



WHEN TOMORROW RUNS OUT

Narrative game · Speculative Interactive Experience · Interactive storytelling

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mmexport1766846963284.mp4?rlkey=ws4ufagjkfd55hjzl22czsg&dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/yqub0ova8r6rvq05c1you/mmexport1766846963284.mp4?rlkey=ws4ufagjkfd55hjzl22czsg&dl=0)**

When Tomorrow Runs Out is a narrative-driven interactive game set in a near future where brain-computer interfaces can preserve copies of human consciousness beyond the body.

The story follows Sasha, who loses her closest friend, Frida, yet refuses to accept that their last meeting has already passed. After Frida's death, Sasha uses the brainwave data Frida left behind to create a digital ghost and places it within Orpheus—a simulated world that functions as a digital cemetery. Powered by a superstring computer, Orpheus allows people to see how many future encounters remain between themselves and others, subtly altering their behavior as they are drawn into repeatedly “keeping company” with a presence that is no longer truly human.

Through exploration, choice-making, and branching paths shaped by emotional values, players confront questions of identity, control, and the human desire to rehearse everyday partings indefinitely—suggesting that many farewells occur quietly, long before we recognize them as final.

Inspiration



• **Background**

In *Frieren: Beyond Journey's End*, Frieren is an elf who has lived for over **thousands** of years. She meets the hero Himmel and travels with him for ten years to defeat the Demon King. After their victory, they part ways for decades. To an elf, ten years pass in the blink of an eye, so she doesn't think much of their farewell—until they meet again, and Himmel is already eighty-three, nearing the end of his life.



• **Influence**

One line from the character Vierabel deeply moved me: “A **final farewell** doesn't only happen in **death**. We have already seen many people for the **last time** in our lives.”

Enlightenment

- **Cherish the Encounter**
As a member of the Elven race, Frieren had no concept of death or separation. Therefore, she did not **cherish the time** she spent with Simel, which became a regret for many who watched this comic.
- **The Predictability of Encounters**
The audience began to imagine how they would have interacted with each other **if Frieren** had realized before Simmer's death that Simmer's lifespan was very short.
- **Human Responses to the Number of Encounters**
This will prompt us to reflect on reality: **When it is anticipated that there will be future interactions, what kind of behaviors do people tend to exhibit?**



Background Research

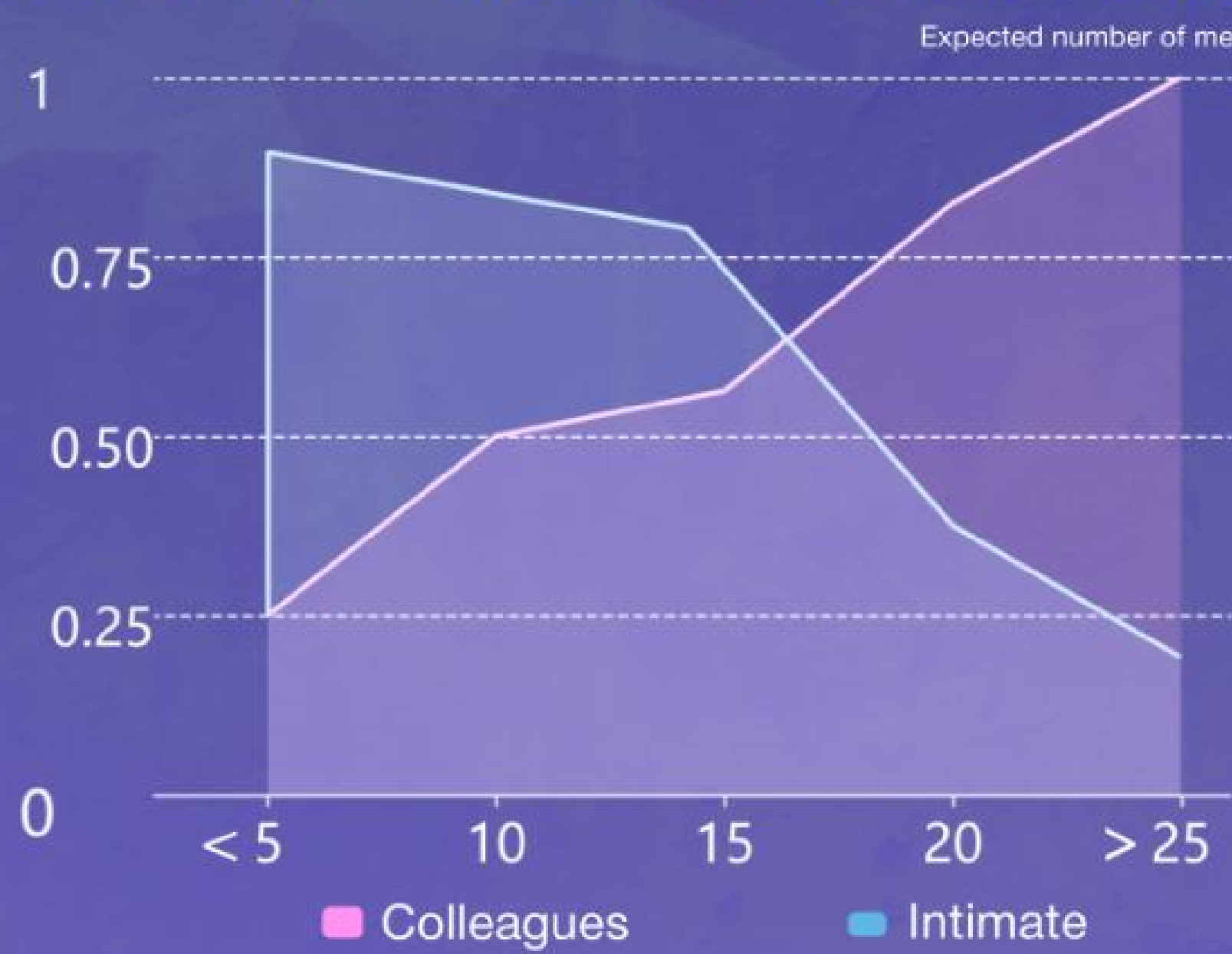
Social Phenomenon



• Phenomenon 1	• Phenomenon 2	• Phenomenon 3
When individuals anticipate future interactions with their collaborators, they tend to behave more politely and responsibly.	When individuals interact with close others whom they meet on a daily basis, they tend to assume a higher level of emotional tolerance from them.	As individuals perceive a decrease in the anticipated frequency of future interactions with close others, they tend to value and cherish these relationships.
Social exchange theory	Intimacy spillover effect	Relational threat sensitivity

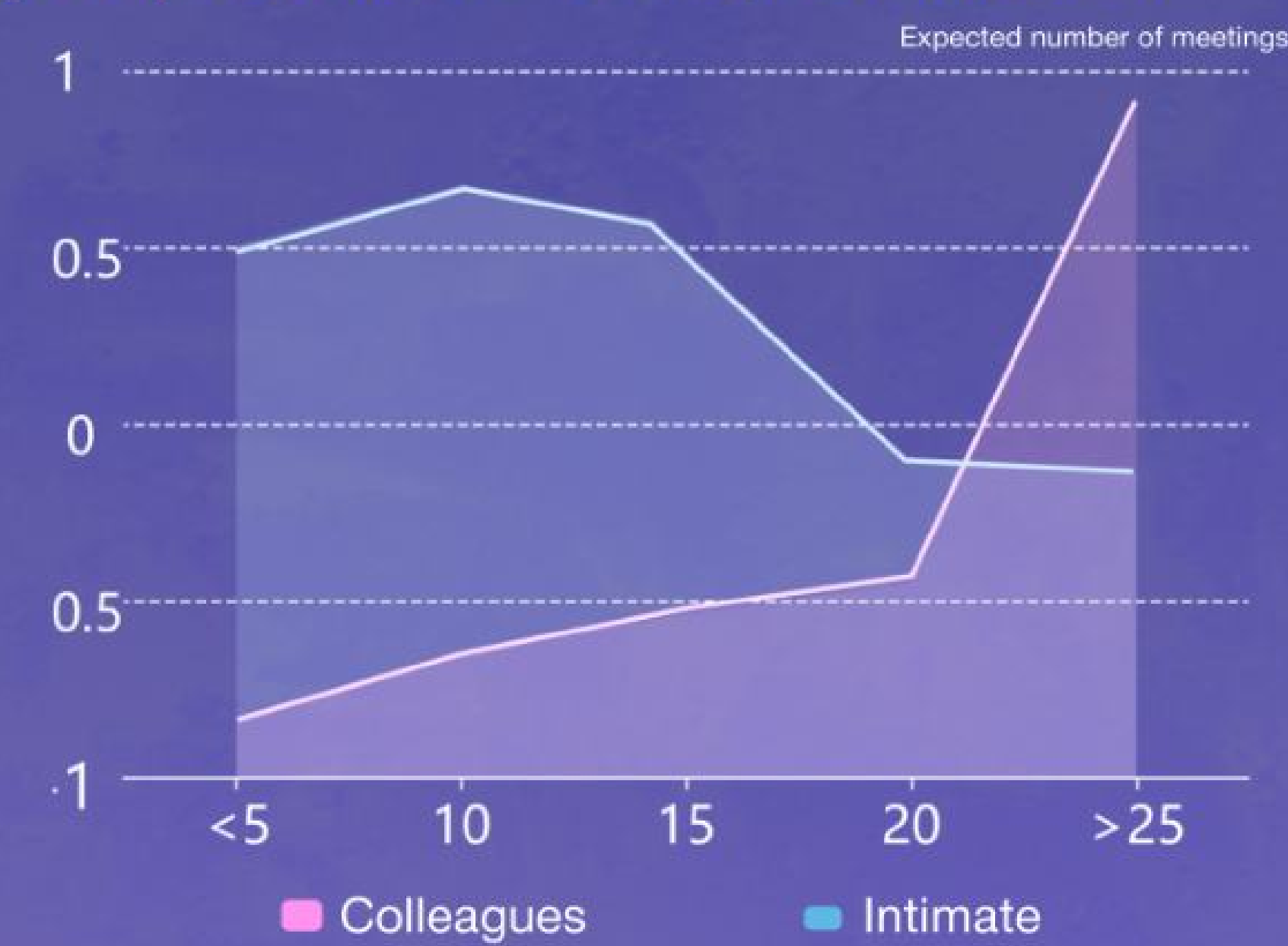
Reference: Van Lange, P. A. M., Klapwijk, A., & Van Munster, L. M. (2011). How the shadow of the future might promote cooperation. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 14(6), 857–870.

How the shadow of the future might promote cooperation?



• **Cooperation Rate**

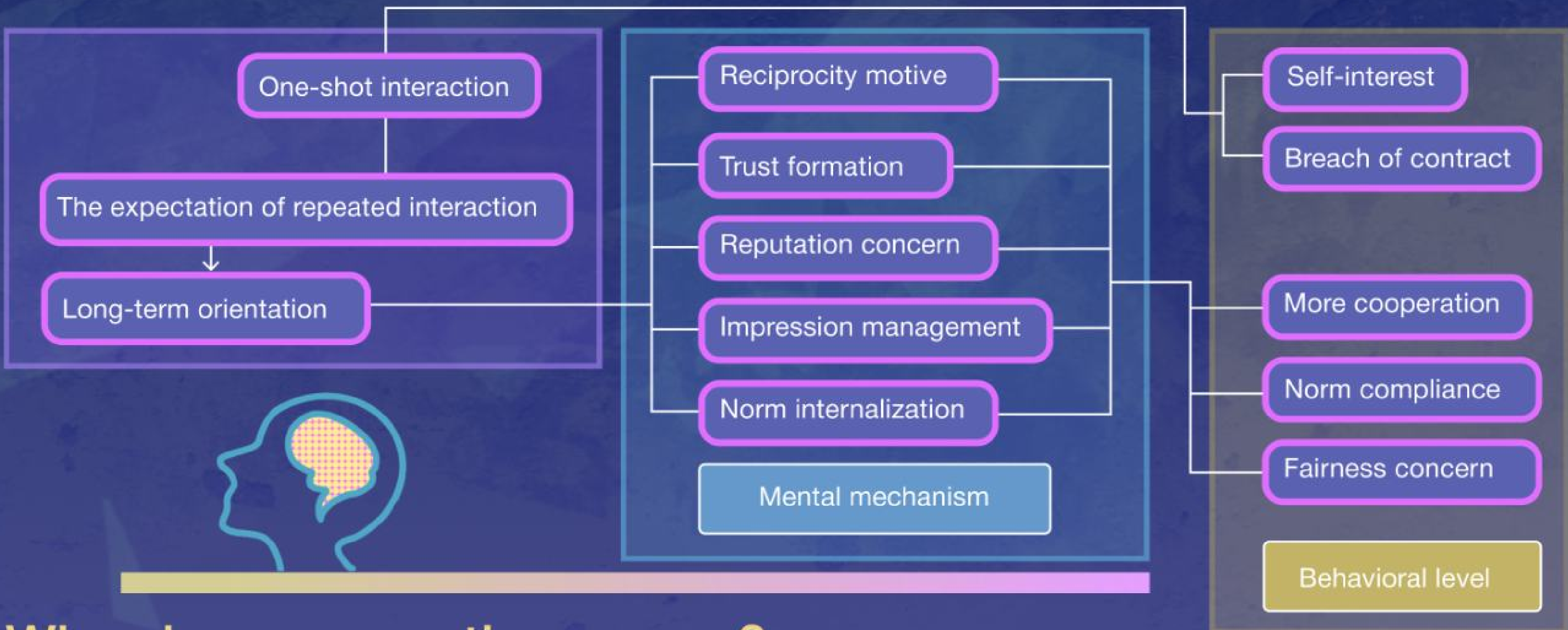
The expected repeated interaction and the promoting effect of cooperative behavior in social dilemmas



• **Degree of Harmony**

However, for close individuals, an increase in the expected number of future meetings has led to a decline in the level of harmony.

How cognition and emotions will be redistributed?



Why choose narrative games?

• **Immersive traits**

Resonate with reality

Incorporation

Immersion

• **Player Involvement Model**

• **Involvement dimensions**

- kinesthetic
- spatial
- shared
- narrative
- emotional
- ludic

• Social traits

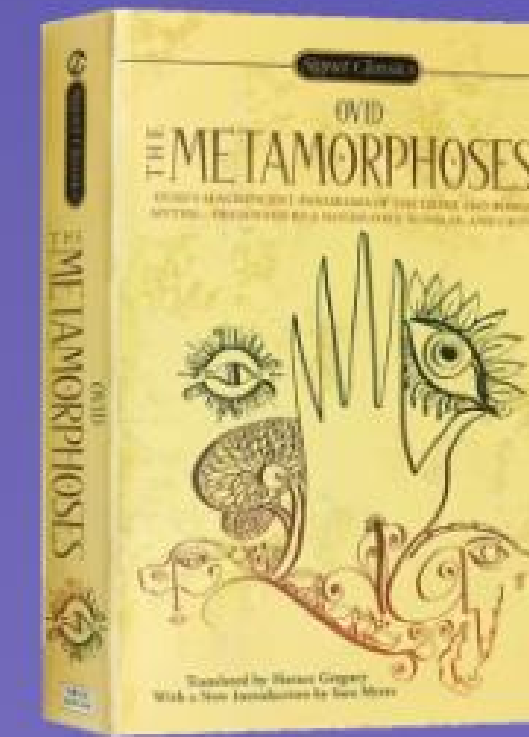
Games as Mirrors and Laboratories of Society.

In this model, the author distinguishes two time dimensions: the macro time (offline, preparations, expectations, etc. outside of the game) and the micro time (real-time interactions of players within the game)

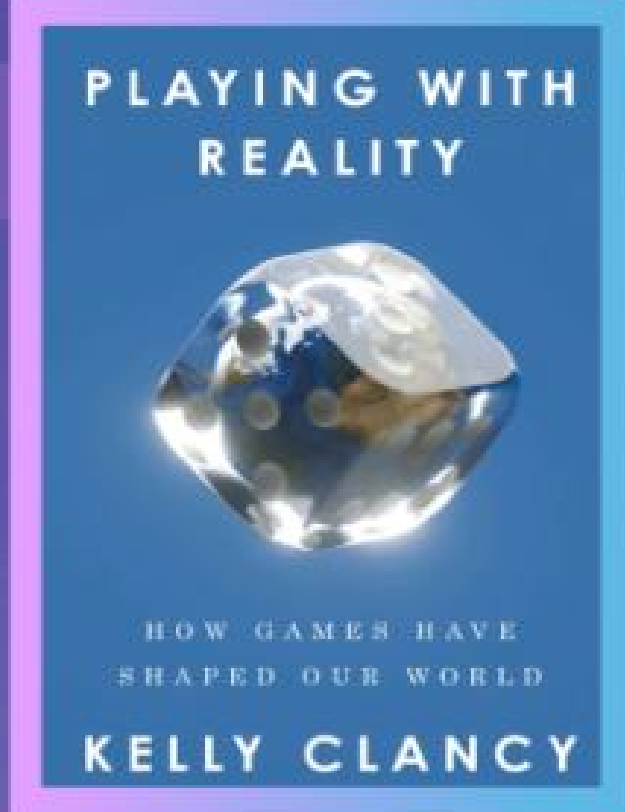
Other references



• In this book, the author has created a world where all actions are transparent, and all the crimes of everyone are exposed.

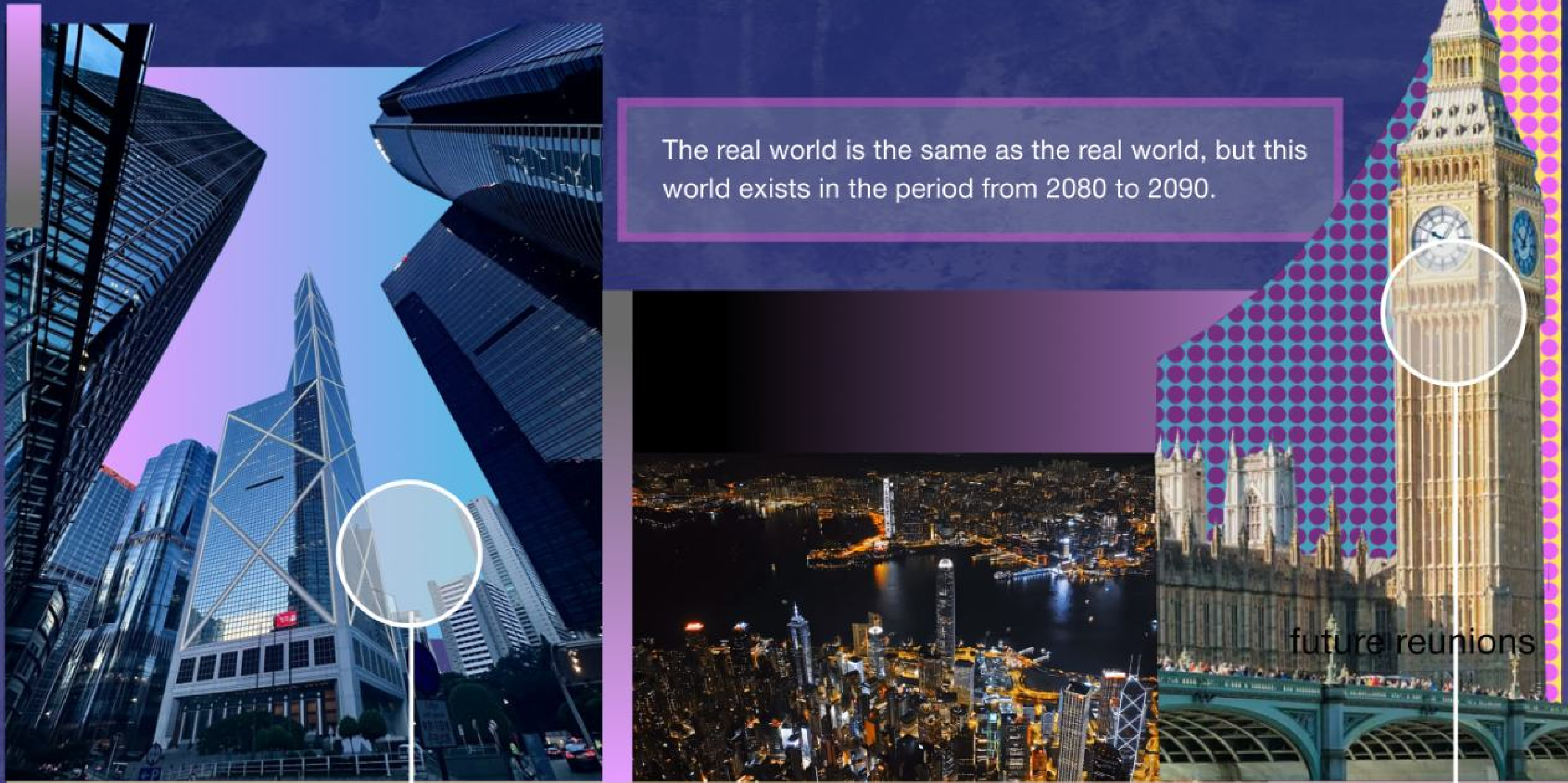


• The storyline of this narrative game is based on the tragic story of Orpheus and Eurydice from Greek mythology.



Worldview

“Real World”-Overall atmosphere



The bustling and technologically advanced city in the year 2087 - Hong Kong - where the story begins with two friends who grew up together, Then Frida went to the UK and studied at Imperial College London.

“Orpheus world”-Overall atmosphere

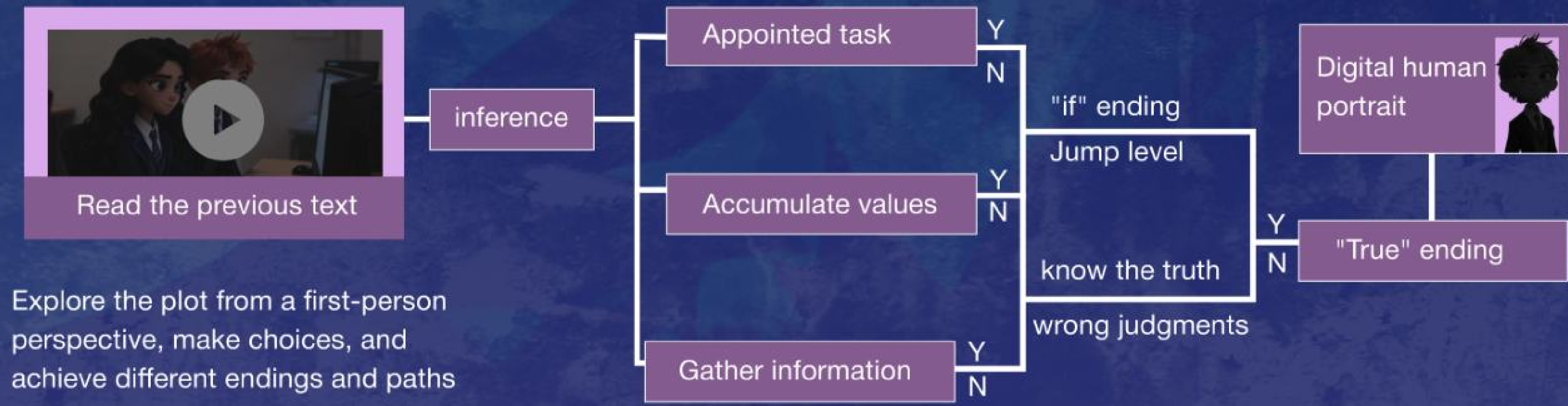


Knowing that they wouldn't see each other again, the colleagues began to make derogatory remarks about one another.

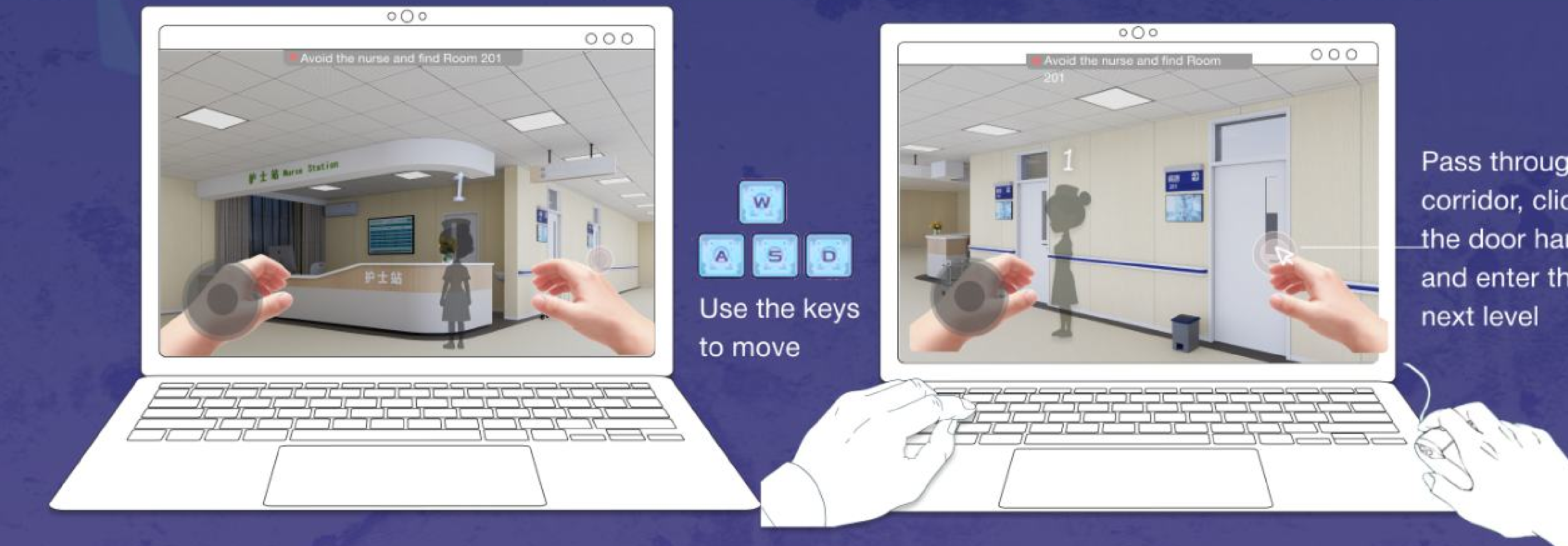
The child and the parents, because they knew they would see each other every day, ignored each other's feelings.

Game Form-

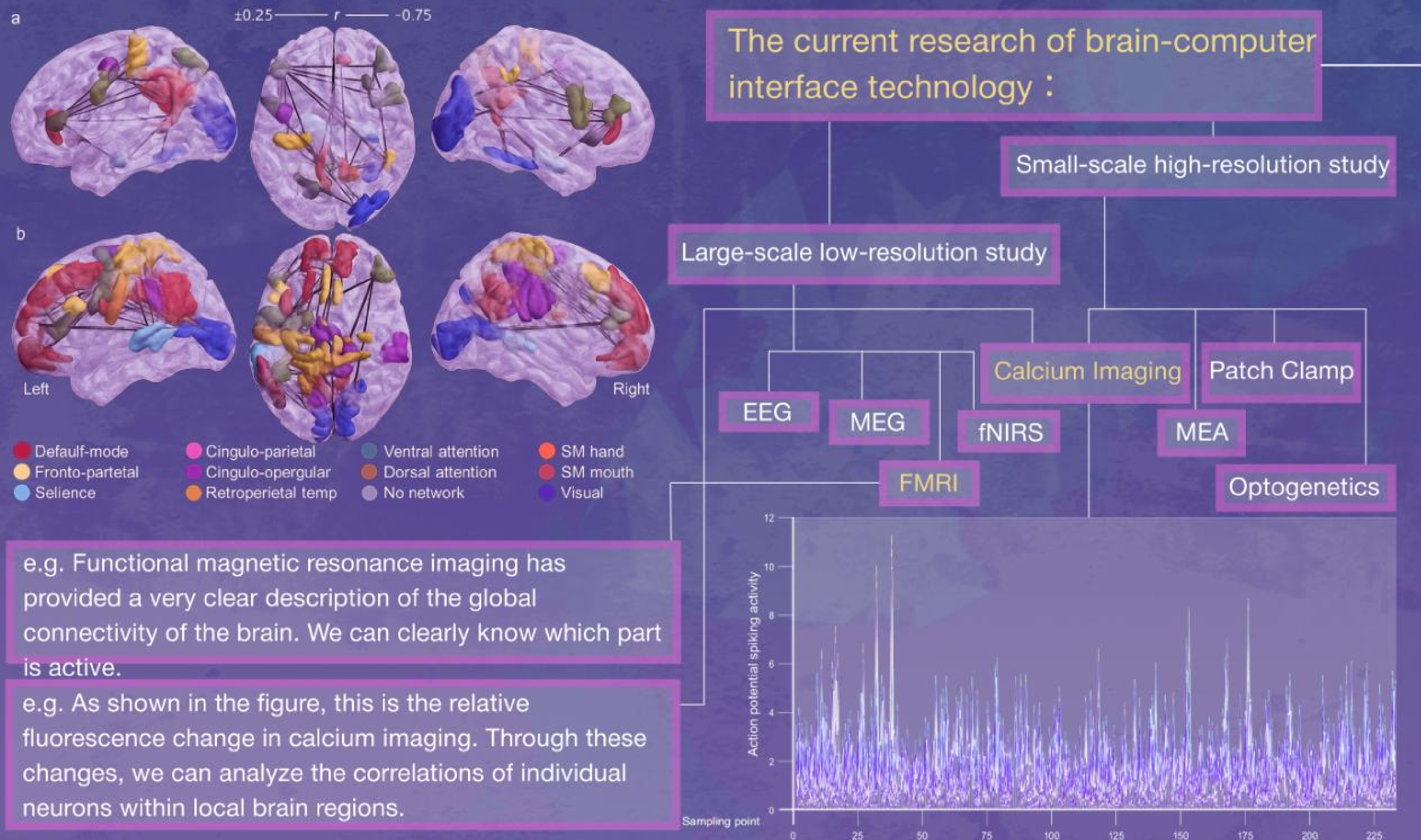
Players navigate a world where future encounters are quantified, making everyday interactions a series of ethical negotiations.



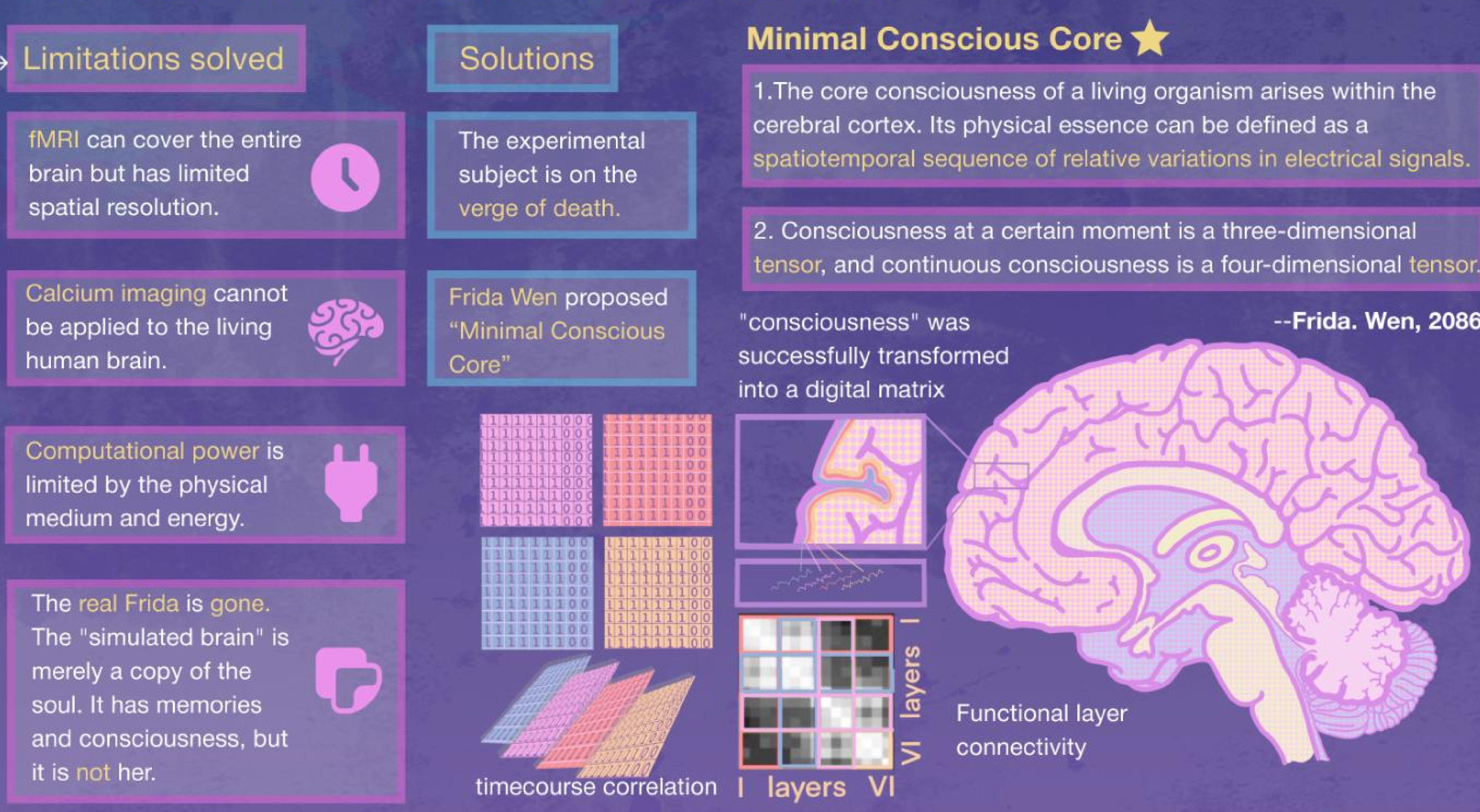
Appointed task-- take the first level as an example



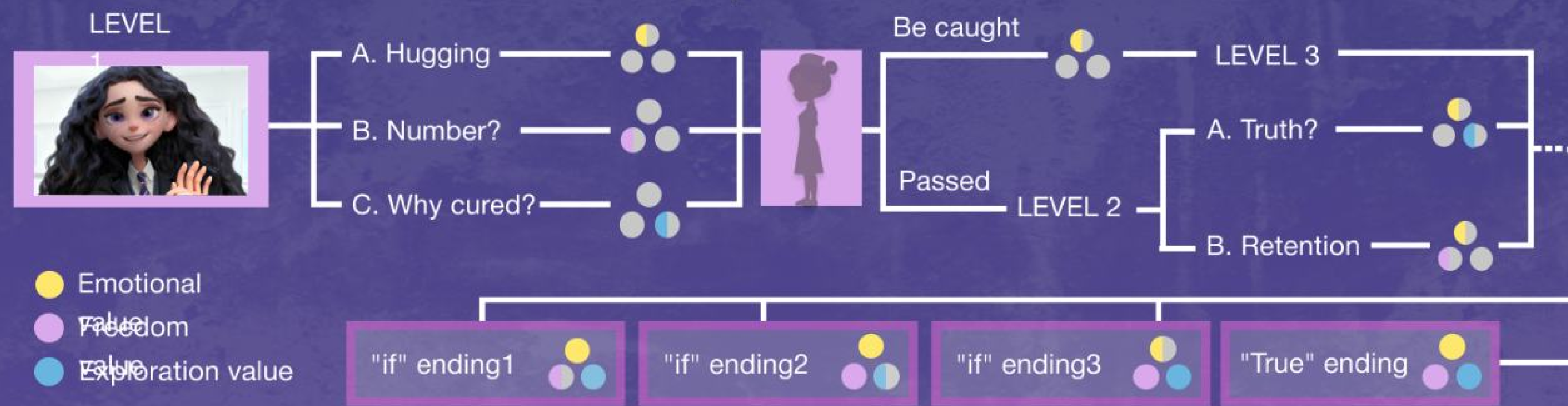
“Real World”-Technical background



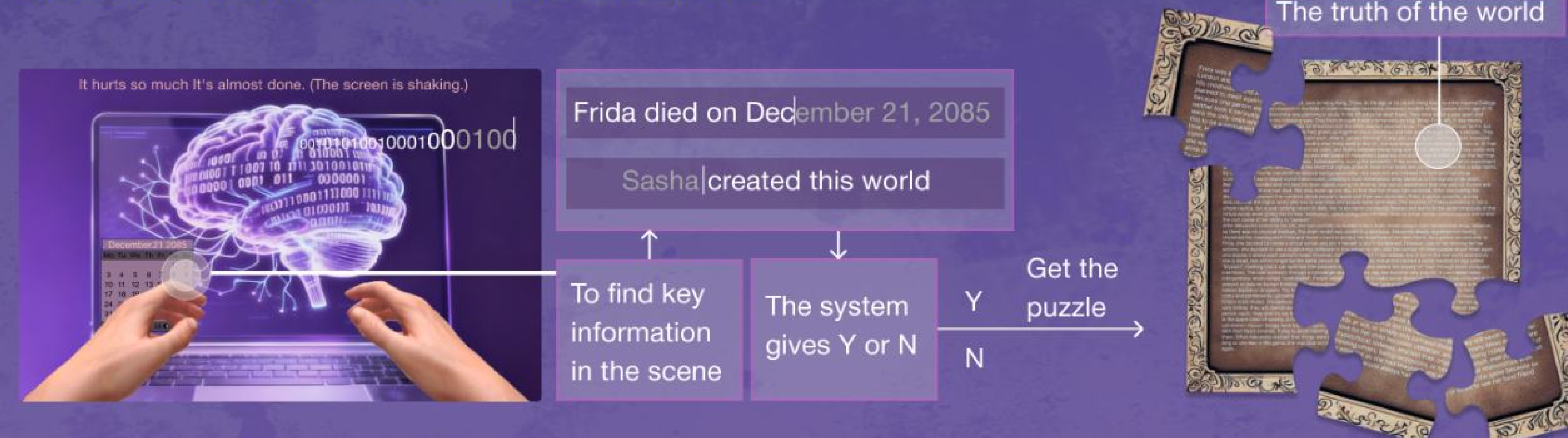
“Orpheus World”-Technical background



Accumulate values-- take the first level as an example

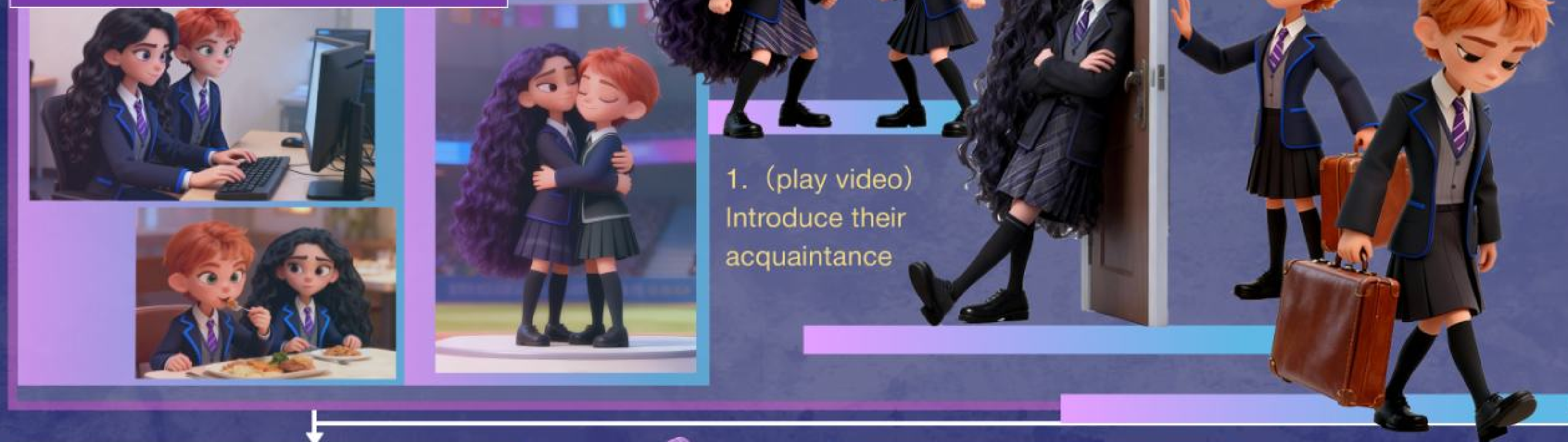


Gather information-- take the first level as an example



Story Line

I.The Digital Dawn



1. (play video)
Introduce their
acquaintance

2.The player
struggled (by
following the
instructions in the
document and
pressing several
numbers and the
Enter key on the
computer screen)



Enter

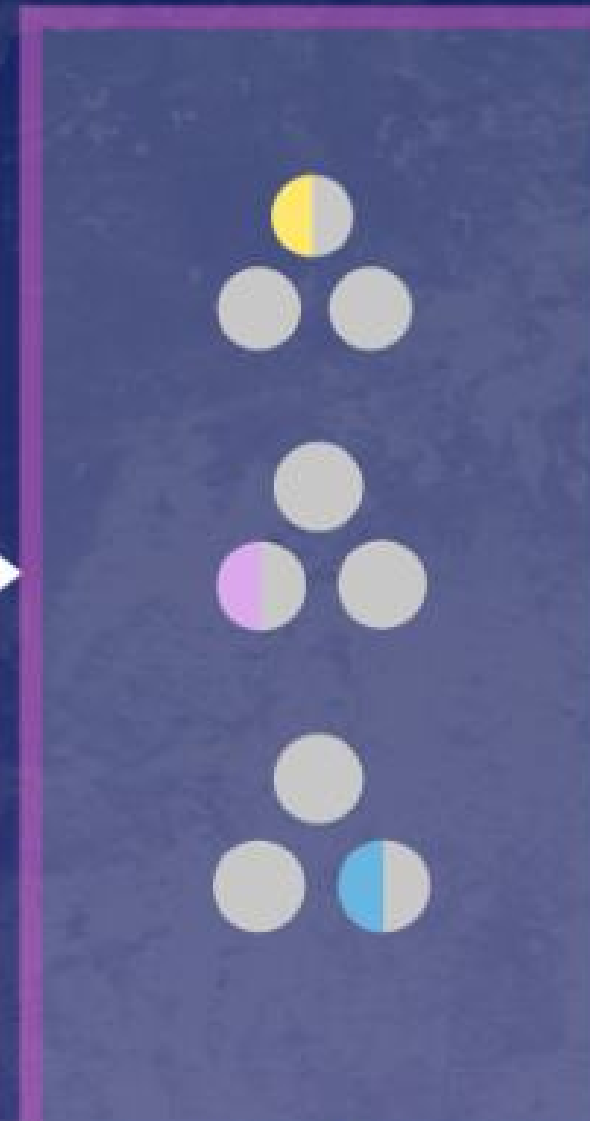


3.Suddenly, the
screen went black
for about five
seconds. At that
moment, the
ticking sound from
the ward began to
be heard.



5.The player observes the surroundings
and makes a choice:

- A. 【Choose to continue hugging Sasha
and comfort her emotions】
- B. 【Lightly pat her shoulder and ask
what the number on her head is】
- C. 【Lightly pat and push away Sasha,
then look for the medical staff to ask
why her illness has been cured】



II.Harmony Breaks

Frida, stop messing around for me.
Make sure to **get everyone out of this
cemetery**, only you....(fade away)

Professor Mikhail is about to die in
reality. Your choose is:

- A. Reluctant but say goodbye properly
- B. Try to copy his consciousness to
save him



Sasha, this isn't her, you know.



Upon arriving at the
professor's ward, the
player enters Level 2



The player was driven
out of the hospital by the
nurse and directly
entered level three

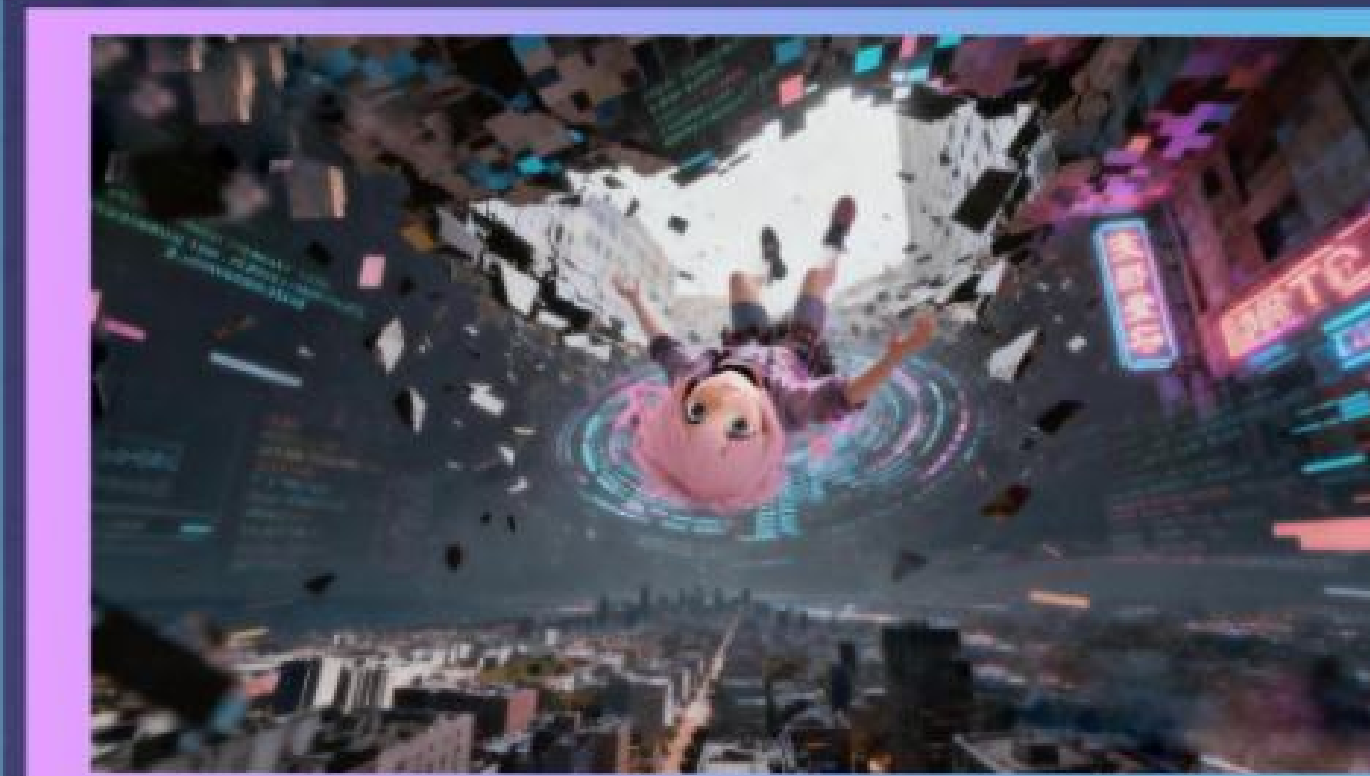
She is patrolling in
the corridor.

Please avoid her
when entering the
201ward!



The head nurse with the number 1
on her cap said to you that you
could be discharged from the
hospital. Professor Mikhail is dying.
You want to go and visit him.
(Dialogue between the player and
the head nurse) The head nurse
coldly **refused** your visit request.

V. Beyond the Underworld



However, at the last moment,
your consciousness and
Isabella's consciousness were
swapped due to the interference
device given to you by the
professor



III.Gaze of the Creator

The professor
passed away. You
and Sasha walked
out of the hospital
with a heavy heart
and strolled down
the street.



Finding1 : The location is incorrect.



The name of this
store... In **my
memory**, it was in
Hong Kong. How
could it end up
here ?

Finding2 : Why is the date
broadcast on TV so early?



Television report: December
21, 2085, renowned
bioinformatician Frida. Gu
passed away. Before that,
she published the famous
Minimal Conscious Core

Me? Dead?

Finding3 : Holographic display
screen? how advanced technology



Frida, why are
you here?



IV.Echoes Beneath the Code



Sasha angrily
pushed Isabella
out of the real
world.



The player makes a choice:
A. Can human energy support
superstring computers?
B. Tell me the truth. I don't want to
learn about your affairs from others.
C. I want to go back to the real world
and tell me how to get out, Sasha

Isabella: She has used all the
computing power of this world to
build the world of Orpheus. She
deceived everyone.



Sasha: (interrupting)You
entered my "Orpheus
world", and I used a
superstring computer to
predict how many times
people would see each
other again.

Player's response:

- A. Isabella, What's the number
above your head?
- B. I don't know why I'm here.
- C. Tell me, Isa, I had a terminal
illness before, right? How did I
suddenly get better?

(Recall video) It seems that you have
collaborated on a project at Imperial College



VI. Never look back



The player rushed to the familiar
classroom and saw Sasha.



She is replicating someone's physical
consciousness.



ENDING1-Goodbye for now



A. The player hugged Sasha and asked her to restore the world to its original state.



Sasha and Frida hugged each other and said a heartfelt goodbye.



Eventually, the people in the real world were liberated.

ENDING2-A Tomorrow That Never Comes

B. The player rushed forward and turned off the power supply, protecting the remaining people in the world who had not yet been controlled.



Frida impulsively forcibly shut down the hyperspace computer.



In the real world, the brains of people are damaged, and all of them die.

ENDING3-System Override

C. The player and Sasha stayed in the digital ruins together and asked Sasha to restore the real world to normal.



Sasha and Frida returned together to the virtual world



The trapped people returned to the real world.

REAL ENDING-The Silence After Memory

(The player still hasn't made a choice after 60 seconds.) The decision-making process was too slow. The player's consciousness was pulled back to the Ophelia world.



Sasha excitedly shut down the server of the Orpheus World



However, she herself was also criticized by the remaining people..

Character design

Style Setting



In "Real world",the styles of the characters

In "Orpheus",the styles of the characters

Role Modeling



Main characters



Sketch

Age: 14
Nationality: China
Height:158cm
Interest: Computer science
Linear algebra lyre



Sketch

Age: 15
Nationality: China
Height:155cm
Interest: Dissect animals,Study
Remark: A person with exceptional biological talent entered Imperial College at the age of 14.



Sketch

Age: 17
Nationality: Italy
Height:168cm
Interest: Art and design, piano, figure skate

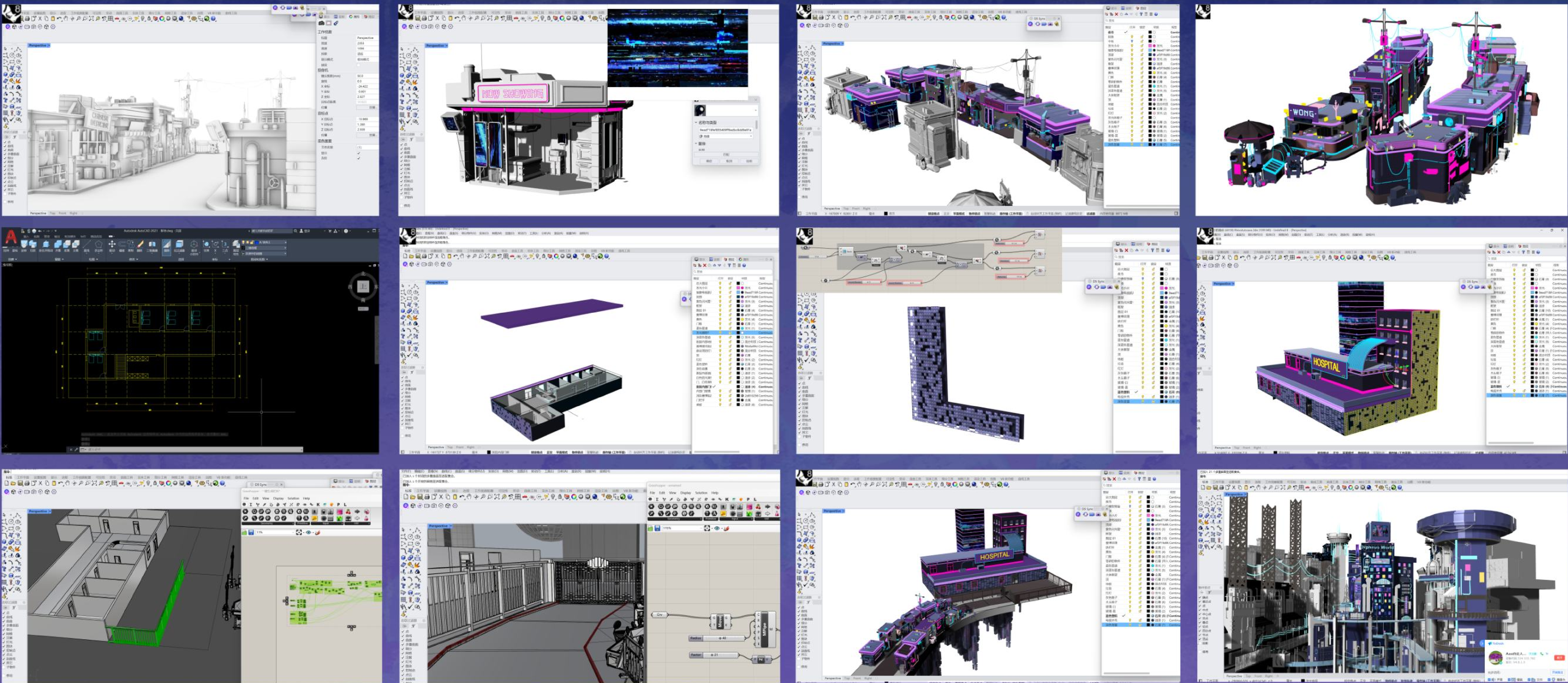


Sketch

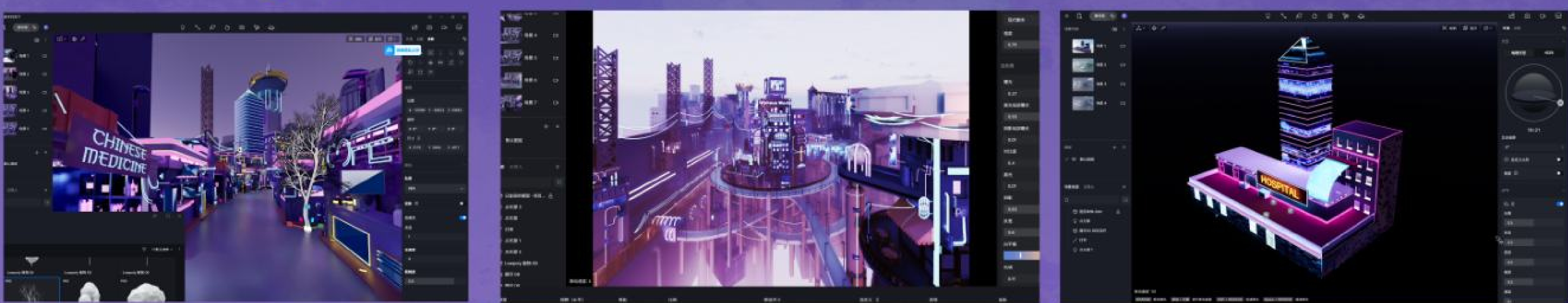
Age: 67
Nationality: Russia
Interest: Physics, philosophy, social sciences, social psychology

PROCESS

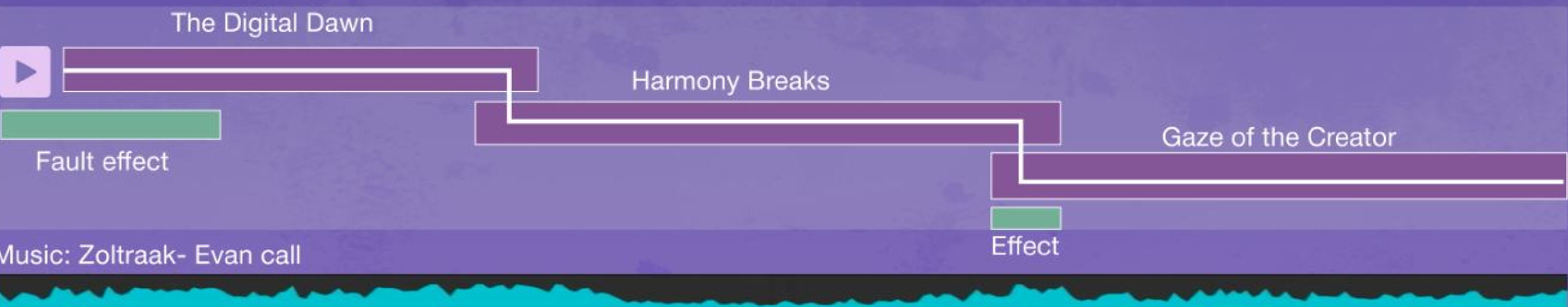
I built the model of the site using Rhino and Sktech up, rendered it with D5 renderer, and created dynamic effects with Unity 3D



Rendering process



Animations process

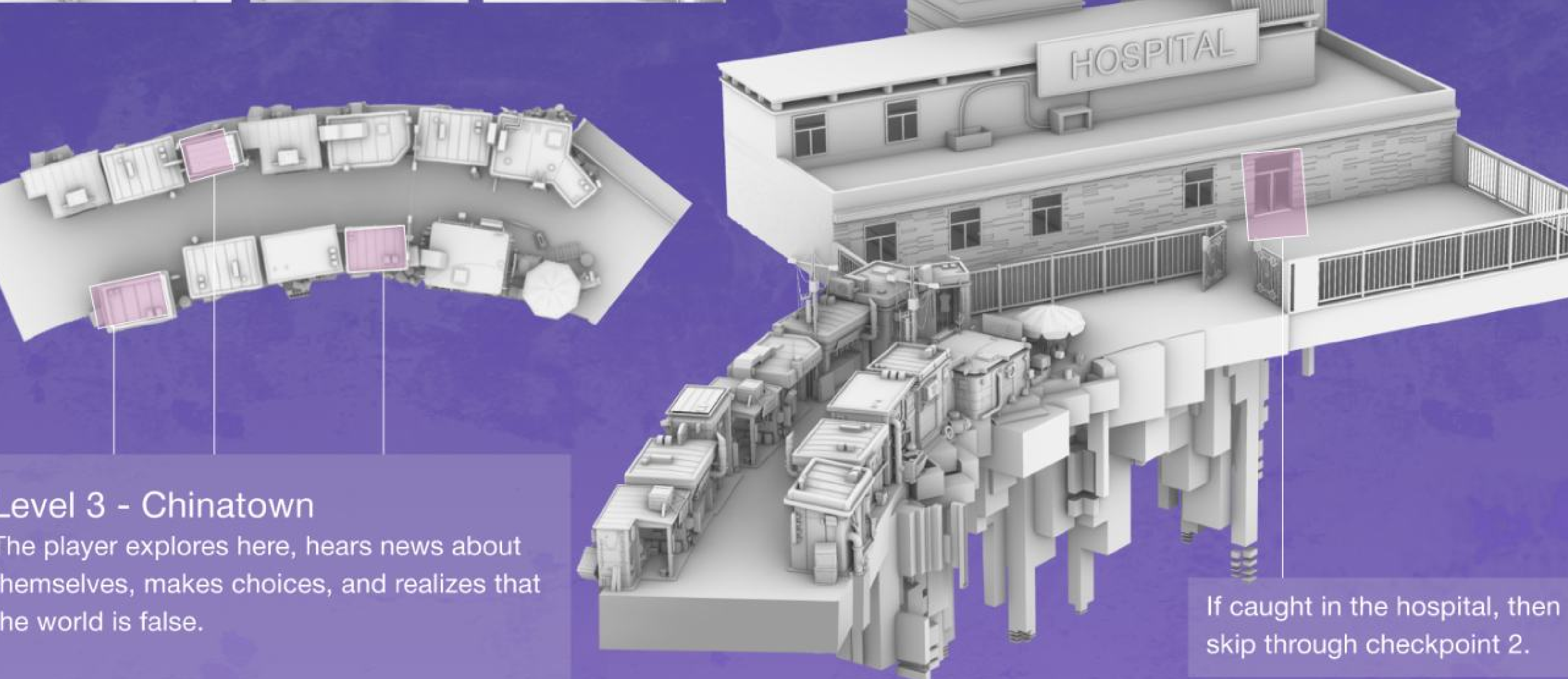


Map of the World



Level 1 - Nurse Station
Players evade the patrolling nurses and head to Intensive Care Unit 201. If caught, you will skip the second level, be expelled from the hospital and directly enter the neighborhood.

Level 2-ICU(201)
Obtaining clues through conversations with the professor



Level 3 - Chinatown
The player explores here, hears news about themselves, makes choices, and realizes that the world is false.

If caught in the hospital, then skip through checkpoint 2.

GAME OVERVIEW

The game features four distinct scenes and two memory video segments. Each scene contains numerous points that players can explore, along with mini-games that can be triggered.

• SCENE1



By exploring the world, numbers arouse the curiosity of players.

• SCENE2



Avoid hostile NPCs and reach the designated location.

• SCENE3



Obtaining crucial clues through a conversation with the professor.

• SCENE4



Explore Chinatown and complete the designated game to obtain all the clues.

The Digital Dawn---Animation of the Orpheus world

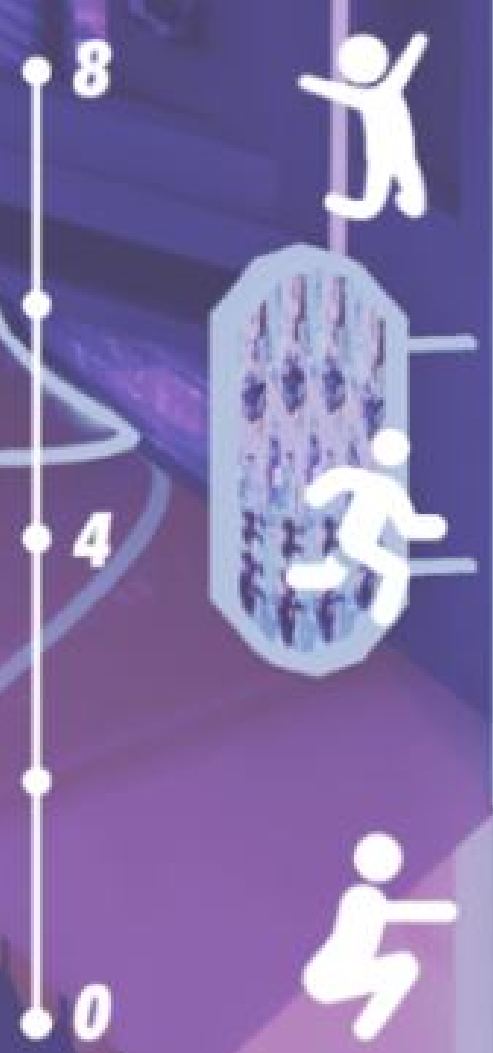


• Discovering the meaning of the numbers above people's heads

Achievement

- The Digital Dawn
- Harmony Breaks
- Gaze of the Creator
- Goodbye for now

Movement speed



• After entering the game, players will first explore the entire Orpheus world in flight mode. The world of Orpheus has a weather and day-night system, just like a real future world.



• NPCs arguing with each other while others were getting along peacefully. Through these phenomena, players began to develop curiosity about meanings of the numbers.

Nurse Station



Avoid the enemy forces and reach the ICU



• Being caught by the nurse will result in the loss of clues.



• Observation prompt, enter interaction point.

ICU



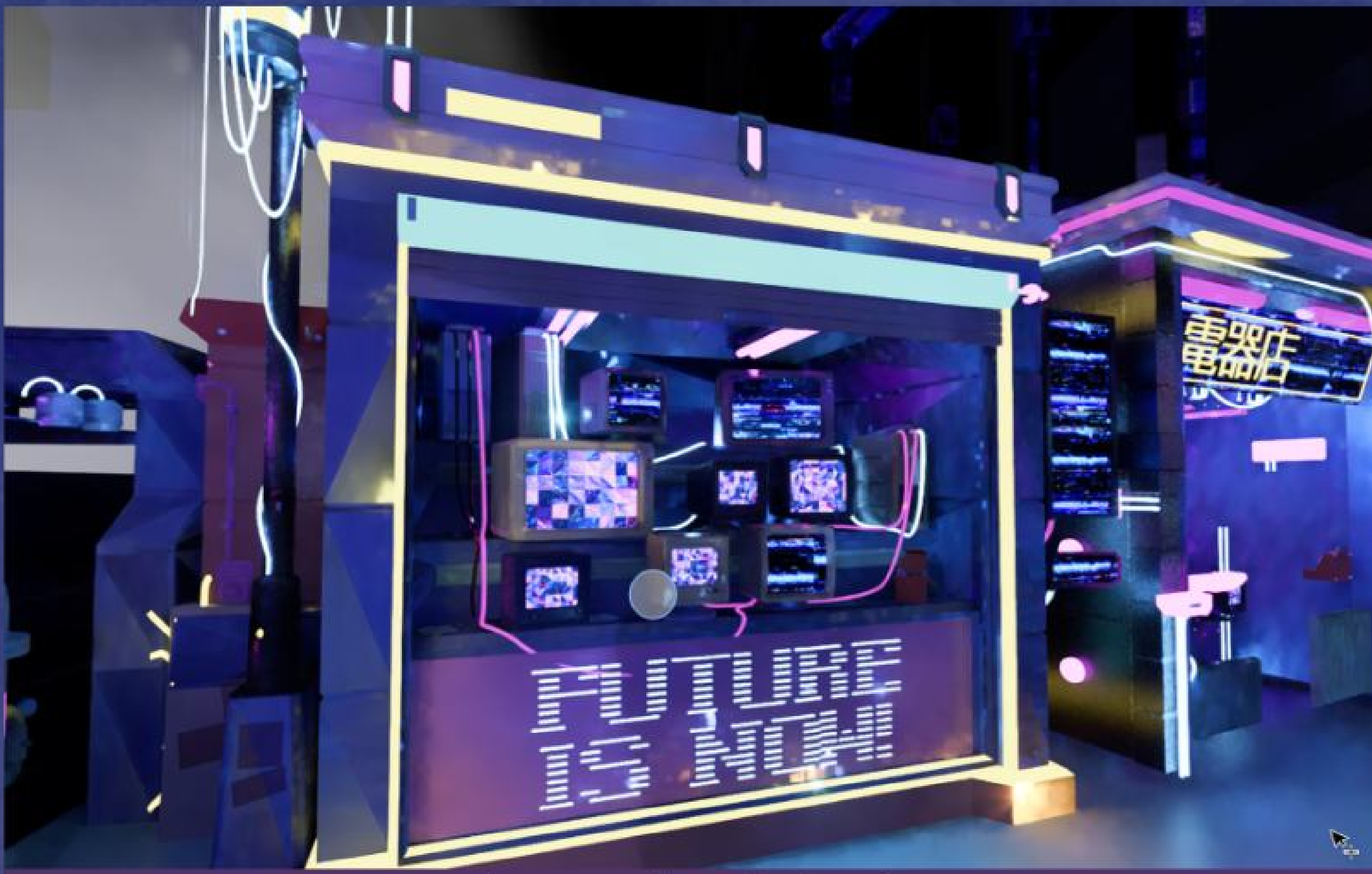
Have a conversation with the professor to obtain the item.



Exploring the truth of the world within the Chinatown



Collect all the clues and uncover the truth



• Interaction Point 1.



• Interaction Point 2.



• Interaction Point 3.

