



Level Design in HITMAN: Guiding players in a non-linear sandbox game

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Principal Level Designer, Io-Interactive

Mette Pødenphant

Level Designer, Io-Interactive



HITMAN™

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Guiding players in a non-linear sandbox game

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The Agenda

HITMAN & The Showstopper

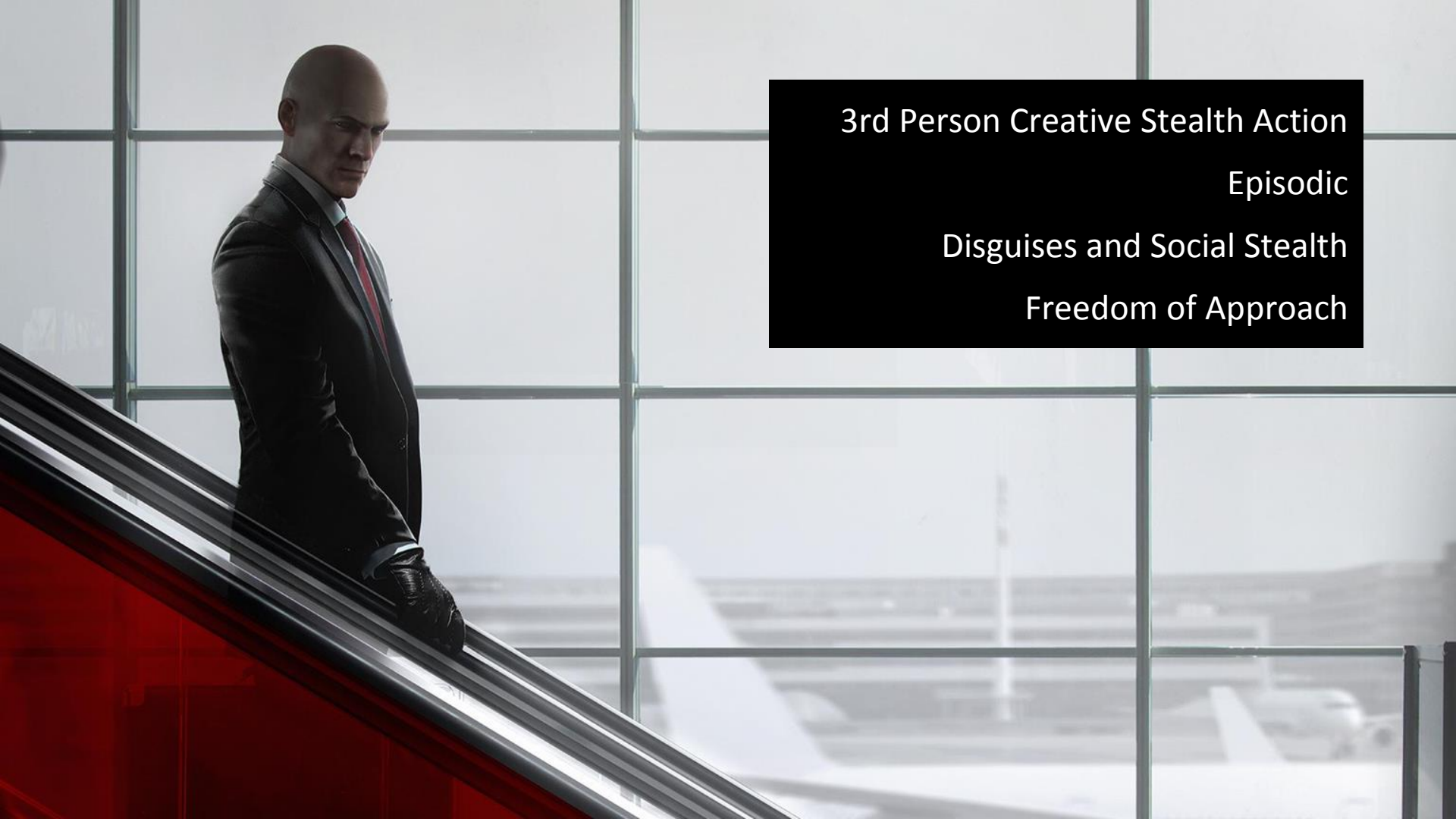
Closed Alpha Report

The Mission

The Tutorial

The Guide

Questions



3rd Person Creative Stealth Action

Episodic

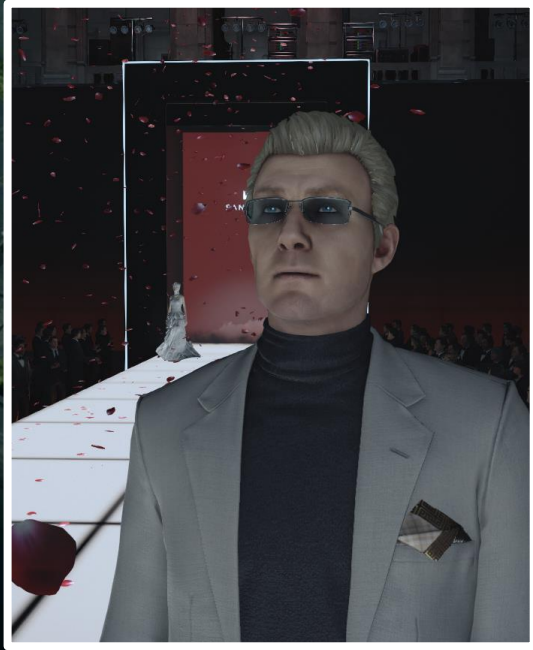
Disguises and Social Stealth

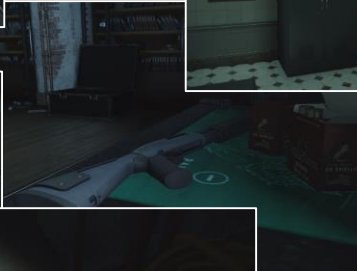
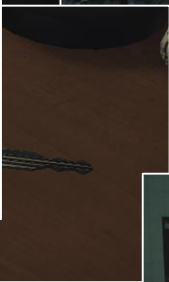
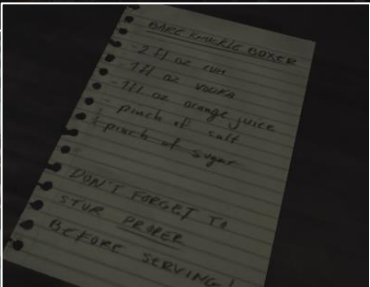
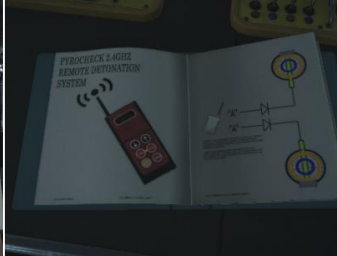
Freedom of Approach

The Games



Alpha Build - The Showstopper







And with newly appointed head designer, Sebastian Sato, at the helm, tonight's show should prove no exception.

The Closed Alpha

“...did not have as good an understanding of how to **navigate** the game world...”

“...difficulties getting an **overview**...”

“...found the showstopper level **difficult to approach**...”

The level felt empty





The Direction

Make the best Hitman **Tutorial** ever

..Teach players to think like Hitman

Design a new **Level Guidance** system

..Show them the rest of the iceberg without forcing their hand

The Mission

Operate the game



Hitman fundamentals



Set their own goals



Show them the iceberg



Encourage replay



Tutorial



Training
47's Past

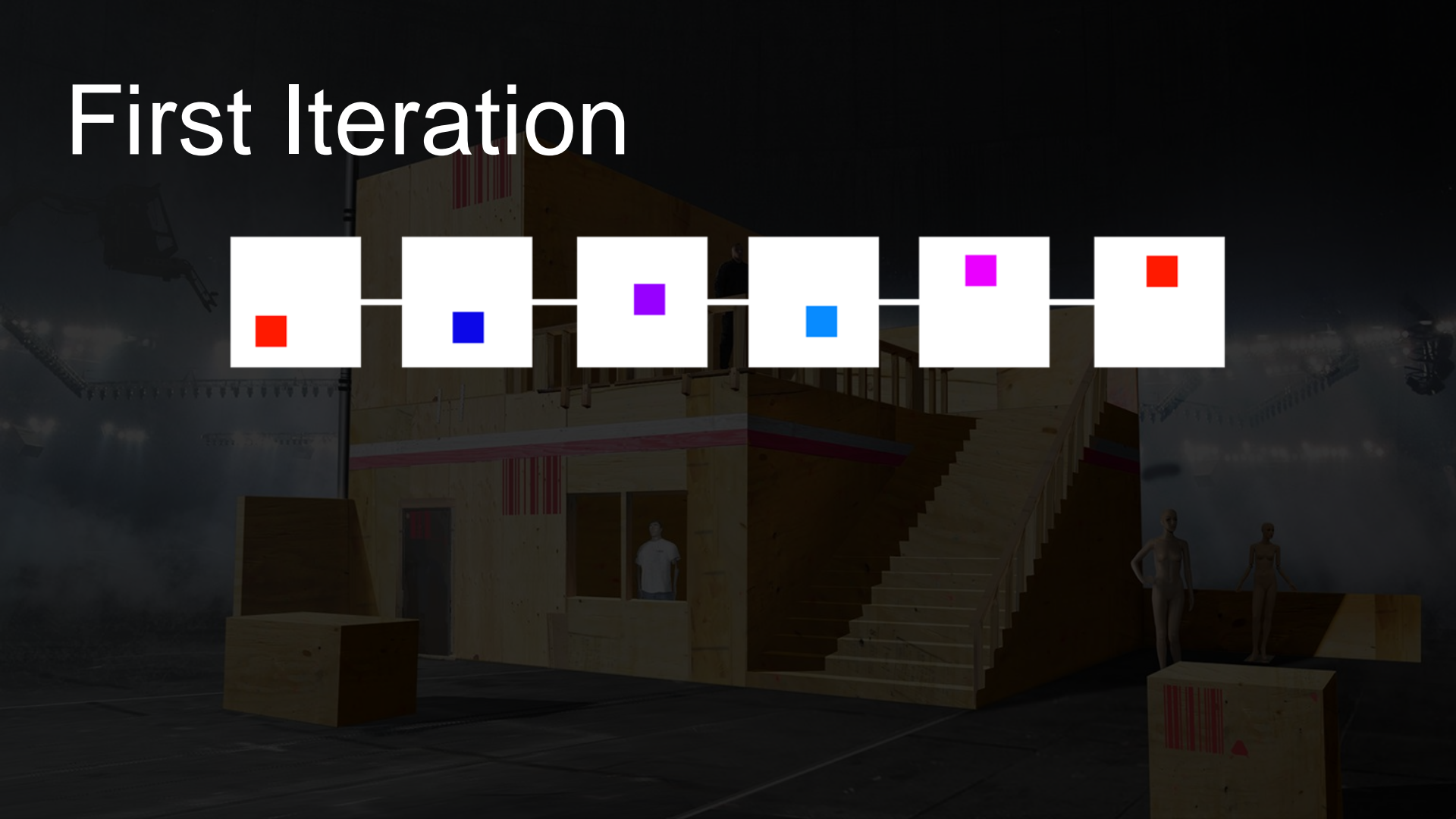


The Showstopper

The Mechanics

	Ever		Item		Environment				NPC			NPC Alert			
Present		Dependent		Dependent				Dependent				Behavior			

First Iteration



The Mission

Operate the game



Hitman fundamentals



Set their own goals



Show them the iceberg



Encourage replay



...but wait...

it's a giant sandbox...



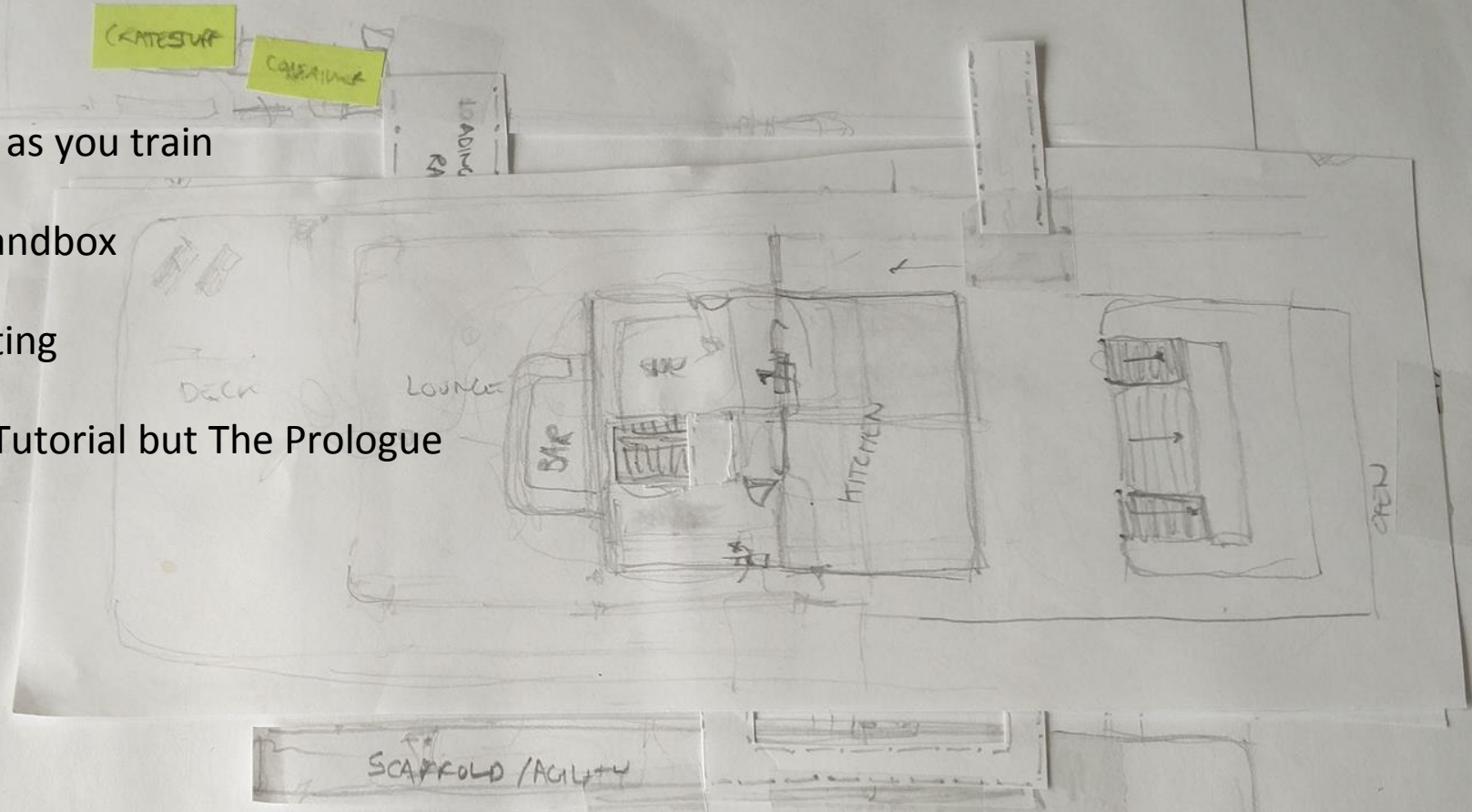
Back to the drawing board

You fight as you train

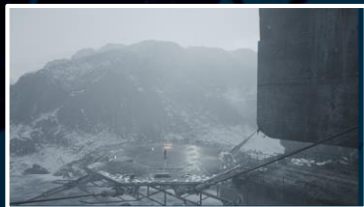
Build a sandbox

User Testing

Not The Tutorial but The Prologue



The Prologue



Part 1 - Arrival



Part 2 - Training



Part 3 - Final Test

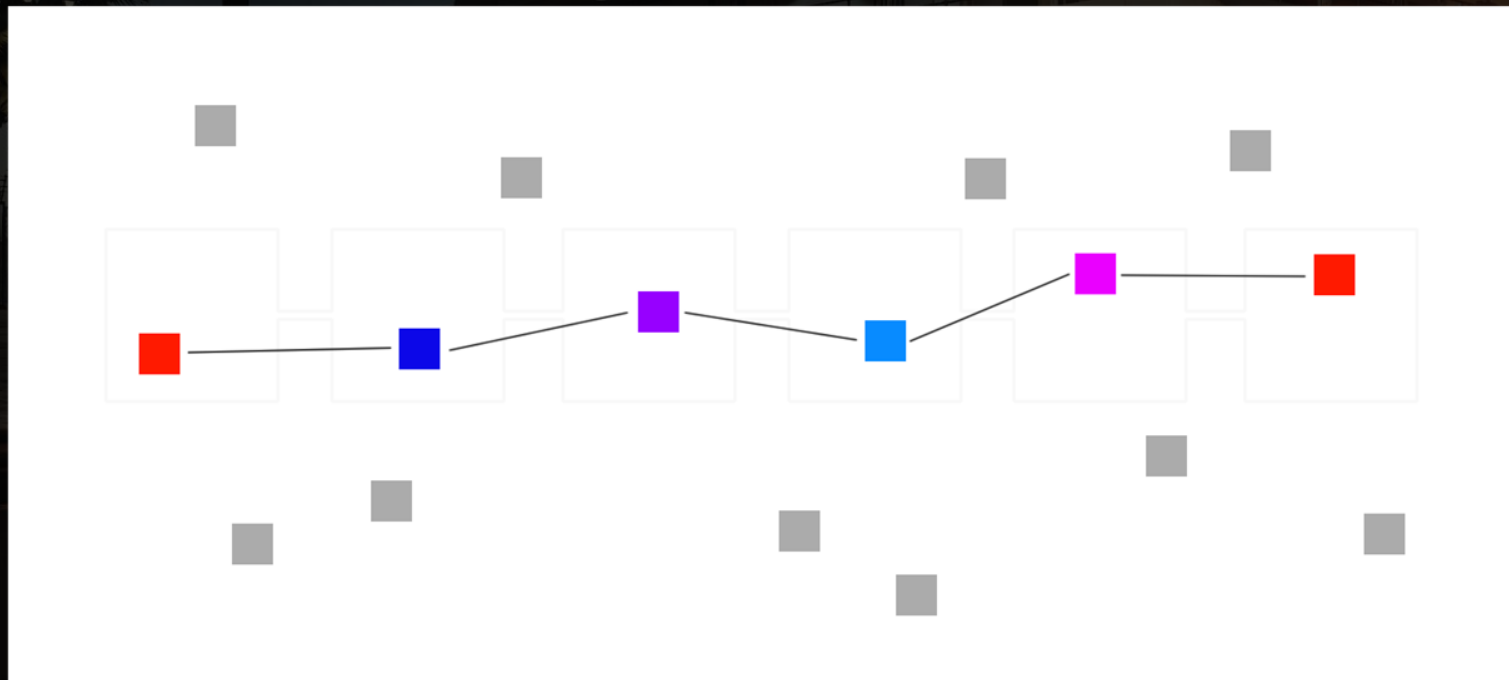


The Showstopper

Part 1 - Arrival



Part 2 - Guided Training



Requirements



A real sandbox mission

Very robust guide

Easy but not boring

The only way to fail is death

No feature crippling

Only kill the target



Eliminate Calvin Ritter

Training



Approach the gangway




Training



Approach the gangway



 Press **B** to take cover.

Training



Infiltrate the cargo area



→ Trespassing

Training



Subdue the mechanic



Subdue



→ Trespassing



Drag the body into the restroom to avoid detection.

Training



Conceal the body



→ Trespassing

B Drop



Disguise
Mechanic

Y Open



Training



Board the yacht



Might just work, though. People do tend to see uniforms, not faces.

Training



Board the yacht



Threats

People marked as threats will find you suspicious. Make sure they do not see you.



Understood

... Don't want any scratches, now.

Training



Board the yacht



Training



Follow the target




- It's okay.

Training




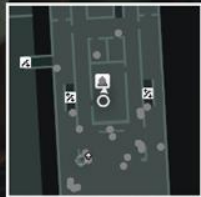
Disguise yourself as a yacht crewmember



 Hold **LT** to aim, and press **RT** to throw.

Training

 Disguise yourself as a yacht crewmember





Training



Disguise yourself as a yacht crewmember



Snap Neck



Drag



Disguise
Yacht Crew

→ Compromised



Training



Infiltrate Ritter's private deck





As a crewman you can blend in behind the bar to avoid detection.

Training



Man the bar



Blend In
as a Yacht Crew member



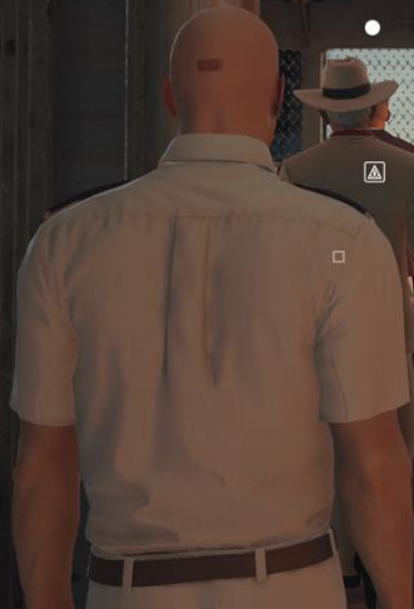
- Funny how you and the universe always tend to agree, honey.



Training



Follow the target



 Press **B** to take cover.

Training



Sneak into the office



→ Trespassing

Not my usual scene, technology.





Pistol

ICA19

7 /28






Unknown Item Description




Detected During Frisk




Visibly Armed

  Change Item  Select  Drop Item  Cancel

Ah, slipped your mind.

 Hold **LT** to aim, and press **RT** to shoot.

Training

 Eliminate the target



→ Trespassing

7 / 28
Visibly Armed 



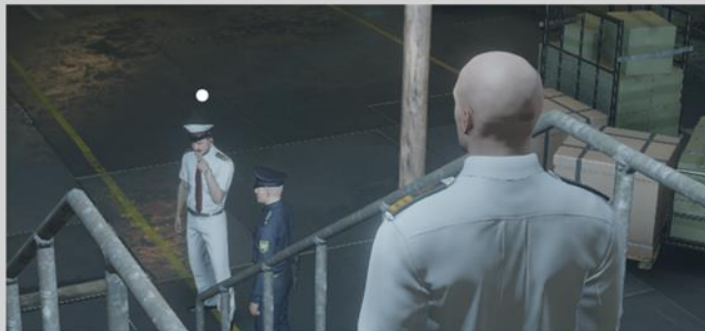
Training



Disembark the yacht

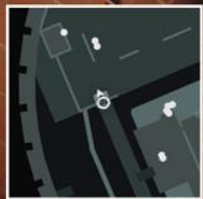
Threat

The crewman on the pier will see through your disguise. Find another way off the yacht.



Understood





Slipping out the back door? Good choice, Initiate. Improvisation is the key to success.



Overview

3 Threats Popup
Sentry Guards

2 Cover
Hide body
Change Disguise
Window Climb

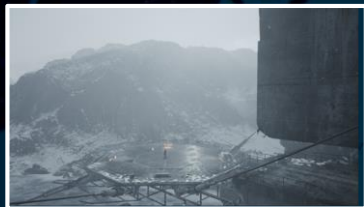
1 Blend-In
Throw
Instinct
Crowbar
Pistol
Subdue





- So make it one.

The Prologue



Part 1 - Arrival



Part 2 - Training



Part 3 - Final Test



The Showstopper

The Mission

Operate the game



Hitman fundamentals



Set their own goals



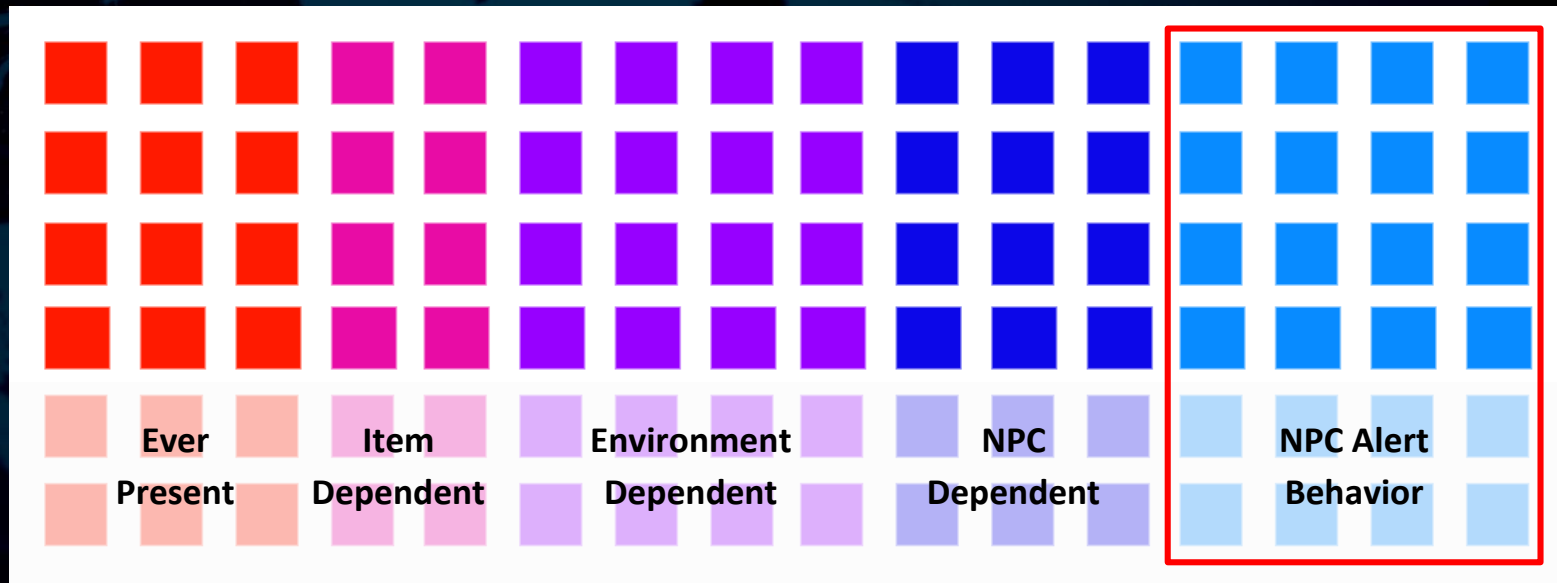
Show them the iceberg



Encourage replay



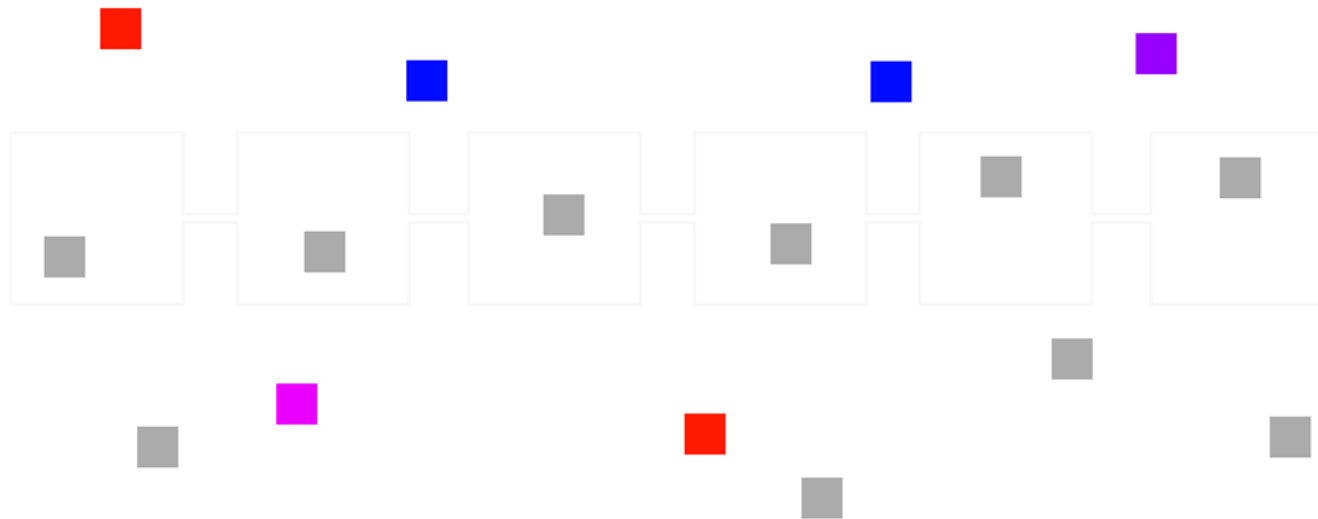
The Mechanics





Again!

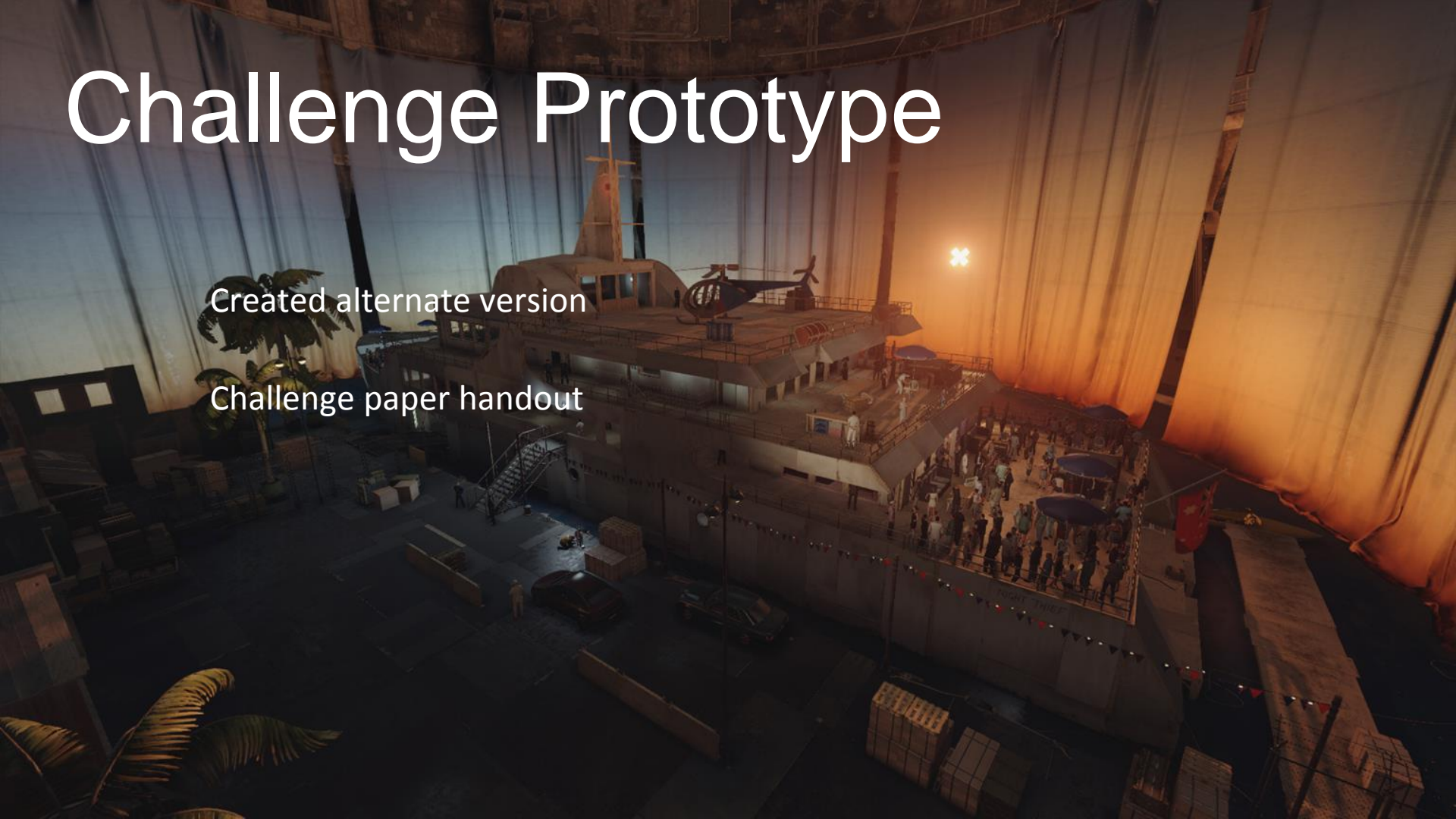
Again?!



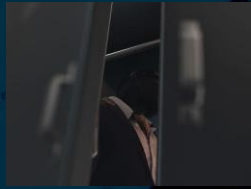
Challenge Prototype

Created alternate version

Challenge paper handout



The Challenges





Eliminate Calvin Ritter

Remote Explosive

Place explosives, weapons and items in the world by holding **LB + RB**.

If guards see explosives and weapons lying around, they will pick them up.



Understood



Visibly Armed



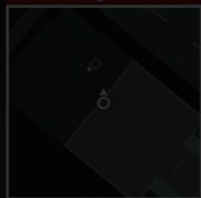
User Test

Players set goals - They became creative

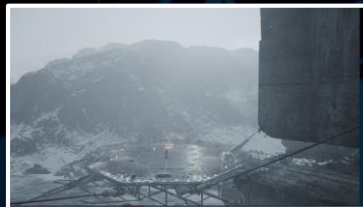
Tolerant Setting - OK to do experiments

Discover the NPC reactions

Q Searching



Final Version



Part 1 - Arrival



Part 2 - Guided



Part 2 - Freeform



Part 3 - Final Test



The Showstopper

The Mission

Operate the game



Hitman fundamentals



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Show them the iceberg



Encourage replay

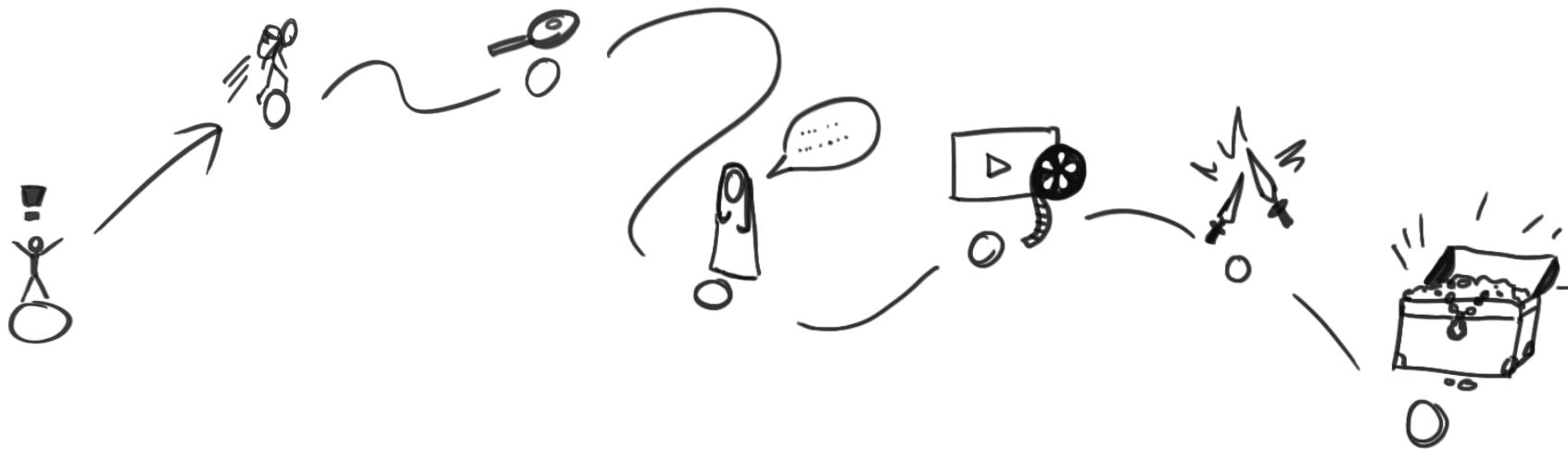




Making Experiences visible: Quests



Making Experiences Visible: Quests





Story Dictated

Checkpoint Structure

The Epic Main Quest

Unique Endings



Not Story Dictated

Anything Can Happen

Encourage Replay

A world map with a red dot in Europe. The text "TARGET ELIMINATED" is overlaid in large, bold, red capital letters. The map shows the continents and oceans, with the red dot located in Western Europe, specifically over France. The text is centered horizontally across the map.

TARGET ELIMINATED







→ Compromised





REC

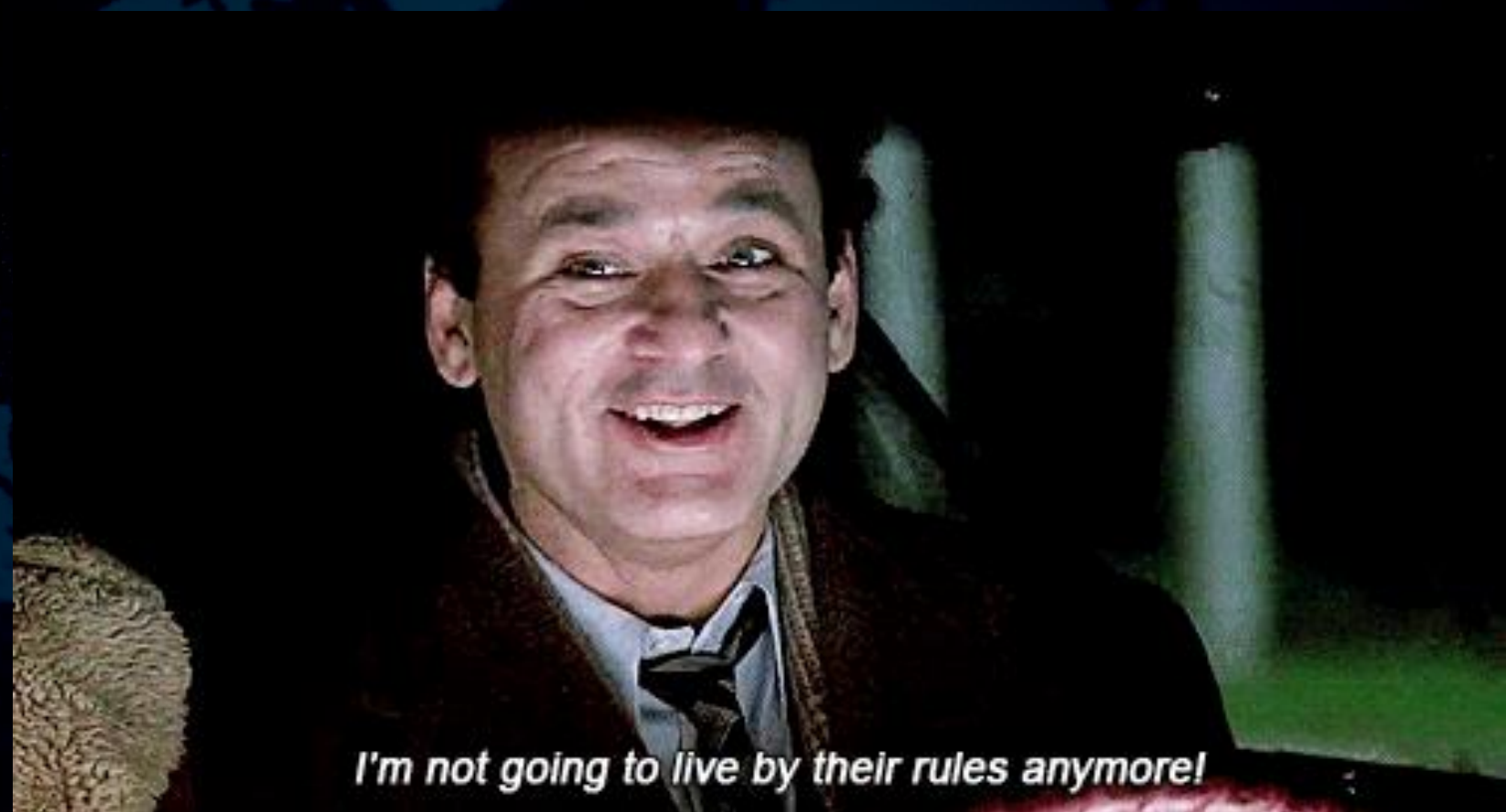












I'm not going to live by their rules anymore!

Groundhog Day Quests

A dark blue world map serves as the background. A small white circle with a dot in the center is located in Western Europe, specifically over the British Isles. The map shows the outlines of continents and some ocean names like 'Atlantic Ocean'.

Optional

Flexible

Consistent





Important Questions

 Opportunity Revealing





Opportunity Revealed

Would you like to track this opportunity?

Press 

Helmut Kruger's been my role model since college.



Track



15 Seconds of Fame

The famous Helmut Kruger is part of the show. He has your cheekbones, 47.

According to our intel, Helmut Kruger is friendly with Dalia Margolis. I suspect that IAGO uses fashion models to infiltrate the lives of the rich and powerful and Kruger is likely one of their spies. His face paint conveniently obscures his features and the two of you already share a striking resemblance.



Find out more about Helmut Krüger



Tim

SÉCURITÉ

Dalia? Helmut.



Call Margolis





Call Margolis

- Got it. You want me to drop by now or...?





Get your make up done



Subdue



Sit Down
As Helmut Kruger



5m







Walk the catwalk



8m





Meet up with Margolis



38m


SANGUINE

B Leave Catwalk





Opportunity Completed



Challenge Completed
The Undercover Model

Access to the auction and a private audience with Dalia Margolis. Nicely done, 47.



Y Pick Up
Lethal Poison Pill Jar

Helmut, really I insist. Have a seat.

7/28
Visibly Armed 



A dark blue world map with a white dot in Europe. The map is centered on the Atlantic Ocean, with the Americas on the left and Europe and Africa on the right. A small white dot is located in central Europe, specifically in Germany. The text "Opportunity failed" is written in white, sans-serif font across the upper left portion of the map.

Opportunity failed



Get the Helmut Kruger disguise





Opportunity Failed

Non-Target Killed



Suspicious



💡 Opportunity Revealing

- Stop, you look fine.

25/120

Visibly Armed ⚠️





Opportunity Missed

Target Lockdown

25/95

Visibly Armed ⚠








Opportunity Revealed

Would you like to track this opportunity?

Press 





B Stop Blending In

Last and only copy.



X Subdue
A Push

Viktor, old boy? You're walking on water.



The Mission

Operate the game



Hitman fundamentals



Set their own goals



Show them the iceberg



Encourage replay



Opportunity Design Principles

Information could never be a prerequisite for progression

Opportunities should let go before the kill

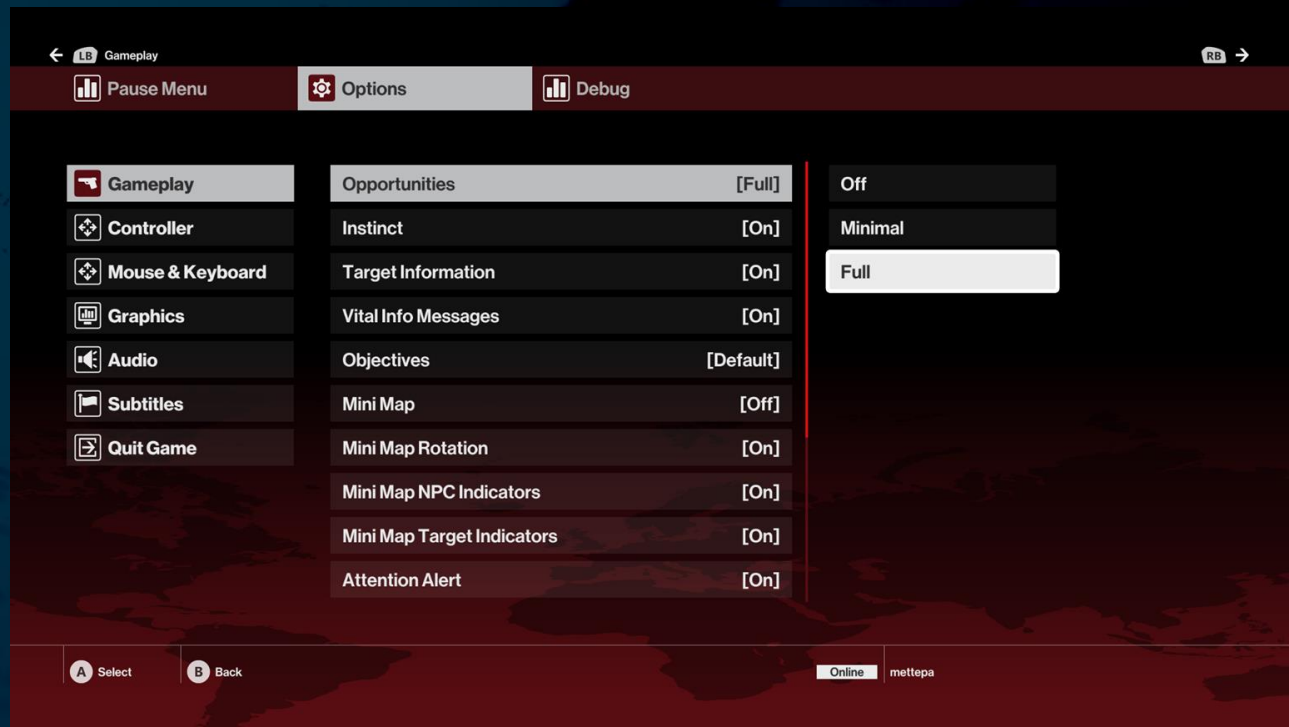
The opportunity should always be available - even without the guide

Technical Changes

The Persistent Bool

Intel HUD message

Level of Guidance







Examine
Fireworks Schedule



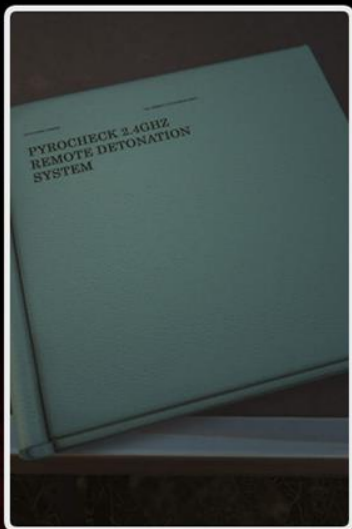
5m

 Get a tech crew disguise

 View Intel 



Novikov plans a grand fireworks display at the end of the Sanguine show.



Fireworks Schedule

According to the schedule, Novikov plans a grand fireworks display at the end of the Sanguine show. The fireworks are located on a barge in the Seine. The detonation remote, however, is unaccounted for.

The Compromise



Sandbox

Guidance

Replay Value

The Mission

Operate the game



Hitman fundamentals



Set their own goals



Show them the iceberg



Encourage replay



How one level of Hitman lasts longer than most games

By [Lorna Reid](#) April 28, 2016



Learnings

You fight as you train

Prototyping: Rapid and paper

If designing a live game: Go live early

A guide in HITMAN means designing fail conditions

Sandbox guidance means compromises

- But that's ok

THANK YOU

Questions?

www.HITMAN.com - Information about HITMAN

Jobs.ioi.dk - Come work with us

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