

Narrative Design Reviews & Proposals SELINI

This document will cover narrative elements to be modified, added, or removed related to gameplay and level design. It will also describe the complete flow of the game from A to Z for each level.

General Scenario: *We are in an era where the world struggles against an unknown form of extraterrestrial corruption. The AI has become hostile toward humans and creatures, except for clones. You play as a clone assigned a task after escaping from a science-fiction industrial facility controlled by the AI. Find a way to escape corruption and destroy this AI without being caught by corrupted law enforcement.*

DARK METROPOLIS

PITCH : The universe of Dark Metropolis takes place in an industrial facility controlled by an AI. The AI has become dangerous and hostile due to corruption. The game begins when the AI wakes you up and assigns you a specific task.

Scene 01 : 2 corrections

When the player begins the game, they are immediately immersed in a bluish universe, among other individuals similar to them: clones.

Correction : *It would have been interesting to see some of them in the background so that the player understands that the other clones are corrupted and that they are the only one free to move.*

Correction : *One may also wonder why this clone escaped the programming of the others and is free to move? This could be justified with a cutscene showing a robot programming the player so they can move. At the moment the robot approaches, the player starts running, thus beginning the adventure of our clone!*

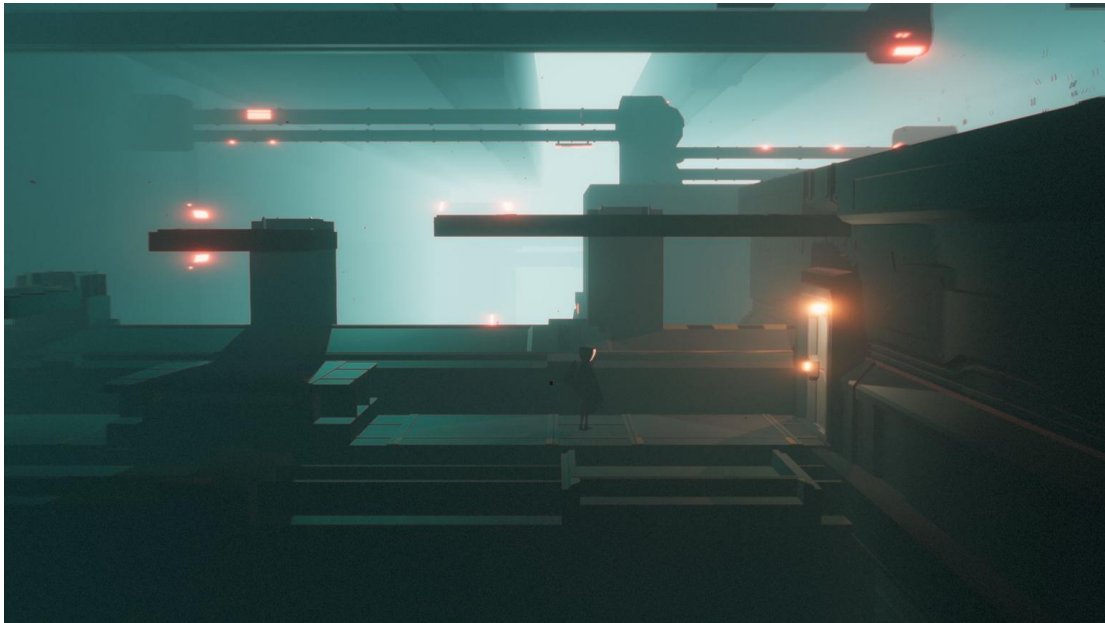


Right away, the player faces the first gameplay mechanic: interacting with the opening of a first door.

Scene 02 : 3 corrections

The player discovers a new place that requires the use of a second mechanic: jumping. The jump allows them to progress in the story.

Correction: *I noticed there was a door below. This door is not available at the start of the game. The player has to come back later to open it. This represents a big risk in this kind of game as it can easily cause players to lose interest. This is known as BackTracking. It would be better to avoid it here and place the door further along in the game, ideally near the sword. When I played, I did not always understand that I had to go back, especially since this mechanic is already used by the double jump to access new rooms. It is preferable not to overuse this mechanic, otherwise players risk getting frustrated, even if the intention is to make the game closer to a Metroidvania.*



Then, as they continue, the player encounters multiple possible paths. Starting with the lower path, it leads to an open door. The player can interact with a locker containing an unlocking card. From a gameplay perspective this is a great idea. However, narratively speaking, it is unclear why there is a locker in the middle of the level.

Correction: *It would be more interesting if this card was found on the body of a fallen clone, or stolen during a chase in a room. This way, the player would face their first real challenge and risk in the game, introducing a first level of difficulty. Since the player already has the jump ability, they can use it to escape quickly.*

Continuing to the right, the player realizes they need a new mechanic because the door requires a double jump that can only be unlocked in another world. Here, the backtracking element makes sense. It shows the player that there are reasons to return to previous places, reinforcing the Metroidvania structure.

Taking the upper path instead leads to a platform mechanism that cannot be reached without the sword to collect a fossil. In the game, the fossil's purpose is unclear both narratively and in terms of gameplay.

Correction: *It would be better if the player could combine three fossils into a collection. This collection could then open a door requiring all three fossils. The player should therefore understand that these items are combinable. It would be necessary to add a combining mechanic in the inventory.*

Scene 03 : 2 corrections

After passing through the door, the player discovers an open area where they encounter their first enemies: drones. When hit by a drone, the player disintegrates and restarts at the last checkpoint.

***Correction:** Regarding checkpoints, it would be better if the player activated them with the interaction button, because currently it is unclear where the respawn point will be. The checkpoint could take the form of a generator, similar to the lamps in Little Nightmares.*

The drones present in this part of the level have no clear origin or controller from a narrative perspective.

***Correction:** Placing a passive character in the background under the arch, controlling them, could help explain their presence.*



The player then unlocks a door using the badge collected earlier, granting access to the next room.

Scene 04 : 1 correction

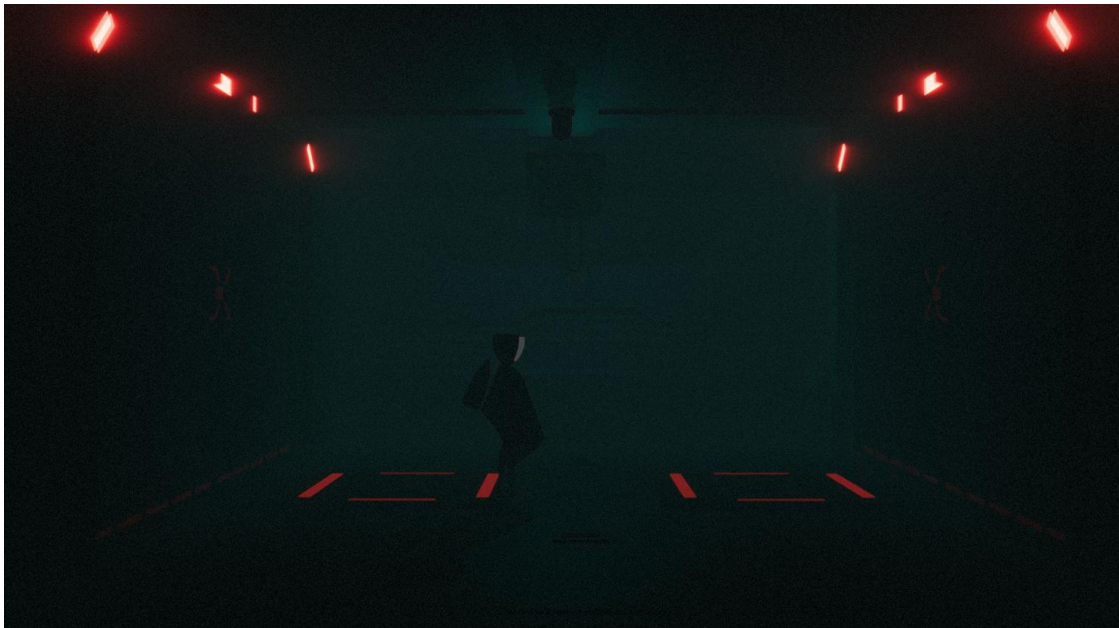
In the following room, there is a plant that the player can only interact with once they have obtained the sword. I noticed that players can sometimes get lost after this point.

***Correction:** When the player interacts with the plant, it could summon a companion such as a firefly. This firefly would occasionally appear to help guide the player. It would not stay permanently, but its presence would bring emotional value while also helping beginners. For example, the first time it appears, the firefly moves to the right, indicating the path forward. This is not a gameplay-changing mechanic but adds emotion and guidance. The firefly would reappear in multiple worlds later on.*



Scene 05 : 0 correction

The player discovers a new platforming mechanic: a platform that moves only when the player stands on it, opening the path forward. When stepping onto a second platform, another passage opens to allow progression.



Scene 06 : 0 correction

Moving to the right, the player finds a sword locked inside a structure that requires a 4-digit code to unlock. At the end of the corridor is a locked door. The player must return to the cube to access the elevated passage.

Scene 07 : 2 corrections

The clone finds a room where a robot manipulates another clone. This robot provides the code to unlock the sword: 1985.

Correction: The code could instead be 1984 as a reference to George Orwell's famous dystopian novel. The book, inspired by Nazism and totalitarian regimes, ties into the game's metaphorical context of WWII and authoritarian control. This small reference would strongly resonate with players aware of the novel. It would also reinforce the idea that clones are exploited and that the player's character is a fugitive. The historical parallel gives depth to the narrative.



Correction : One question arises: Why does the robot give the code to the clone? Why deactivate the others? If the robot is corrupted, it should not be helping the player since corruption controls the AI. It would be better to build tension: before drones appear to eliminate the robot, a bright spotlight shines insistently on it. This forces the player to grab the weapon quickly and escape. When the player later returns, the robot is lifeless.

To the right, the player realizes they must move a cube to reach the upper platform. Though the double jump may seem like a solution, it is not intended here. Now with the code, the player can return to unlock the sword. Once equipped, the sword grants a new mechanic: attack. This allows the player to strike, move objects, and defeat enemies.

Scene 08 : 2 corrections

Once the player has the sword, they realize they can extinguish lights. The purpose of this is unclear.

Correction: Earlier, there was a yellow-lit door that could not be opened. Combine this door with the light mechanic: extinguishing a set number of lights opens it. The first time the player interacts, a UI objective appears: "Extinguish 6 lights" (some doubles) to unlock the door.



Later, when backtracking, the player finds a switch and gondola. However, it is not obvious that the sword must be used to activate it.

Correction: Any objects requiring the sword should glow yellow (the same color as the sword). This color coding could be extended: red lights mean doors unlocked by passes, white lights indicate open doors.



Scene 09 : 1 correction

After opening the door, the player descends into a bunker with more light-based puzzles.



***Correction :** Place another yellow-lit door here to reinforce the mechanic, instead of forcing players to break random lights. This time, destroying 9 lights opens the door. Changing light colors could add variety. Otherwise, repetition may bore players. With practice, breaking lights becomes a reflex, avoiding excessive backtracking.*



Scene 10 : 1 correction

Once inside, the player enters a large wooden structure, blocked by debris. It becomes clear that a bomb is needed to proceed. To obtain it, they must go up and discover a new screw-lift gondola mechanic. The player must hit the mechanism to move the gondola.

***Correction:** Adding a yellow glow to the screw mechanism would clarify that it must be struck. Alternatively, a background clone could demonstrate the action, teaching the player indirectly.*

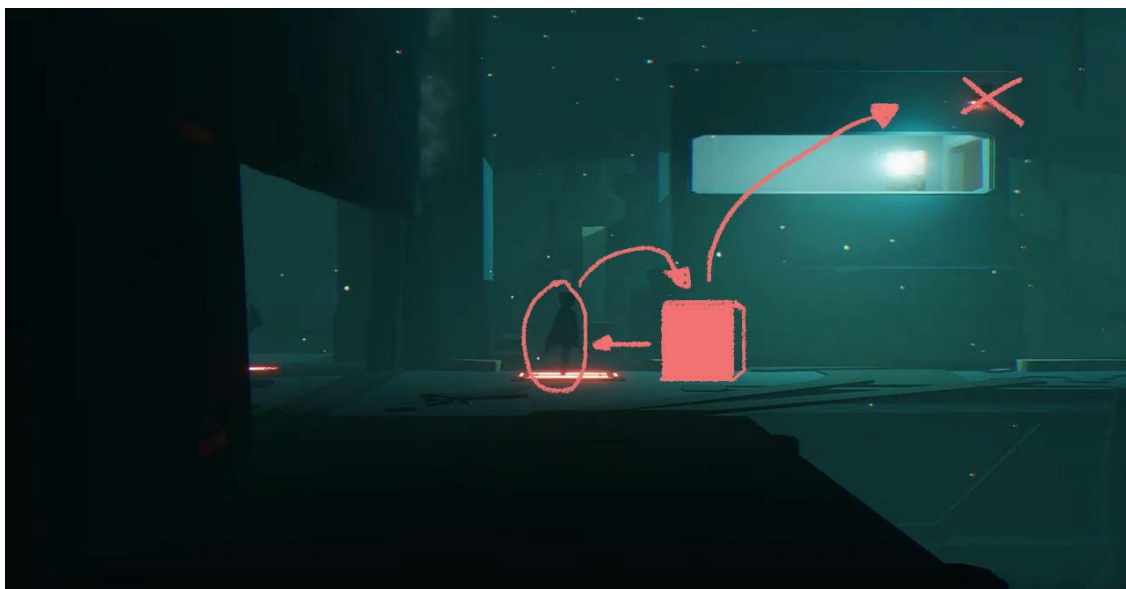


Eventually, the player reaches a shooting-range type room with a bomb to destroy the blockade. After placing it and clearing the way, they descend into the ruins and access a new unlocked door.

Scene 11 : 1 correction

The player enters a control room with a camera tracking their movements and a pressure plate for opening the bunker door.

Correction: Adding a cube here would allow the player to destroy the camera, introducing a new mechanic. Staying in front of a corrupted camera for more than 6 seconds alerts corrupted armies, summoning drones or other enemies. The presence of cameras also recalls Orwell's "Big Brother is watching you," further reinforcing the 1984 theme.

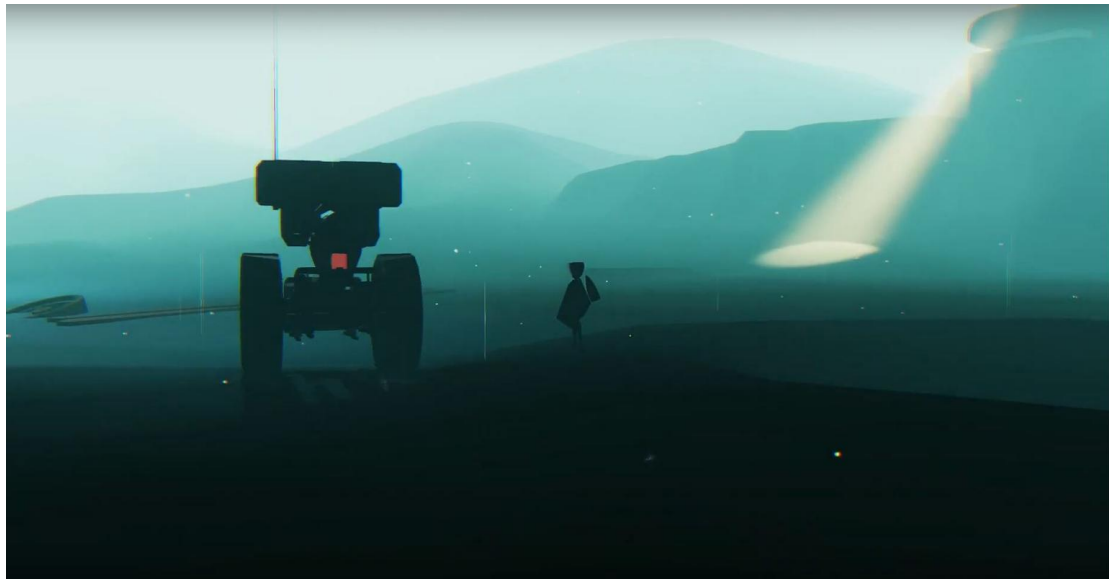


Scene 12 : 0 correction

Narratively, this is a powerful and beautiful scene: controlled clones line up on a pressure plate, and the player joins them. When they step onto the plate, the massive door ahead opens. No corrections needed.

Scene 13 : 1 correction

When the door opens, the player faces their first tough enemy: a corrupted gunner firing a destructive red laser.



The machine rotates toward the player, firing with a relatively low rate, giving the player time to dodge. A red mark on its back recalls the mark seen earlier on the blockade, hinting at using a bomb to defeat it. A fighter plane also crashes at this moment, setting up its later reappearance. Additionally, a ground drone rushes at the player, defeatable after several sword hits.

***Correction:** This extra enemy feels unnecessary here. It should either appear earlier in the game or be removed for better pacing.*

Scene 14 : 0 correction

The player then encounters the crashed plane again and saves its corrupted pilot, before moving into trenches. Soon, they face their first boss: a WWII-style tank reminiscent of Normandy. Defeating it grants the Energy Collector (details in the production document), which introduces new mechanics like powering energy doors. The player reaches a crossroads: the right path leads to a port with a boat, the left to a heliport with a drone. With the drone, the player can reach both the FOREST and the OLD CITY (landing outside, then entering on foot). However, the player will first go to the FOREST to acquire the double jump, then to the OLD CITY to obtain the pistol.