

Writing Storyline

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example:

Timeington Hall

Here is an example of work on writing a synopsis for the **Timington Hall** district on the Clockmaker project: how narrative tasks are formed taking into account business goals, how the best concept is chosen, how the detective components of the story are designed, etc.

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1. Goals and objectives

Business goal:

- expansion of the main saga content to retain **old players** (who have passed two towns) and maintain payment metrics;

GD objectives:

- use the area next to the town for new districts;
- the new district should have **the same gameplay** as the main town, but can go **in parallel**;
- provide the possibility of the emergence of new districts instead of the old ones (therefore **the disappearance of the old districts**);
- the player should understand that this is a **separate** unique area;
- the district has its own mascot character;
- there are no resources for new characters – we **reuse** existing ones;
- the proposed concept of the first district: a traveling circus / fair.



2. Narrative objectives

We form narrative objectives concerning GD and business goals:

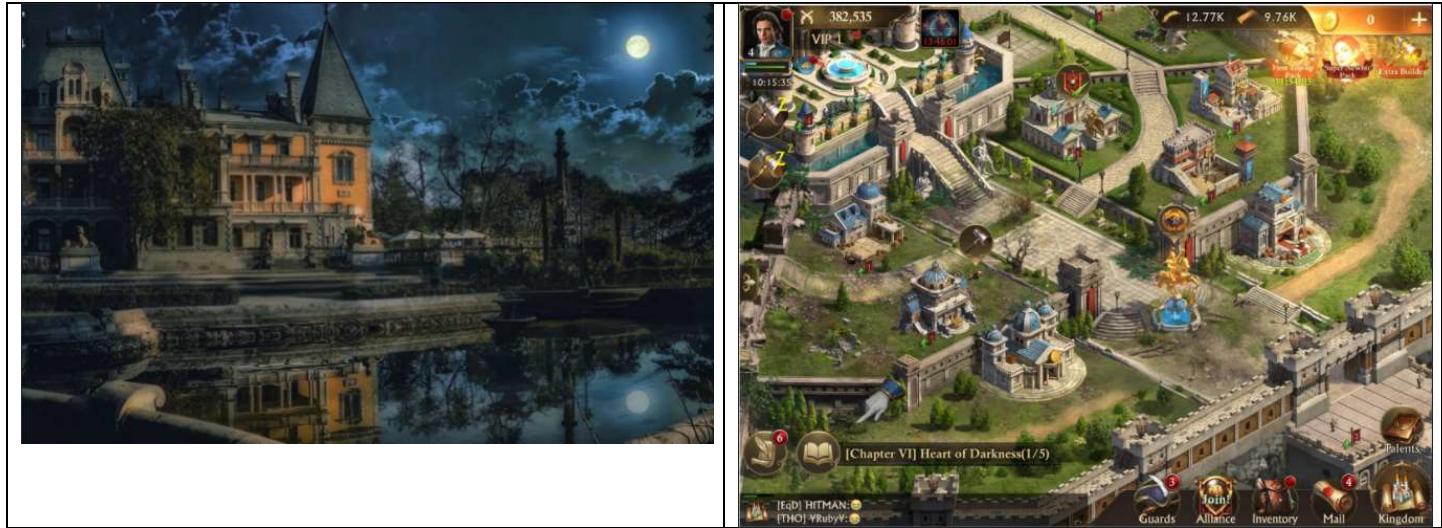
- **old players:**
 - o we need to give players what they already love: urban architecture, mystics, mysteries, and riddles;
 - (the reason why the circus is not the best idea)
- **going in parallel:**
 - o independent story, not connected to the main saga;
 - o we cannot involve characters from the main saga, only characters from events;
- **the disappearance of the old districts:**
 - o the district either appears temporarily (like a traveling fair) or has an abnormal nature of origin and may disappear at any moment;
- **separate area:**
 - o a closed ecosystem, not just another district of the town;

We add narrative tasks based on the knowledge of the target audience:

- it is known that events with ghosts perform well:
 - o we can literally **add ghosts**;
- we need features that will fulfill the range of players' interests and give freshness to the well-known content:
 - o we need **a love story**;
 - o we need **a detective story**, which will be interesting to reveal;
- the game is about the Clockmaker + players often ask to reveal more details from the mysterious past of the villain:
 - o we need to add the **influence of the Clockmaker**;
 - o but don't forget about the independent history!

3. Narrative concept

We look at refs, combine urban architecture and a closed ecosystem, and come to the idea for **the count's manor** – a district with its own territory and luxurious palace pavilions.



We study all the characters of the events and choose the rarely used and most mysterious ones. **The Curator** of the Grand Lodge is the best candidate. We also find an event about a **White Lady** – it mentions a legend about the ghost of a girl suffering from unhappy love. Let's expand this legend and strengthen the player's knowledge about the game lore. Also, the ghost of her is suitable + a love line is planned...



The final narrative concept for pitching:

The player is approached by the Curator of the Grand Lodge with the information about the old manor. Once upon a time, there lived a hermit count in Clocksville, who was engaged in strange experiments in the field of magic, time and occultism. The lodge managed to find this manor. Help the Curator explore the manor and get the information you need, and the Lodge will help you learn more about dealing with temporary anomalies.

During the restoration of the manor, the player realizes that the Lodge has long-owned information about this manor. The Lodge also transferred the count's research to the Clockmaker and helped him conduct his experiments. The lodge does not hide this but is ready to correct its mistake. But it's not so easy, because when we entered the territory of the count's manor, we woke up a ghost in its walls - a White Lady...



4. Synopsis

After the concept is approved, we begin to think over the details:

1. The district may suddenly disappear if the feature is not profitable enough. Therefore, the manor is not just located in the forest but is hidden "out of time and space" and can disappear again at any moment.
2. So, the manor has a magical nature. Therefore, the owner of the manor is a dark magician and an occultist...
3. ...who conducted experiments with time. After all, we still need to show the background of the title villain of the game – **the Clockmaker**.
4. We need a powerful **detective plot twist**. What if... the curator who invited us is the same count? Great!
5. We have a ghost – a White Lady. We study her legend from another event to maintain the consistency of the lore:

The girl saw in a dream beautiful black roses. A young man in love with her went in search of them... But his ship crashed on the rocks! Soon the girl died, and men began to receive invitations to a date... And they all ran away in horror when they saw the White Lady.

So, the White Lady is the beloved of the count, the owner of the manor. But since the count is the Curator, it means he didn't crash on the rocks. And he has the motive to return his beloved from the world of ghosts. We already have a betrayal and a dramatic story in which the White Lady asks the count to let her go and move on...

6. We forgot about the **female character** with whom a female target audience could associate themselves. We urgently introduce the mysterious Lady M into the story – fortunately, both her art and personality correspond to the level of the Curator. We need to introduce her as early as possible to create more opportunities for conflicts and jokes between the characters.



7. The player needs to be prepared for the appearance of the White Lady – we need to remind the legend, to inspire him with horror. However, the Curator already has to tell a lot about the count, about the manor, about the reason he invited the player to explore the manor. But the mystics should intrigue the player from the beginning! We have a challenge...

We also need to show the appearance of Lady M. What if... What if we make her appearance a mystical deception? Let her be with a dog and the Curator will take her for a werewolf? The former owner of the manor is an occultist and a dark magician. He could be a werewolf. We just need to add the appropriate trait to the count's background. Let the count have the surname Brightwolf.

The final **synopsis** with all the details:

The player is approached by the Curator of the Grand Lodge with information about the old manor. Once upon a time, there lived a hermit count in Clocksville, who was engaged in strange experiments in the field of magic, time, and occultism. The lodge managed to find this manor. Help the Curator explore the manor and get the information you need, and the Lodge will help you learn more about dealing with temporary anomalies.

While exploring the manor, the player understands that the Lodge has possessed the information about this manor for a long time. The Lodge also transferred the count's research to the Clockmaker and helped him conduct his experiments. The Lodge does not hide this fact, and the Curator is ready to correct its mistake. But it's not so easy, because when we entered the territory of the count's estate, we woke up a ghost in its walls - a White Lady...

Lady M, who came to save us, tells us about this. It was stupid of the Curator not to warn the player about the bloody ghost, eager for revenge for his dead lover.

The White Lady legend:

The girl saw in a dream beautiful black roses. A young man in love with her went in search of them... But his ship crashed on the rocks! Soon the girl died, and men began to receive invitations to a date... And they all ran away in horror when they saw the White Lady.

For a long time, the Secret Society of Lady M. guarded the manor from the invasion of strangers, so that innocent souls would not perish in the arms of a White Lady. But the ambitions of the Curator and his Lodge will ruin the whole town! No, says the Curator, on the contrary, this is our chance. Count's research is the key to the Clockmaker's anomalies. We continue to explore the manor, waiting for the appearance of its current owner - the White Lady...

Finally, it turns out that the Curator is the count, the owner of the manor. But he didn't die in a shipwreck, as the legend says, and even found the black roses. After he had known about the death of his beloved, he began to study the occult and founded a Grand Lodge. When he found out that the Clockmaker was experimenting with time, he transferred his research to the Clockmaker so that he would return his beloved. The Clockmaker fulfilled his part of the bargain, but the White Lady returned only in the form of a ghost, an echo of the past. For a long time, the Curator thought about what to do with it, but the player who appeared in Clocksville opened his eyes: the beloved of the Curator only suffers. And he wants to break the anomaly, to stop torturing the poor girl.

The player manages to find the cause of the time loop in the manor and learns how to manage it. These possibilities could the Curator's head and he tries to return the time (we see a young ghost count), but the player stops him. Nobody can live in the past! The Count understands this and breaks the time loop, freeing the White Lady. She will live forever in his heart and without any mystics...

The player learns the secrets that the Lodge gave to the Clockmaker, learns some details about his background and now the player is better prepared to deal with any anomalies (= rewards and boosters).

The player restores the manor and it becomes the headquarters of a Secret Society, owned by Lady M. (Or simply disappears again out of time and space).

5. Detailed plots of episodes

It is important not only to distribute the storyline according to the current game balance (five pavilions per district), but also to give the clues so that the smartest players have the opportunity to reveal the curator's mystery.

Episodes:

1. Picture Gallery

The player and the Curator are trying to get into the Picture Gallery - according to **the diary of the count**, which the Curator has, "his beloved is the key to the treasures." It's worth checking out. We see the coat of arms of Count Brightwolf, which depicts a wolf. The curator urges us not to believe the rumors, allegedly the count was the lord of werewolves, but we hear howling and growling, and the werewolf himself blocks our way.

We're trying to escape from a werewolf. But it's just Lady M with her dog Winston (the fear stoked the imagination). She was especially guarding the manor to protect outsiders from the curse of the manor - the ghost of the White Lady. And the player should not go there.

But the Curator convinces the player that they will cope with both anomalies and traps of the castle because he has the diary of Count Brightwolf himself. Seeing the player's courage in action, Lady M admits that only the player can reveal the secret of the manor and get rid of ghosts. We see a portrait of the Countess and also meet a White Lady who steals the key from the lock and hides in the Ballroom.

We think that the White Lady is a threat.

2. Ballroom

In the ballroom, we learn the story of the Count and his beloved, and later the ghost - the White Lady. We meet the White Lady who trapped us. **The Curator says that this is not a ghost, but an echo of the past.** Heartbroken Brightwolf wanted to bring back the time when his beloved was alive. It is here that we learn that the name of the Countess is Celeste.

Now we have to dance with the White Lady to appease the ghost and get the key. After receiving the key, we go to the Castle.

We learn that the White Lady is not a threat. Through the dance we teach her to speak, although she speaks in riddles with the mention of time (Half past four, two: ten, this is the time of the song!)

3. Castle

We have to enter the office where the Count conducted his research. We find evidence of the cooperation of David Watchman (the Clockmaker) and the count. It was the Grand Lodge that brought them together. The curator does not deny this, but admits his mistake and is ready to fix it.

We find the guest room where David Watchman worked and find the Chinese Compass. Lady M goes to call May for help. She says that the Clockmaker used the art of Feng shui to channel the energy of some powerful artifact. Everything is clear to the curator - this is the Black Rose that the Count found for his beloved. We go to the garden and call the best gardener - Kangi.

We learn that the White Lady is not a threat, but on the contrary, an assistant.

4. Garden

We activate a temporary anomaly according to the records and drawings of the Clockmaker/Count, but before we have time to gain control over it, it causes a violent growth of plants and various obstacles. We are trying to get to the "control panel".

The Curator succeeded. But instead of freeing us, he escapes to the Family Crypt. Lady M appears and saves us at the last moment. Having sent May to us, she herself went to the library and found out that it was not possible to find the diary from the sunken ship of the count. And only the count himself could know so much about the count. **So the Curator is the count!** And his goal was not to eliminate the manor anomaly but to gain control over it in order to get a second chance to reunite with his beloved.

Kangi and May go to the town, and Lady M and the player go to stop the Count.

We find out that the White Lady and the Curator are directly connected.

5. Family Crypt

Walking through the cemetery and an epic confrontation with a couple of ghosts - the Count and Countess. We convince the curator-count that it is impossible to live in the past. The Countess herself suffers, being an echo of the past. And happiness in this form is only an illusion.

We rid the White Lady of the colloquial course, we use the White Lady as a weapon against the Curator.

The curator finally recognizes the Clockmaker's methods as obviously dangerous and abandons his plan. He gives us the "control panel" of the anomaly, and we finally eliminate the manor anomaly.

The curator repented, but believes that he fulfilled his part of the deal - the player received a valuable artifact and understands better how temporary anomalies work. And no matter how you feel about him, he and his Lodge will continue to research in this area and will help us. On mutually beneficial terms. Lady M is skeptical of such a statement. However, the beautiful manor has been restored.

6. Clues for detectives

A set of clues by which the player can guess that the Curator is the Count:

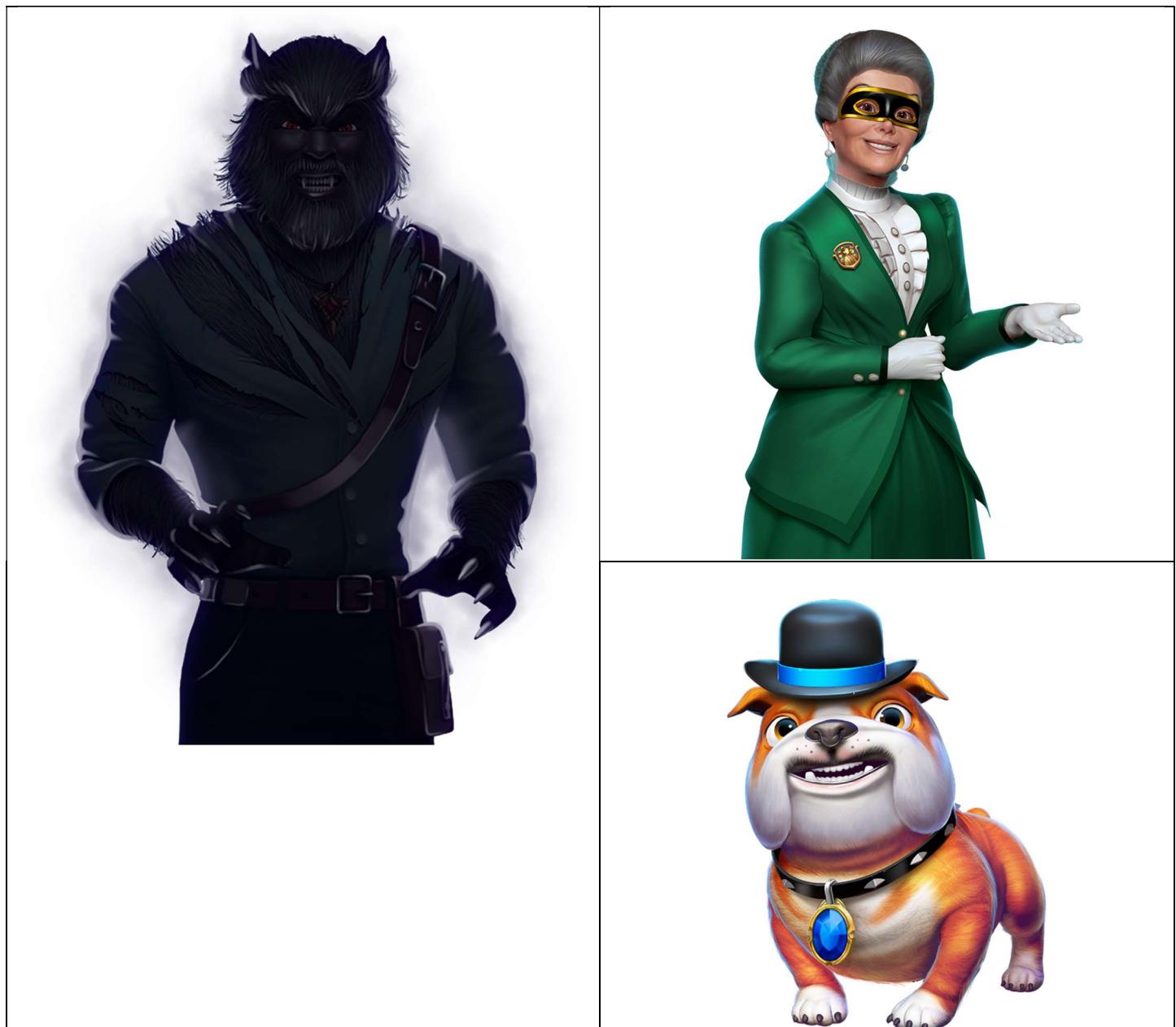
- the Curator hid from us the presence of a White Lady ghost in the manor;
- the Curator claims that he has a diary from a sunken ship and a herbarium has been preserved in it – a dried black rose flower. But this is a clear contradiction, and later it will turn out that the sunken ship has never been lifted from the bottom;
- the Curator knows the manor too well;
- the Curator declares what the ghost's favorite dance is – he allegedly read it in the count's diary. But let it slip that "it turns out that I don't know everything about Celeste";
- the Curator declares that the ghost is an echo of the past even before all the evidence;
- the Curator was silent about the cooperation of his Lodge with the Clockmaker, but in the Castle he goes directly to the guest room of the villain;
- Lady M's dog always barks and growls at the Curator when he says outright inconsistencies.

7. Interesting narrative ideas

7.1. Werewolf trick

We escalate the horror about Count Brightwolf and about the legend that he was a werewolf. Then we run away from the werewolf in fear, but it turns out to be only Lady M with the dog Winston: darkness and fear stroke the imagination.

We visualize this through the reuse of the werewolf character from the Halloween event, and also introduce a functional pet assistant as a full-fledged character in the story.



7.2. Text Riddles

In addition to the main plot intrigue, text riddles are embedded in episodes of the Castle. During several dialogues, the characters ponder the charades of the ghost, giving the player the opportunity to solve it himself and enjoy his own guesswork.

A popular trope is used that abandoned manors are full of riddles and ciphers, and ghosts cannot speak directly.

Lady M: Hmm... The count's desk is empty. But one of the drawers is closed with a combination lock... What else would one keep there but secret notes?

Lady M: I doubt it's a subscription to the Darkchester Times. A publication with a circulation of several thousand isn't very secret, anyway!

White Lady: Eight, nine, six, and two are the amounts.\ These are the numbers you must count...

Lady M: Oh, the White Lady! She appeared and vanished... Could she really... Be giving us a hint?

Lady M: Enter the code, /player_name!

Lady M: ...and the last number in the code: 2. Hear that click? The desk drawer is opening...

[picture – a deadly dart flies out of the table]

Lady M: The code was wrong, and there's a trap! We nearly died! Why didn't you warn... Wait, where did the Curator go?

White Lady: Eight, nine, six, and two are the amounts.\ These are the numbers you must count...

Lady M: Hang on, /player_name. The ghost told us the numbers we "must count." But why? What if we...

Lady M: Count how many letters are in the numbers! "Eight" has five letters, so the number 5 is part of the code! Enter the new code!

Lady M:

... and "two" has 3 letters, so it's the number 3. Great work, /player_name! The code is right and the desk drawer opened!

[picture – a letter]

Lady M: "I have fulfilled your request. Thank you for the samples and the office you provided, but it had to be closed off. David Watchman."

Lady M: The Clockmaker and Count Brightwolf worked together? The Clockmaker even had his own office in the castle... Let's head there!

...

Curator: You're finally here, /player_name! The Clockmaker's office has a combination lock on it. I can't get inside. Will you help?

Lady M: If somebody hadn't been working alone, they'd know the trick already. /player_name, will you summon the White Lady?

White Lady: One, eight, five and two.\ Go backward to find the truth...

Curator: What are you waiting for, /player_name? Celeste is telling us the code to the Clockmaker's office! Enter it!

Lady M: Master Curator, weren't you listening? She said "go backward"... There could be another trap here!

Curator: And you're the ones who accused me of being too literal with the count's journal! Well, /player_name, let's step aside and enter the code...

Curator: The doors to the Clockmaker's office are not rigged with a trap, but the code 1852 didn't work.

White Lady: One, eight, five and two.\ Go backward to find the truth...

Lady M: Go backward... Backward... As in the order of the numbers? Let's try 2581!

Click!

Lady M: It worked! But why is Celeste speaking in riddles? Why can't she just tell us the numbers in the right order?

Curator: Does it matter? /player_name, open the door! I can't wait to enter the Clockmaker's office!