD (Heads-Up Display)

The HUD is designed to be **diegetic and minimalist**, fading in only when necessary to maintain immersion.

HUD Elements Include:

- **Dialogue Interaction Meter (Detection Meter):** Appears during conversations, reflecting how suspicious Lyvanna's behavior is.
- **Quest Notifications:** Pops up briefly to inform the player of new objectives or progress.
- **Contextual Prompts:** Displayed when the player approaches an interactable (e.g., "Inspect", "Pick Up", "Open Door").
- **Shapeshifting Indicator:** Displays when Lyvanna transforms into a crow, with a small icon and duration tracker if applicable.
- **Inventory Access:** A subtle icon opens the inventory menu or journal.

Design Considerations:

- All elements are styled to fit the game's visual identity: ornate borders, calligraphic fonts, and muted gold highlights.
- HUD elements appear dynamically, staying hidden unless active.
- Designed with modularity in mind to allow easy expansion for future mechanics.