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Playtesting: Avoiding Evil Data

Adriaan de Jongh
Game Designer, Independent

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Evil Data

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Goal of this talk:

- Make playtests more valuable
- Make playtests easier to organise



What is Evil Data?
Avoid Evil Data?
Organise playtests?



'QA'
is not the same as
'playtesting'



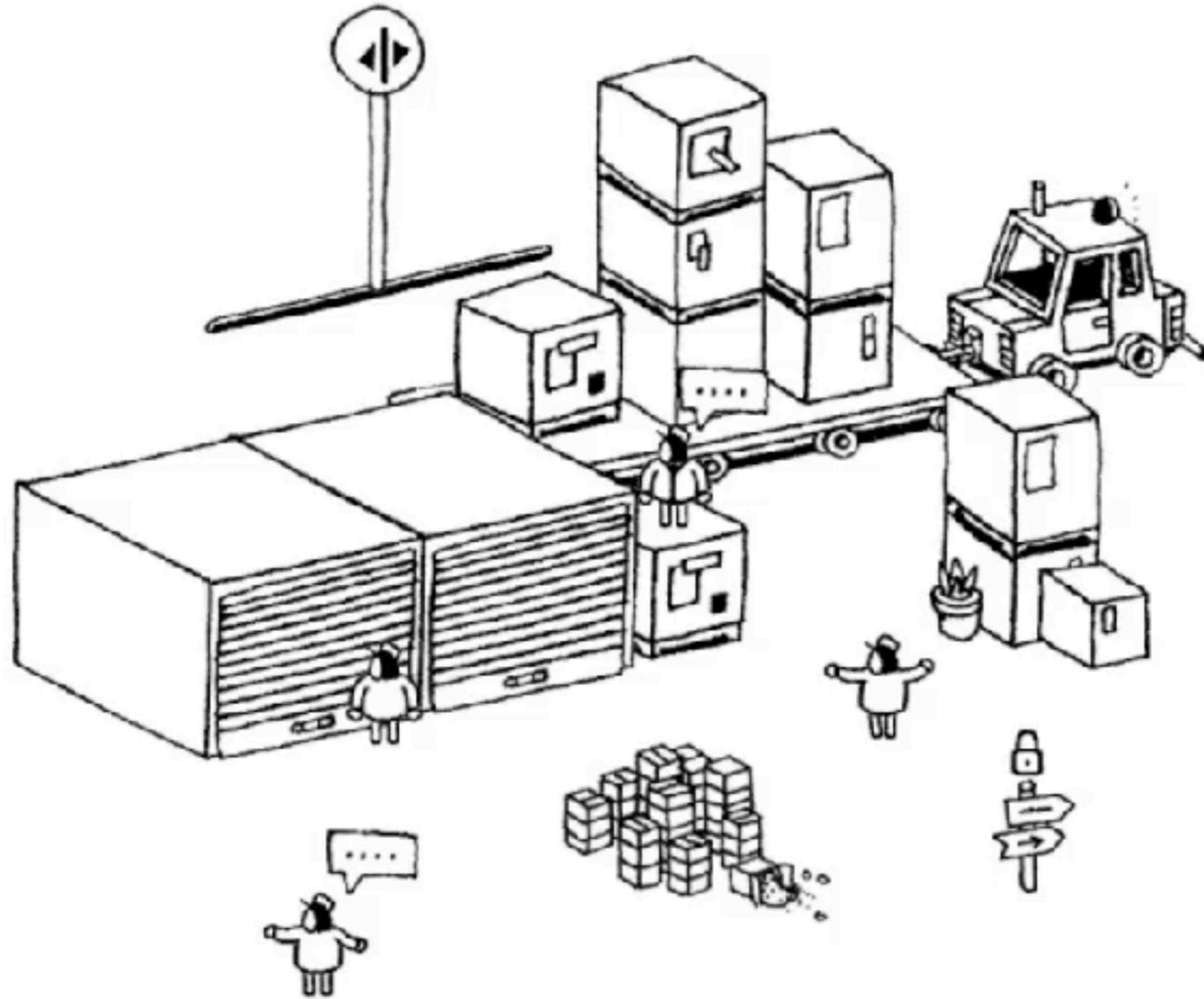








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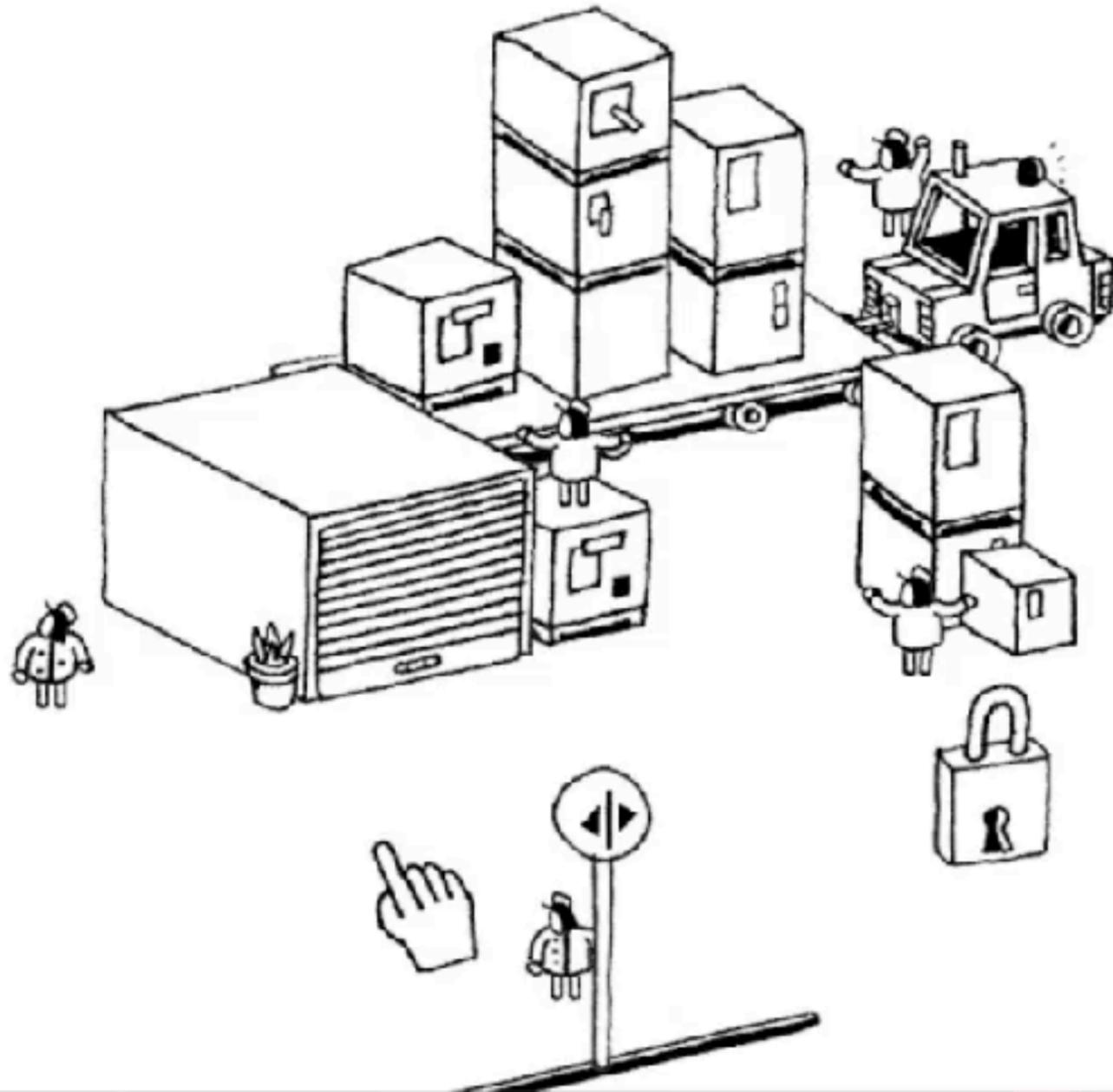
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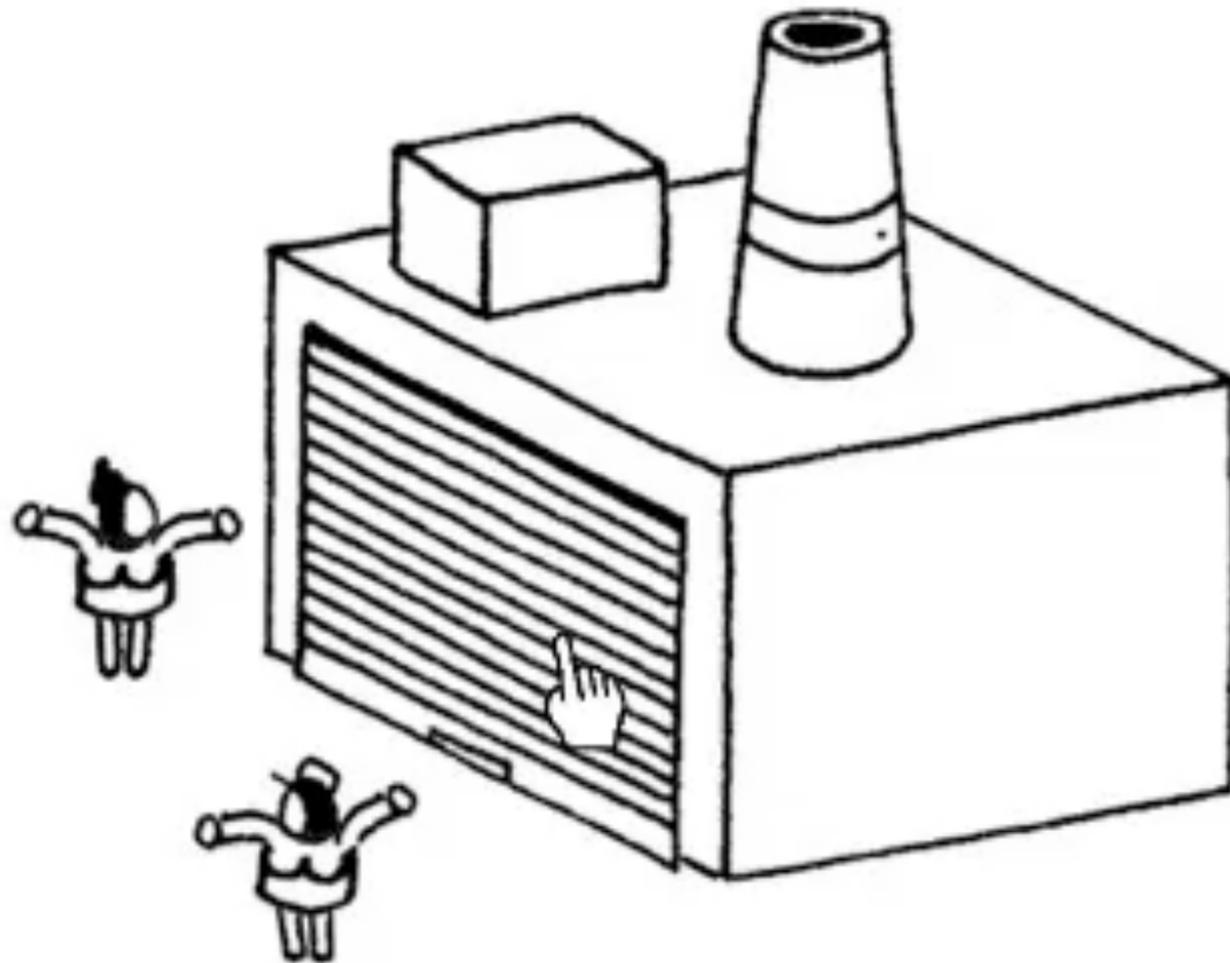
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Evil Data

Playtest results that are
distracting, unclear, or misleading.



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Where Evil Data comes from and how to avoid it?

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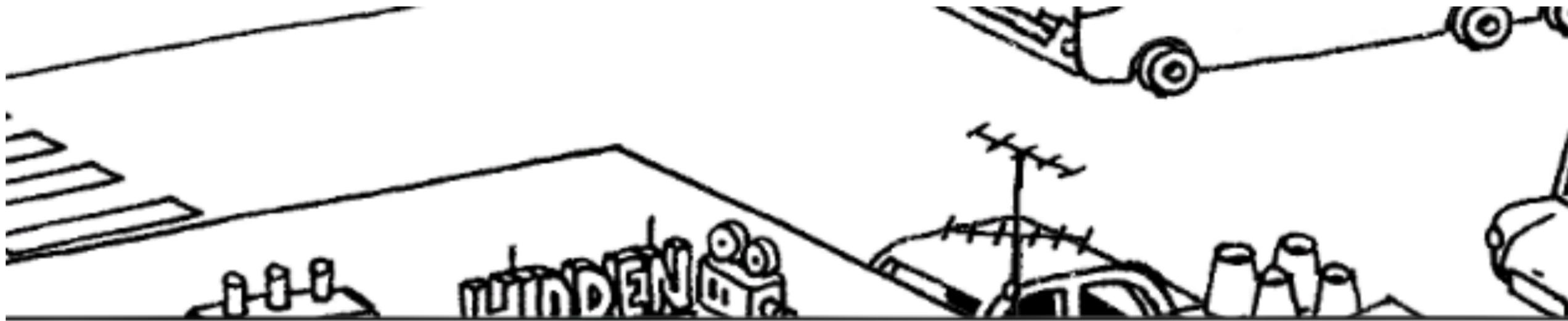


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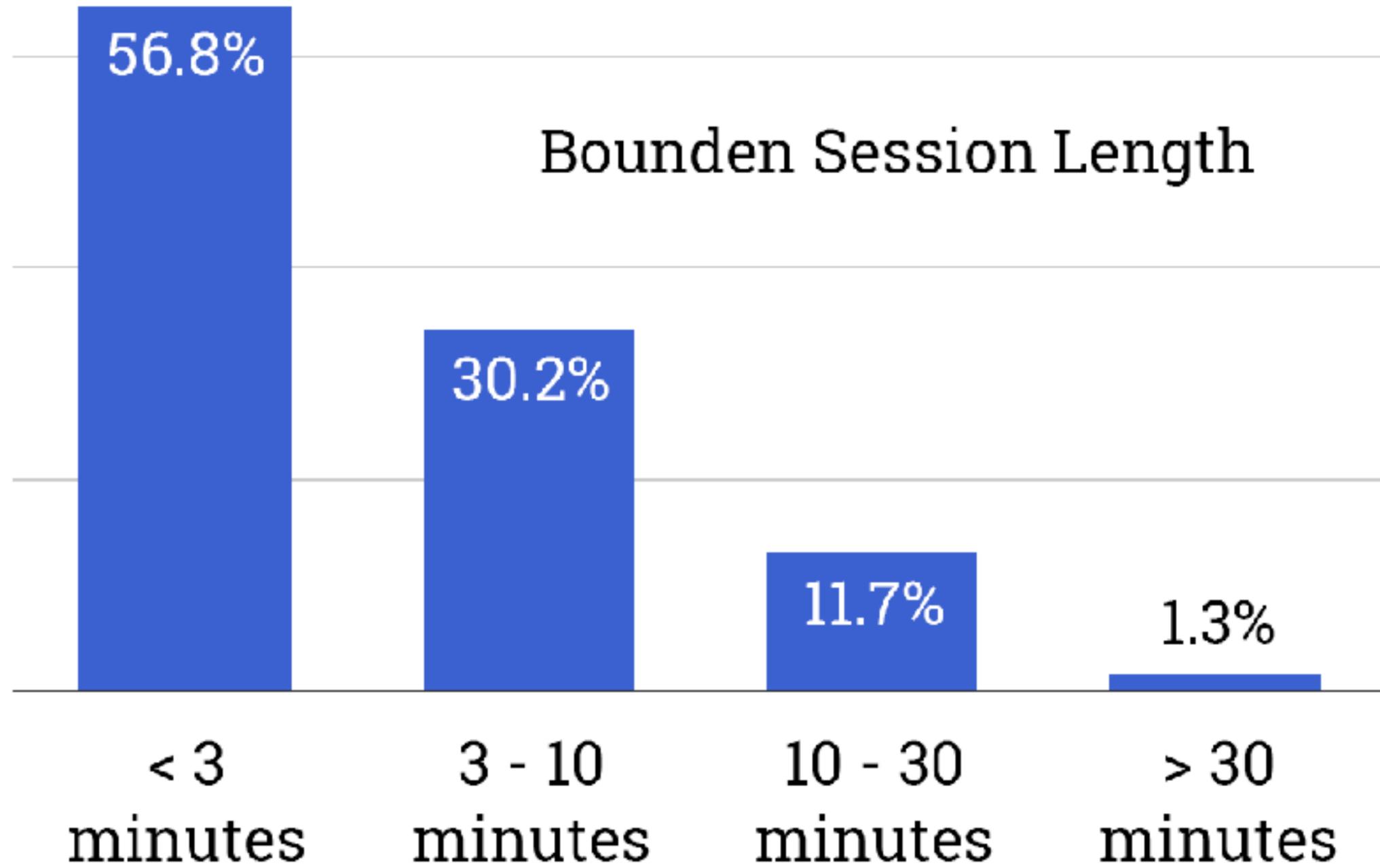


1. (Physical) location





Find 7 more targets to
unlock the next area.





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Playtest in a setting that fits your game

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2. People

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[stock photo of wonderful nerds]

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It's easy to miss
bottlenecks entirely
depending on who's testing.



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People are different;
playtest with everyone.

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coworkers
other game developers
into-games friends
not-into-games friends
family
young / old
people from different cultural backgrounds
fans / online community
etc.



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3. Your introduction

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“Okay, so, [game] is a...”



Don't tell people what to do.
Don't explain the story.
Don't explain what's missing.
Don't explain the controls.
Don't explain the interface.
Don't explain anything.



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Do tell people the game isn't done yet.

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4. Surface Problems

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BONUS



BONUS



BONUS



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Surface Problems

obvious & neglected

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Make every playtest about the
experience as a whole.

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5. Game

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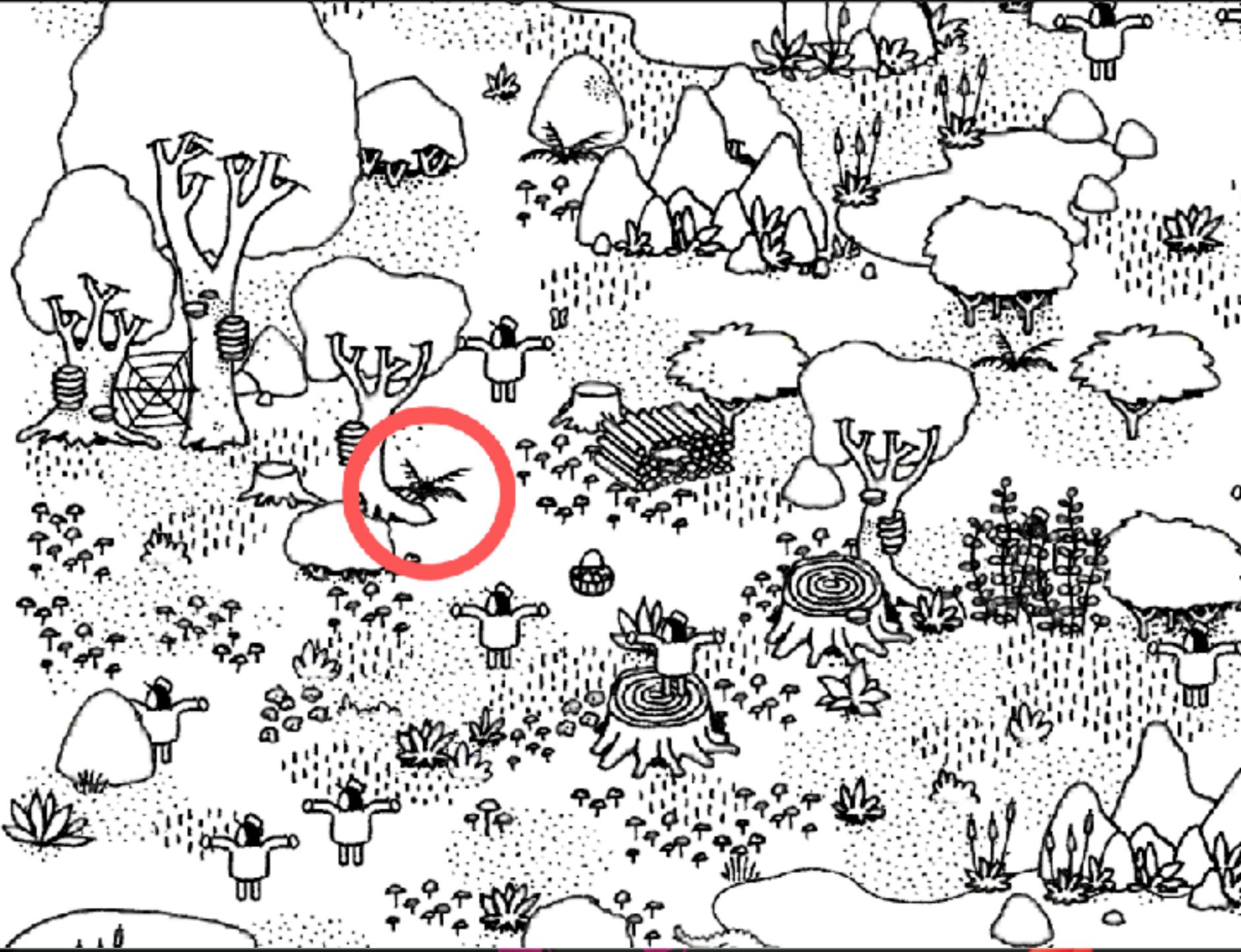


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SPIDER
IN BUSH?!



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Make 1-minute changes
in between builds.

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6. What testers say



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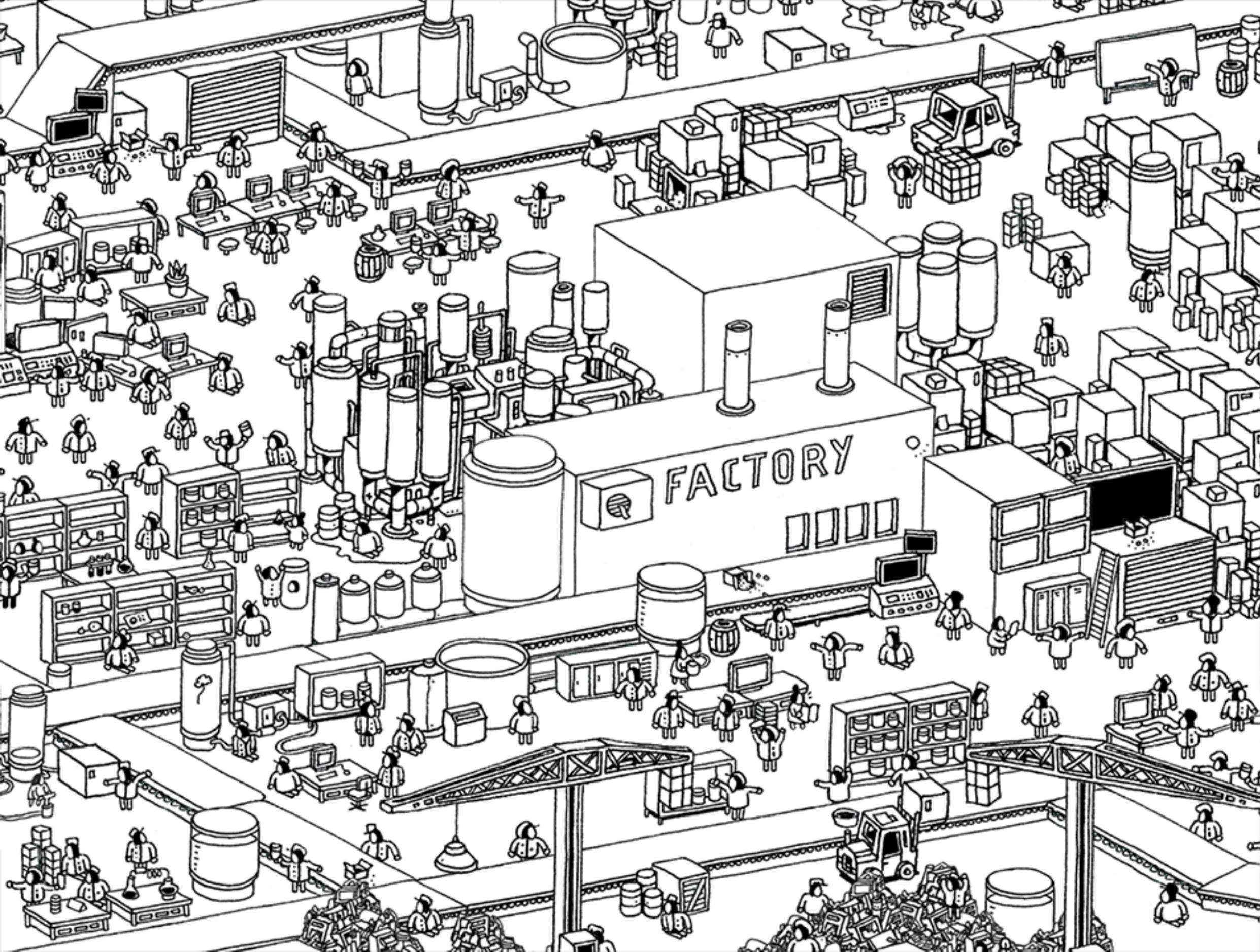
bla bla bla bla bla

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Find:

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- 

3 / 12 found



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Second hand information
can be a huge distraction.

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Filter feedback, always.

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7. Surveys

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What do you think of level 3?





What do you think of level 3?
“I didn’t like level 3 because it was
too difficult. I would make John
easier to find.”



I loved the third area where there weren't any targets, but I wish there were some things to click on that didn't affect the guy.

I enjoyed the animations between areas.

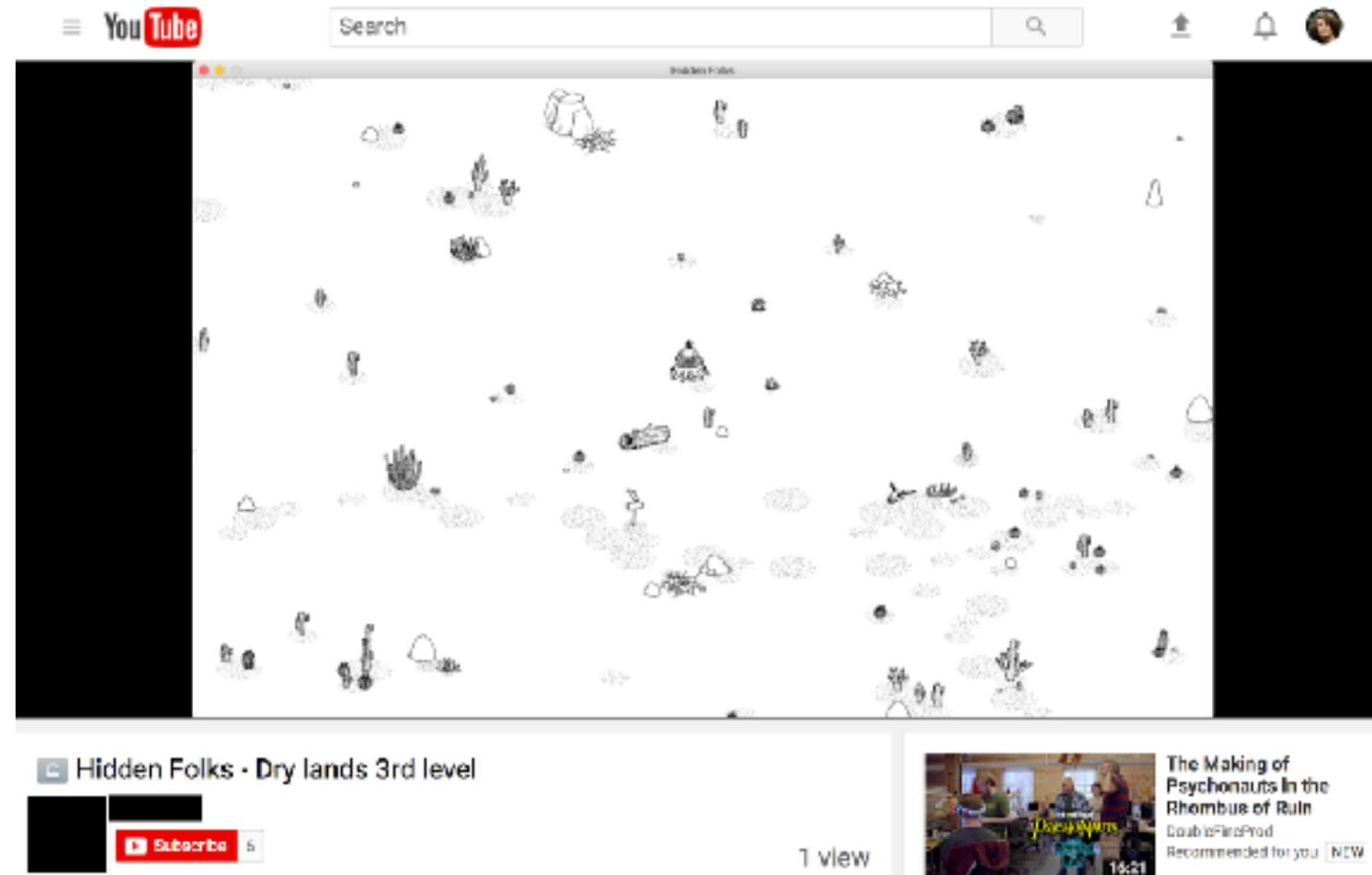
I think some of the more frustrating targets are ones that look very similar to other things, such as the spider that likes fungus flies.

I don't think I'm missing any options.

One thing that I found was that repeatedly clicking things played a lot of overlapping sounds, which didn't sound so great.

Looking forward to continued playtime and the eventual release!

VS





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No surveys. No questionnaires. Ever.

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8. Online playtesting



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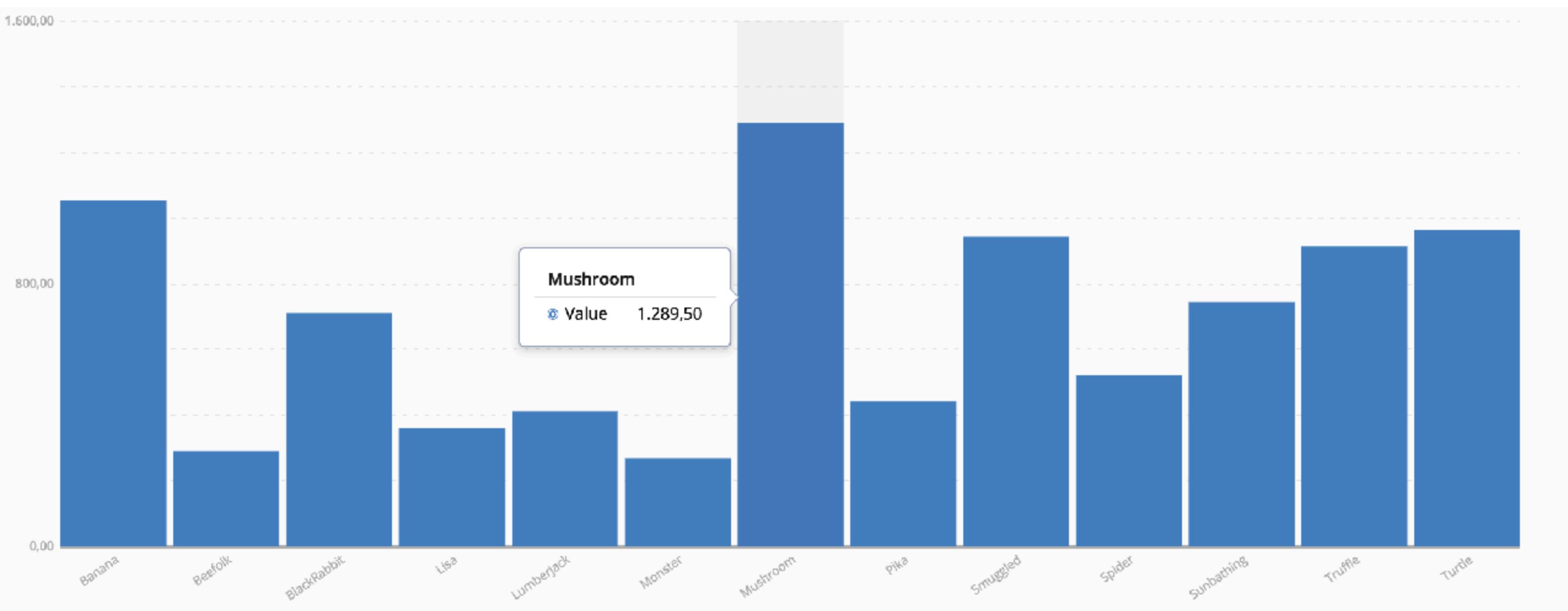
Written feedback from
online playtests: don't.

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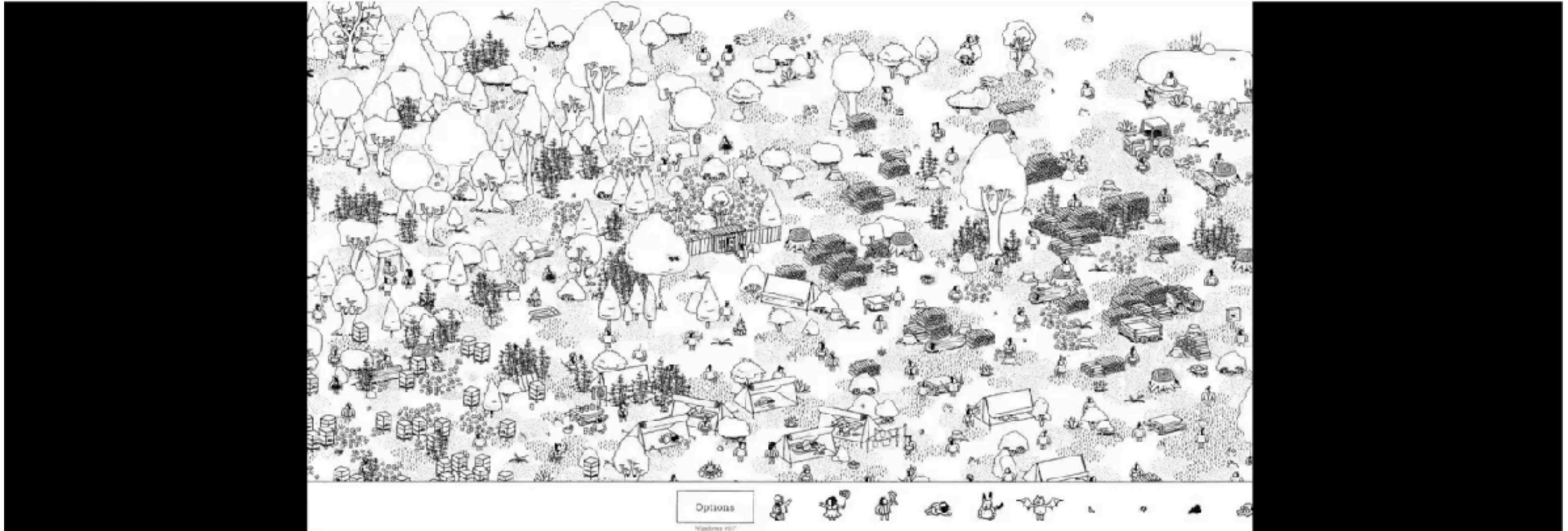
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PLAYTESTING A BAD GAME



Andrew Gleeson

Subscribe 16

4 views



The Making of Psychonauts in the Rhombus of Ruin

DoubleFineProd

Recommended for you NEW

16:21



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How to organise playtests with minimal effort?

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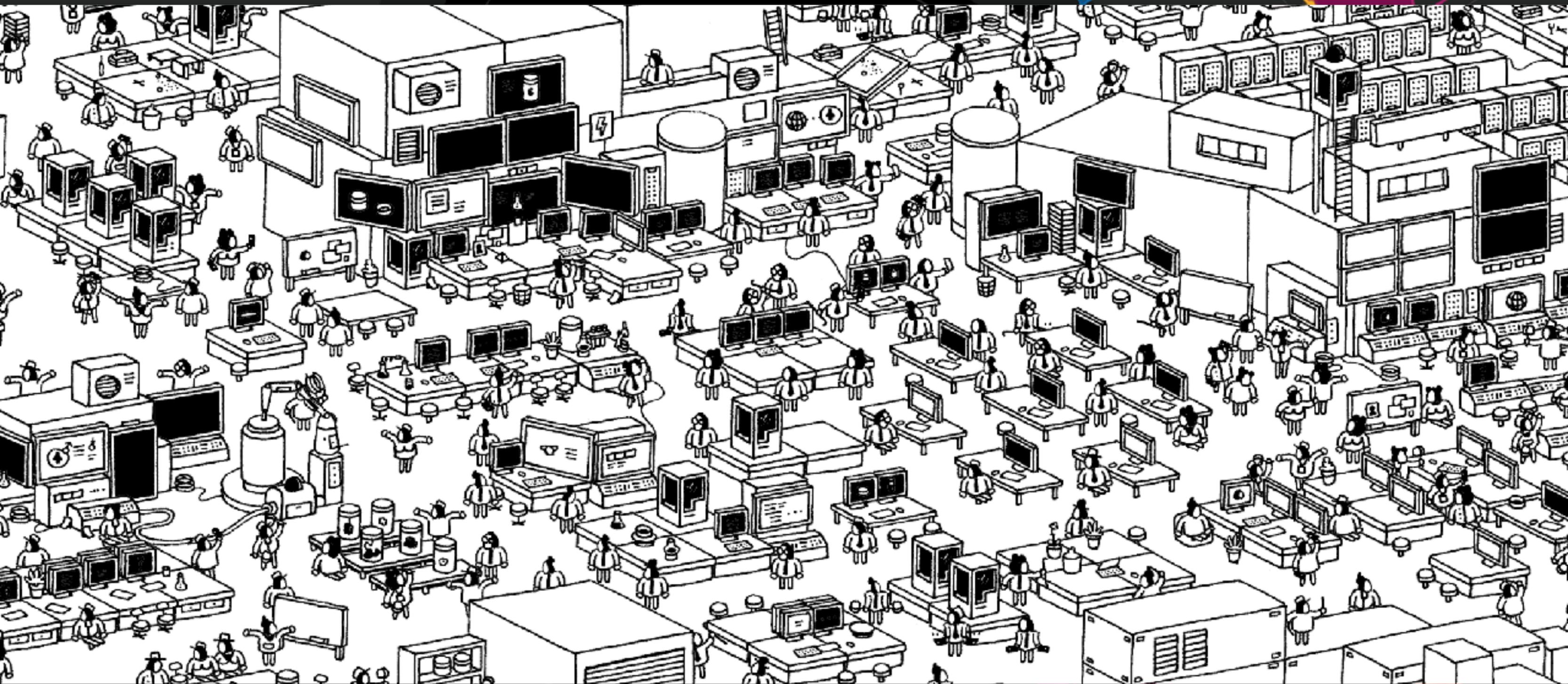
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Playtest v0.1 through v1.0.
(not just v0.8 and v0.9)



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Playtesting overhead

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implemented major feature / content
implemented minor features / content
events



- keeping a spreadsheet of testers,
- writing a bunch of email templates,
- putting follow-up dates on my agenda.



Initiate an offline playtest:
1. send texts or emails.



Initiate online playtests:
1. send template emails.
2. set a reminder.



Thank you for subscribing to playtest Hidden Folks! We really appreciate the effort and look forward to hear your feedback!!

Some tips before you start playing:

- Your feedback comes across best if you record your screen + voice, and upload it to youtube as an **unlisted video**. Seeing what you do and hearing what comes to mind when you play is SUPER valuable to us! (If you don't know how to record your screen + voice, this 4 minute video by Adriaan explains how: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sJt2TDqmR7c>)
- If you're really not in the mood or unable to make a recording, obviously feedback in any other form is always welcome.
- Because we're iterating on the game ridiculously fast, your feedback is most useful if you can play the game within the next 7 days or so... but don't rush it! Play the game at your own pace!

The sort of feedback we're looking for:

- What do you think of the stories and the hints? Are there interactions you expected but weren't there? Which targets were too easy or too hard to find? Anything else that comes to mind?

To install the game:

1. Redeem your Steam code: 20E5P-KF5W0-JQXHX
2. Right click on Hidden Folks > Properties > Betas > Enter code: ipromisetosendfeedback



physical playtests: 100% response

online playtests:

30% response < 7 days

+30% response after reminder



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Alternative playtesting structures

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Playtesting Bounden: every other day.

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Impromptu Fingle playtests at parties

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playdev.club

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Playtest in the right setting.

Playtest with everyone.

Don't explain anything.

Always playtest the whole experience.

Make those 1-minute changes.

Filter feedback, always.

No surveys, no questionnaires, ever.

Try getting gameplay + audio recordings.

Make email templates & make initiating a playtest easy.



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