Hi

The talk shall begin shortly!

"DEATHLOOP"'s

USER RESEARCH
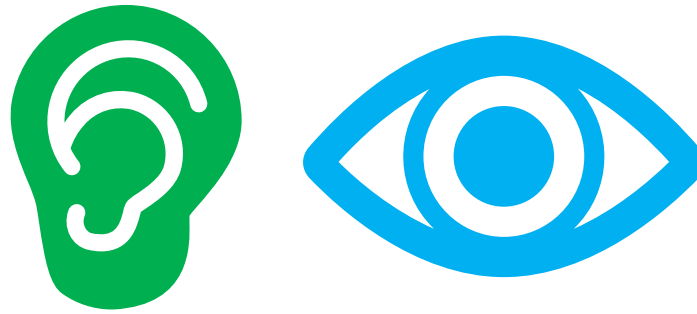USER EXPERIENCE

DEATH LOOP

(a war story)

Talk Breakdown

Who *am I?* ✅
What's *my experience?* ✅

Back to **Q3 2020** ← *TIME TRAVEL*

What **is** "DEATHLOOP"?

❖ Review a **User Research Report**
  ✓ *Look at how we reacted to it*
❖ ***Repeat***
  ✓ **User Experience Design** is *not a straight line*
  ✓ A **smart fix** to a **big issue** can reveal *problems elsewhere*
  ✓ Sometimes, the *obvious solution* to a UX issue is the **wrong one**

The
UR-UX
DeathLoop

1 Year in *40-ish* mins.

Q3 2021

Takeaways ✅
Wrap-up ✅

This talk has a Visual Component
(audio-only it *will miss a lot*)

About Me
Dana Ellen Nightingale
Campaign Director, Arkane Lyon

| Born the same year Pac-Man was released | Worked on Immersive Sim fan-sites (TTLG.com) | Earned a Master's in Architecture in 2008 | Joined Arkane as a Level Designer in 2010 | Moved to Lyon, France in 2011, which I call home |

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Moved to Lyon, France in 2011, which I call home

Came out as Transgender in Feb, 2021

About My
Game Dev Experience

Beginning as a **Modder**:

THIEF II: The Metal Age 🏹   SKYRIM 🐉

About My
Game Dev Experience

As a **Level Designer**:

Dishonored   Disho DLC   Dishonored 2

Death of the Outsider   Wolfenstein Youngblood

About My
Game Dev Experience

As **Campaign Designer**:

TIME TRAVEL

"DEATHLOOP"™

2020 2022

AUGUST MARCH

As **Campaign Designer**:

Had been the position for **several months**

> ❖ Owner of the *Critical Path*

Had access to ***UR Reports***

> ✓ Thus far based on the **core gameplay loop**, not campaign content, so I hadn't *yet* fully engaged with them   *(that was about to change)*

"DEATHLOOP"™

What
is "DEATHLOOP"?
was
During
ALPHA

"DEATHLOOP"™ ALPHA

You are **Colt,** an armed amnesiac who discovers that he's trapped in a *day-long* **time loop** on the island of **Blackreef**

Colt's being hunted by his best-frenemy, **Julianna**

She seems to know what is going on, but wants nothing more than to **kill him** *over and over*
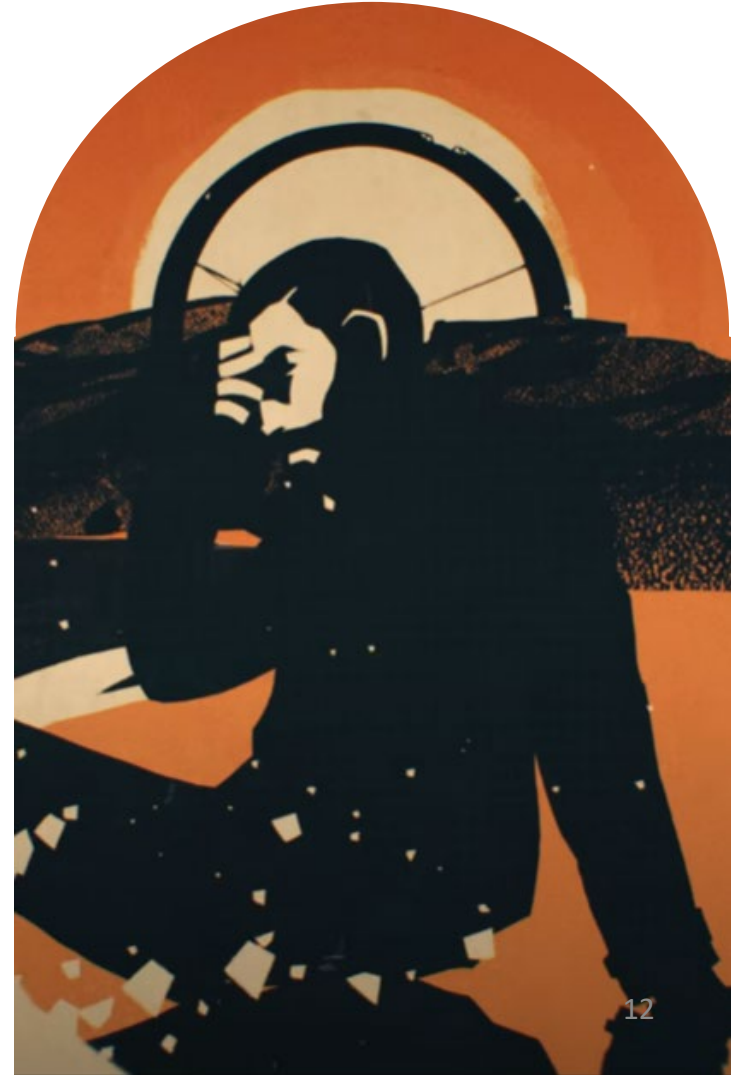
"DEATHLOOP" ALPHA

A Narrative & Puzzle focused **First Person Shooter**

Four small open-world-ish maps *filled with quests and side content*

Very non-linear, go **where** you **want**, *when you want*

An **"Immersive Sim"** *Play your way,* at your pace, *in your style*
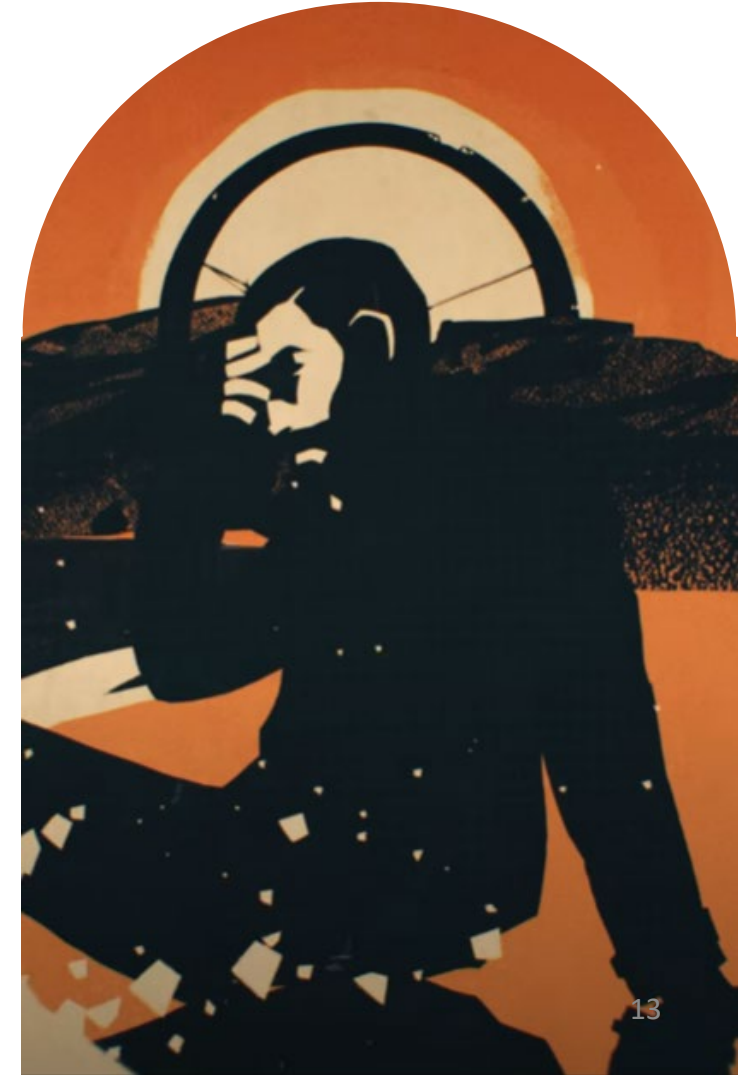
"DEATHLOOP"™ ALPHA

Colt's goal is to **Break the Time Loop**

To do this he must eliminate the eight **Visionaries,** *before midnight*

If he fails, the day loops, *again and again,* **forever**

To Understand
"DEATHLOOP"

This audience
&
The Players
need to
understand:

The layout of the world in **Space** *and* *Time*
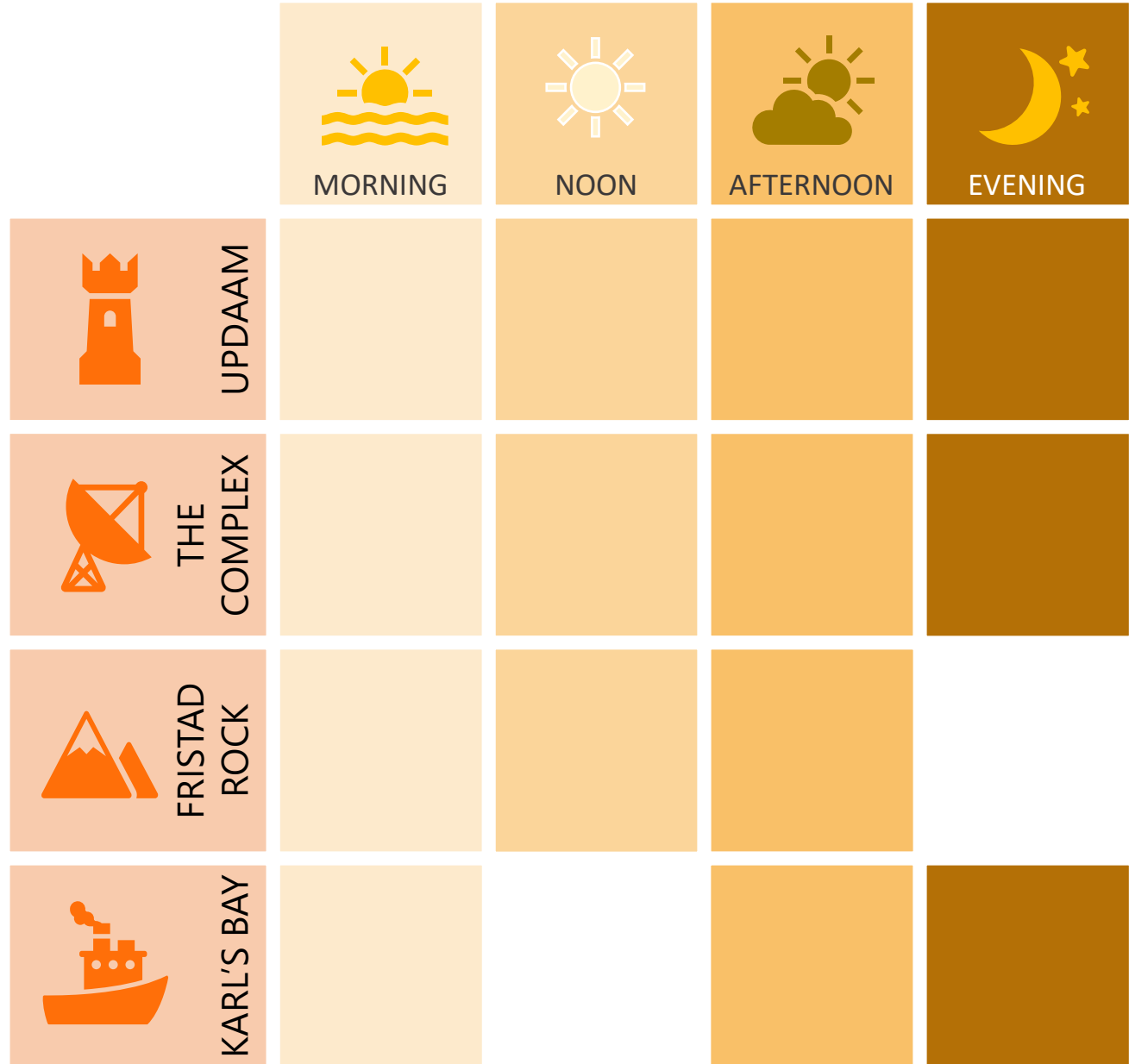
What a **lead** is ⟶ *and how it works*

The Blackreef Space Time Diagram

Used *throughout production* &

will be throughout

this presentation

	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM				
THE COMPLEX				
FRISTAD ROCK				
KARL'S BAY				

When *visiting the*
Same Location
at a different **time of day,**
you'll discover *unique*

❖ Events
❖ Vignettes
&
❖ Challenges

		MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
	UPDAAM			🗝️	
	THE COMPLEX		🏠		
	FRISTAD ROCK	👤		🧩	
	KARL'S BAY				
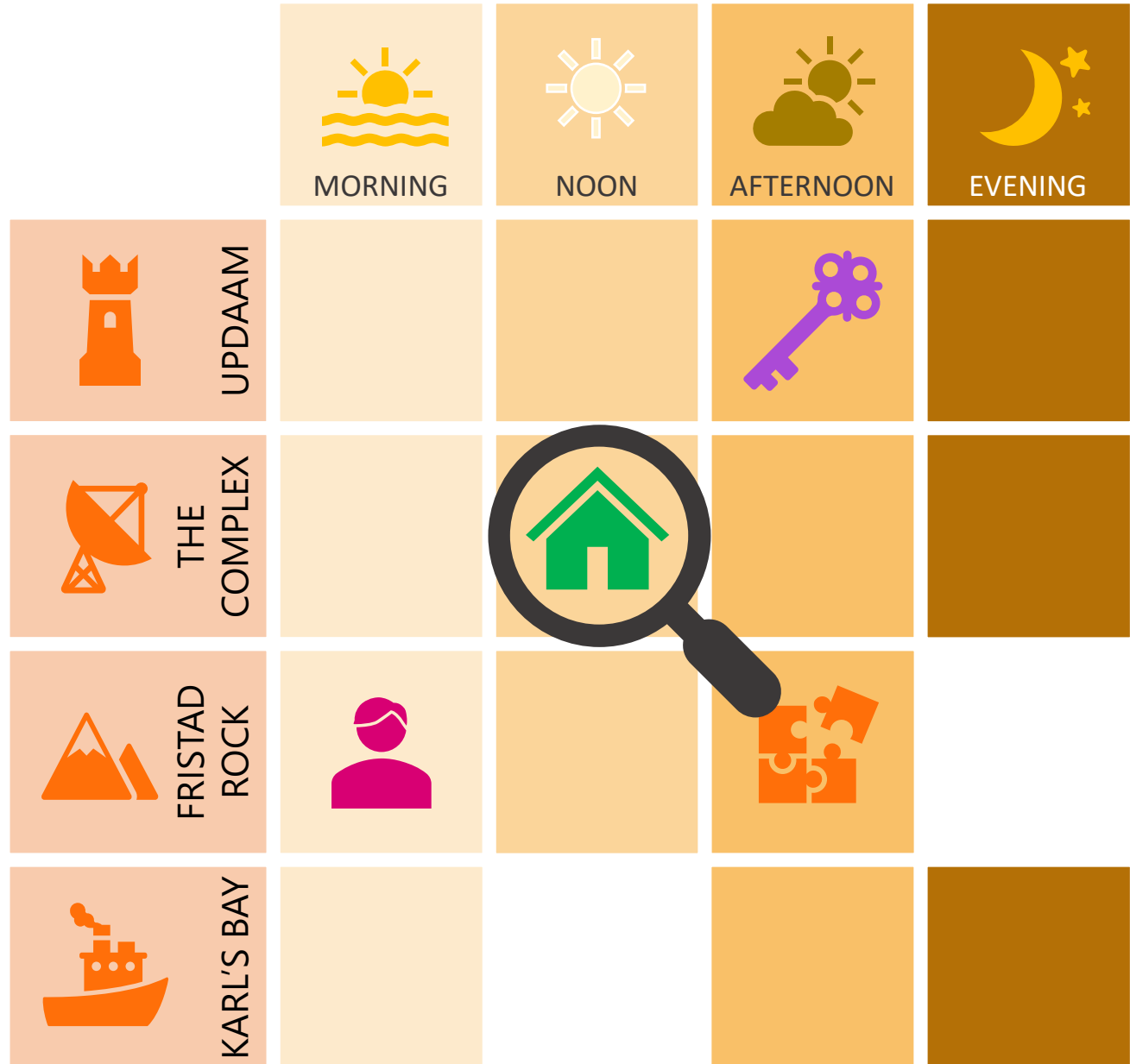
To **Break the Loop**

You must **Kill**

8 Visionaries

In one **Loop**

	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM				
THE COMPLEX				
FRISTAD ROCK				
KARL'S BAY				

To Break the Loop

Kill

Aleksis

In one Loop

	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM				
THE COMPLEX				
FRISTAD ROCK				
KARL'S BAY				

At the start of the day
Kills:
0

Player

Colt

	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM	Julianna	Charlie		Aleksis
THE COMPLEX			Wenjie	Egor
FRISTAD ROCK	Frank	Fia		
KARL'S BAY	Harriet			

Kills:

0

Time Passes	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM	Julianna	Charlie		Aleksis
THE COMPLEX			Wenjie	Egor
FRISTAD ROCK	Onk (Player)	Fia		
KARL'S BAY	Harriet			

Kills: ~~4~~
How do you **kill all 8?!**

That's what **a Lead** **is for**

		MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM		Julianna	Charlie		Aleksis
THE COMPLEX				Wenjie	Egor
FRISTAD ROCK		Frank	Fia		
KARL'S BAY		Harriet			

what's a
Lead?

what's a **Lead** ?

- ❖ The game's *"Murder Puzzle"*
- ❖ *Quest-lines*
- ❖ Designed by the **Campaign Designer**

But,
How do they work?

DISCOVER	INVESTIGATE	SOLVE	EXECUTE
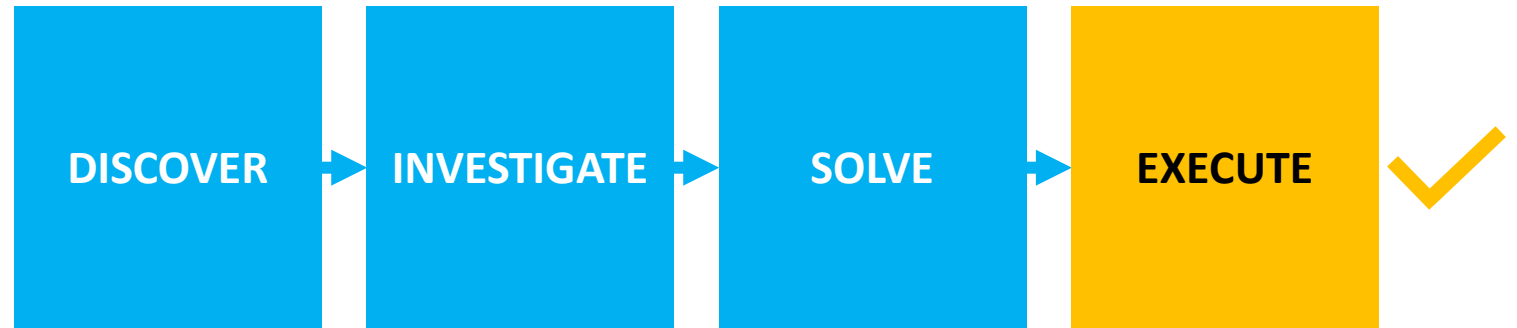
Solving them builds the **"Golden Loop"**
- ✓ The Loop where you kill all **8 Visionaries**

Expressed through
- ❖ A dedicated **Journal UI**
- ❖ HUD elements: **Notifications, Markers**

MORNING

Frank's stronghold is *not* accessible at **noon**

FRISTAD ROCK

Frank

Player

Frank's been emailing *Otto*

Frank's will send *info about storage* at **noon**

NOON

So, we must go to *Otto's*

Otto

Otto makes Fireworks

Fireworks are **dangerous**...
I bet we can make them **explode** **Frank**...

INVESTIGATE FRANK → **INTERCEPT THE EMAIL AT OTTO'S AT NOON**

30

MORNING

NOON

UPDAAM

FRISTAD ROCK

Otto

Player

Frank

Otto's Fireworks Shop **burned down**

But we know it was *fine* in the **morning**....

Day Loops

INVESTIGATE FRANK → **INTERCEPT THE EMAIL AT OTTO'S AT NOON** → **LOOP TO MORNING AND STOP THE FIRE**

MORNING   NOON   Day Loops   MORNING

UPDAAM

FRISTAD ROCK

Frank

Player
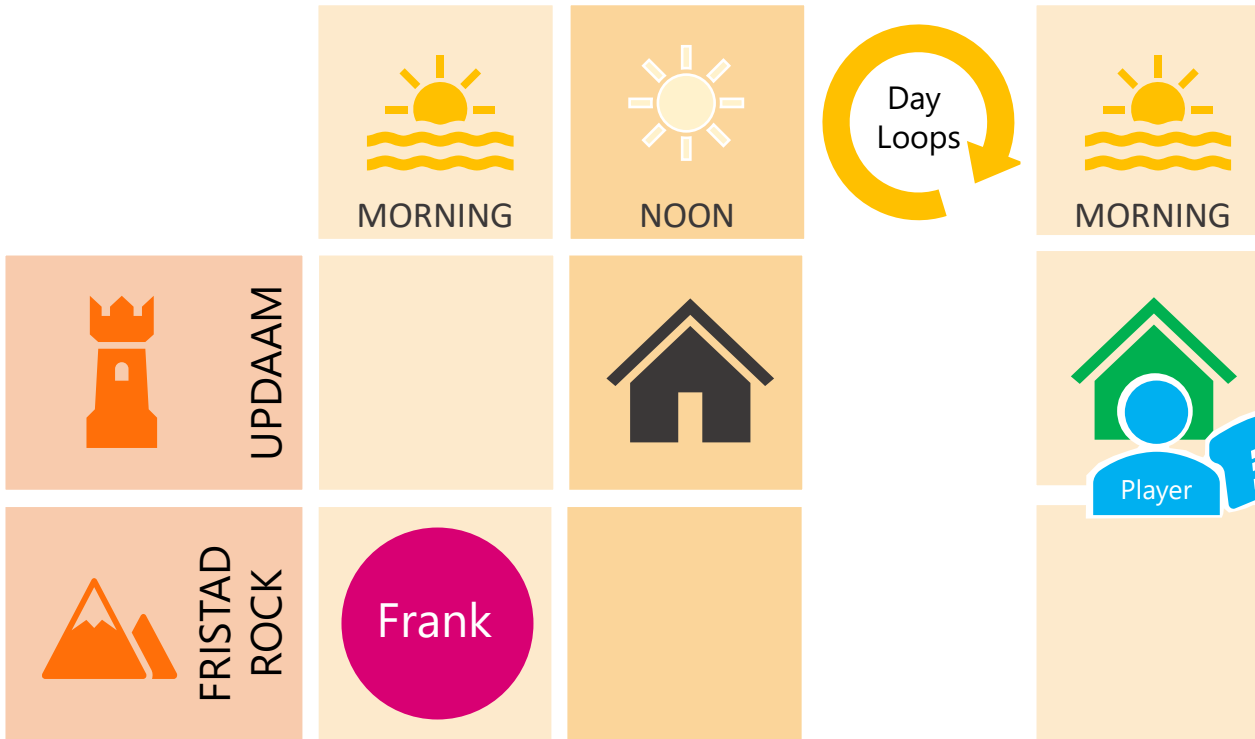
Otto's Fireworks Shop
Is *fine*
Solve a puzzle
to *stop the **fire**!*

| INVESTIGATE FRANK | INTERCEPT THE EMAIL AT OTTO'S AT NOON | LOOP TO MORNING AND STOP THE FIRE | NO FIRE? READ OTTO'S EMAIL AT NOON |

MORNING | NOON | Day Loops | MORNING | NOON

UPDAAM

FRISTAD ROCK

Frank

Player

Otto's Shop is *untouched!*

Let's *read his mail!*

INVESTIGATE FRANK → INTERCEPT THE EMAIL AT OTTO'S AT NOON → LOOP TO MORNING AND STOP THE FIRE → NO FIRE? READ OTTO'S EMAIL AT NOON → FIND THE FIREWORKS IN KARL'S BAY

		MORNING	NOON	Day Loops	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON
UPDAAM			🏠		🏠	🏠	
FRISTAD ROCK		Frank					
KARL'S BAY							Player

| INVESTIGATE FRANK | → | INTERCEPT THE EMAIL AT OTTO'S AT NOON | → | LOOP TO MORNING AND STOP THE FIRE | → | NO FIRE? READ OTTO'S EMAIL AT NOON | → | FIND THE FIREWORKS IN KARL'S BAY | → | SABOTAGE THE FIREWORKS | ✓ |

34

UPDAAM

FRISTAD ROCK

Frank

KARL'S BAY

AFTERNOON

So how does
that help?

35

We have to **look at the** **Big** *Picture*

MORNING

UPDAAM

THE COMPLEX

FRISTAD ROCK

Frank
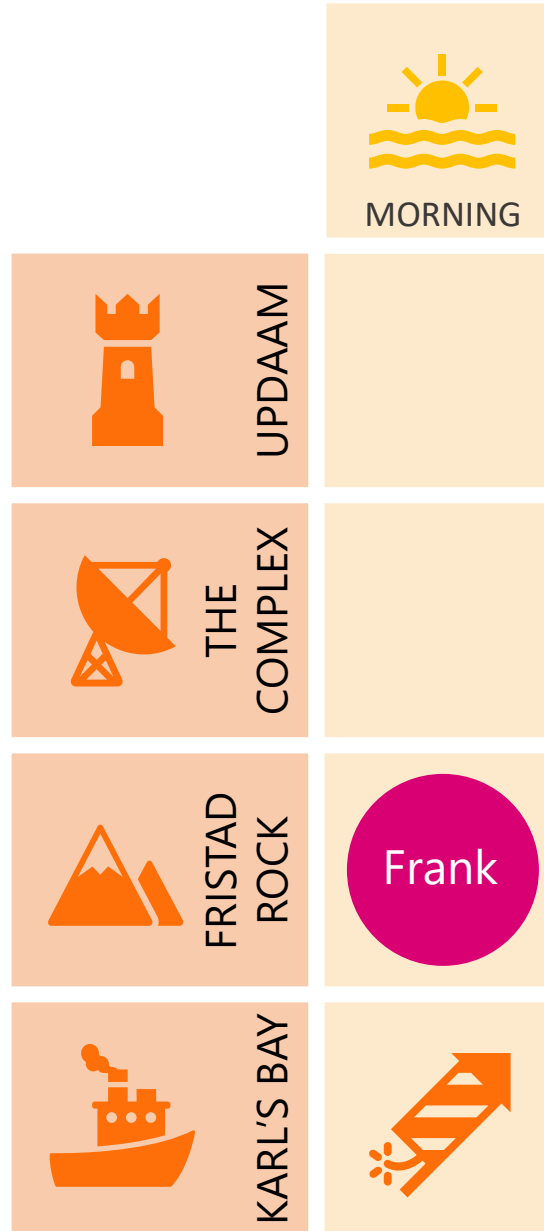
KARL'S BAY

The **fireworks** are *also* there in the **morning**…

	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM	Julianna	Charlie		Aleksis
THE COMPLEX			Wenjie	Egor
FRISTAD ROCK		Fia		Frank
KARL'S BAY				

So **Frank** Dies in the Evening

38

	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM	Julianna			Aleksis
THE COMPLEX				
FRISTAD ROCK		Fia		
KARL'S BAY				

Kills:
~~5~~ 4 < 8

Still *three to go!*
It's a start

It's *a step* in what will become the
"Golden Loop"

To Understand
"DEATHLOOP"™

 The layout of the world in **Space** *and* *Time*

 What a **lead** is ⟶ *and how it works*

 How the **Progression** system works

How does our
Progression 💪
System Work?

The Infusion Ability
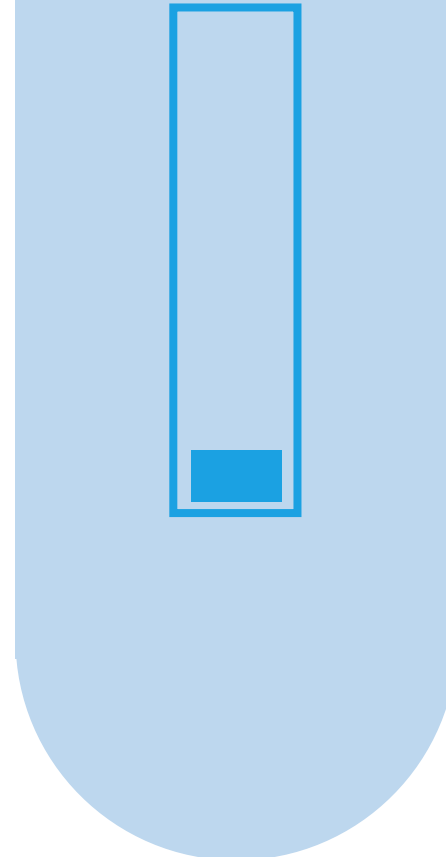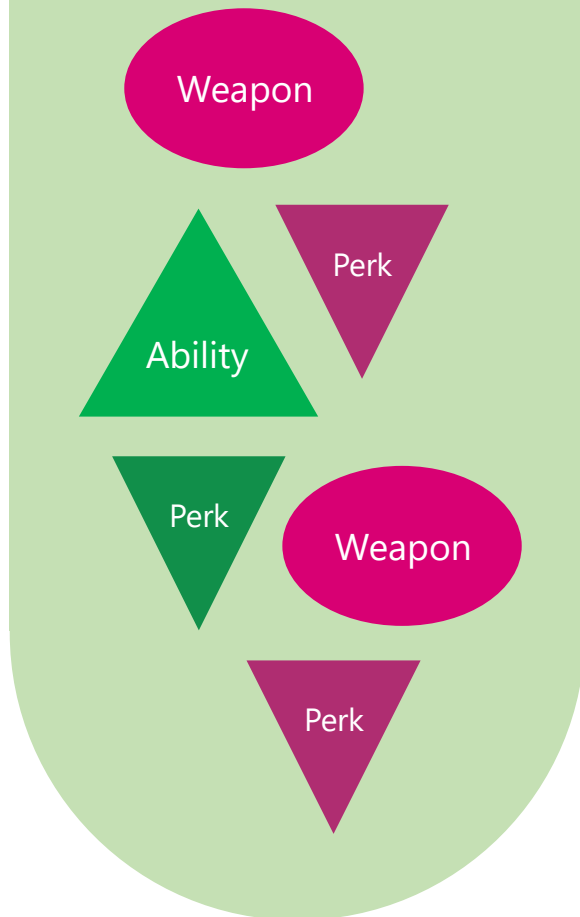
Residuum

This run's Gear **+** **Residuum**
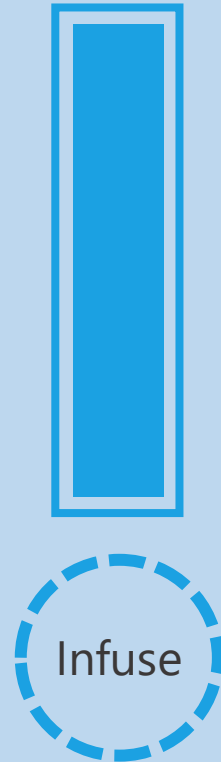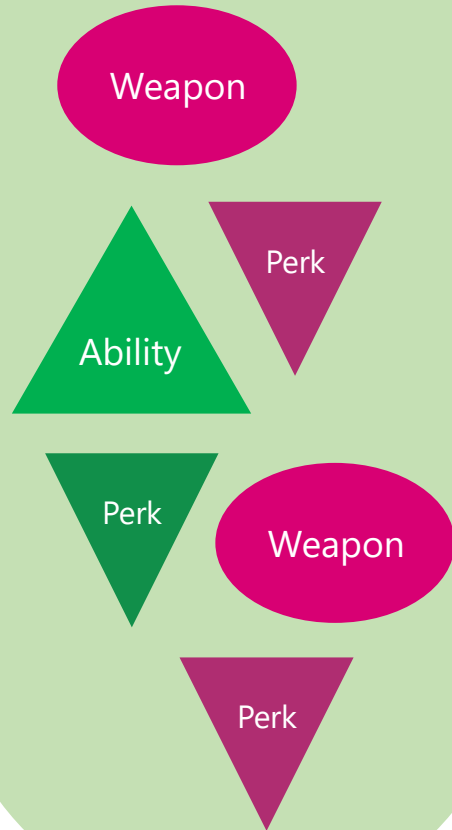
Weapon

Perk

Ability

Perk

Weapon

Perk

This run's Gear

Lost *when the day loops*
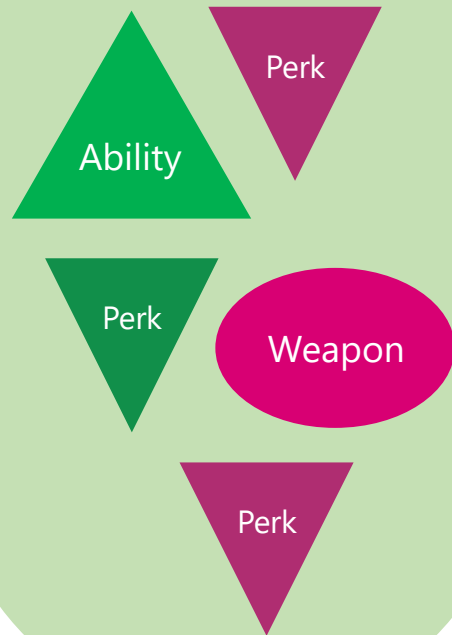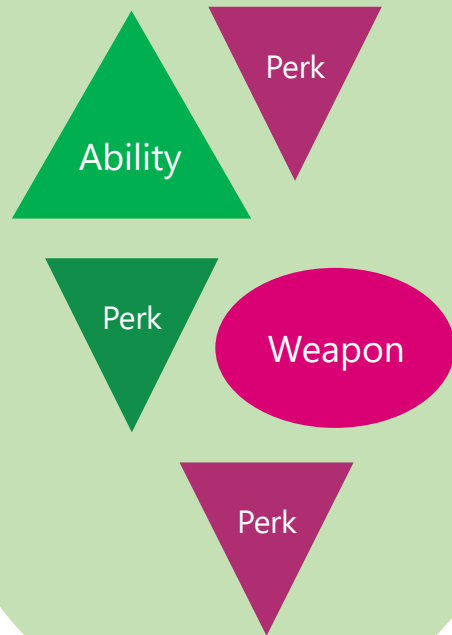
Weapon

Perk

Ability

Perk

Weapon

Perk

+ Residuum

Infuse

This run's Gear **+** Residuum

Permanent Arsenal

Sacrifice

Infuse

Perk

Ability

Perk

Weapon

Perk

Weapon

This run's Gear + Residuum

Permanent Arsenal

Sacrifice

Infuse

Ability

Perk

Weapon

Perk

Weapon

This run's Gear **+** Residuum

Permanent Arsenal

Sacrifice

Infuse

Perk

Weapon

Perk

Weapon

Ability
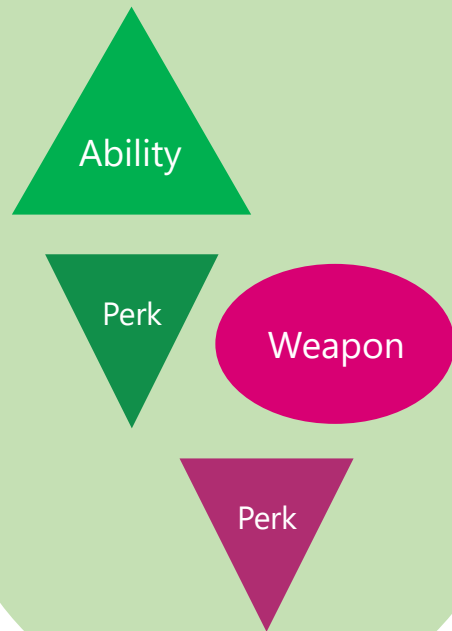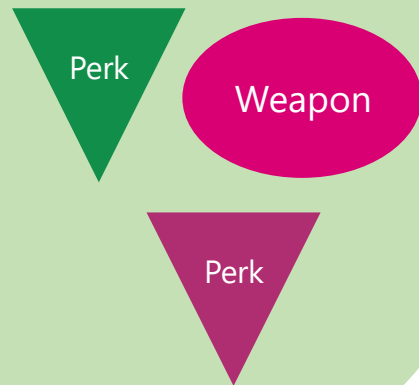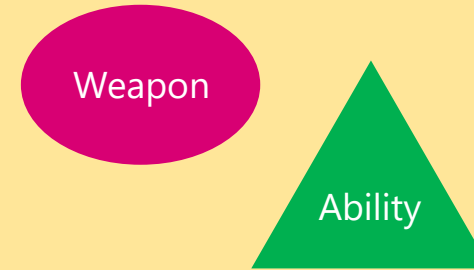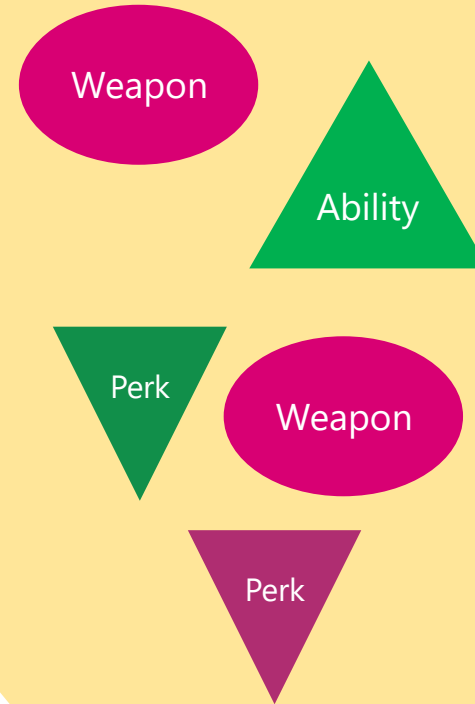
To Understand
"DEATHLOOP"™

✓ The layout of the world in **Space** *and* *Time*

✓ What a **lead** is ➜ *and how it works*

✓ How the **Progression** system works

A Breakdown of the game's **structure**

Breakdown of a Single Play Session

10-60 mins of play

Begin Play → Choose Time & Location →

- Target Mission
- Explore. Learn.
- Follow a Lead

Breakdown of a Single Play Session

10-60 mins of play

Target Mission

Explore. Learn.

Begin Play

Choose Time & Location

Follow a Lead

Infuse Your Gear

Time Passes
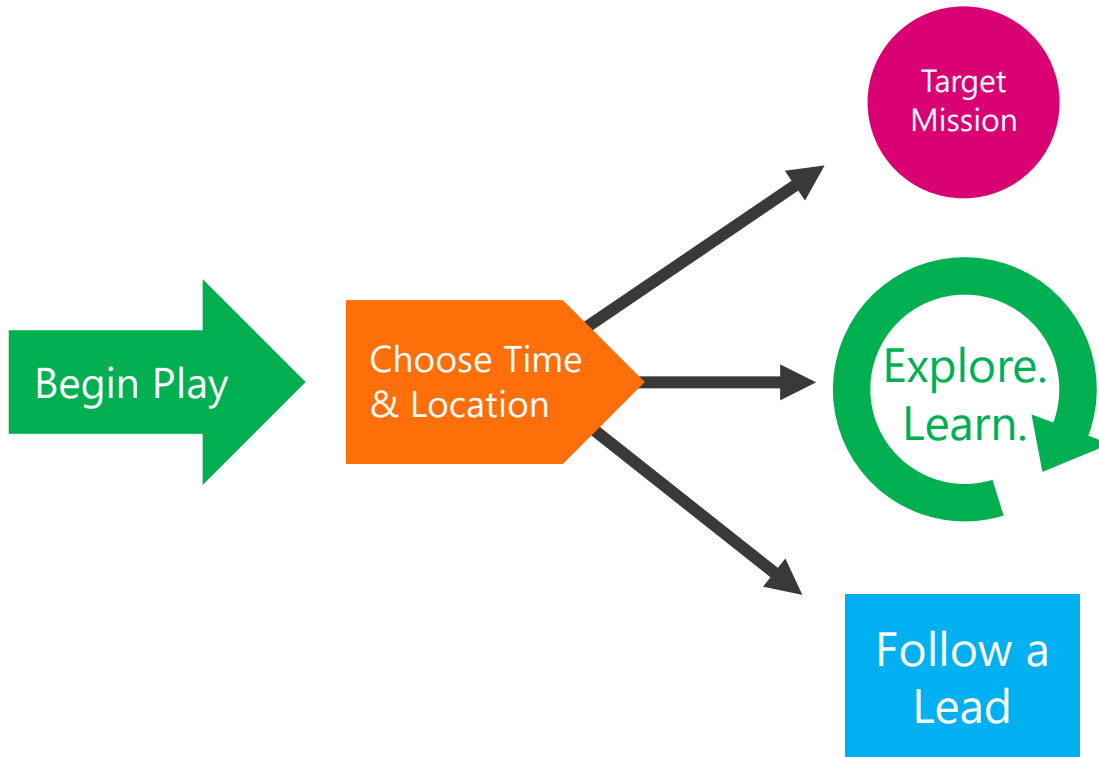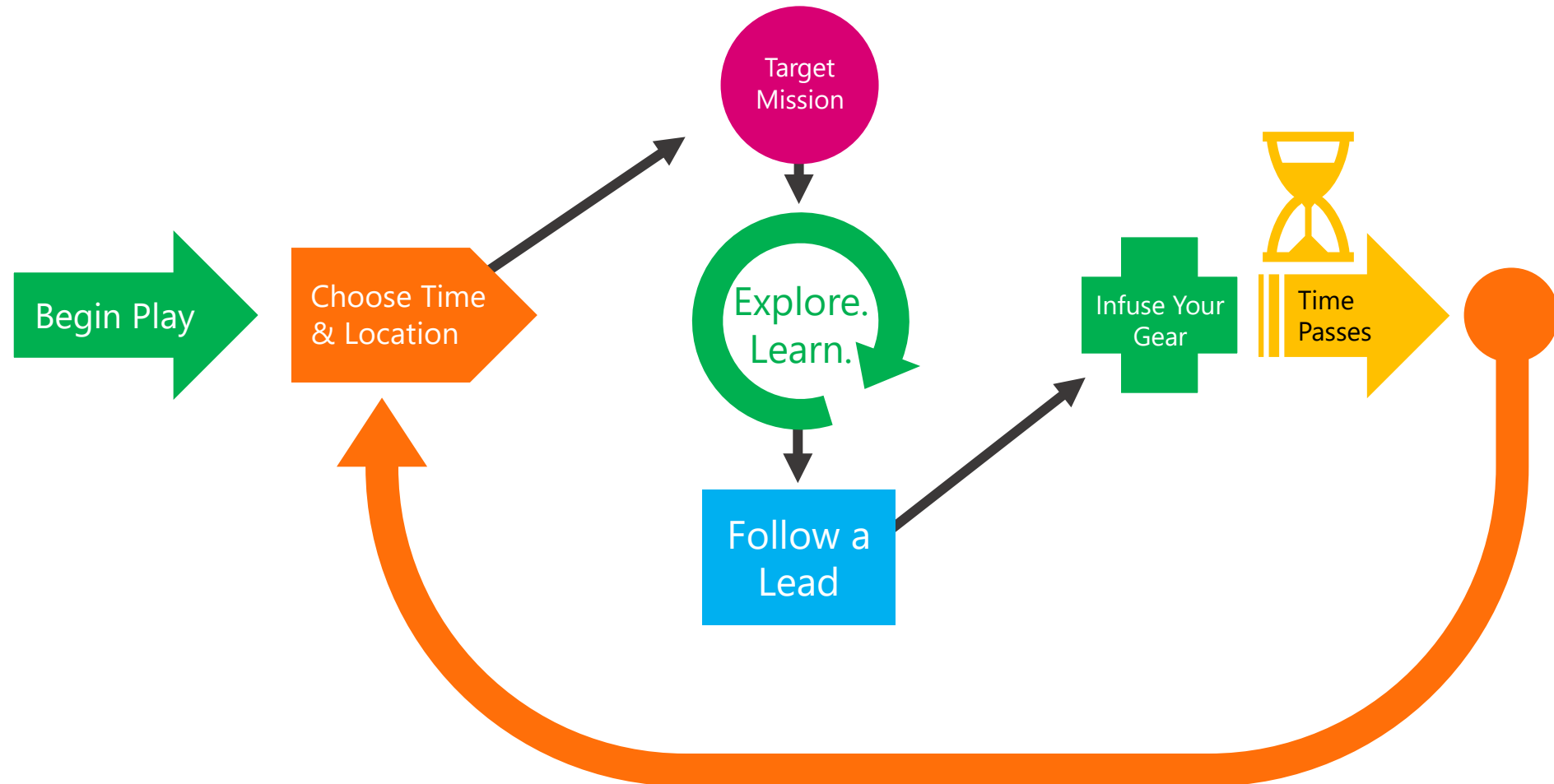
Breakdown of the Campaign

Target Missions

Leads

Aleksis	Wenjie
Charlie	Fia
Egor	Frank
Harriet	Julianna

Begin Play → Prologue → Explore. Learn. → Breaking the Loop Clues

- The Fireworks Accident
- A Change of Plans
- The Invitation
- The Hunt
- Secret Love

The Golden Loop → Roll Credits

Break the Loop!
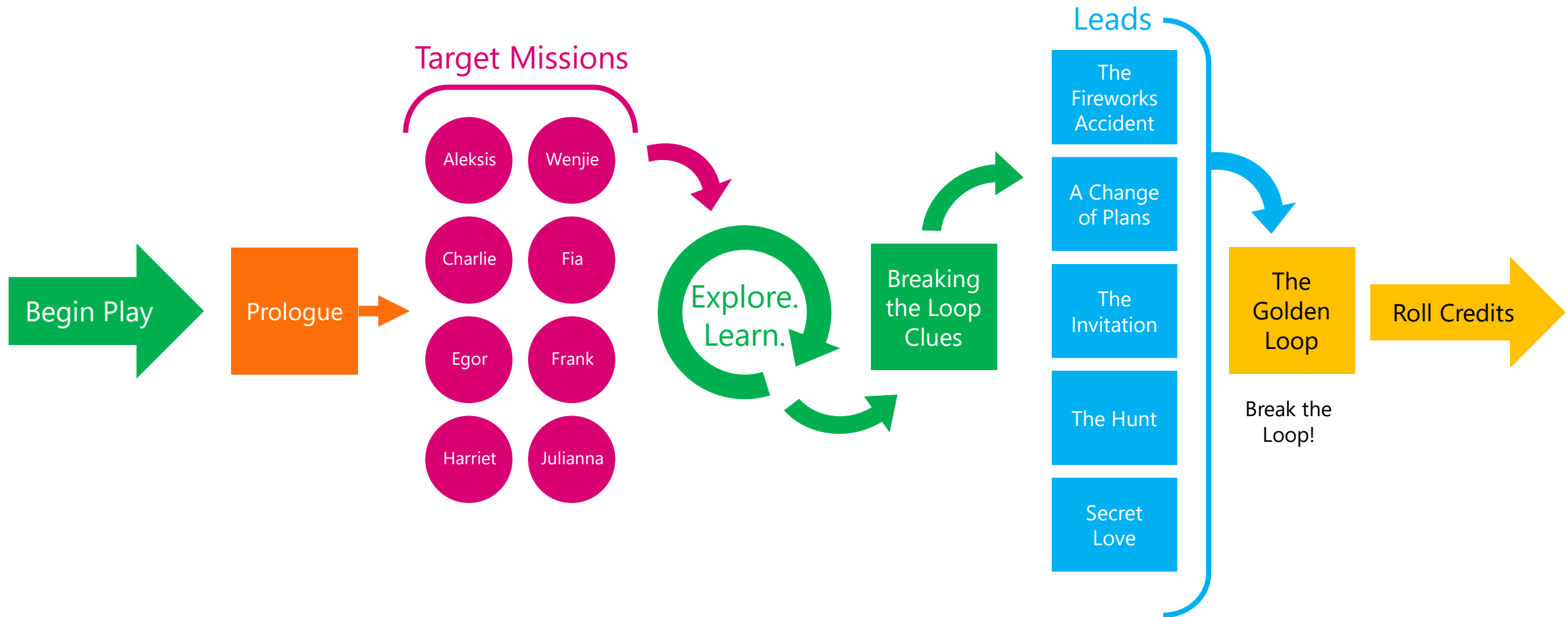
"DEATHLOOP"™ ALPHA

What's the *state of the game*?

"DEATHLOOP"™ ALPHA

The Game could be played from start to finish *"with guidance"*

All Maps, Weapons, Gadgets, Powers, and NPCs *were present*

UI was *unfinished*
Some *missing* narrative scenes

AI behavior was *unfinished*
No economy balancing done

Of course,
ALPHA
means *testing...*

We knew it was *rough around the edges,*

But we were **Confident**

that we were making

something *special*

Time to send it off to

The User

Research Team...

User Research Milestone: Alpha

User Research Milestone: Alpha

What's Cool: Players *immediately* liked **Colt** and **Julianna** during the game's **prologue**

What's not Cool: Very little about their rivalry connected.
Players didn't understand:
- ❖ **Why** Colt wanted to break the loop
- ❖ If Julianna wanted to **help** him or **stop** him
- ❖ What *killing Visionaries* had to do with **breaking the loop**

What's Cool: Players were **intrigued** by the game's **mysteries** and cited them *as a source of their investment*

What's not Cool: We *failed to pay that off* in the hours after the **prologue**

Players **wanted to** understand:

❖ *What is* the island of **Blackreef** and *what's going on here?*

❖ *Who is* **Colt** really? *Why* did he lose his memory?

❖ **Break the loop?** What does that mean? *How do I do that?*

What's Cool:	Players found it to be an *interesting* but *confusing* **rogue-like**
What's not Cool:	"DEATHLOOP" is not a **rogue-like**. (or a rogue-lite) Players didn't understand: ❖ When and *why* you'd lose your gear ❖ Or that **residuum** and **infusion** could be used to keep your gear

What's Cool:	Players found the *minute-to-minute* gameplay ***enjoyable***
What's not Cool:	They all played it like a straightforward FPS. Players didn't understand: ❖ That you'd get nowhere if you just kill the **Visionaries** over and over without looking for clues ❖ Or that the **time of the day** mattered
What's ***Really Not Cool***:	*Some* players didn't understand: ❖ That you needed to kill all 8 in **a single loop** (they'd just kill all eight and wonder why the game didn't finish.) ❖ Or that they were ***in a time loop at all***

What's Cool: *Some players* manage to find the **fireworks lead**, and *complete it*

*What's **even Cooler:***   These players seemed to ***get*** the game, and reported ***enthusiasm*** *in seeing it through to the end*

To them, *the game **worked***

So

So

We had an **onboarding** *problem*

So

We had an **onboarding** *problem*

We put everything in the **prologue** into
driving home the game's mysteries
and it worked!

Players felt as *lost and confused* as **Colt** did!

We weren't so much **Onboarding** as *Un-boarding*

We needed…

We needed…
an Onboarding Strike Team

What goes into an
Onboarding
Strike Team

- ❖ **Key Disciplines** are Represented
- ❖ Headcount is *Light*
- ❖ All Members are **Senior** and *Autonomous*

Onboarding *Strike Team* Members

Designing all *nondiegetic* ***tutorial*** *related features*

Systems Designer

UI-UX Designer
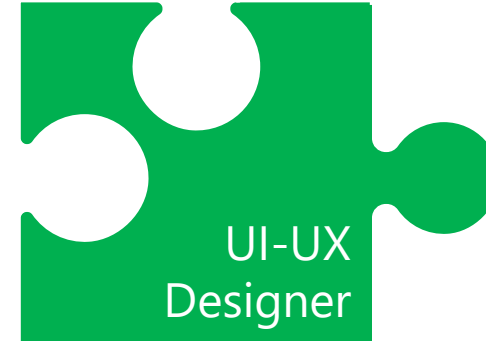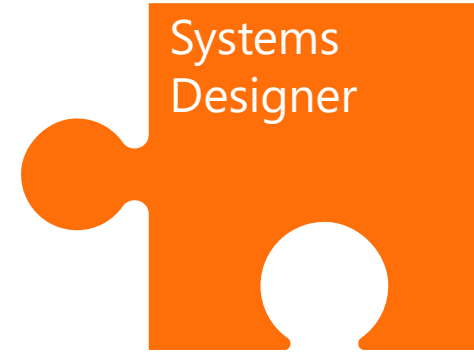
Continues work on the **unfinished UI** and *advises in* **Onboarding UX**

Onboarding Strike Team Members

Narrative
Designer

Systems
Designer

UI-UX
Designer

Gameplay
Programmer

Writing **tutorial texts** &
handling *onboarding* narrative
throughout the game
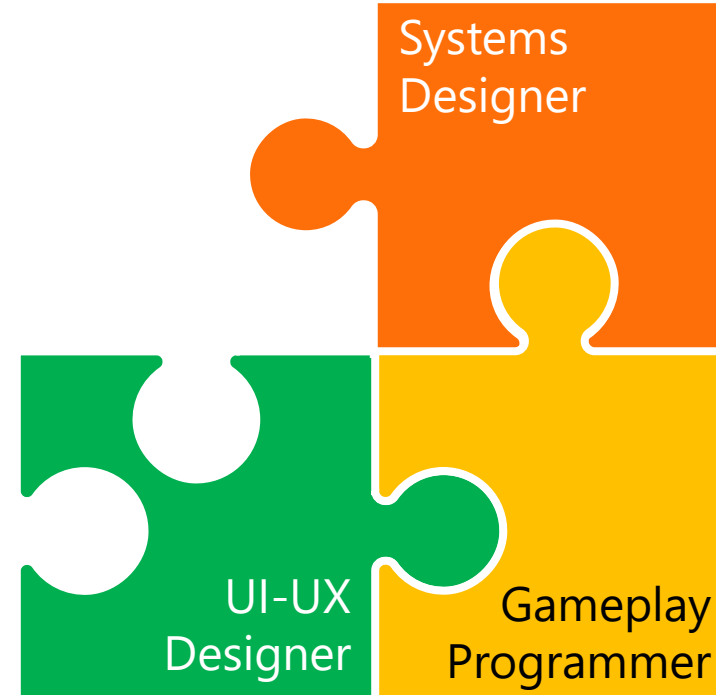
Code ownership
of all **tutorial
features**

Owns the **prologue map** & will *modify existing maps **across the game*** for onboarding needs

Coordinates *this team* with *all other teams*

Level Designer

Producer

Systems Designer

Narrative Designer

Gameplay Programmer

UI-UX Designer

Gameplay Programmer
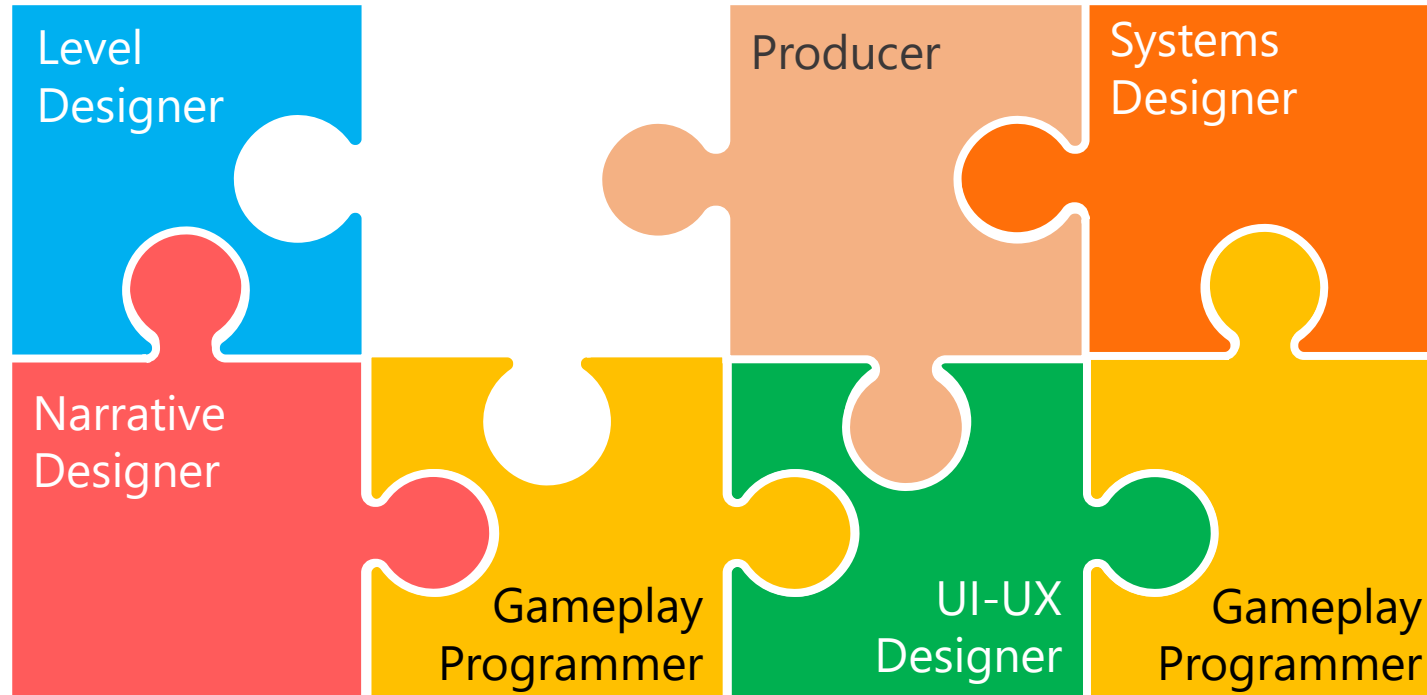
Code support for all other designers and *onboarding features*

Has *design ownership* of
all *critical-path*
onboarding content

Level
Designer

Campaign
Designer
(hi!)

Wait, what
is this?

Producer

Systems
Designer

Narrative
Designer

Gameplay
Programmer

UI-UX
Designer
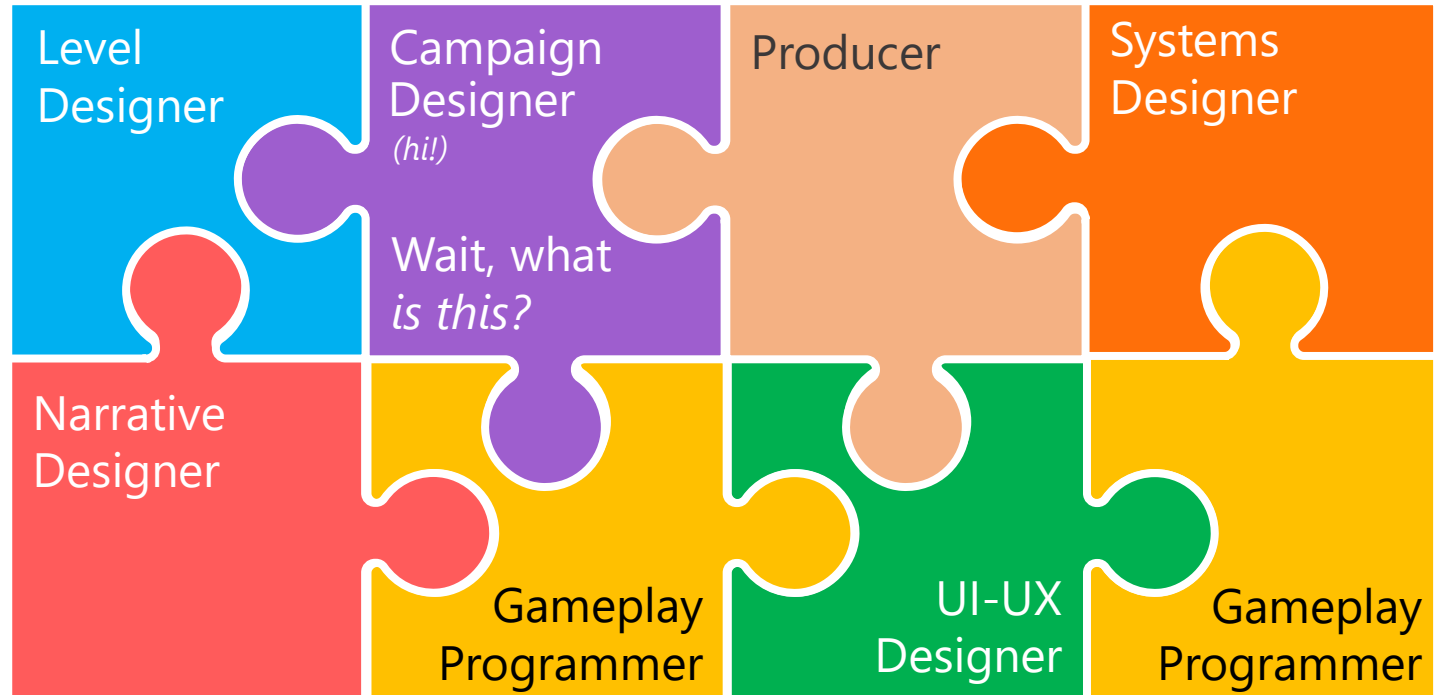
Gameplay
Programmer

Wait, what *is this?*

Provides the team with *a global view* of the ***player's experience***

Campaign Designer

is a **member** of the **Level Design Team**

Owner of the game's ***Critical Path*** *& Principle Designer* of the **Leads**

the

**Campaign
Designer** is a **member** of the
Level Design Team, but

must *also be* a
User Experience Designer

the

**Campaign
Designer**

must *also be* a
User Experience Designer

small problem:
I hadn't been trained in **UX design**

small problem:
I hadn't been trained in **UX design**

time to learn fast

small problem:
I hadn't been trained in **UX design**

time to *learn* **fast**

We had an

"Un-boarding"

to solve

Solving the "Un-boarding"

Definition

Players' *overwhelming sense of confusion* as a *direct result* of the game's **prologue**, often lasting for *several hours*

Solving the "Un-boarding"

Definition

Players' *overwhelming sense of confusion* as a *direct result* of the game's **prologue**, often lasting for *several hours*

Goals

Reduce the *mystery* **overload** during the **Prologue**

Players **liked** *the mystery!*

The problem was they went *too long* with **no pay-off**

Solving the "Un-boarding"

Definition

Players' *overwhelming sense of confusion* as a *direct result* of the game's **prologue**, often lasting for *several hours*

Goals

Provide the **payoff** the players are seeking *in the first hours*

Clarify Colt & Julianna's conflict: **Breaking the Loop**

Put a *spot-light* on the **time loop** and *how it works*

De-mystify the progression system, **residuum**, and **infusion**

Colt: *Break* the Loop
Julianna: *Protect* the Loop

After *some deliberation,* we decided we needed an

Extended Opening Chapter

This chapter *would be*

- ❖ **Linear**
- ❖ Use the **Leads UI** elements *(Journal, HUD)*
- ❖ *Not allow the player* to choose their
  location or **time of day**
  (Hide this UI)
- ❖ Structured like *other narrative action games*
  while **easing the player into the world**

Solving the "Un-boarding"

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Constraints

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Constraints

No new maps & edits to existing maps must be light

Reuse as much existing narrative and art as possible

Visionary encounters and mid-late game content should be avoided

It must co-exist with content from the entire game

Solving the "Un-boarding"

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What follows *isn't an explanation* of the **new opening chapter**

It's a *walkthrough* of **designing it**

So things

might get

bumpy

The *new opening chapter* begins with
The Prologue

and **concludes** with

THE BEACH

Prologue Narrative Content
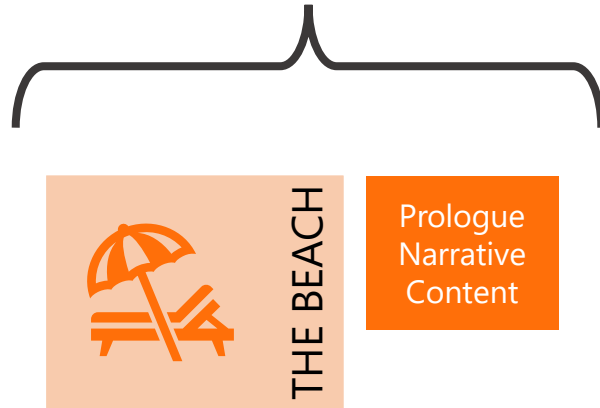
I like *to nail down where I am going* ***first***

Julianna's Target Mission

Just the first stages

THE HUNT PART 1 | Lead, THE HUNT
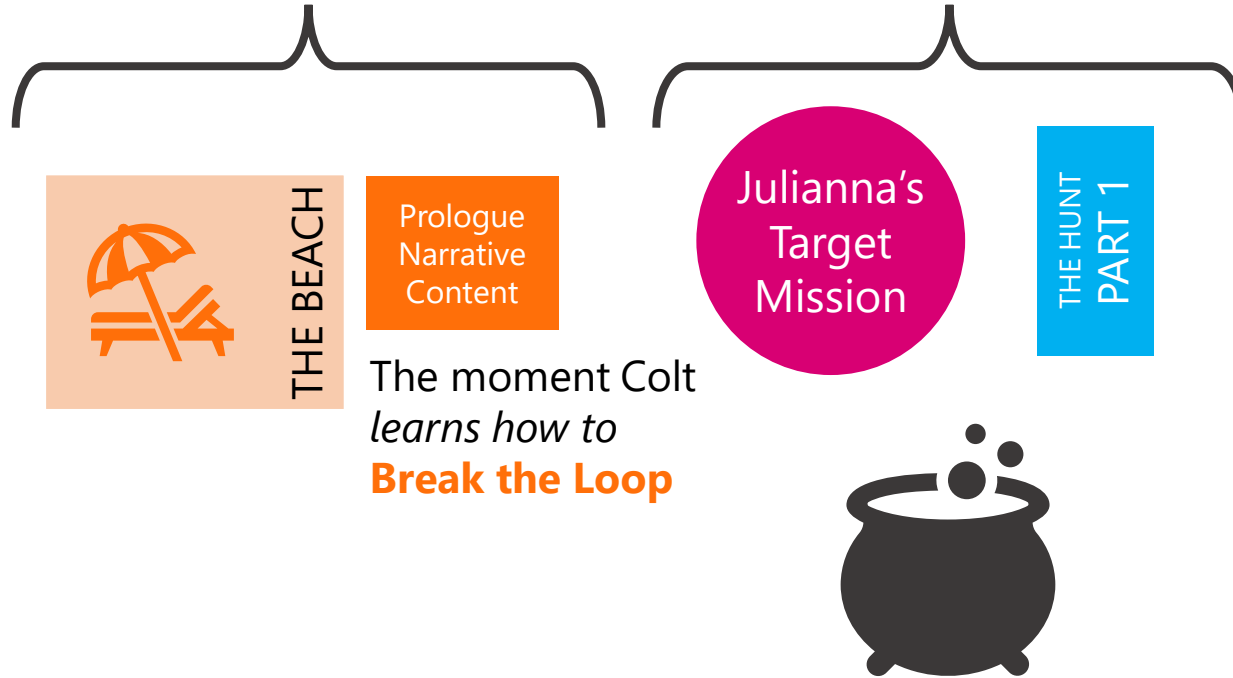
The *new opening chapter* begins with **The Prologue**

and **concludes** with

THE BEACH

Prologue Narrative Content

The moment Colt *learns how to* **Break the Loop**

Julianna's Target Mission

THE HUNT PART 1

and **concludes** with

Julianna's Target Mission

THE HUNT PART 1

In the **ALPHA**

1. Colt learns how to *break the loop* at the *end of the prologue*

2. Later, you can pursue **Julianna** *to her stronghold*

3. She's not there – *a friendly* **NPC** *is,* who sets you on the right track

4. While there you can find a "lore document" – the **Loop Preservation Protocol**, which clarifies:
   - ❖ Why killing all **8 Visionaries** *breaks the loop*
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   - ✓ Lets *players who **don't read*** know ***that doc*** *was important*

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and **concludes** with

Julianna's Target Mission

THE HUNT PART 1

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The *Loop Preservation Protocol* **(LPP)**

Encounter with a *friendly **NPC***
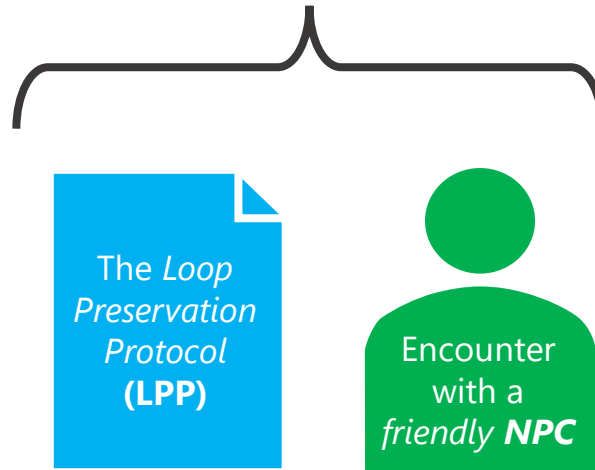
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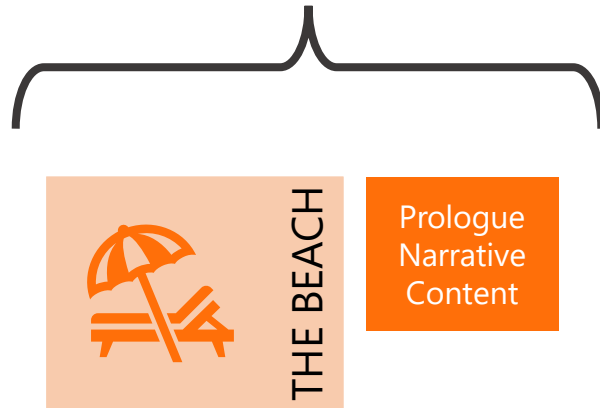
... but *along the way?*

and **concludes** with

THE BEACH

Prologue Narrative Content

Put a *spot-light* on the **time loop** and *how it works*

The *Loop Preservation Protocol* **(LPP)**

Encounter with a *friendly NPC*

❖ Visit the same **location** at different **times**
❖ Use **Knowledge** and **The Loop** to solve a problem
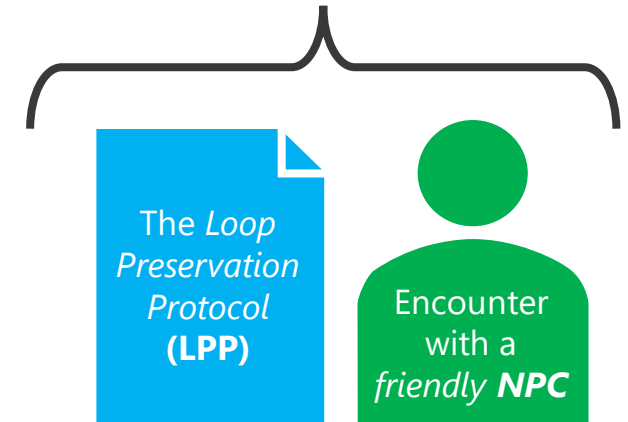
... but *along the way?*

We don't know
where yet

DISTRICT

?

MORNING

EVENING

Do
Something → Do next
Something

Clear differences
Good Contrast

... but *along the way?*

What's the *problem to* **solve?**
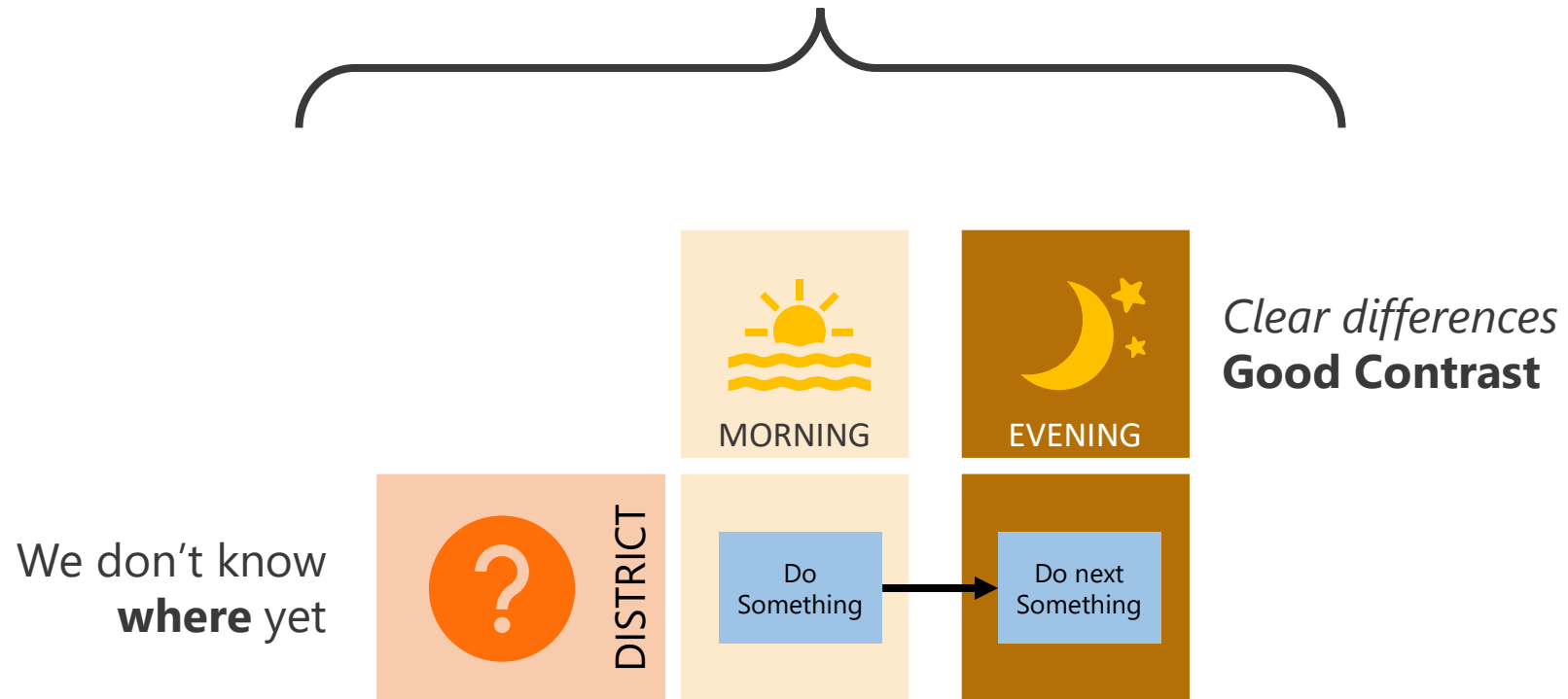
MORNING

EVENING

DISTRICT

Do Something → Do next Something
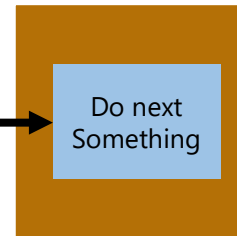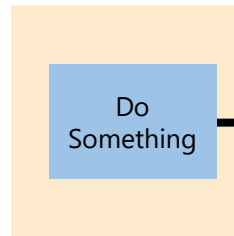
... but *along the way?*

What's the *problem to* **solve?**

MORNING

EVENING

DISTRICT

Find Locked Safe

Do next Something

What's the *problem to* **solve?**

	MORNING	AFTERNOON	EVENING
DISTRICT ?	Find Locked Safe		Do next Something
DISTRICT ?		Find Code to Safe	

They can *return with the code,* **but...**

What's the *problem to* **solve?**

MORNING

AFTERNOON   EVENING

Loop
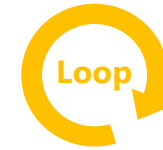
Keep the
knowledge
of the
Someone
safe code
got to it
before you!

MORNING

DISTRICT

Find Locked Safe

Find it broken, empty

Open safe, find goal

But *what's in the safe?*

DISTRICT

Find Code to Safe

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MORNING | AFTERNOON | EVENING | Loop | MORNING

DISTRICT

? Find Locked Safe

Find Code to Safe

Find it broken, empty

Open safe, find goal

DISTRICT

?

The *Loop Preservation Protocol* **(LPP)**

Encounter with a *friendly NPC*

The **LPP** is *in the safe*

Reading it triggers **this scene**!
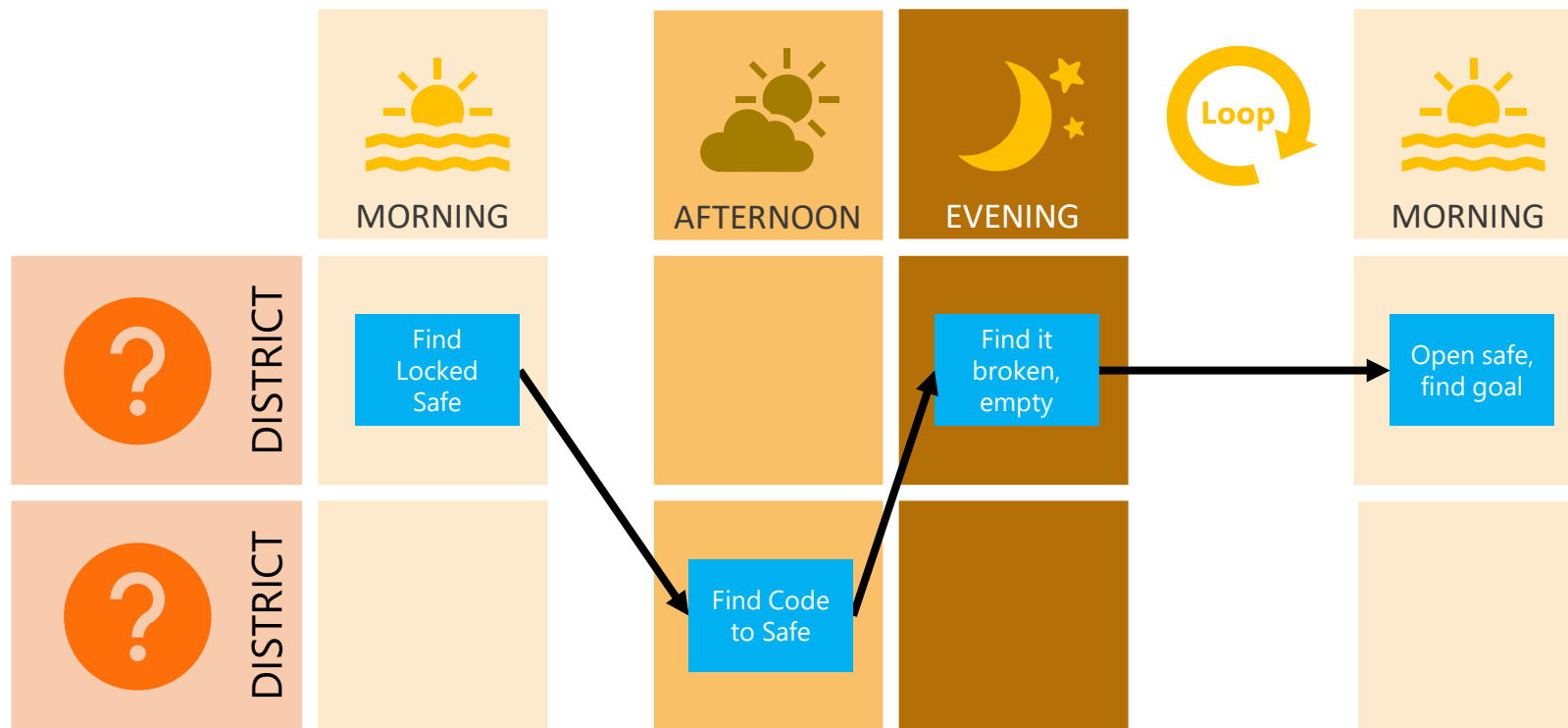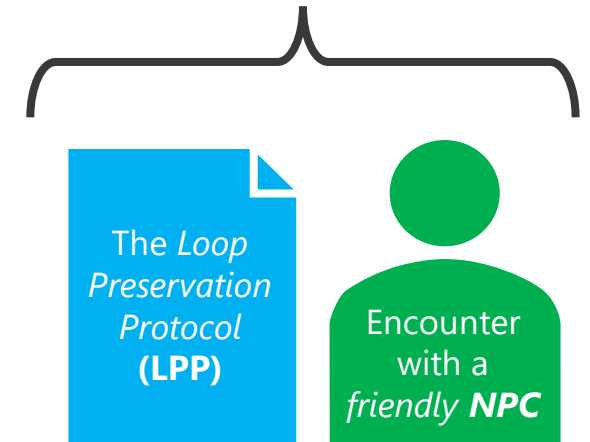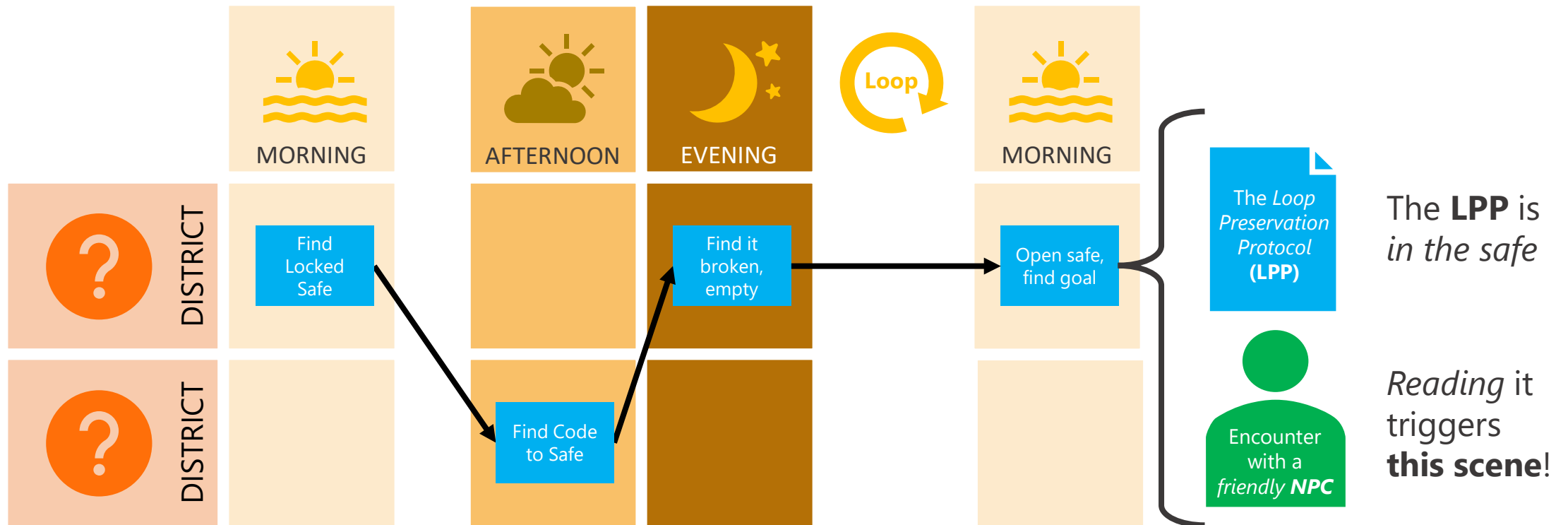
We have to decide *where all of this happens*

	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING	Loop	MORNING
DISTRICT	Find Locked Safe			Find it broken, empty	→	Open safe, find goal
DISTRICT			Find Code to Safe			
DISTRICT		Another Action				

The *Loop Preservation Protocol* **(LPP)**

Encounter with a *friendly NPC*

	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM		Charlie		Aleksis
THE COMPLEX			Wenjie	Egor
FRISTAD ROCK	Frank	Fia		
KARL'S BAY	Harriet			

Find Locked Safe → Find Safe Broken, Empty → Open Safe, Find Goal

The Safe — *Where* does it go?

Colt's Flat — Let's use this to learn more about **Colt**

	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM		Charlie		Aleksis
THE COMPLEX			Wenjie	Egor
FRISTAD ROCK	Frank	Fia		
KARL'S BAY	Harriet			

The Safe

Where does it go?

Let's use this to learn more about **Colt**

Colt's Flat

		MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM			Charlie		Aleksis
THE COMPLEX				Wenjie	Egor
FRISTAD ROCK		Frank	Fia		
KARL'S BAY		Harriet			

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	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM		Charlie		Aleksis
THE COMPLEX			Wenjie	Egor
FRISTAD ROCK	Frank	Fia		
KARL'S BAY	Harriet			

Colt's Flat

Hunter Julianna

Hunter Invasions are our PvP Feature – **Julianna** invades your game!

They **only** happen when there's a **Visionary**

113

	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
Colt's Flat / UPDAAM		Charlie		Hunter / Julianna
THE COMPLEX			Wenjie	Egor
FRISTAD ROCK	Frank	Fia		
KARL'S BAY	Harriet			

The broken safe is **Julianna's** doing!

		MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM		Colt's Flat	Charlie		Colt's Flat — Hunter Julianna
THE COMPLEX				Wenjie	Egor
FRISTAD ROCK		Frank	Fia		
KARL'S BAY		Harriet			

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		MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
☀️	Learn About the LPP	*Understand* your **goal**			
	Loop Control Center	Introduce the technology that *powers the loop*			
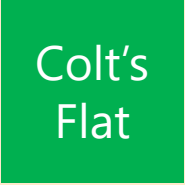
		MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
🏰	UPDAAM	Colt's Flat	Charlie		Colt's Flat / Hunter Julianna
📡	THE COMPLEX			Wenjie	Egor
⛰️	FRISTAD ROCK	Frank	Fia		
🚢	KARL'S BAY	Harriet			

Find Code to Safe

Aeon Security Office

If the **LPP** is *in the safe,* then **where** is this code kept?

Introduce the *Aeon Program*, founded by the **Visionaries**

		MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM		Colt's Flat	Charlie		Colt's Flat — Hunter Julianna
THE COMPLEX			Loop Control Center	Wenjie	Egor
FRISTAD ROCK		Frank	Fia		
KARL'S BAY		Harriet			

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Find Code to Safe

	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING
UPDAAM	Colt's Flat	Charlie		Colt's Flat — Hunter Julianna
THE COMPLEX		Loop Control Center	Wenjie	Egor
FRISTAD ROCK	Frank	Fia	Aeon Security Office	
KARL'S BAY	Harriet			

122
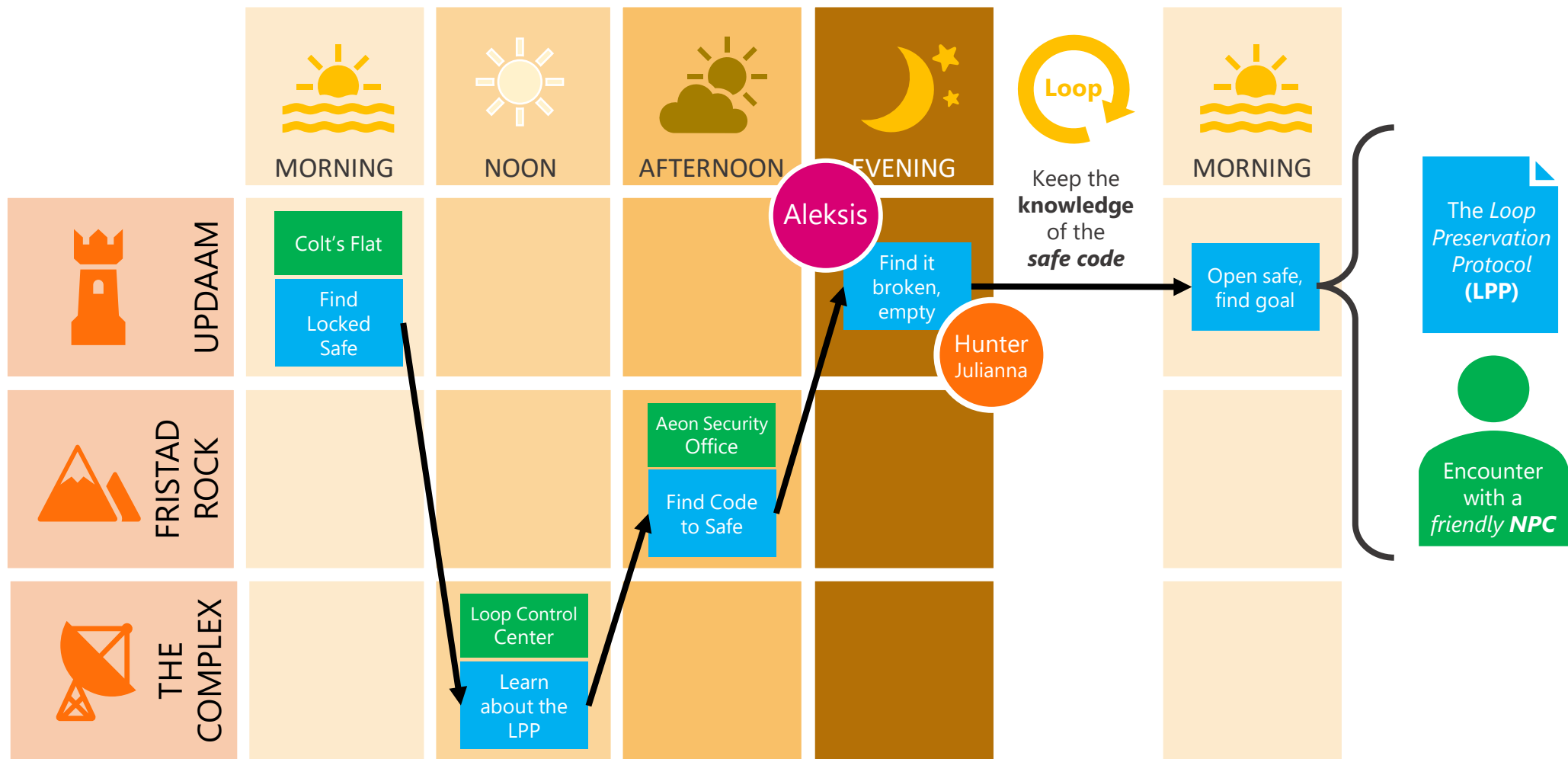
and we called it: **The Guided Tour**
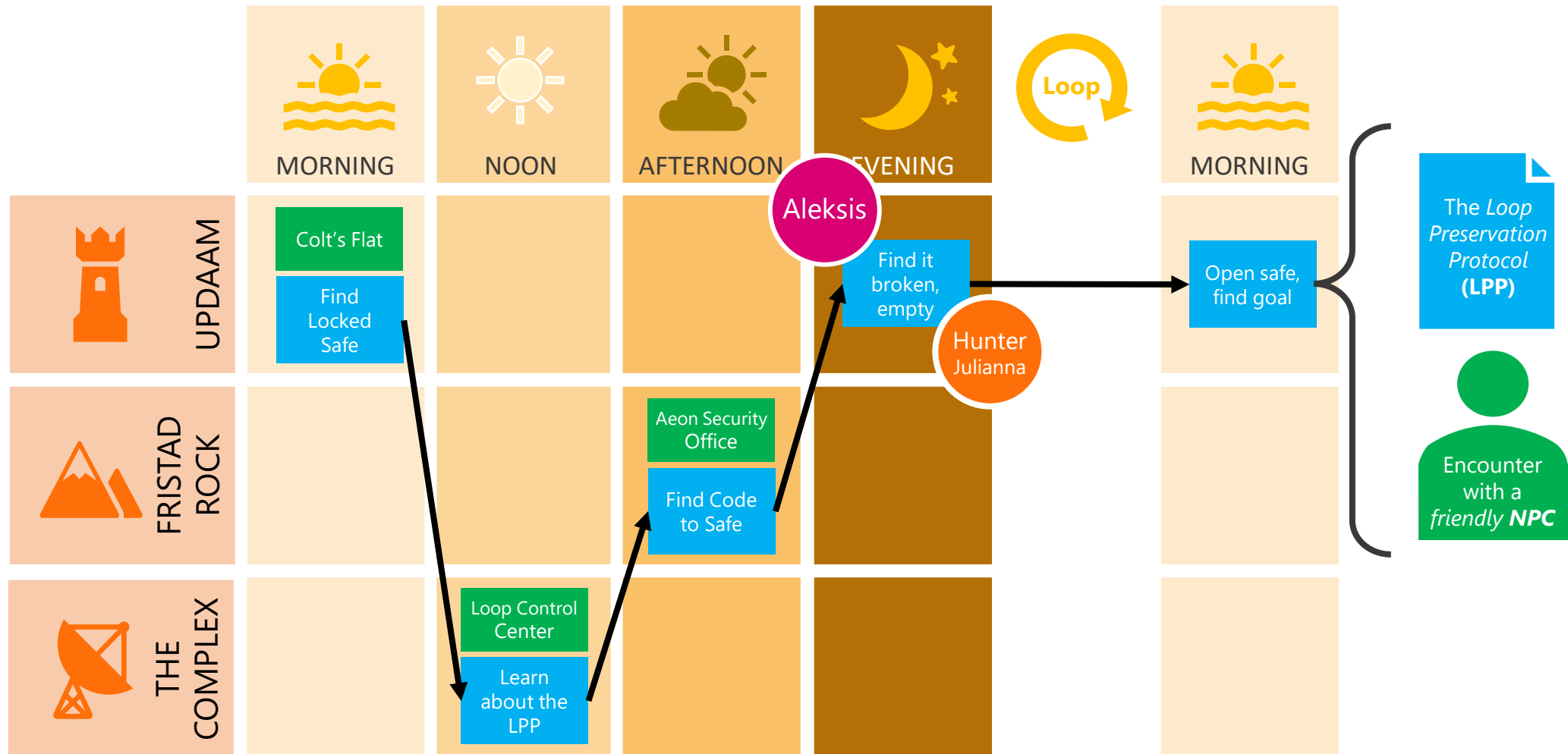
	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING	Loop	MORNING
UPDAAM	Colt's Flat / Find Locked Safe			Aleksis / Find it broken, empty / Hunter Julianna		Open safe, find goal
FRISTAD ROCK			Aeon Security Office / Find Code to Safe			
THE COMPLEX		Loop Control Center / Learn about the LPP				

The *Loop Preservation Protocol* **(LPP)**

Encounter with a *friendly NPC*

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Solving the "Un-boarding"

Definition

Players' *overwhelming sense of confusion* as a *direct result* of the game's **prologue**, often lasting for *several hours*

Goals

Create an *extended* **opening chapter** that gives *some answers*

Clarify Colt & Julianna's conflict: **Breaking the Loop**

Put a *spot-light* on the **time loop** and *how it works*

De-mystify the progression system, **residuum**, and **infusion**
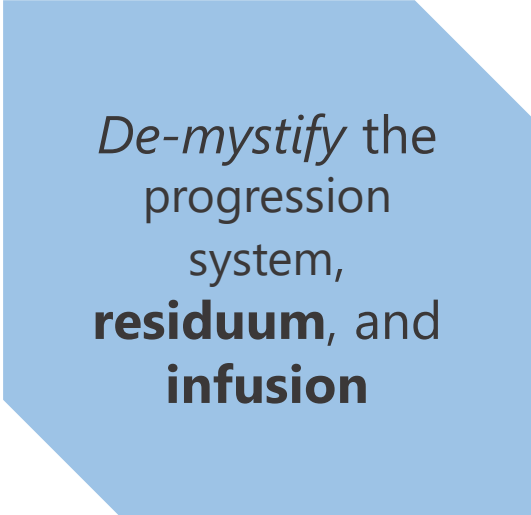
Constraints

No new maps & edits to existing maps must be light

Reuse as much existing narrative and art as possible

Visionary encounters and mid-late game content should be avoided

It must co-exist with content *from the entire game*

De-mystify the progression system, **residuum**, and **infusion**

Let's look at
Infusion
&
Cognitive Load

De-mystify the progression system, **residuum**, and **infusion**

What's the Player's Starting Kit?

Gadgets

- Doors
- Turrets
- Hack Tool
- Sensors
- Throw
- Mine
- Grenades
- Tripwire (silent)

Weapons

- Machete
- Rusty Gun

Abilities

- Reprise
- Infusion
- Double Jump
- Anti-Recoil

129
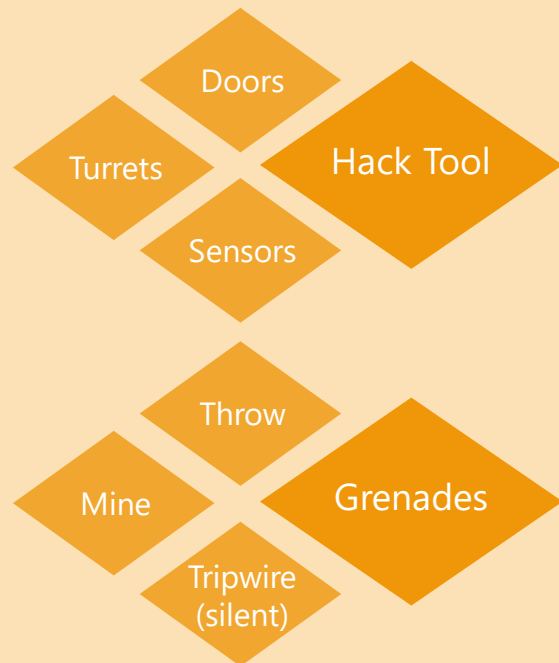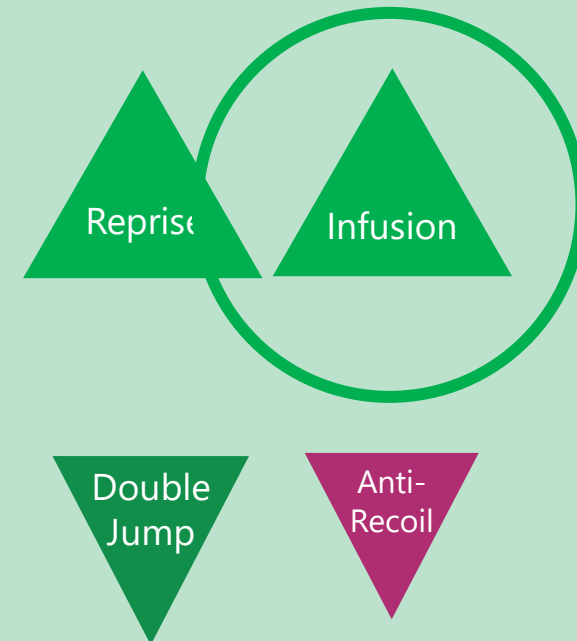
When **Infusion** *is Introduced:*

❖ It's along with *many other complex mechanics*

❖ It's a **solution** to the **problem** of *losing your gear at the end of a loop*

❖ **But** this *won't be a problem* for another **hour or two** *of play!*

Infusion

Remove
Infusion &
all mention of it
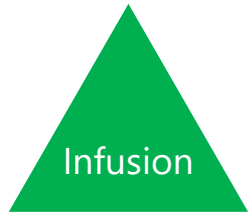
Infusion

Prologue

Draw attention to
when and **why** you
lose your gear

Prologue → The Guided Tour

The player *experiences the problem* of **gear loss** as they play

Prologue → The Guided Tour → Loop. Explore. Learn.

They *understand the problem* before **getting the solution**
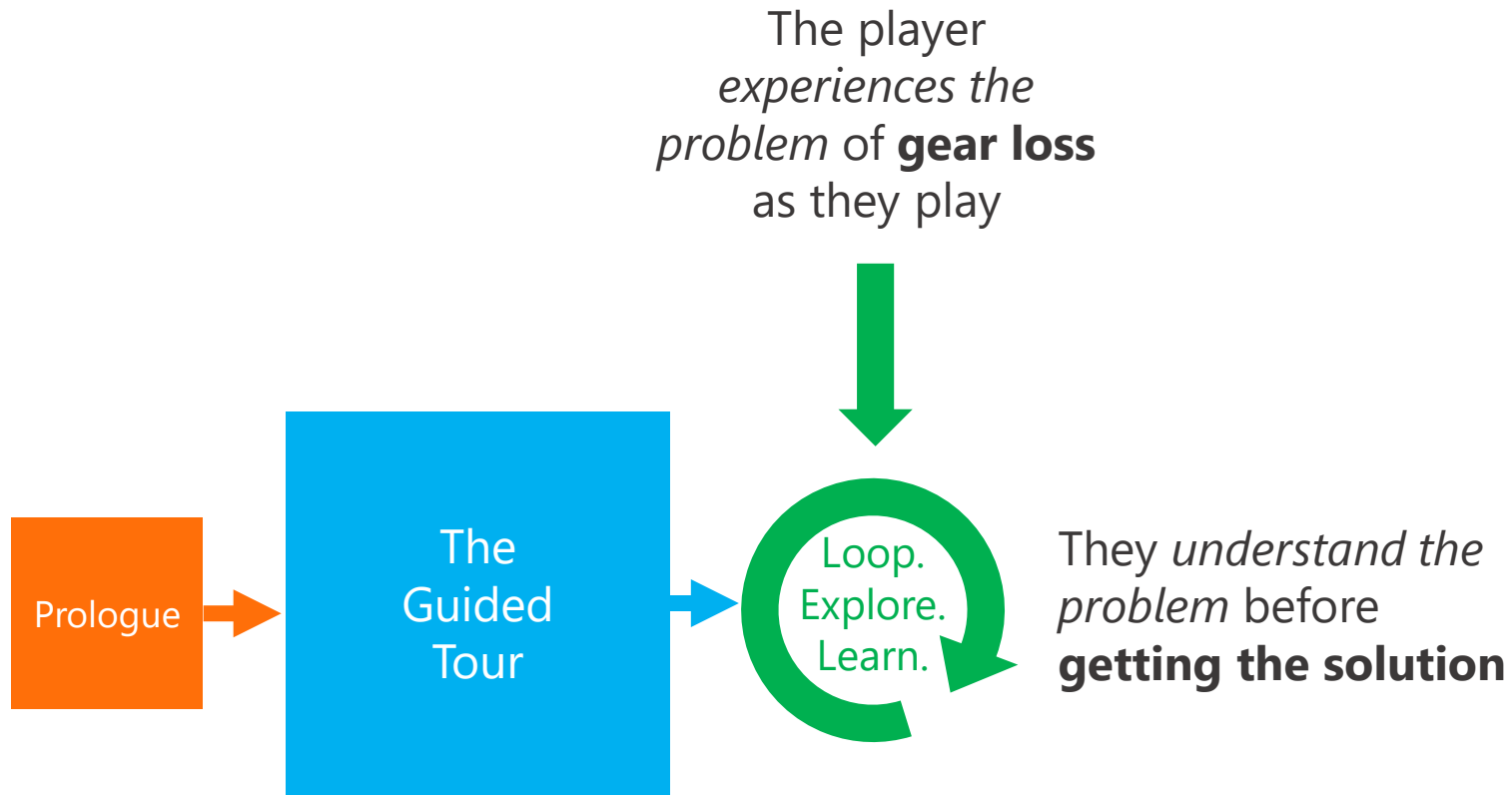
The player *learns of a way to keep their gear*: **Infusion**

Prologue → The Guided Tour → Loop. Explore. Learn.

THE COMPLEX

AFTERNOON

Wenjie

Prologue → The Guided Tour → Loop. Explore. Learn. → THE COMPLEX / AFTERNOON / Wenjie → Infusion / The Infusion Vignette → Infuse your first weapon

It ends with *one weapon infused* to show the **utility**

Let's update the Campaign

Target Missions

Leads

Aleksis	Wenjie
Charlie	Fia
Egor	Frank
Harriet	Julianna

Begin Play → Prologue →

Explore. Learn.

Breaking the Loop Clues

- The Fireworks Accident
- A Change of Plans
- The Invitation
- The Hunt
- Secret Love

The Golden Loop

Roll Credits

Let's update the Campaign

Begin Play → Prologue

The Guided Tour

Target Missions
- Aleksis
- Wenjie
- Charlie
- Fia
- Egor
- Frank
- Harriet
- Julianna

Explore. Learn.

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Breaking the Loop Clues

Leads
- The Fireworks Accident
- A Change of Plans
- The Invitation
- The Hunt
- Secret Love

The Golden Loop → Roll Credits

OK!

The Guided Tour

The Infusion Vignette

Let's Deliver
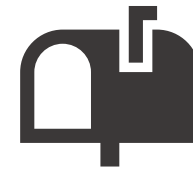
To: The UR Team
(with love 💛)

User Research Milestone: Pre-Beta

User Research Milestone: Pre-Beta

What went right:	Players played the Guided Tour (GT) and – Oh no…
Oh no:	Oh *noooo*

Oh *noooo*
    Players didn't understand:
- ❖ **How to complete the GT**
- ❖ Many were *completely stumped*
- ❖ Many spent **hours** in each map ***after*** *their goals were complete, unsure of what to do*

Even worse: Players who ***did*** complete the GT seemed *just as lost* as the players from **UR Milestone Alpha**

What about Infusion?	Most players *never found* the Infusion Vignette

| *But those who did?*
they were ok, right?
... right? | **NOPE**, those who did find and complete it:
Didn't understand:
❖ **When** and **how** they could infuse their gear
❖ That they ***didn't*** *need to replay the infusion vignette* every time
❖ Bottom Line: *most players still never infused their gear* |

Ok, let's take a second –
What do we *have to keep in mind?*

DON'T
PANIC

Let's take a *closer look* at what's ***actually*** going on

What's Cool:	Players struggled and were frustrated, but over **different things** than before
What things?	Players **DID** understand:

❖ That they were in a **time loop**
❖ That Colt and Julianna had *opposing goals*
❖ That killing **8 Visionaries** *in a single loop* would break the loop
❖ That **when** you did something was as important as **what** you did

Players **DIDN'T** understand:
❖ How to use **anything** that they learned during the GT to then *progress through the game*

The sessions had a **2-4** hour "gap" of *total confusion*

Oh

It was **time to**
go back in
and find a way to
Bridge the
"Gap"

Bridging the "Gap"

Definition

The hours of confusion between completing the **Guided Tour** and the player understanding the **campaign structure**

Bridging the "Gap"

Definition

The hours of confusion between completing the **Guided Tour** and the player understanding the **campaign structure**

Goals

*Update the GT to **ensure** that players understand the game's structure*

The GT doesn't *use the game's **real** structure*

*So how can the **GT** explain the **structure?***
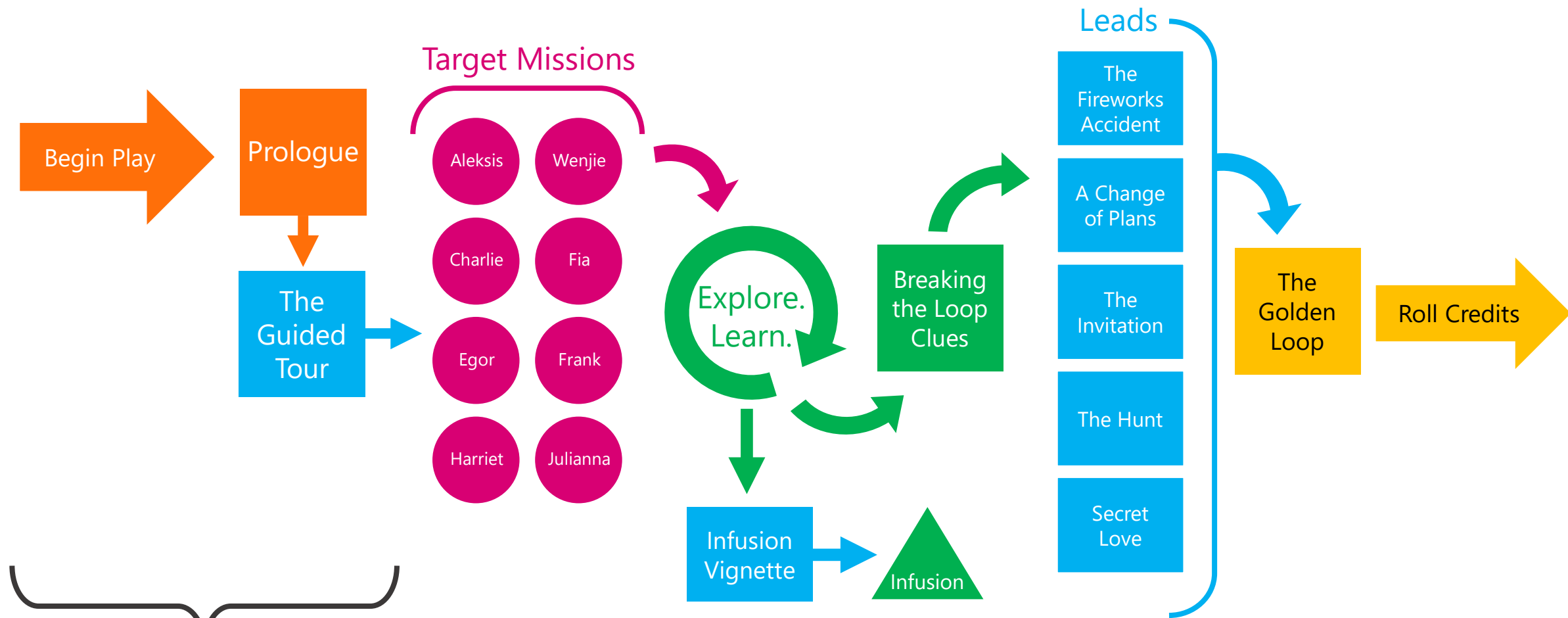
Bridging the "Gap"

Definition

The hours of confusion between completing the **Guided Tour** and the player understanding the **campaign structure**

Goals

Update the GT to **ensure** that players *understand the game's structure*

Bridging the "Gap"

Definition

The hours of confusion between completing the **Guided Tour** and the player understanding the **campaign structure**

Goals

Clearly orient the player towards going to **Visionary** Strongholds

Bridging the "Gap"

Definition

The hours of confusion between completing the **Guided Tour** and the player understanding the **campaign structure**

Goals

Clearly orient the player towards going to **Visionary** Strongholds

→

Make **searching for clues** (rather than attack) a *player-facing goal*

→

Directly connect the **Visionaries** to the **Leads**

→

Drive home that **Leads** are how you **Kill All 8** in **One Loop**

Bridging the "Gap"

Definition

The hours of confusion between completing the **Guided Tour** and the player understanding the **campaign structure**

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Constraints

Focus on how *content is presented*, not **changes** to the content

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Constraints

Focus on how *content is presented*, not **changes** to the content

Breaking the Loop Clues

Clues that result from *passive observation*
If followed up with *active investigation,*
It will *unlock* one of the **leads**

FRANK HAS A FIREWORKS SHOW EVERY EVENING

But is *just as likely to* guide the player to a point where the ***lead's path*** *is unclear*

INVESTIGATE FRANK → INTERCEPT THE EMAIL AT OTTO'S AT NOON → STOP THE FIREWORKS SHOP FIRE → READ OTTO'S EMAIL AT NOON → FIND THE FIREWORKS IN KARL'S BAY → SABOTAGE THE FIREWORKS ✓

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Begin Play → Prologue

Target Missions

Aleksis, Wenjie, Charlie, Fia, Egor, Frank, Harriet, Julianna

The Guided Tour

Explore. Learn.

Breaking the Loop Clues

Leads

The Fireworks Accident

A Change of Plans

The Invitation

The Hunt

Secret Love

The Golden Loop → Roll Credits

This created **a Gap** between *finding the first* **clue** and *beginning the* **lead.**

Does the player *really care* about the *difference* between **passive observation** and **active investigation?**

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

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Target Missions
A *classic* **objective tree**

Frank

Title: **The Biggest Hit**
Objective: *Eliminate Frank*
- ❖ *Task: Infiltrate Frank's Club*
- ❖ *Task: Find Frank's Recording Booth*
- ❖ *Task: Kill Frank*
- ❖ *Task: Escape to the Tunnels*

"The Biggest Hit" Complete!

This gives the *impression* that you've **done everything you need to,** even if you found *nothing related to the* **lead**

Begin Play → Prologue

Prologue → The Guided Tour

Target Missions

The Guided Tour → Aleksis, Wenjie, Charlie, Fia, Egor, Frank, Harriet, Julianna

Explore. Learn.

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Killing **Visionaries** *isn't your objective* until the **Golden Loop**

So why were we *starting the game* with objectives to kill **Visionaries?**

Leads

The Fireworks Accident
A Change of Plans
The Invitation
The Hunt
Secret Love

The Golden Loop → Roll Credits

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Following a **Lead** could *invite the player* to visit a **Visionary**

The **Fireworks Accident**

Leads can be kicked off *many ways*
- ✓ Discoveries *throughout the world*
  (active investigation)
- ✓ Often automatically on *visiting a Visionary*
  (passive observation)

The **Lead**, not a *Target Mission,* is the reason to visit the **Visionaries**

Frank

Visiting a **Visionary** could *kick off* their **Lead**

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Begin Play → Prologue → The Guided Tour →

Aleksis | Wenjie
Charlie | Fia
Egor
Harriet | Julianna

Explore. Learn.

Frank

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Leads

- The Fireworks Accident
- A Change of Plans
- The Invitation
- The Hunt
- Secret Love

- Chaos Theory
- Devouring of the Lambs

Let's *update these names* to the shipped versions!

→ The Golden Loop → Roll Credits

Begin Play → Prologue

Prologue → The Guided Tour →

Explore. Learn.

Leads

Frank	The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank
Egor	Lost in Transmission
Wenjie	What Wenjies Want
Julianna	Radio Silence
Charlie	Space Invader
Fia	Afternoon Delight
Harriet	Chaos Theory
Aleksis	Devouring of the Lambs

The Golden Loop → Roll Credits

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Begin Play → **Prologue**

Prologue → **The Guided Tour** →

Explore. Learn.

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Leads

Frank	The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank
Egor	Lost in Transmission
Wenjie	What Wenjies Want
Julianna	Radio Silence
Charlie	Space Invader
Fia	Afternoon Delight
Harriet	Chaos Theory
Aleksis	Devouring of the Lambs

→ **The Golden Loop** → Roll Credits

Begin Play → Prologue

Explore.
Learn.

Prologue → The Guided Tour →

Why not end the **GT** with some **leads** *already started?*

Infusion is an *obvious one*

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Leads

Frank	The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank
Egor	Lost in Transmission
Wenjie	What Wenjies Want
Julianna	Radio Silence
Charlie	Space Invader
Fia	Afternoon Delight
Harriet	Chaos Theory
Aleksis	Devouring of the Lambs

The Golden Loop → Roll Credits

Begin Play → Prologue

Explore. Learn.

Prologue → The Guided Tour →

Starting Leads

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

The **Alpha UR** *reported positively* about **Frank's** **Fireworks Lead**

Leads

Frank	The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank
Egor	Lost in Transmission
Wenjie	What Wenjies Want
Julianna	Radio Silence
Charlie	Space Invader
Fia	Afternoon Delight
Harriet	Chaos Theory
Aleksis	Devouring of the Lambs

The Golden Loop → Roll Credits

Begin Play → **Prologue**

The Guided Tour

Starting Leads

Explore. Learn.

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Frank — The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank

Let's pick the **Visionaries** with strongholds *you visit or see* during the **GT**

Leads

Egor — Lost in Transmission

Wenjie — What Wenjies Want

Julianna — Radio Silence

Charlie — Space Invader

Fia — Afternoon Delight

Harriet — Chaos Theory

Aleksis — Devouring of the Lambs

The Golden Loop

Roll Credits

Begin Play

Prologue

The Guided Tour

Explore. Learn.

Starting Leads

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Frank — The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank

Charlie — Space Invader

Aleksis — Devouring of the Lambs

Some **leads** can *auto-start* others

Leads

Egor — Lost in Transmission

Wenjie — What Wenjies Want

Julianna — Radio Silence

Fia — Afternoon Delight

Harriet — Chaos Theory

The Golden Loop

Roll Credits

Begin Play

Prologue

The Guided Tour

Explore. Learn.

Starting Leads

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Frank — The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank

Charlie — Space Invader → Fia — Afternoon Delight

Aleksis — Devouring of the Lambs

Leads

Egor — Lost in Transmission

Wenjie — What Wenjies Want

Julianna — Radio Silence

Harriet — Chaos Theory

The Golden Loop

Roll Credits

We looked for other *useful narrative links*

169

Begin Play → Prologue → The Guided Tour

Explore. Learn.

Starting Leads

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Frank — The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank

Charlie — Space Invader → Wenjie — What Wenjies Want; Fia — Afternoon Delight

Aleksis — Devouring of the Lambs

Leads

Egor — Lost in Transmission

Julianna — Radio Silence

Harriet — Chaos Theory

The Golden Loop → Roll Credits

170

Begin Play

Prologue

The Guided Tour

That *should help* but we're **not done**

Starting Leads

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Frank — The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank

Charlie — Space Invader

Aleksis — Devouring of the Lambs

Wenjie — What Wenjies Want

Fia — Afternoon Delight

We'll keep some *hidden* to **reward exploration**

Leads

Explore. Learn.

Egor — Lost in Transmission

Julianna — Radio Silence

Harriet — Chaos Theory

The Golden Loop

Roll Credits

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The Guided Tour

The Infusion Vignette

Let's reduce

❖ Friction
❖ & Cognitive Load

Aleksis's content was downplayed *(not removed)* to avoid a needless difficulty spike

		MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING	Loop	MORNING
UPDAAM		Colt's Flat / Find Locked Safe			Aleksis / Find it broken, empty / Hunter Julianna		Open safe, find goal
FRISTAD ROCK				Aeon Security Office / Find Code to Safe			
THE COMPLEX			Loop Control Center / Learn about the LPP				

The *Loop Preservation Protocol* **(LPP)**

Encounter with a *friendly NPC*

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	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING		MORNING
UPDAAM	Colt's Flat / Find Locked Safe			Find it broken, empty	Hunter Julianna	Open safe, find goal
FRISTAD ROCK			Aeon Security Office / Find Code to Safe			
THE COMPLEX		Loop Control Center / Learn about the LPP				

The *Loop Preservation Protocol* (**LPP**)

Encounter with a *friendly NPC*

We updated the NPC scene to *explain how to keep your gear:* the **Infusion Ability**

(and where to find it)

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Distracting content from **Wenjie's Lead** was cordoned off from the **Infusion Vignette**

AFTERNOON

THE COMPLEX

Wenjie

Wenjie

What Wenjies Want

The Infusion Vignette

Infusion

Distracting content from **Wenjie's Lead** was cordoned off from the **Infusion Vignette**

Wenjie — *What Wenjies Want*

AFTERNOON

THE COMPLEX

Wenjie

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Ok, **great!**

Surely, we ***solved it***

Come on, **User**

Research

Team Show us *what you've got*

User Research Milestone: Beta

User Research Milestone: Beta

What's Cool: Yes! "What's Cool" is back!	Finally, players were *enthusiastic* about the game in the hours following the **Guided tour**

What's less Cool: Many players *still had trouble* completing the **GT**
Friction Remained:

❖ Many of what should have been mechanics tutorials were stumping players – *they were too* **"puzzle-y"**

❖ **Despite** the exit markers, players still *spent hours in each map* **after** their goals were completed

Why?

❖ They *didn't realize* that they could **come back later!**

They were suffering from FOMO

What's Cool:	Players *were able to find* and begin the **Infusion Vignette** in *record numbers*
What's still frustrating:	We needed **everyone** to find it, and **complete it** Players didn't understand: ❖ That it was the **Infusion Vignette** that would *let them* **keep their gear** ❖ We were encouraging players to *do it first,* but hadn't been clear enough about **its utility**

Players were being *heavily influenced* by their feelings about a familiar genre
"I don't like rogue-likes"
or
"This is a *bad* rogue-like"
But "DEATHLOOP" isn't a rogue-like

What's Cool:	Players **were able** to begin the **leads** in *far greater numbers* than in previous UR Reports
What's less Cool:	Players found it frustrating to get very far Friction Remained: ❖ No-one was *skipping time periods*, so progressing through a lead was **a chore** ❖ It wasn't by choice; they didn't know *it was **possible** at all!*

Without time period skips, the player would have to play map *after map **after map*** to complete their goals

This lead would take *an hour and a half* to complete *with **time-skips***.

INVESTIGATE FRANK	INTERCEPT THE EMAIL AT OTTO'S AT NOON	LOOP TO MORNING AND STOP THE FIRE	NO FIRE? READ OTTO'S EMAIL AT NOON	FIND THE FIREWORKS IN KARL'S BAY	SABOTAGE THE FIREWORKS
MORNING	NOON	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	MORNING
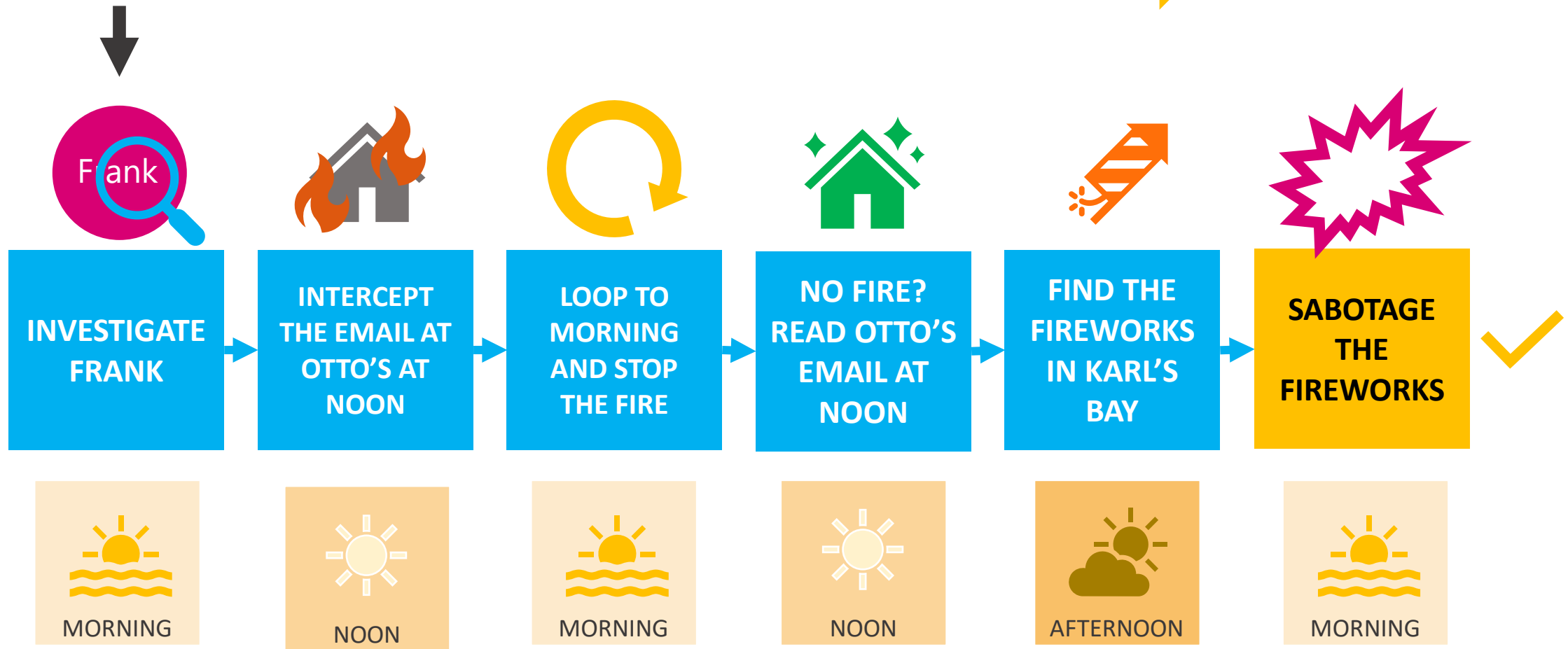
Without, it could take
*almost **twice as long***

INVESTIGATE FRANK	INTERCEPT THE EMAIL AT OTTO'S AT NOON		LOOP TO MORNING AND STOP THE FIRE	NO FIRE? READ OTTO'S EMAIL AT NOON	FIND THE FIREWORKS IN KARL'S BAY	SABOTAGE THE FIREWORKS
MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING	MORNING	NOON	AFTERNOON	EVENING	MORNING
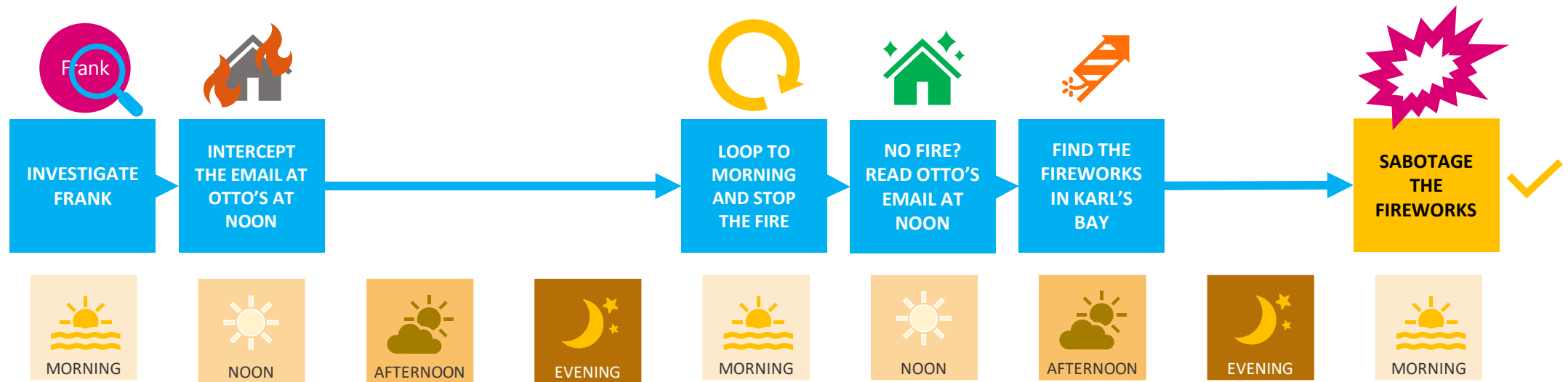
No-one reached **The Golden Loop**

The game was "**tedious** and **boring**"

Ending the "Tedium"

Definition

The feeling that the game was **tedious** and **boring**, caused by *needless hours* in the GT, not *skipping periods,* & not *gaining or using the* ***Infusion Ability***

Ending the "Tedium"

Definition

The feeling that the game was **tedious** and **boring**, caused by *needless hours* in the GT, not *skipping periods*, & not *gaining or using the Infusion Ability*

Goals

Teach the player how to ***skip*** a time period

Ensure *all players* visit the **Infusion Vignette** *early on*

Ending the "Tedium"

Constraints

Definition

The feeling that the game was **tedious** and **boring**, caused by *needless hours* in the GT, not *skipping periods*, & not *gaining or using the **Infusion Ability***

Goals

Teach the player how to ***skip** a time period*

Ensure *all players* visit the **Infusion Vignette** *early on*

No time

Seriously,
We were *in* **Beta**
what could we *really do?*

DECEMBER
2020

It was time for a break

No travel –

So, I stayed at home and played games

I noticed one thing over and over;
UI Tutorials
(rarely in FPSs, but common elsewhere)

It was a sledgehammer maneuver, *not very immersive* –

JANUARY
2021
(the game ships in Q2)

But it was **worth a shot**

Here's *how we would solve "The Tedium"* *with* **UI Tutorials**

(a proposal)

Location Selection UI

This is the UI where the player selects **time of day** and **location**

Online Mode

Journal Icons

NOON

THE COMPLEX

UPDAAM

Loadout

KARL'S BAY

FRISTAD ROCK
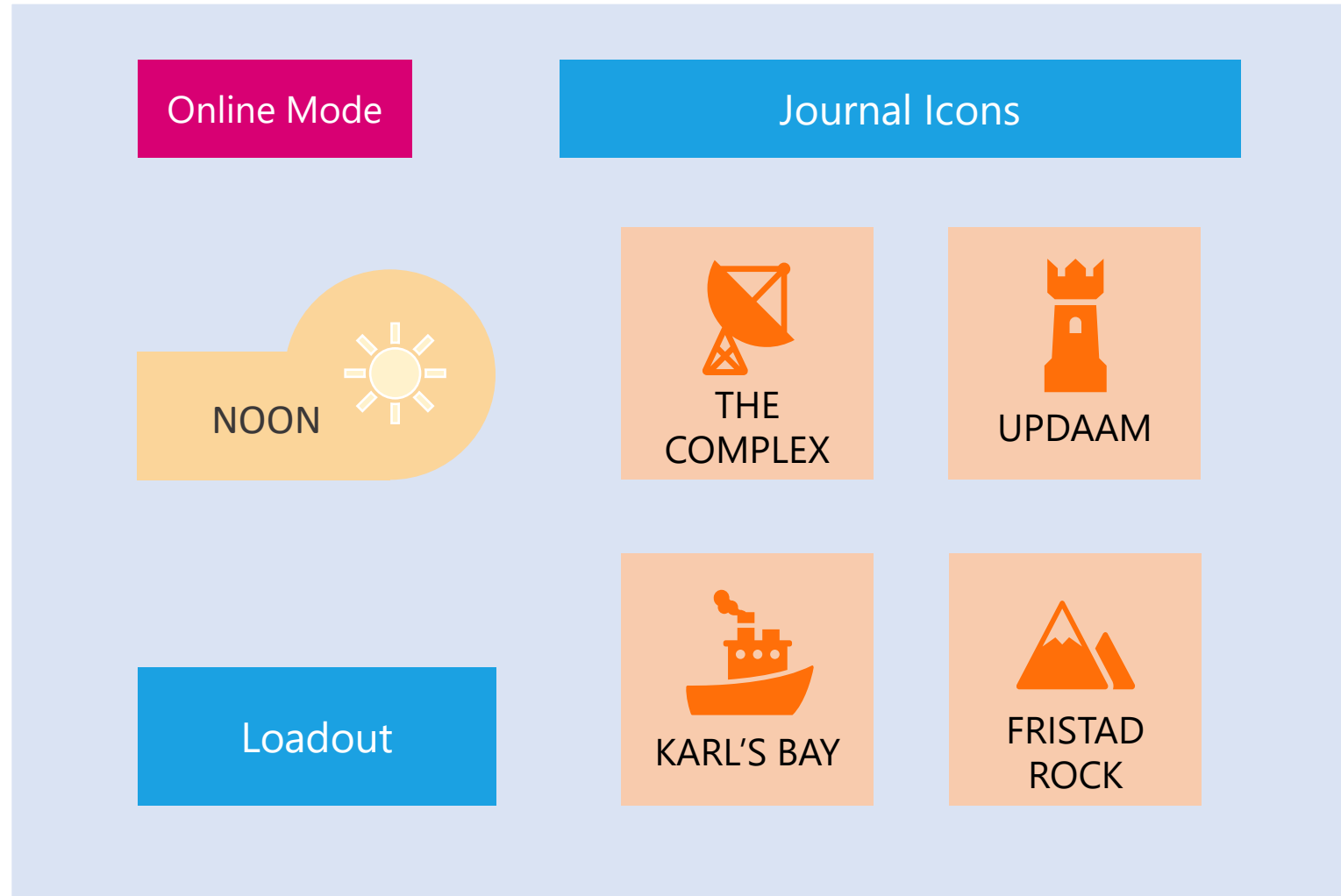
Location Selection UI
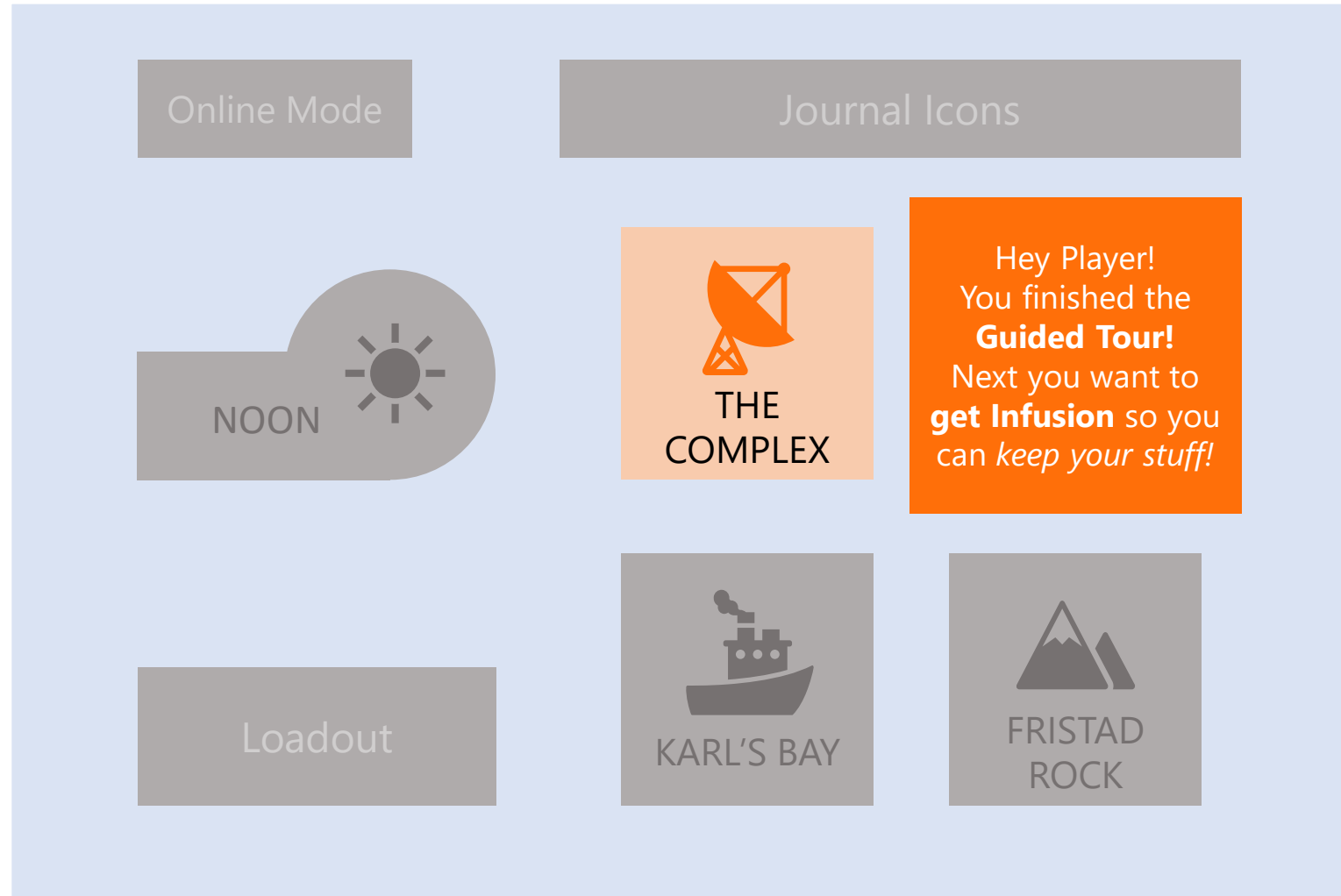
The player sees this UI *for the first time* after the **GT**

The UI is *grayed out* to put the focus on a **single element**

It's **The Complex,** where we *want the player to go next*

We then show a message *explaining* **why**

Location Selection UI

The player **must** *interact with this widget* to proceed

A Modal Message: Each step **can't be passed** unless a *certain input* is made

Online Mode

Journal Icons

AFTERNOON

But first, use this widget to *wait until* the **Afternoon**!

Loadout

THE COMPLEX

UPDAAM

KARL'S BAY

FRISTAD ROCK

Location Selection UI

Online Mode

Journal Icons

AFTERNOON

THE COMPLEX

UPDAAM

Great! **Now Select The Complex** so you can *keep your gear!*

Loadout

FRISTAD ROCK
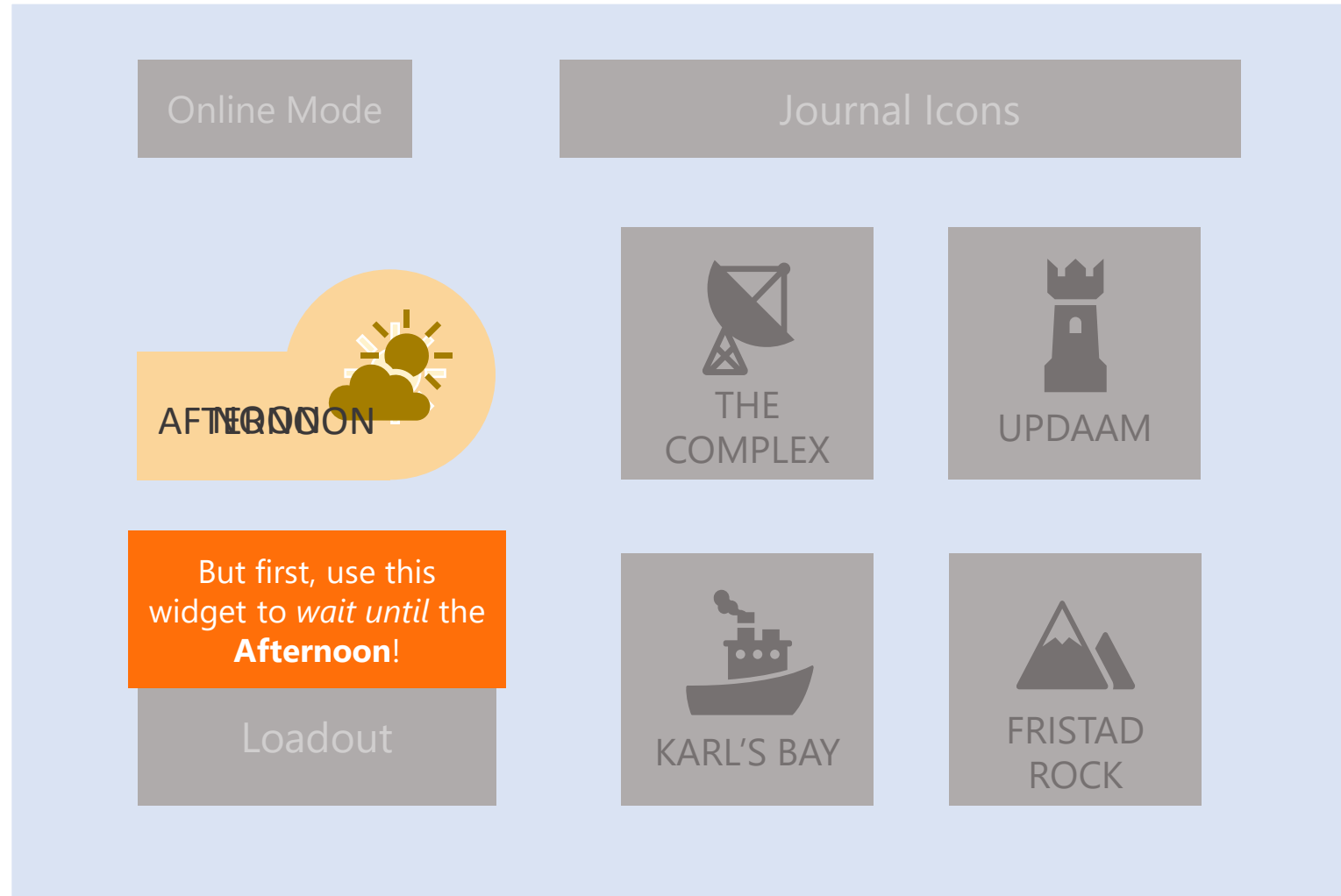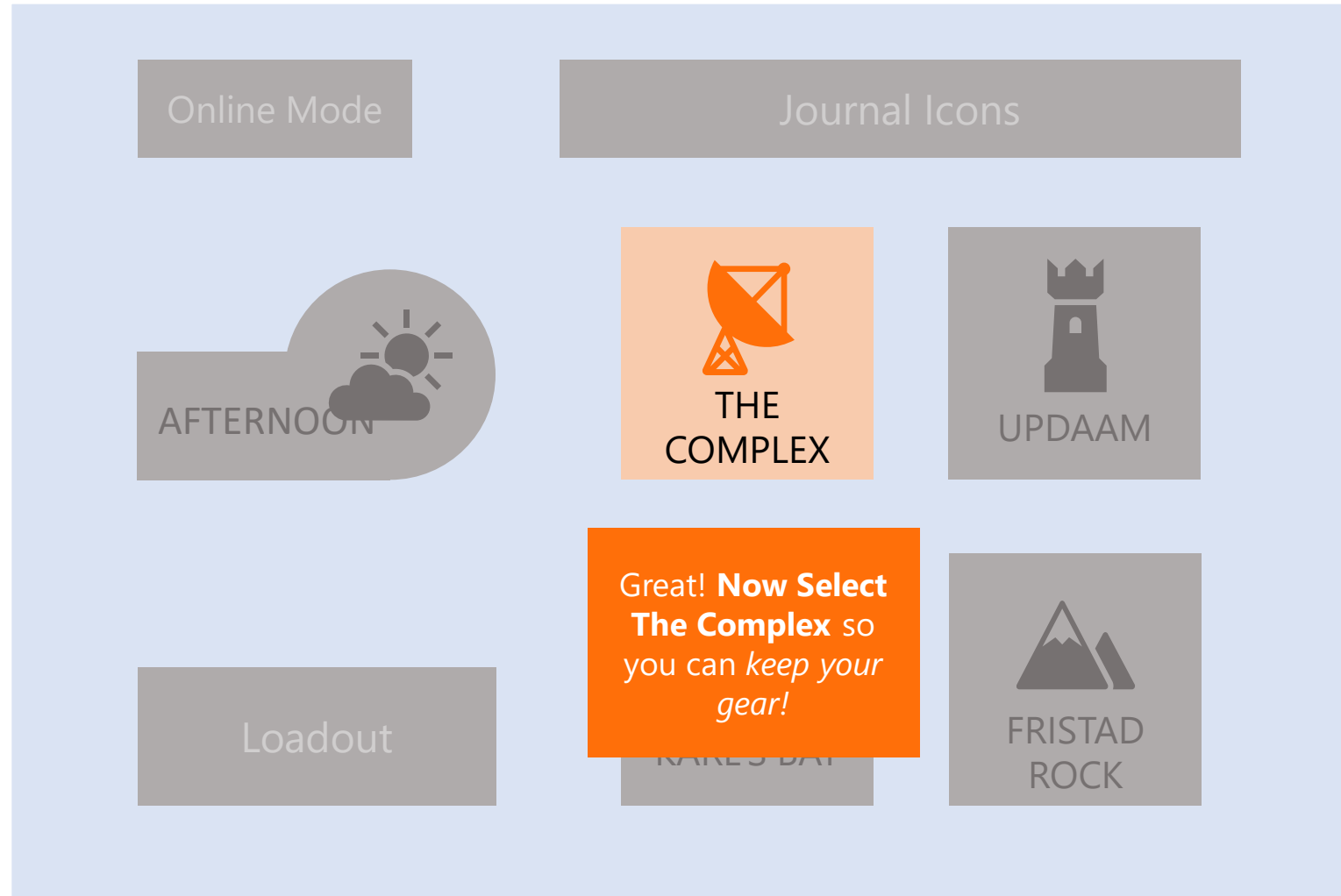
Now the time period is the one we want

We **force the player** to *select The Complex*

Every player is brought directly to the **Infusion Vignette** at the *end of the opening chapter,*

*Along with **why** they want to go there*

It was considered *un-immersive*
and a bit **clunky**,
but nevertheless:

Everyone agreed to the plan

But there was *one problem*

Constraints

No time

But there was *one problem*

Constraints

But then
something *cool*
happened

No time

Release Date:
~~Q2 2021~~ (months away)

14 September, 2021

But there was *one problem*

Constraints

But then
something *cool*
happened

Now we needed
A Team

Some time
not a lot,
but enough

Release Date:
~~Q2 2021~~ (months away)

14 September, 2021

Constraints

Now we
needed *A Team*

Some time,
No UI artist,
1 UI coder,
1 Gameplay coder,

Constraints

Now we
needed *A Team*

Some time,
 No UI artist,
1 UI coder,
1 Gameplay coder,
1 Engine coder,
1 Narrative Designer,
and...

Constraints

Now we needed *A Team*

Some time,
 No UI artist,
1 UI coder,
1 Gameplay coder,
1 Engine coder,
1 Narrative Designer,
and...
 Designed by
  someone
 who isn't a
UX Specialist

me

Ok, so we have *a team*

Keeping in mind *"a bit"*

and **a bit** more time

What **else** *can we do?*

Ending the "Tedium"

Definition

The feeling that the game was **tedious** and **boring**, caused by *needless hours* in the GT, not *skipping periods*, & not *gaining or using the Infusion Ability*

Goals

Teach the player how to *skip* a time period

Ensure *all players* visit the **Infusion Vignette** *early on*

Explain Colt's gear so the player knows *what they are* **Infusing**

Provide *much clearer* **guidance** throughout the *first hours*

Constraints

Some time,
No UI artist,
1 UI coder,
1 Gameplay coder,
1 Engine coder,
1 Narrative Designer,
and...
Designed by someone who isn't a UX Specialist

me

Begin Play → Prologue → The Guided Tour

Starting Leads

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Frank — The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank

Charlie — Space Invader
- Wenjie — What Wenjies Want
- Fia — Afternoon Delight

Aleksis — Devouring of the Lambs

Leads

Explore. Learn.

Egor — Lost in Transmission

Julianna — Radio Silence

Harriet — Chaos Theory

The Golden Loop → Roll Credits

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Begin Play → Prologue → UI Tutorial Explaining Loadout

The Guided Tour

UI Tutorial Guiding Time Skips & Infusion → The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

What good is *understanding* **Infusion** if the player *doesn't understand* what *the things they are* **infusing** *even are!*

Detailed guidance for complex vignettes

A combination of all tutorial types, and liberal use of task markers

A message explaining it's safe to leave the map

Players weren't *trawling the map for content* because they **wanted to** – it was because *they didn't think they'd be able to later!*

Begin Play

Prologue

The Guided Tour

You don't need to **complete** the vignette to progress to the rest of the game – we just require that you know **where** and **what** it is

The Infusion Vignette

Infusion

Starting Leads

Frank — The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank

Charlie — Space Invader

Aleksis — Devouring of the Lambs

Wenjie — What Wenjies Want

Fia — Afternoon Delight

Leads

Explore. Learn.

Egor — Lost in Transmission

Julianna — Radio Silence

Harriet — Chaos Theory

The Golden Loop

Roll Credits

We had done **all we could think of**
That we had the **time/budget for,** *anyway*

At this point we're all just **holding our breath**
This will be our **last UR Milestone** *before we* ***ship***

Ok, **User Research Team**

Let's roll 📦 📫

User Research Milestone: Final Report

(*Late* Beta)

User Research Milestone: Final Report

What's Cool:	Success! Players enjoyed a *frictionless* **Guided Tour**, understood ***time skips***, and how to find ***Infusion***
	And then many of them ***rage-quit***!
Yay! *Wait WHAT?*	**WHAT**

Yeah, they were *rage-quitting*
- ❖ Players no longer spent hours in the GT or struggling to find the Infusion ability
- ❖ As a result, they went Frank's stronghold *immediately* (it was a *starting lead*, after all)
- ❖ And died over and over and **over** *and over and over and **over***...

Many said if they were playing at home, after hitting this "**wall**" at Frank's, they would have shelved the game

There's some good news, right?	Once past *Frank's stronghold*, players progressed happily through **the leads**, until…
Until?	They completed *every lead they could **find***, and then **got stuck** ❖ Most players *never found* **Egor** or **Harriet's** leads ❖ The early game had trained them that they'd *find leads by following leads*
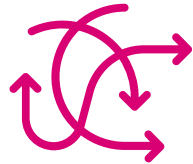
With the missing two leads, players were hitting a "**wall**" and unable to finish the game, and were not happy

And Infusion?	Sending the player *directly to the* **Infusion Vignette** *paid off*, but we were *stuck with a new problem*
What problem?	Players **did** understand that you needed to *infuse your gear to keep it*, **how** *to gain that ability*, and **what** *their gear was*, **but** didn't understand: ❖ The **Residuum Economy** and **when** you could Infuse things

They thought you needed to grind for Residuum and you could only infuse at the end of a full loop, which put up a "**wall**" to progression

Players were **frustrated** and *upset*

fuck

ok

stop, think

remember

DON'T PANIC

The feedback was *intense*
Because players
liked the game
With all of the *other friction removed,*
The scrutiny was
much higher

We were *once again* **out of time**

But we weren't **ready to give up**

No more UR *meant*

No Mistakes

to dismantle **"The Wall"**

we were ***on our own***

Dismantling "The Wall"

Definition

Moments that block the *player's progress*:
1. **Frank's** Stronghold
2. **Egor** & **Harriet's** Leads
3. The **Residuum** Economy

Dismantling "The Wall"

Moments that block the *player's progress*:
1. **Frank's** Stronghold
2. **Egor** & **Harriet's** Leads
3. The **Residuum** Economy

Goals

Ease the *difficulty* inside **Frank's** Stronghold

No, the design is *good*!

Players enjoyed it back when they discovered it *hours into the game*

Find *another solution*

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Dismantling "The Wall"

Definition

Moments that block the *player's progress*:
1. **Frank's** Stronghold
2. **Egor** & **Harriet's** Leads
3. The **Residuum** Economy

Goals

Make it *likely* that players will go to **Frank's** *when they're* **ready**

Design *new clues* to draw the player to **Egor** & **Harriet's** Leads

We're *too close to shipping*, there's no **time** or **resources** to design new clues

Dismantling "The Wall"

Definition

Moments that block the *player's progress*:
1. **Frank's** Stronghold
2. **Egor** & **Harriet's** Leads
3. The **Residuum** Economy

Goals

Make it *likely* that players *will go to* **Frank's** when they're **ready**

Use *existing content* to draw the player to **Egor** & **Harriet's** Leads

Devise a **through-line** to ensure all **leads** are *found on the critical path*

Help players understand that **grinding** *isn't needed* for **Infusion**

Dismantling "The Wall"

Definition

Moments that block the *player's progress*:
1. **Frank's** Stronghold
2. **Egor** & **Harriet's** Leads
3. The **Residuum** Economy

Goals

Make it *likely* that players *will go to* **Frank's** when they're **ready**

Use *existing content* to draw the player to **Egor** & **Harriet's** Leads

Devise a **through-line** to ensure all **leads** are *found on the critical path*

Help players understand that **grinding** *isn't needed* for **Infusion**

Constraints

We have a *matter of weeks* and no more **UR tests**

Dismantling "The Wall"

Definition

Moments that block the *player's progress*:
1. **Frank's** Stronghold
2. **Egor** & **Harriet's** Leads
3. The **Residuum** Economy

Goals

Make it *likely* that players *will go to* **Frank's** when they're **ready**

Use *existing content* to draw the player to **Egor** & **Harriet's** Leads

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We have a *matter of weeks* and no more **UR tests**

Begin Play → Prologue

Prologue → The Guided Tour

The Guided Tour → The Infusion Vignette

The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Starting Leads
- Frank — The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank
- Charlie — Space Invader
- Aleksis — Devouring of the Lambs

Charlie — Space Invader →
- Fia — Afternoon Delight
- Wenjie — What Wenjies Want

Explore. Learn.

Leads
- Harriet — Chaos Theory
- Julianna — Radio Silence
- Egor — Lost in Transmission

The Golden Loop → Roll Credits

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Begin Play

Prologue

The Guided Tour

The Infusion Vignette

Infusion

Like Colt, we *killed two birds with one stone*

We moved the *difficult **leads*** to **later in the game**

Starting Leads

Frank — The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank

Charlie — Space Invader

Fia — Afternoon Delight

Wenjie — What Wenjies Want

Aleksis — Devouring of the Lambs
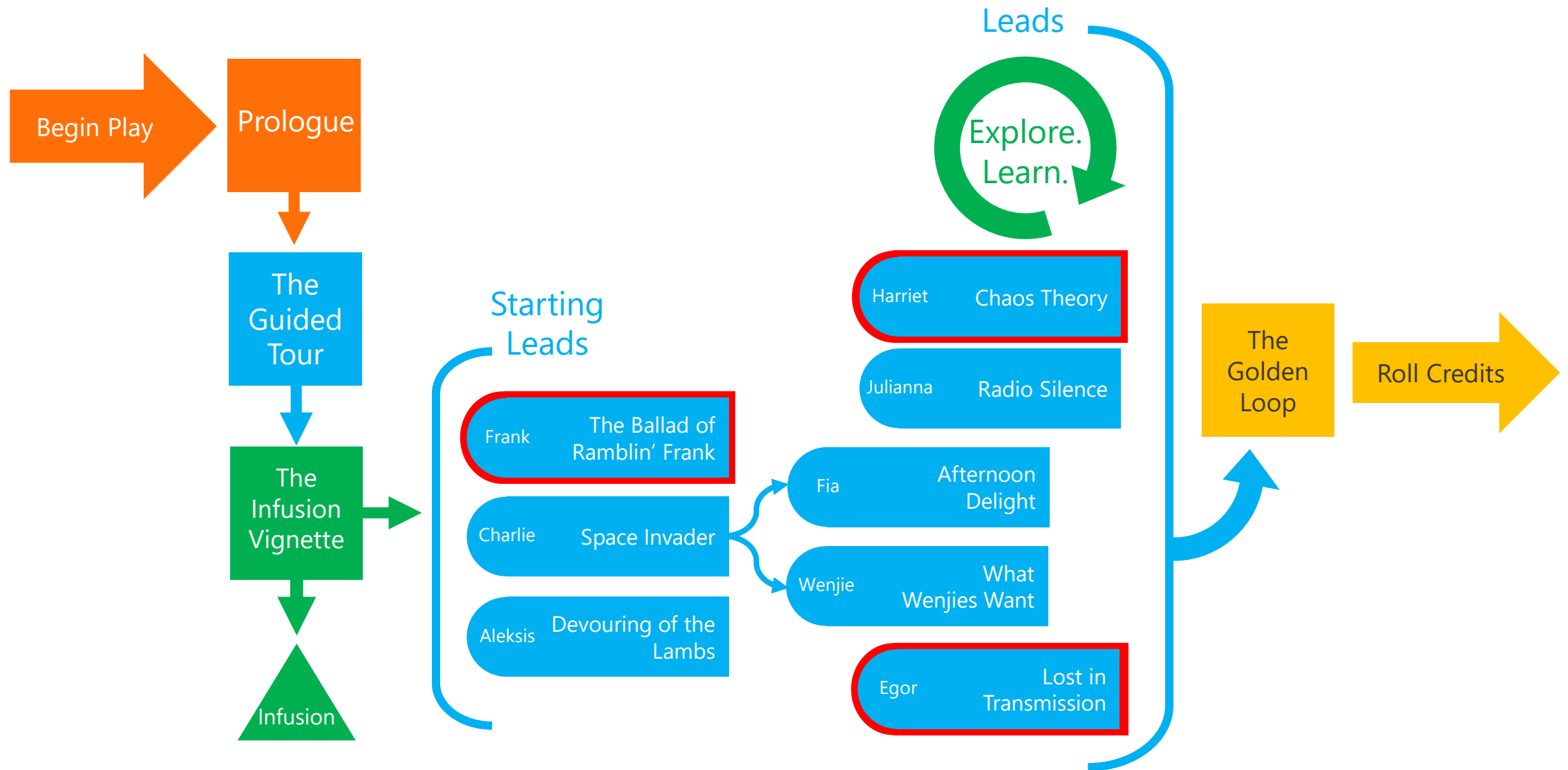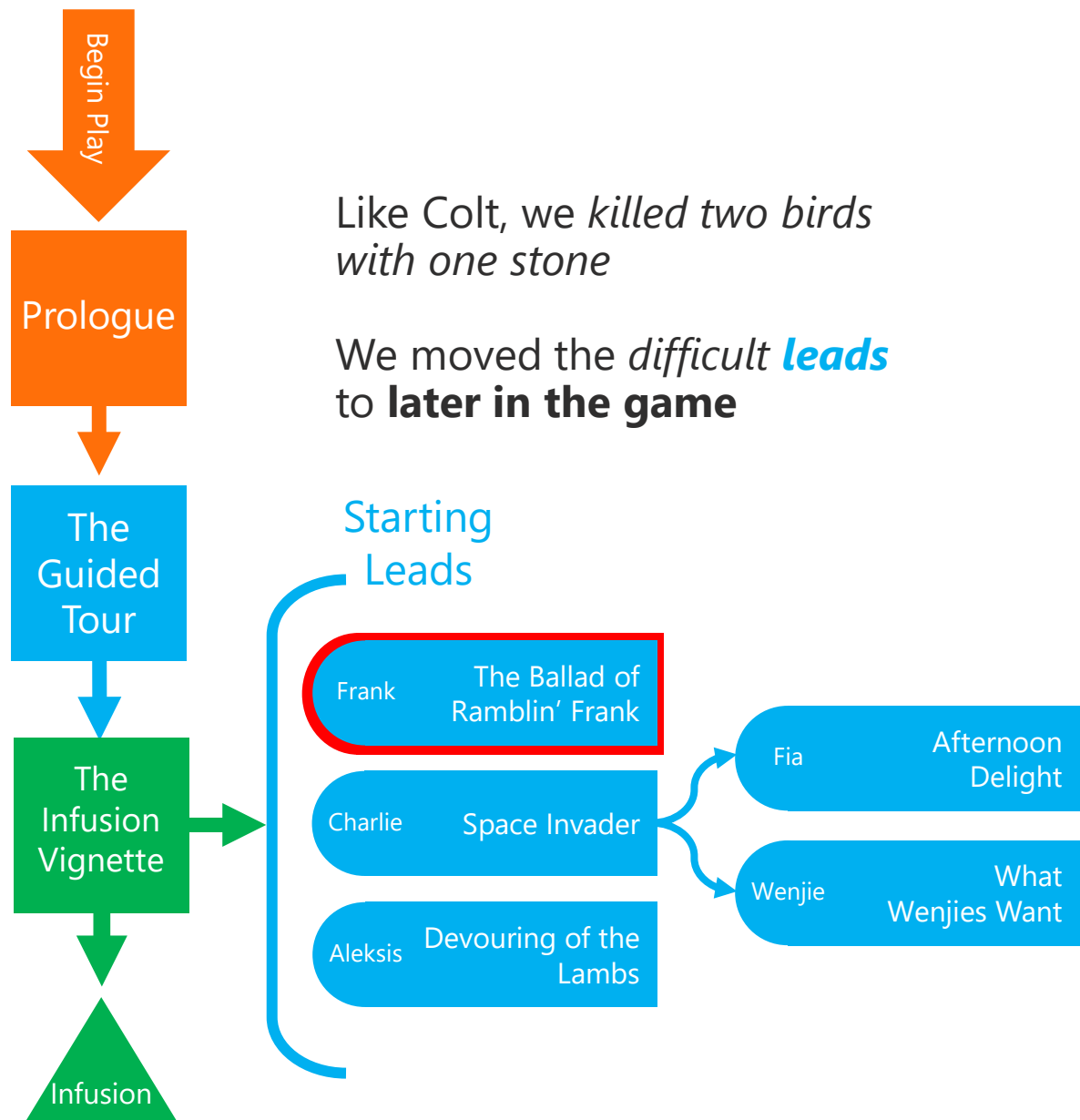
and we *set these* as **starting leads**

Leads

Explore. Learn.

Harriet — Chaos Theory

Julianna — Radio Silence

Egor — Lost in Transmission

Roll Credits

The Golden Loop

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The Final Campaign Structure

Begin Play → Prologue → The Guided Tour → The Infusion Vignette → Infusion

Starting Leads

- Harriet — Chaos Theory
- Charlie — Space Invader
  - Fia — Afternoon Delight
  - Wenjie — What Wenjies Want
- Egor — Lost in Transmission

Leads

- Frank — The Ballad of Ramblin' Frank
- Julianna — Radio Silence
- Aleksis — Devouring of the Lambs

The Golden Loop → Roll Credits

Build logical *narrative connections* to make it all **flow**

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The Final Opening Chapter

Begin Play → Prologue → UI Tutorial Explaining Loadout → The Guided Tour → UI Tutorial Guiding Time Skips & Infusion → The Infusion Vignette → Infusion → UI Tutorial Guiding Infusion and Sacrifice

One last **UI Tutorial** to confront **grinding**
- ❖ Guided *Sacrifice* and *Infusion*
- ❖ Show that this can be done *as early as Morning*
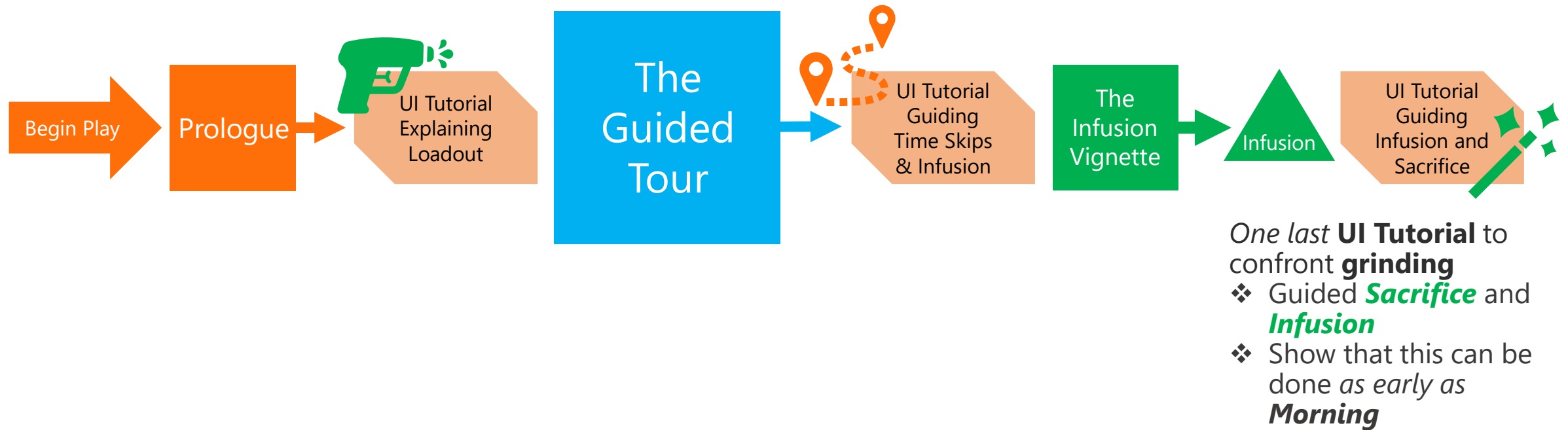
Okay
This is it
time to 🚢

September 14th
2021

10/10 Gamespot

10/10 IGN

10/10 EGM

10/10 PlayStation Universe

10/10 VG247

10/10 TheGamer

10/10 Guardian

10/10 Telegraph

10/10 PCGamesN

9/10 Destructoid

9/10 Game Informer

9/10 Games Radar+

9/10 Edge

9/10 GameRant

9/10 PC Mag

9/10 ShackNews

That's our story
But what did we **learn?**

But what did we learn?

What's Cool:	Creating a **complex game** that isn't *quite like* what the player has experienced before

What's Cooler: **Taking the time** to set up what the game **is**, and *how to play it*

❖ Establish the *Central Conflict*
❖ Build towards *the player's goal* so it **means** something to them
❖ Be crystal clear about **the structure of the game**   Even if that means **changing the structure**

But what did we learn?

What's Cool: Springing into action *with enthusiasm* no matter how **difficult the feedback is**

What's Cooler: **Slow down** and think your options through
- ❖ Sometimes the *reported problem is a symptom*, not the **cause of an issue**
- ❖ If you think something the players are hating **is good**, *trust your instincts* – something **else** in the game *could be causing them to hate it!*

But what did we learn?

What's *less* Cool: Having to make *less than ideal* choices in reaction to the UR because you're
- ❖ **Out of time**
- ❖ Have *more work* than your team can handle

(crunch is never an option)

What's still cool, in the end: Even if the solution is an *obtrusive tutorial* that's
- ❖ **Clunky**
- ❖ **Un-immersive**,

It's better than the player *not knowing how to play!*

But what did we learn?

What's Cool:	Having *a fantastic* **User Research Team** that you can continue to *call on throughout production*
What's Cooler:	Involving many developers across many teams in **User Experience Design** in addition to your UX Specialists *UX Designers can be:* ❖ *UI* Artists & *Coders* ❖ *Narrative* Designers ❖ *Game Systems* Designers ❖ *Level* Designers ❖ A Campaign Designer *(hi!)*

But what did we learn?

What's the **Coolest of all:**	Remembering ***Not to Panic***

Slow down,
Look at the data,
Listen to the UR Team

The Data can look **dire**,
It can look like things are *getting worse*
But here's the thing –

❖ People give *harsher feedback* when they feel *invested in something*
❖ The closer you are to *getting it right*, the more **intensely negative** the feedback can get
❖ Designers that are **trained in UX** and trust the **UR Team** can *cut through the fog of war*

Thank you

Thank you

For Always Believing Dinga Bakaba

Design Leadership Christophe Carrier, Gauthier Roussel, Joackim Daviaud,
Pawel Kroenke, & Yoann Saquet

Arkane Lyon UI-UX Team Julien Mario, Yoann Bazoge,
Lucille Pierrot, & Cedric Bourles

Special Guest Stars Alex Scokel, Diana Houssami, Cindy Gasparini,
Alexandre Leboucher, Jonathan Foudral, & Lubna Cecillon

Our User Researchers & Consultants The Bethesda UR Team, AggroCon, Aim Assist, & Magid

Help & Input on this Talk Axel Olivereau, Charles Somerville, Elisabeth Whyte, Emilio
(who aren't already listed above) Gonzalez, Jean Luc Monnet, Meghan Sébastien Hannier,
Stephanie Puri, Sylvain Menguy, & Stephane Aili

The Entire "DEATHLOOP" Team at Arkane & Bethesda

The GDC Team Anouk Ben-Tchavtchavadze, Celia Hodent, &
Molly Portillo

Want to be on the **"Thank You"** slide in **20XX** ?

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"DEATHLOOP"'s User Research
User Experience Death Loop
Dana Nightingale

| MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY |

"DEATHLOOP": How We
Designed Four Maps Four Times
Sébastien Meghan Hannier

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*Torchbearers: New Generation
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WEDNESDAY **THURSDAY**

A guided tour of Blackreef:
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in "DEATHLOOP"
Gilles Marion

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How a Time Loop Influenced "DEATHLOOP"s Narrative Design
Pawel Kroenke

yay we've made it to the

Questions Slide!

Dana Nightingale

Campaign Director, Arkane Lyon
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