

*Thief*

# A modern retelling (redesign) of a stealth classic

*My Role: UX/UI and Game Designer, Researcher*

# THIEF

New game

> **Settings** 

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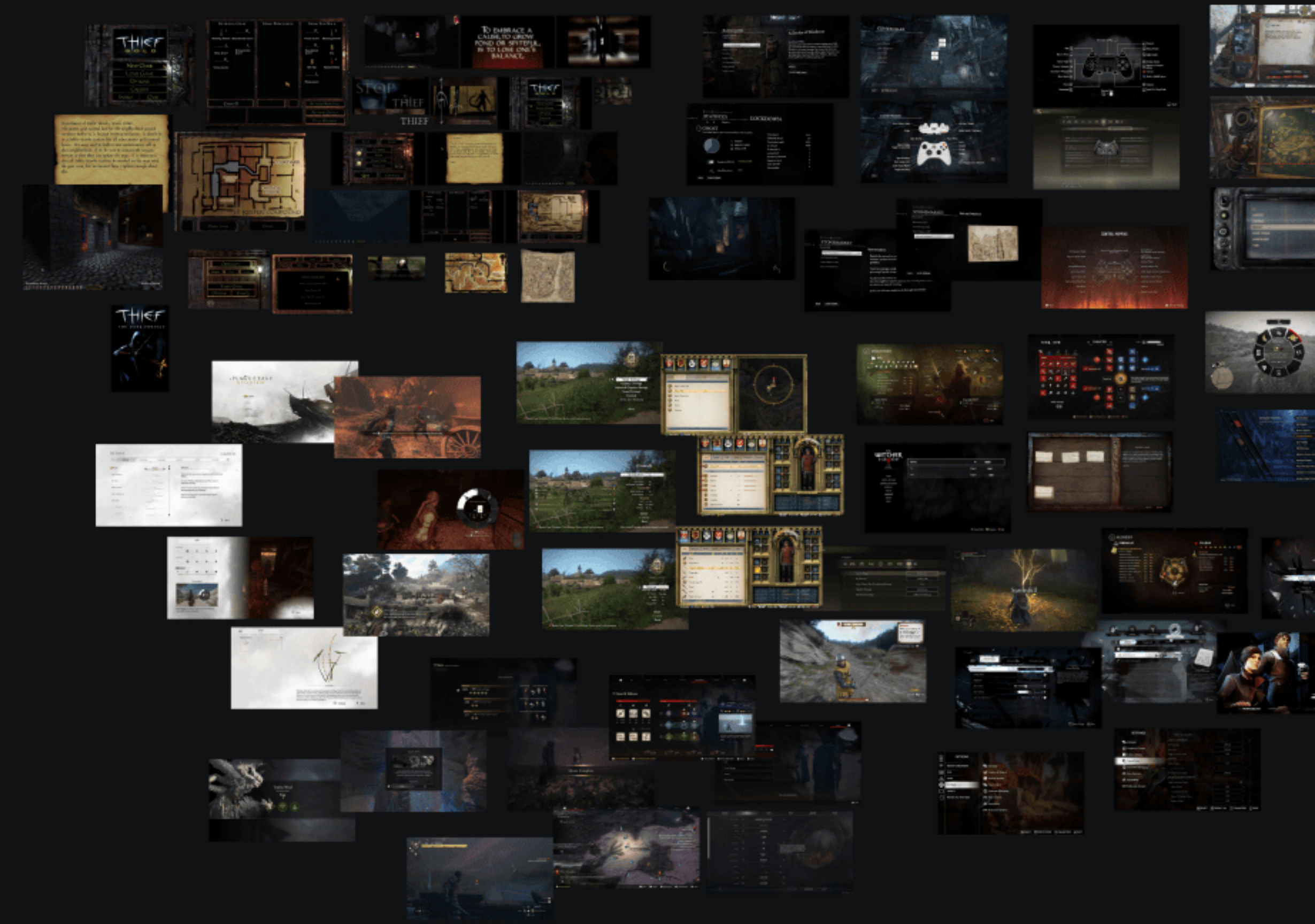
Exit

*“Thief is a retelling of the original trilogy as a series of modern immersive stealth games set in a rich, and persistent world.*

*You play as Garrett, a talented thief earning a living by taking on jobs to acquire rare and precious items. And you must use every tool at your disposal to remain invisible — from your observation and listening skills, to the environment and the tools you employ. But above all is the knowledge you uncover which opens up new possibilities for your creativity.*

*The City is itself a vibrant and living world, blending elements of medieval and gothic fantasy, steampunk, and the supernatural. It is an enigmatic place, with a long history and many secrets to tell — and one that’s uninterested in Garrett’s existence...”*

# Historical and market research



## Insights from player research

“Few games engage my **ears** nearly as much as my eyes. This is one of the hallmarks of a Thief game.”

“The city and it’s people exist independently from Garrett. And that makes for such a cool narrative result.”

“The limited info you get in T1-2 is part of why the atmosphere is so cool. You are forced to use your other senses, or fill in the blanks with your imagination.”

“Combat is the worst part of the game. Not just because its clunky, but because it’s way more satisfying to just sneak past people.”

“The freedom to choose how I can solve a challenge is something I love about the original games.”

“I love that so much of the game is about learning secret things that aren’t related to thieving.”

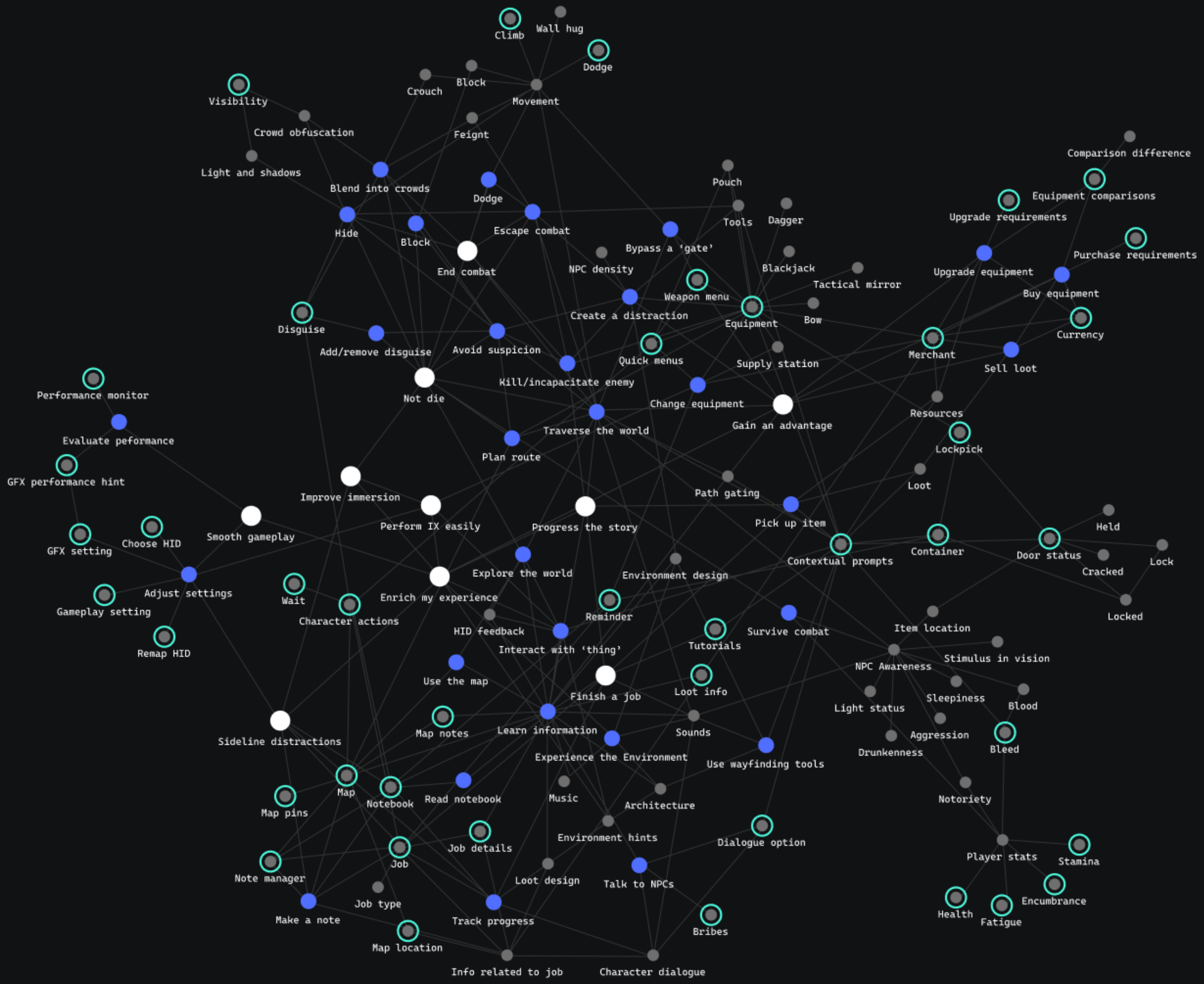
“Using gates to layer access really helps the world feel more interesting.”

“Thief 4 constantly breaks my immersion by taking away my control (of Garrett, of the story, of...).”

(more later...)

## **Core design tenets**

- 1. Keep the player in the world as much as possible**
- 2. Force the player to work off imperfect information**
- 3. Sound drives the storytelling**
- 4. Either it's valuable, or it doesn't exist**
- 5. Every screen is an opportunity for enriching the player experience**



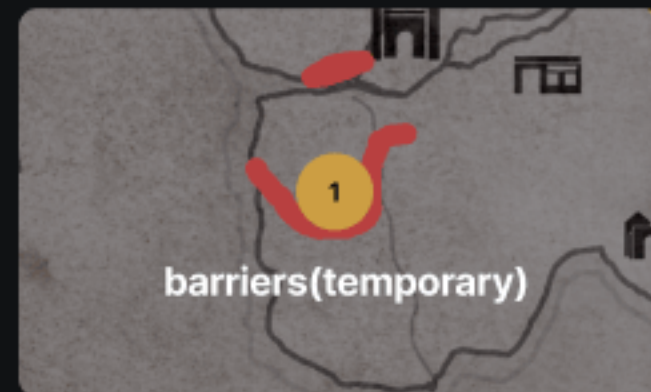
# Mapping goals, behaviors, and mechanics

- Goal (facilitates a real player benefit)
- Behavior
- Mechanism
- has UI Touchpoint

# Opening Sequence (player onboarding)

## Scene 1. Garrett's home

It's evening. Garrett has to pay rent soon and has a potential job. He needs to meet Cutty at the Old Quarter Tavern.



### What is learned

Look

Move

Interact

Interaction signifiers

Travel to place to get info

## Scene 2. The City

Outside, Garrett uses his map and environment to navigate to his destination. He suggests that running could get there faster.



### What is learned

Time of day

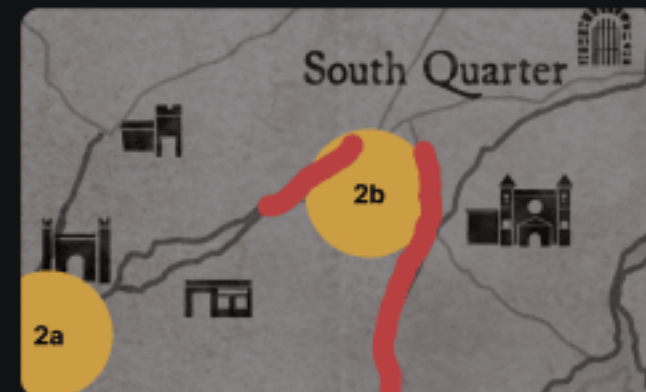
In-game navigation

Character actions

Map

Running

The South Quarter square is obstructed with a theatrical event. Garrett needs to get around the obstacles to continue.

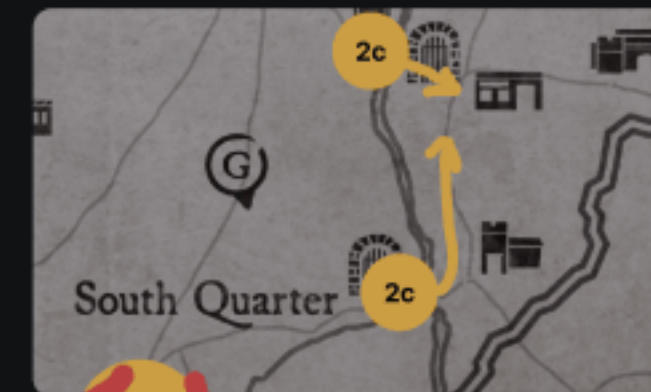


Jump

Scale

Climb

Garrett passes a pack of City Watchmen at the bridge. Garret explains threat, and time-of-day mechanics.



Identify threats

Notoriety

Danger areas

Frisking

## Scene 3. Old Quarter Tavern

Cutty tells Garrett that Reynard (an art collector) has a new statue. Reynard is also at the tavern, and Garrett must follow him to find his home.



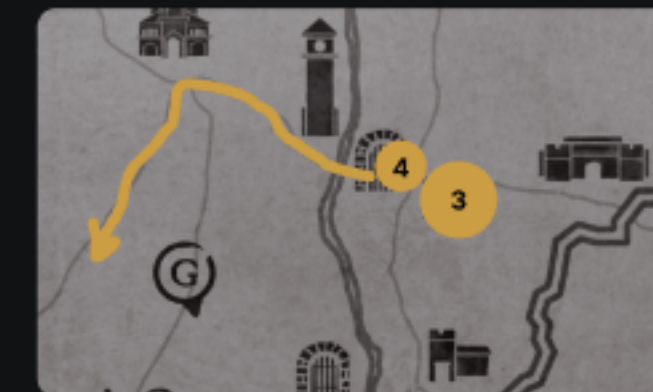
### What is learned

Info via objects, conversation

Contextual look

## Scene 4. Following Reynard

It's now night. Garrett follows Reynard back to his home, using stealth mechanics to avoid being detected.



### What is learned

Disguise

Visibility/light

Crouch/noise

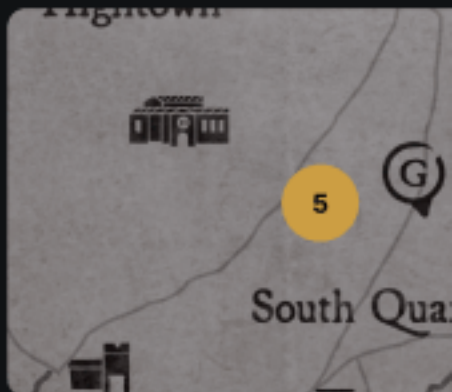
Hug surface

Bow/water arrows

Time of day (night)

## Scene 5. The Jackberry

Garrett breaks into Reynard's home to steal The Jackberry statue, and needs to use his thieving and stealth skills to succeed.



### What is learned

Lockpicking

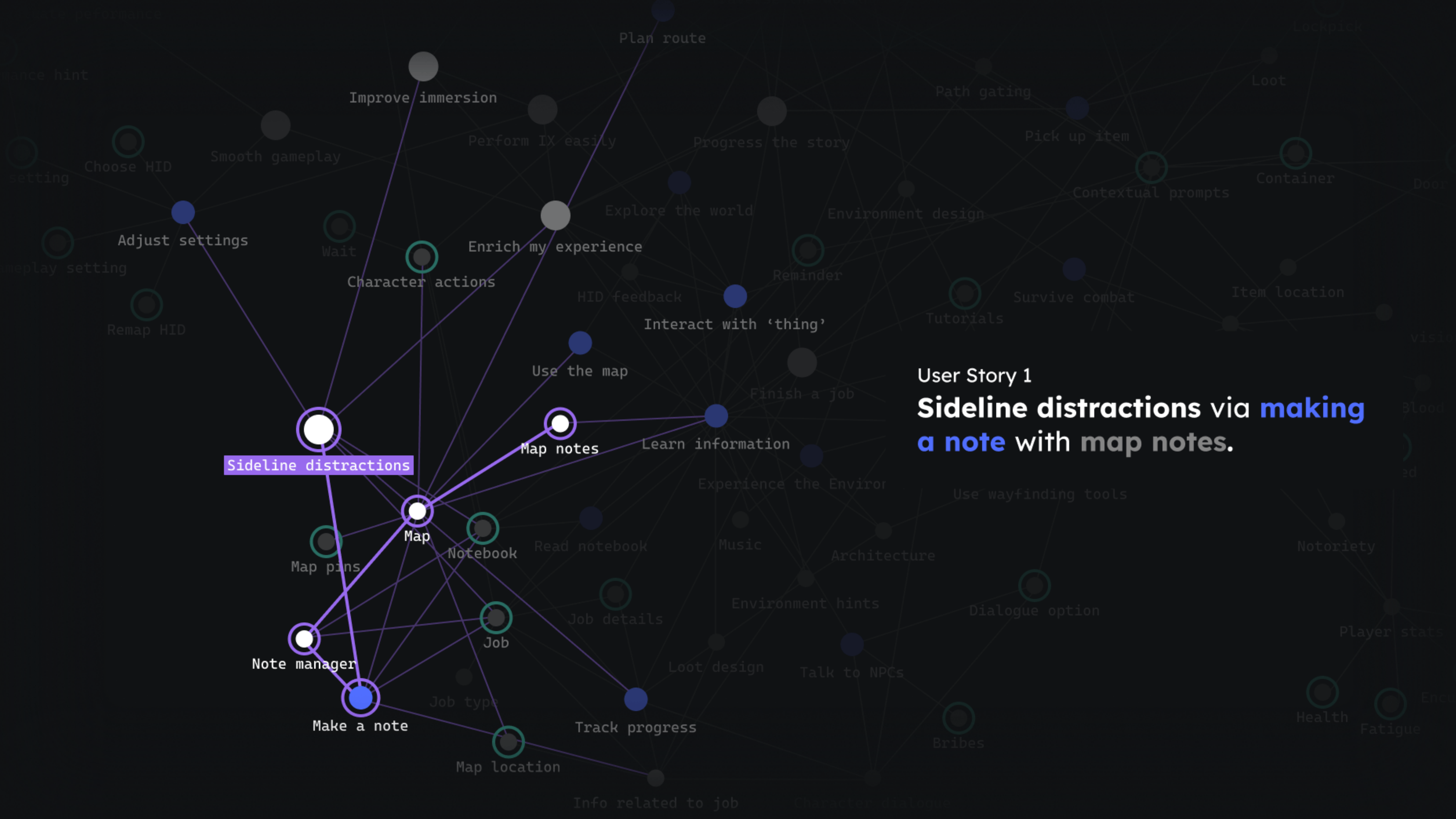
Object states

Granular door actions

Combat (if caught)

(Garrett's natural proclivity to provide commentary allows him to help tutorialize/onboard players in a natural way.)





Sideline distractions

User Story 1  
**Sideline distractions via making a note with map notes.**

Note manager

Make a note

Map

Notebook

Job

Map location

Track progress

Map notes

Learn information

Interact with 'thing'

Use the map

Enrich my experience

Character actions

Adjust settings

Improve immersion

Plan route

User Story 1  
**Sideline distractions via making a note with map notes.**

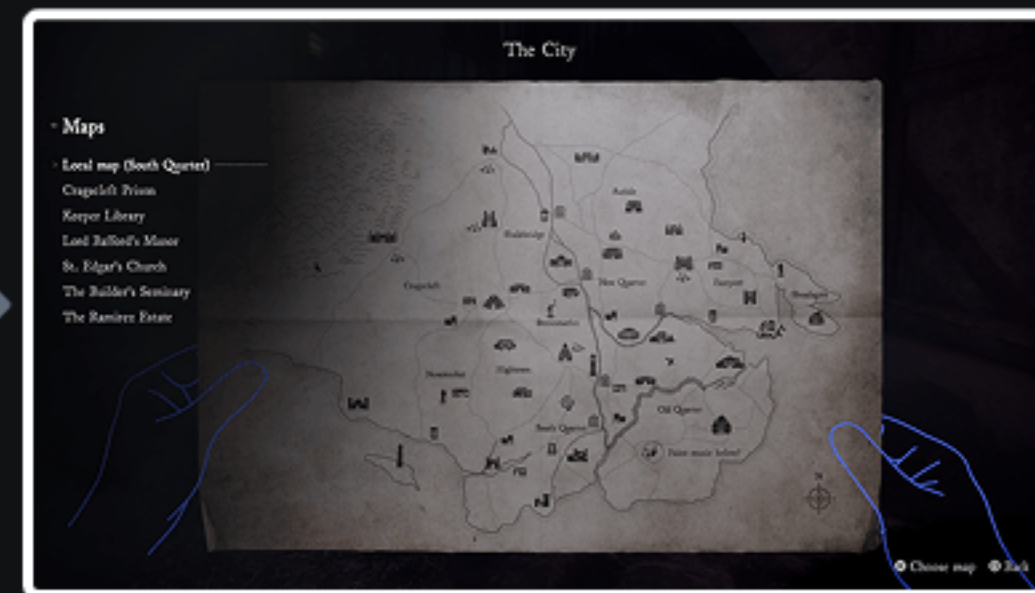
# Using the map (flow)



Use character actions menu, and choose map option



View map



Choose map

Quick swap (local/city map)

Choose found map

Add note

Delete note (if noted focused)

Look around map (cursor)



Look view



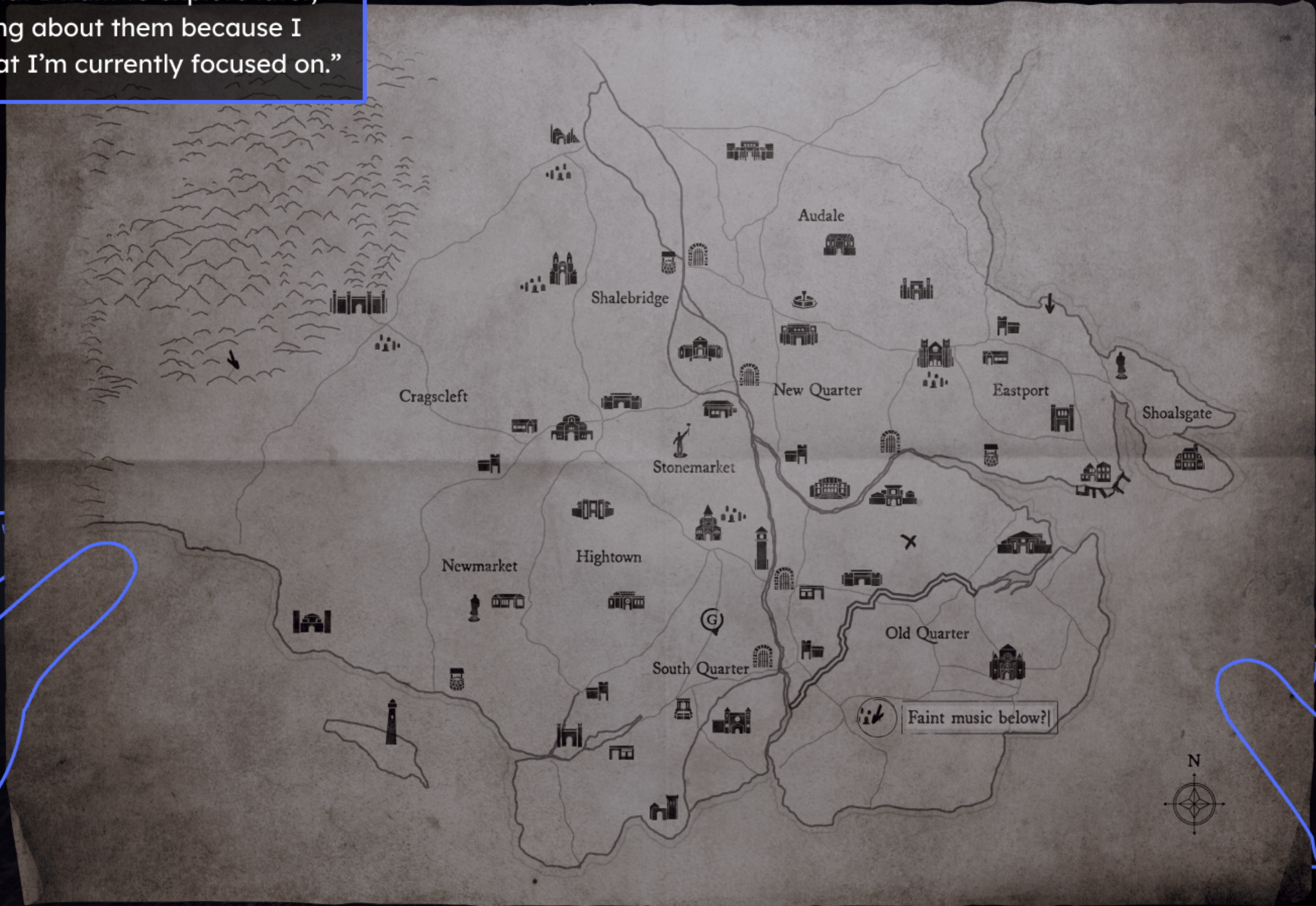
Choose map

Put away map

### Player insight

“I often find things that I want to explore later, but I end up forgetting about them because I get distracted by what I’m currently focused on.”

## The City

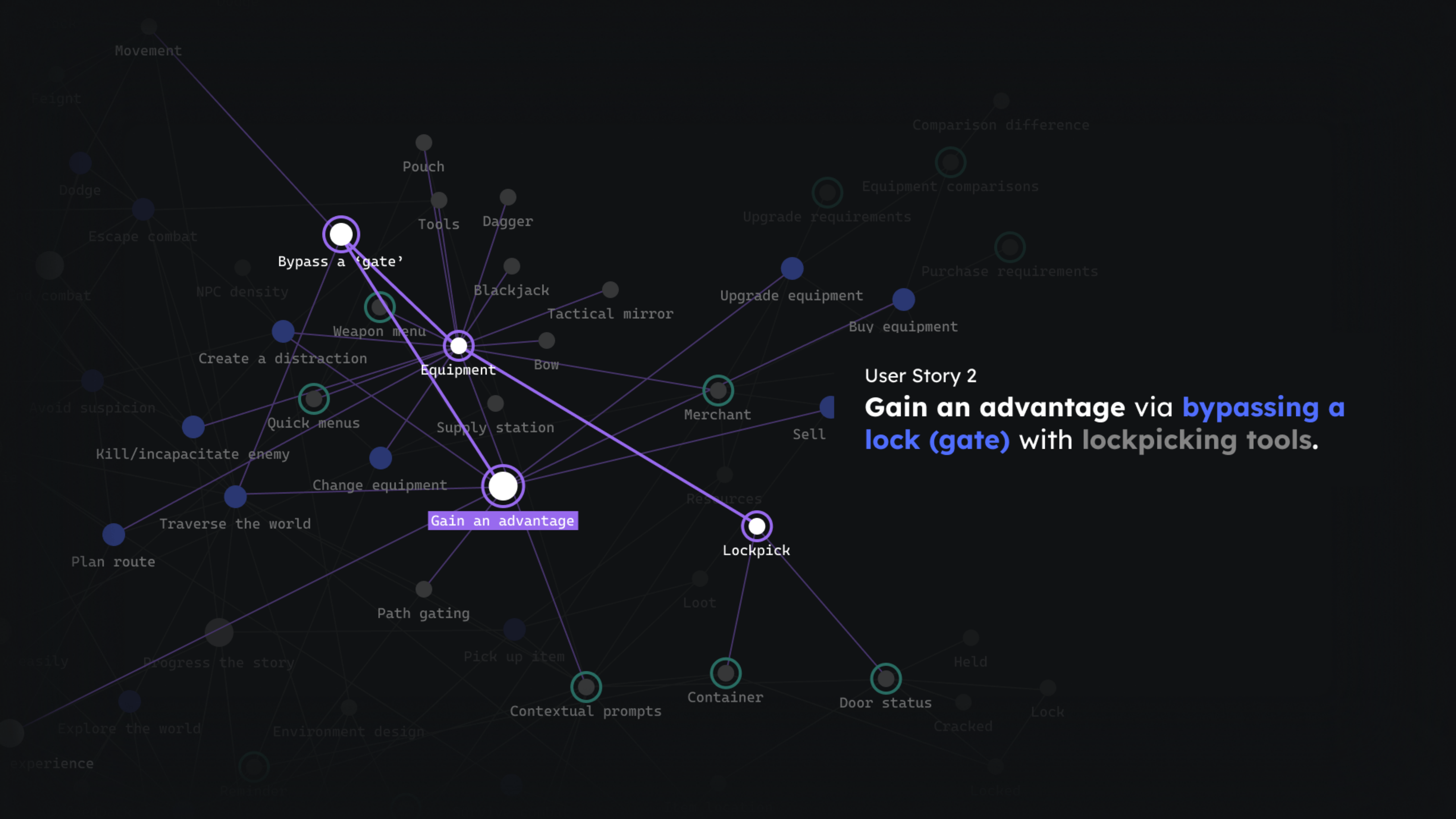


### Player insight

“Sometimes translating where I want to go is difficult because It’s hard to match where I am in the world with what the map is telling me.”



Ⓜ Look Ⓞ Normal view Ⓛ Maps Ⓚ Put away



Bypass a 'gate'

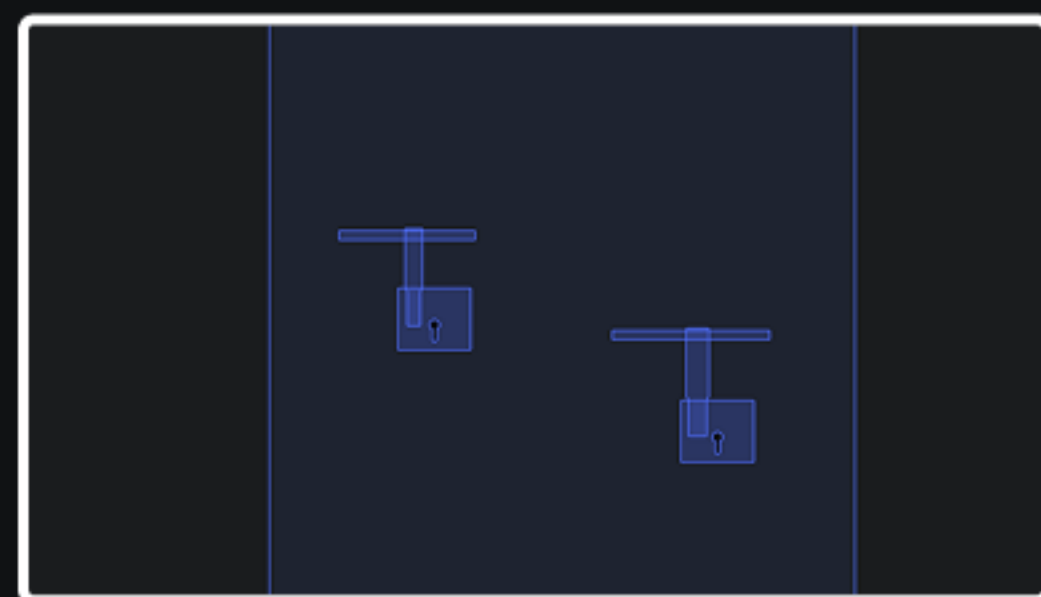
Equipment

Lockpick

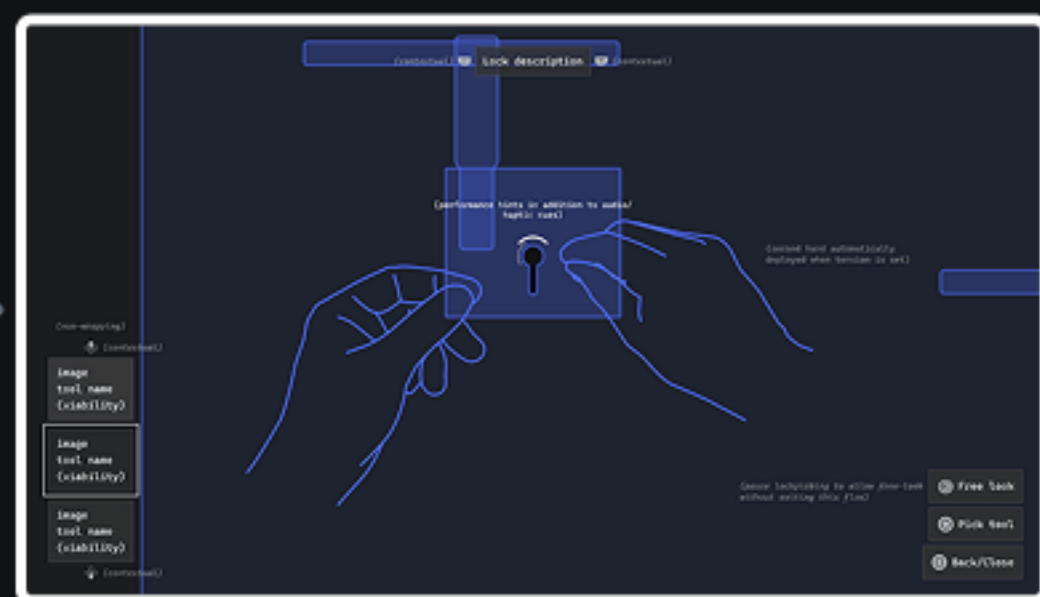
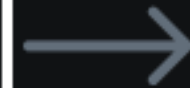
Gain an advantage

User Story 2  
**Gain an advantage via bypassing a lock (gate) with lockpicking tools.**

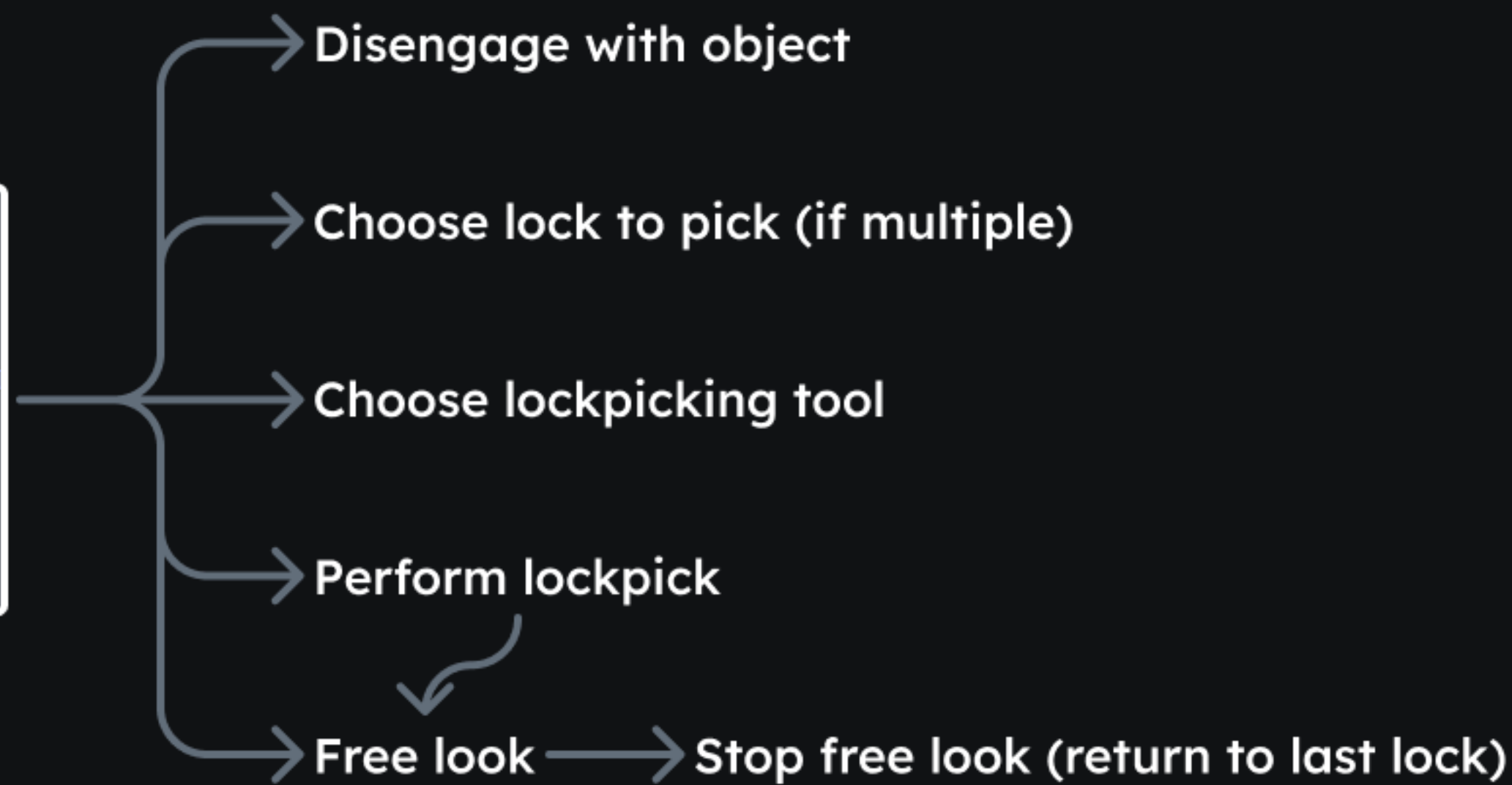
# Picking a lock (flow)



Interact with locked object



Choose lockpicking tool (auto-enabled)



(contextual) **L1** Lock description **R1** (contextual)

(performance hints in addition to audio/haptic cues)

(second hand automatically deployed when tension is set)

**Player insight**  
"I like the idea of lockpicking as a fun mini-game experience, but it always bothers me how little skill is actually involved in the end."

(pause lockpicking to allow free-look without exiting this flow)

(non-wrapping)

 (contextual)


image  
tool name  
(viability)


image  
tool name  
(viability)


image  
tool name  
(viability)

 (contextual)

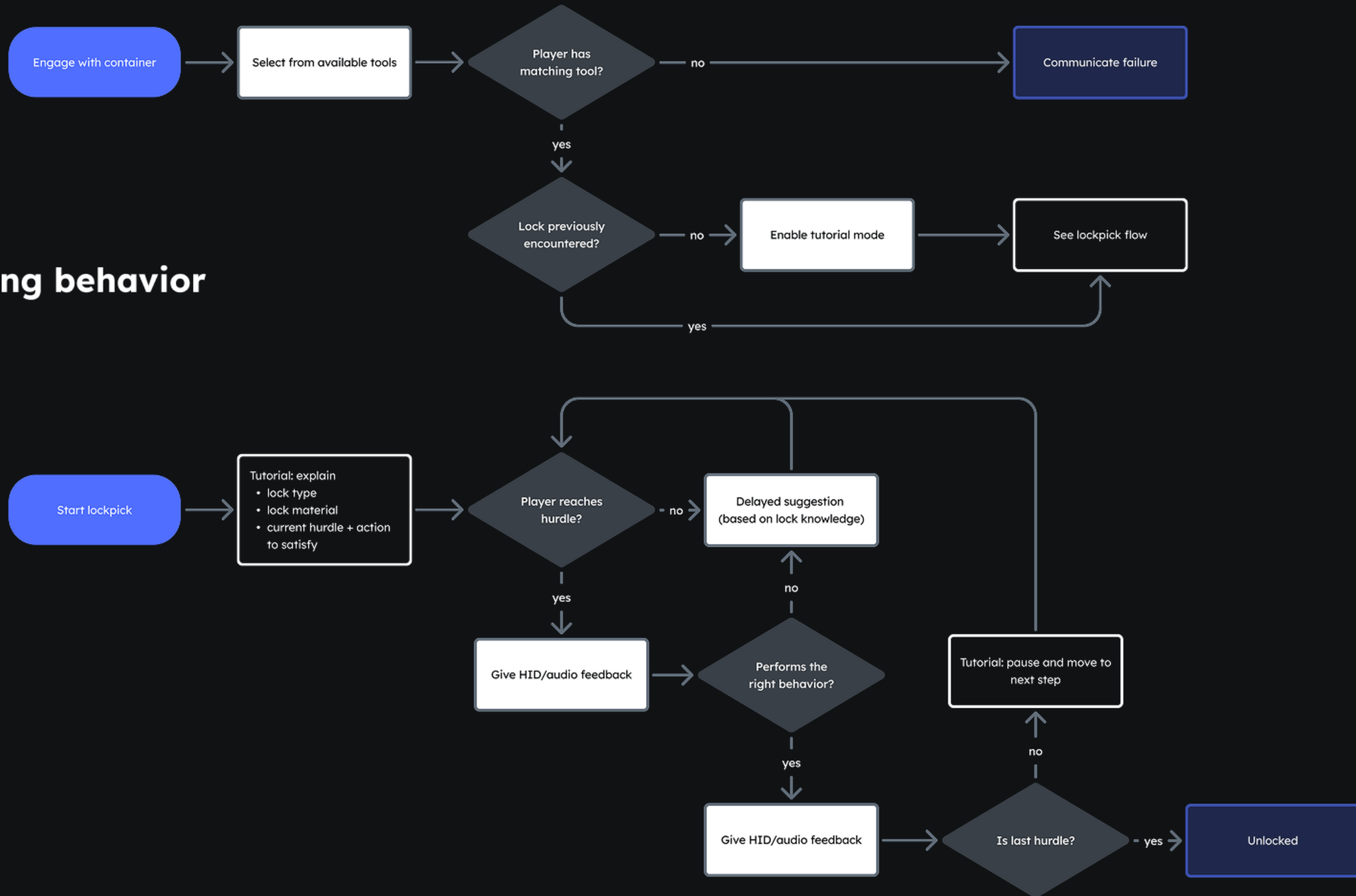


 Free look

 Pick tool

 Back/Close

# Lockpicking behavior








User Story 3  
**Prevent death by avoiding suspicion via planning a safe route with the tactical mirror.**

## Player insight

“I always found it a little weird to look around corners and not be ‘seen’ by guards when I’m directly in their view — even when I’m totally hidden.”

*snap vision/control  
back to mirror when  
releasing free look*


*inverse look axis*


Look around with the  stick. But note that enemies may become suspicious if the mirror catches enough light.

*each button prompt triggers a tutorial the 1st time used*

*(contextually also  
leans around corners  
if close enough)*

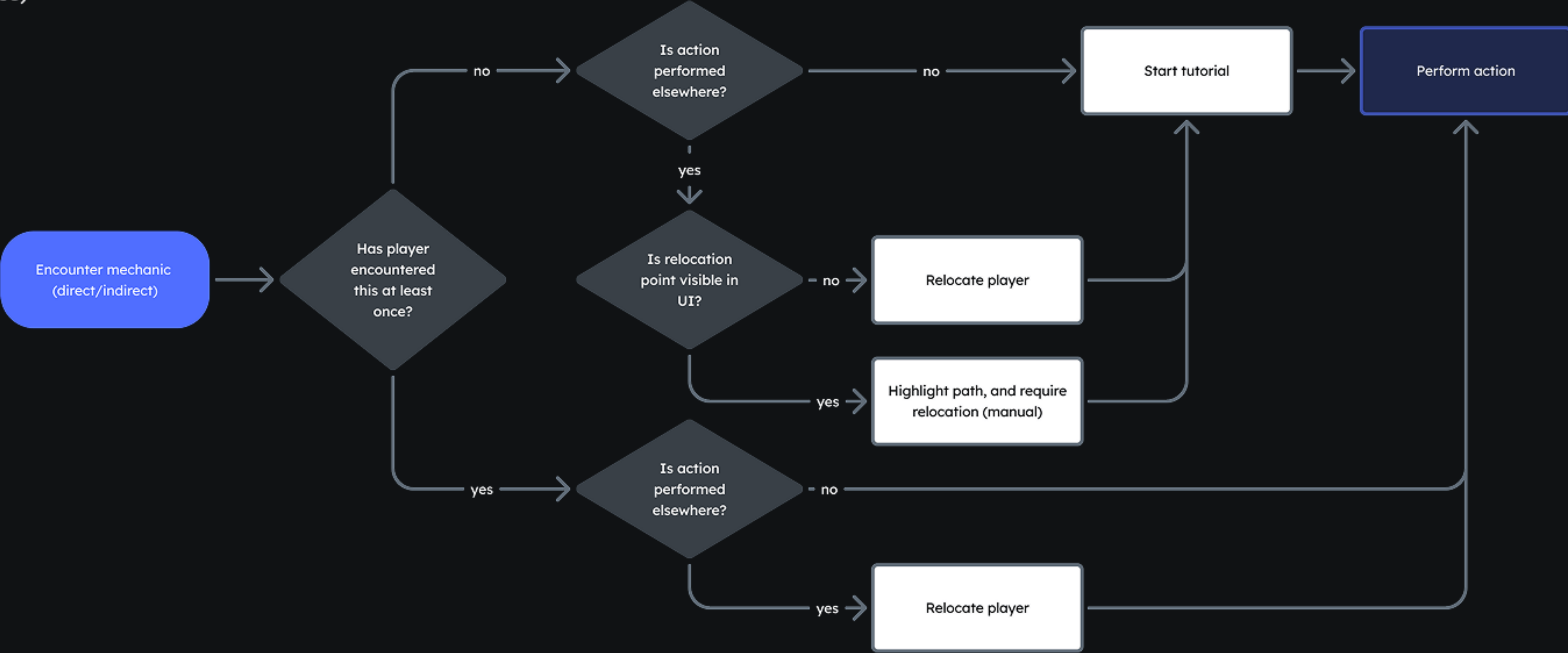
 Free look (hold)

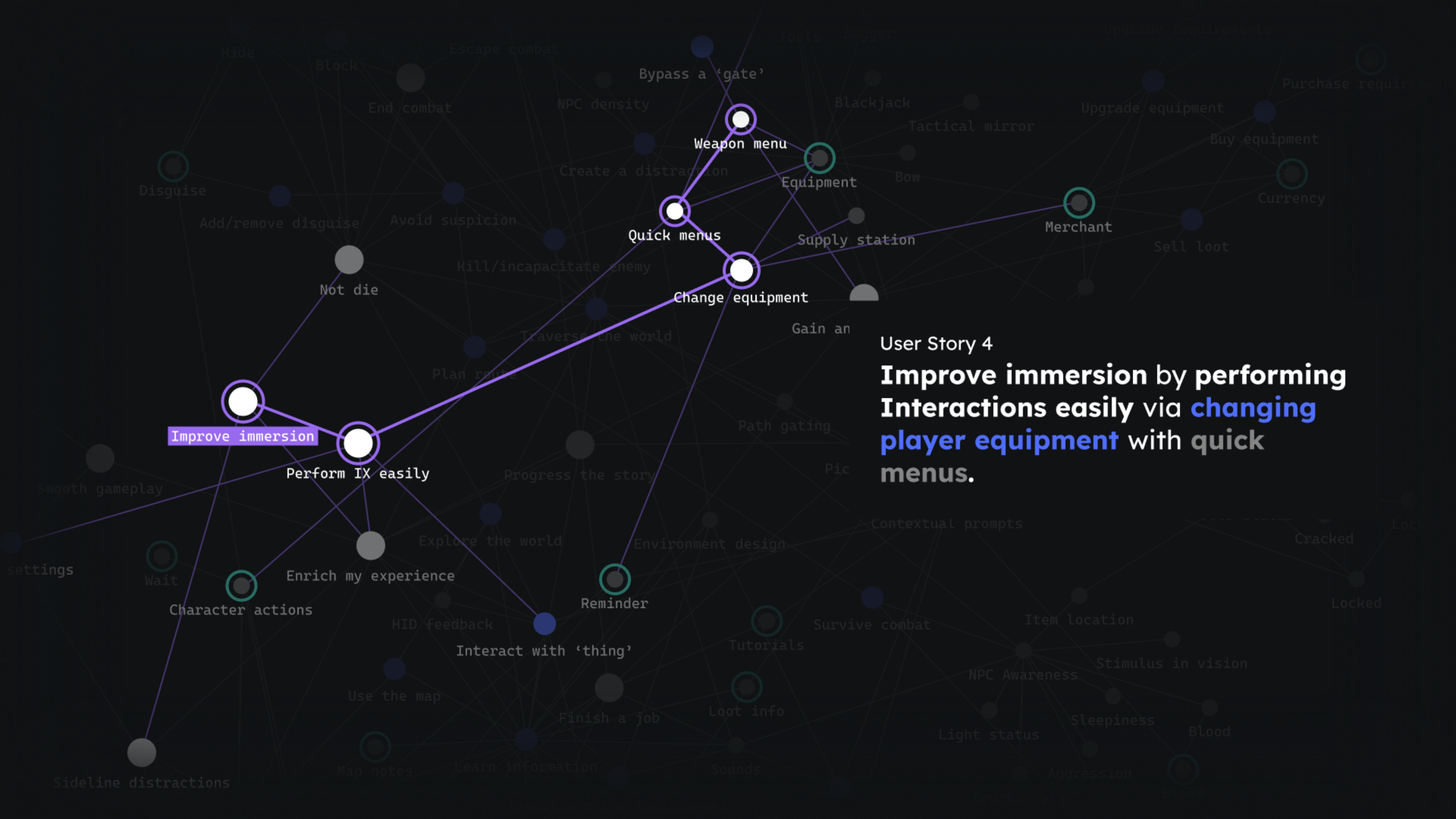
 Use/hide mirror

 Stop hugging

# Tutorial behavior

(in this case, for mirror use)





Improve immersion

Perform IX easily

Quick menus

Change equipment

Weapon menu

Equipment

Merchant

User Story 4  
**Improve immersion by performing Interactions easily via changing player equipment with quick menus.**





Put out a torch by pressing **RT** followed by holding, releasing **RT** to fire a water arrow.



**Bow**  
Water arrow (16)



 Brass ward lock 

Contextual headings

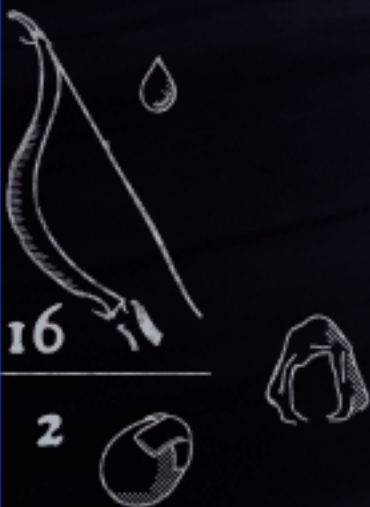
In-game menus

## A nobelman's trinket

Look for a way into Lord Bafford's mannor.



Job updates

Player HUD



# South Quarter

Major areas/places

Put out a torch by pressing  followed by holding/releasing  to fire a water arrow.

Hints/tutorials

Conditional player UI



Copper purse  
+5 Gold (104)



Gold emerald earring  
+1 Jewlery (4)

Notifications

System updates



# Information Architecture

Menus, screens, and structural elements



- > Game
  - Controls
  - Graphics
  - Audio
  - Language
- L1 R1

UI contrast	Default
Text size	Default
Icon size	Default
HUD size	100%
HUD behavior	Fade
Player status	Show
Light gem	On
Tutorials	On
Control hints	Progressive
Object highlights	Off
Interaction hints	Minimal
Aim assistance	Off

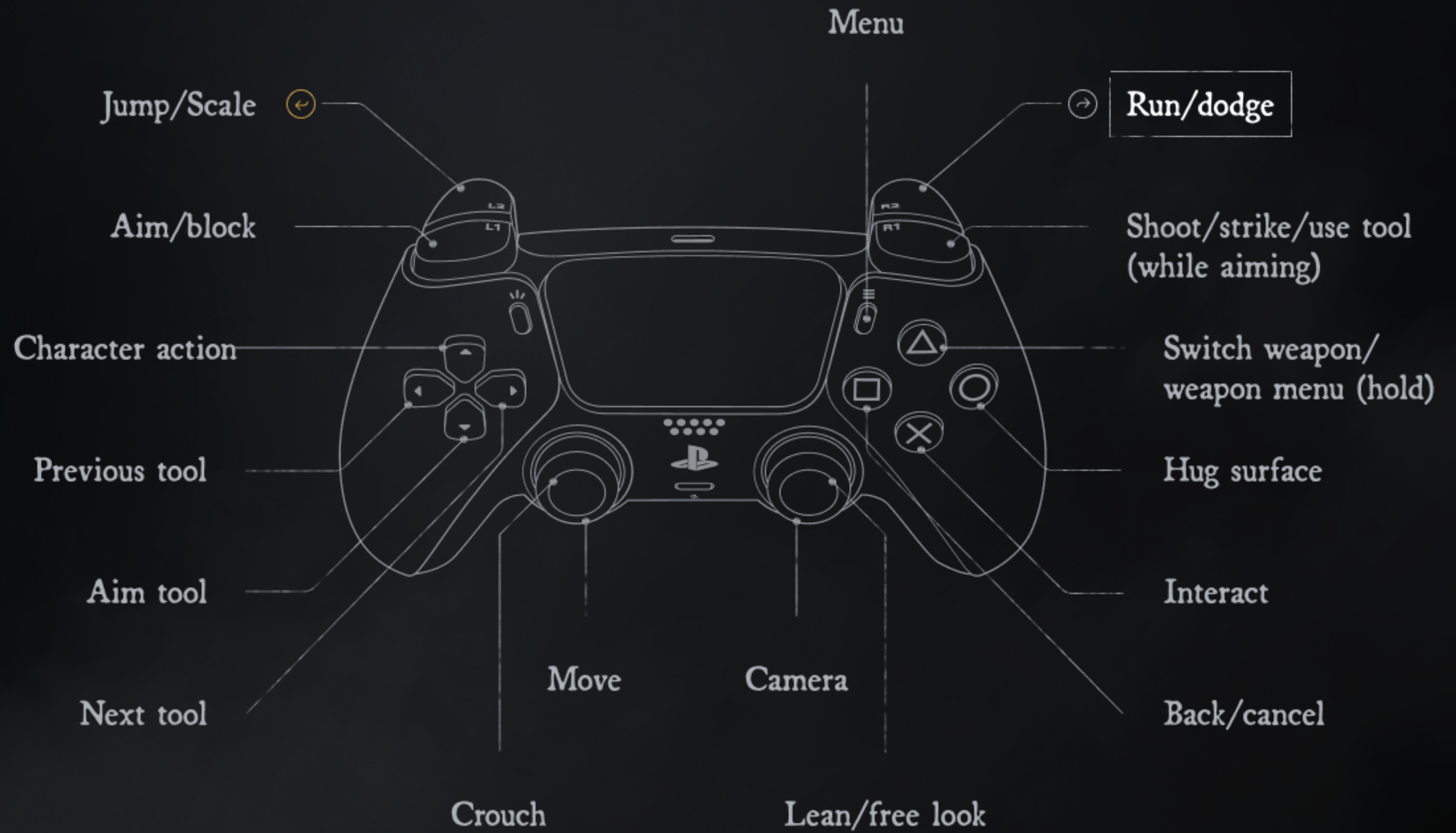
Hints for in-game controls will disappear after using them 4 times.



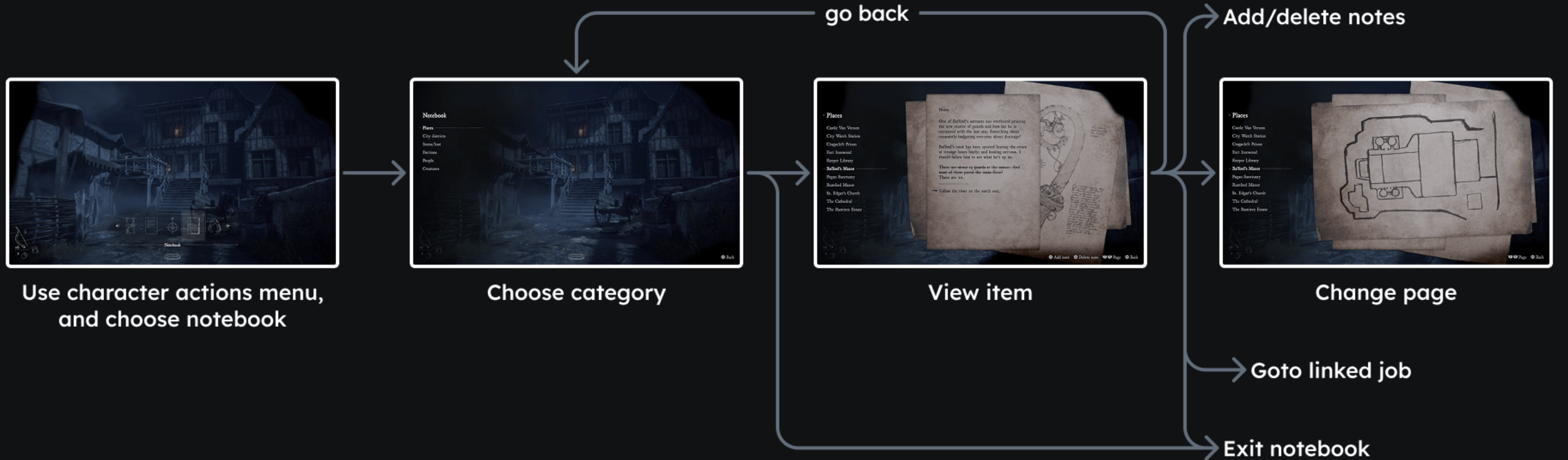
# Controller Mapping

- Game
- > Controls
- Graphics
- Audio
- Language

L1 R1



# Using the notebook (flow, manual use)





16  
2



Notebook



# Notebook

## > Places

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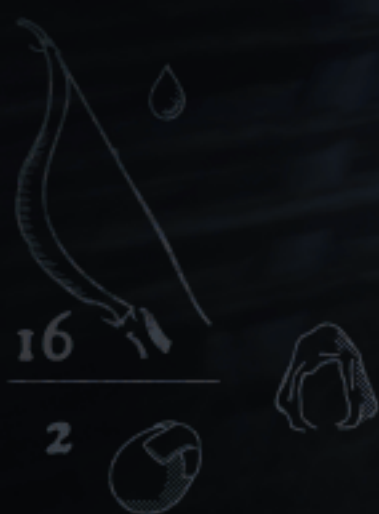
City districts

Items/loot

Factions

People

Creatures



## Places

Castle Van Vernon

City Watch Station

Cragscleft Prison

Fort Ironwood

Keeper Library

Bafford's Manor

Pagan Sanctuary

Rumford Manor

St. Edgar's Church

The Cathedral

The Ramirez Estate

### Player insight

"I don't like that I can only read notes by going into the menu (Thief 4). And on top of that, they have no personality."

### Notes

One of Bafford's servants was overheard praising the new master of guards and how lax he is compared with the last one. Something about constantly badgering everyone about drainage?

Bafford's cook has been spotted leaving the estate at strange hours lately; and looking nervous. I should follow him to see what he's up to.

~~There are about 15 guards at the manor. And most of them patrol the main floor?~~  
There are 20.

→ Follow the river on the north end.



*An unknown jewel adorns the top. Could be valuable.*

*An ornamental sceptre, three feet in length. The body of the shaft is weirwood, carved in the star and dot pattern. Six inches of the ferrule, and five inches of the grip, are bound with burnished copper overlaid by an ink-and-glass, crackleware mosaic. The crowning feature of this magnificent piece, however, is the six inch tracery-cut cloudstone, one of the finest of its type we have seen. A treasure-box of two feet by three feet, of silver birchwood. The lid is of inlaid pearl and onyx, in a mosaic pattern, carved into the wood.*

## ← Places

Castle Van Vernon

City Watch Station

Cragscleft Prison

Fort Ironwood

Keeper Library

› **Bafford's Manor**

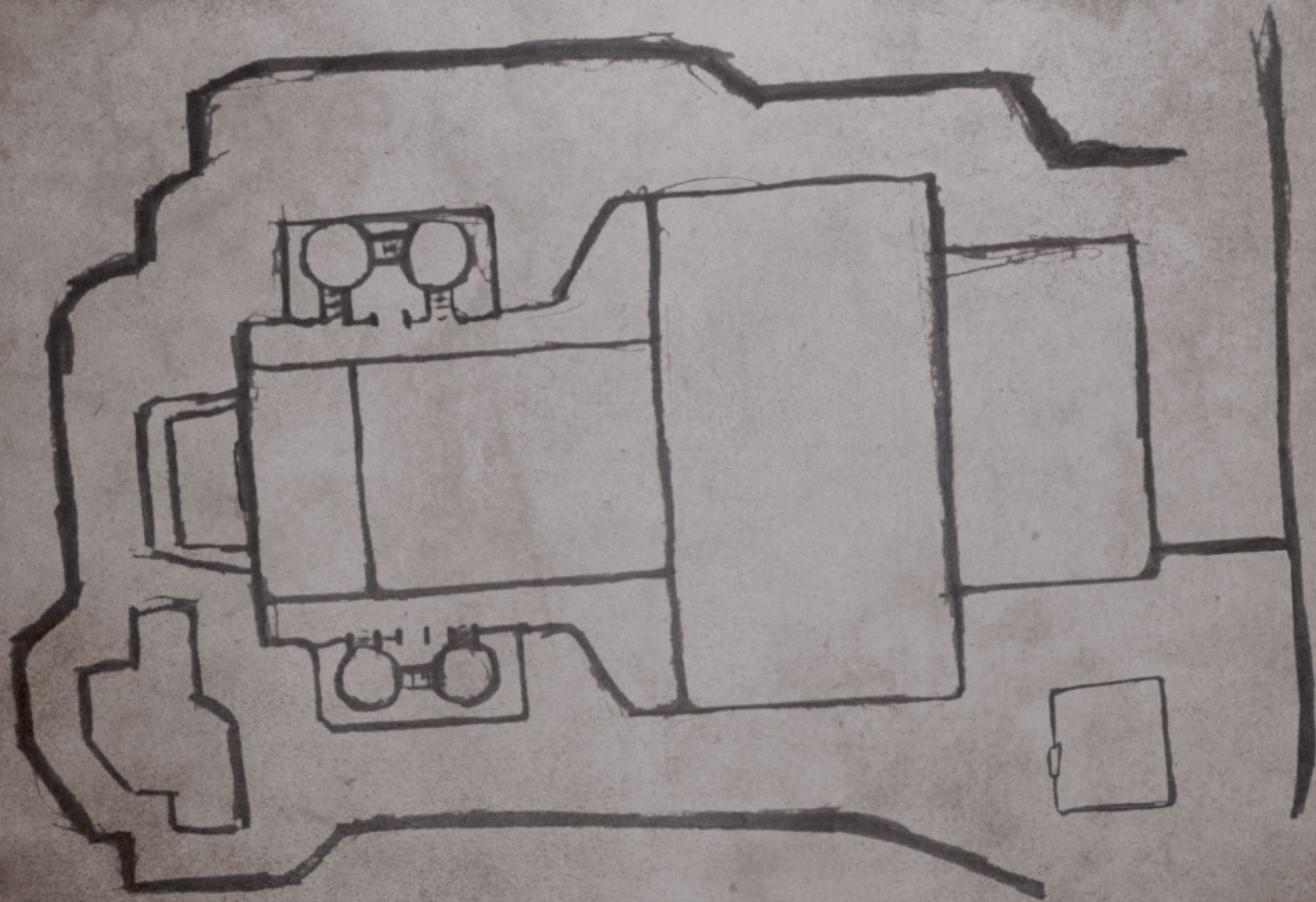
Pagan Sanctuary

Rumford Manor

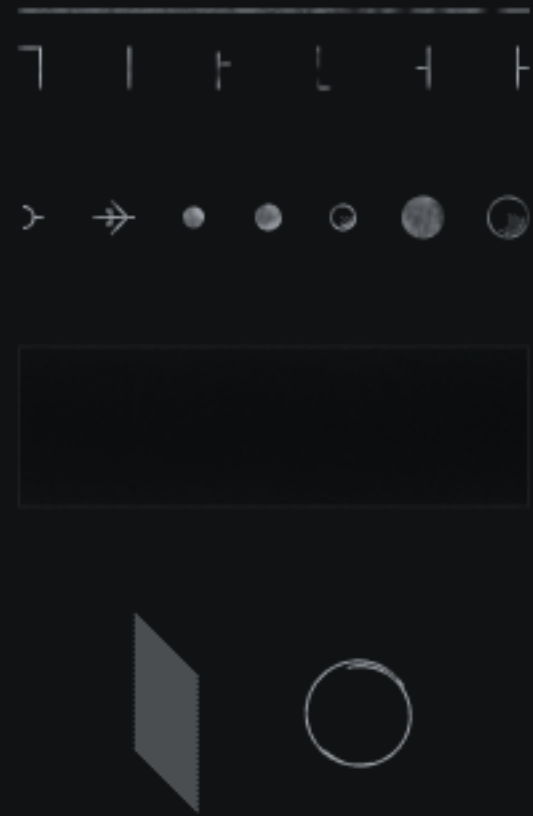
St. Edgar's Church

The Cathedral

The Ramirez Estate



### Primitives



### Basic Components



THIEF



Broadsheet, huge (57)

Broadsheet, large (40)

Broadsheet, default (28)

Broadsheet, small (20)

Broadsheet, tiny (14)

## A nobelman's trinket

Look for a way into Lord Bafford's mannor.

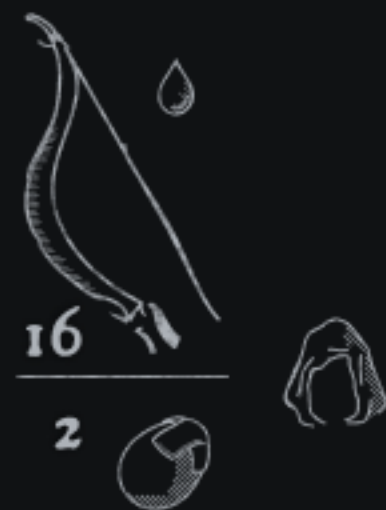
### Menu branch

Menu item

Menu item (focused)

Menu item

L1 R1



HUD size

100% ← →

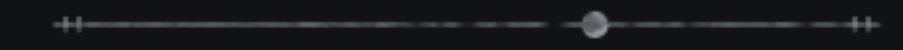
Player status

← Show →

HUD behavior

← Fade →

L2 Branch Current branch R2



Current leaf

L1 Heading R1



Map



Bow

Water arrow (16)

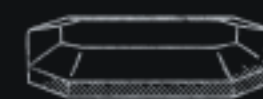
L1 R1



Copper purse  
+5 Gold (104)



Gold emerald earring  
+1 Jewlery (4)





**UX/UI/game design**

Nik Jeleniauskas

**Tools**

Figma, Obsidian, Whimsical, Affinity Suite, Blender, HTML/CSS/JS (motion), Davinci Resolve

**Additional art**

Logo (Looking Glass), game environment (A Plague Tale: Innocence)