

CUSTOMIZED ANGEL

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UI / UX CASE STUDY

- FIGMA
- PHOTOSHOP
- ILLUSTRATOR
- UI DESIGN
- UX DESIGN

OVERVIEW

A time-loop narrative investigation game. Players surveil NPC behaviour across repeating 1:59 loops, building evidence on a deduction board to unmask Melanie's killer. This case study documents the full UI/UX system — from problem framing through final diegetic screens — designed to serve deduction clarity without breaking immersion.

TOOL	ROLE	TYPE	LOOPS
Figma · PS · AI	UI/UX Designer	Game UI System	Time-Loop Core

01:59

THE LOOP RESETS.

THE CORE PROBLEM

01 COMPLEX SYSTEMS OVERWHELM NEW PLAYERS

A time-loop game with telescopes, radios, timelines, and evidence boards is dense. Players must learn multiple overlapping mechanics without a moment of confusion.

02 REPEATED LOOPS RISK UI FATIGUE

Players cycle the same 1:59 loop many times. Traditional HUD overlays accumulate clutter and break the investigative mood that the game depends on.

03 DEDUCTION CLARITY VS. NARRATIVE IMMERSION

Showing all evidence clearly tends to produce floating panels and sci-fi UI that destroy the grimy, analogue atmosphere the game is built around.

DESIGN GOALS

INTRODUCE PROGRESSIVELY

Teach telescope → radio → timeline → deduction board across loops, not all at once.

SUPPORT REPEATED LOOPS

UI resets cleanly; new evidence accumulates without clutter or confusion.

FOCUS ON DEDUCTION

Every screen leads the player toward insight, not menu navigation.

KEEP IMMERSION INTACT

All interactive elements are diegetic objects that exist in the world.

"A restrained, loop-aware UI system designed to support deduction and psychological tension without sacrificing clarity."

RESEARCH APPROACH

I examined detective interfaces, timeline trackers, and minimalist mobile UIs to merge diegetic analogue elements with essential digital UI cues for a mysterious, immersive experience. References spanned noir games, investigation boards, and analog device interfaces.



FIG 01 — Visual & UX Reference Board: Detective tools, evidence boards, analogue clocks, minimalist UI

DETECTIVE TOOLS

Surveillance windows with fixed framing encourage focused observation. Clutter-free compositions reduce cognitive load during investigation.

EVIDENCE BOARDS

Physical cork boards with red thread and polaroids externalize deductive thinking. Tactile, analogue metaphors create psychological investment.

ANALOGUE DEVICES

Diegetic clocks and radios anchor the UI inside the game world. Players interact with objects, not panels — maintaining complete immersion.

KEY INSIGHT: Blending diegetic analogue with minimal digital UI cues resolves the immersion vs clarity tension.
No floating HUD. No sci-fi panels. Every element exists physically in the world.



FIG 02 — UX Flow Diagram: Loop-Based Investigation System (Core + Sub-flows)

FLOW BREAKDOWN

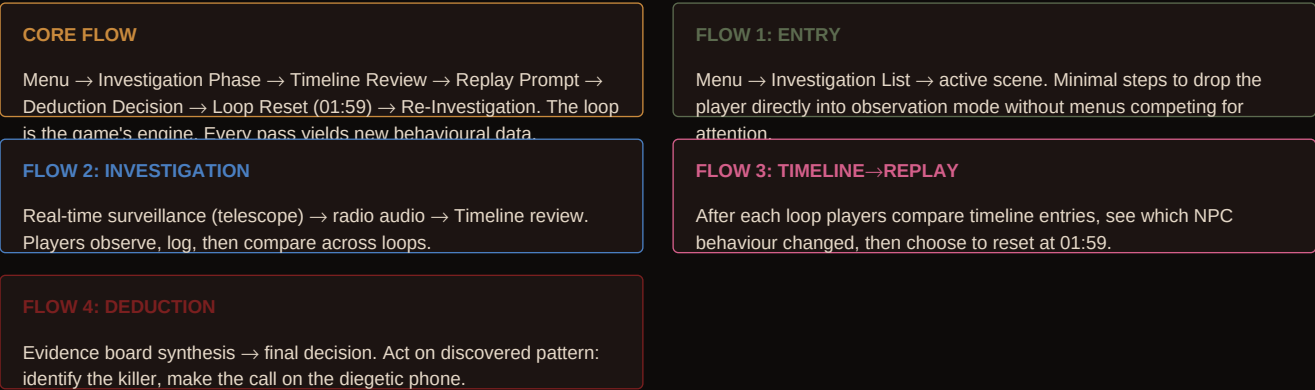




FIG 03 — UI Foundations Sheet: Color Palette, Typography System, Grid Breakdown

PRIMARY COLOR PALETTE

#1C1412	#3A2420	#7A1F1F	#C98A3D	#5C6B4F	#E6D9C8	#B7A89A
Base BG	Surface	Accent Red	Highlight	Device	Text	Secondary
Deep Espresso	Burnt Umber	Oxidized Crimson	Muted Amber	Desaturated Olive	Warm Ivory	Dust Beige

TYPOGRAPHY

Title / Narrative Tone: Playfair Display · Cormorant Garamond
UI Body & Labels: Inter · SF Pro · Source Sans 3
All-Cap Actions: Letter-spacing 4–6% (EXIT, SCROLL)

GRID SYSTEM

- Timeline Panel (Diegetic) — left panel
- Main Observation Viewport — center 60%
- Device Context Menu — right contextual
- HUD-free: 0 floating overlays in core view



FIG 04 — Component Breakdown: Button System, Timeline, Device Interaction, Evidence Board

KEY COMPONENTS

BUTTON SYSTEM

Rectangular, sharp-cornered (2–4px radius). Warm Ivory default → Muted Amber hover (+2% letter-spacing). All-caps labels with 4–6% spacing. Disabled state at 40% opacity — no glow.

DEVICE INTERACTION

Keypad glows subtly on hover; pressed number glows amber. Radio delivers audio clues from physical object. No abstract UI panel — player feels like they’re investigating, not navigating.

TIMELINE SYSTEM

Vertical primary layout (players scan downward). Color-coded dots per NPC: yellow=Barbie, green=Junkie, pink=Melanie, blue=Grumpic. Horizontal scrubber for loop comparison. Bold numeric time, muted

EVIDENCE BOARD

Notes, photos, red thread connections. Click-to-zoom cards with depth shadow. Red thread pulses when a relevant connection is discovered. Reinforces deduction without screen clutter.

SYSTEM PHILOSOPHY:

Reduce friction in repeated loops · Help compare behavioural patterns · Support deduction clarity · Maintain psychological immersion

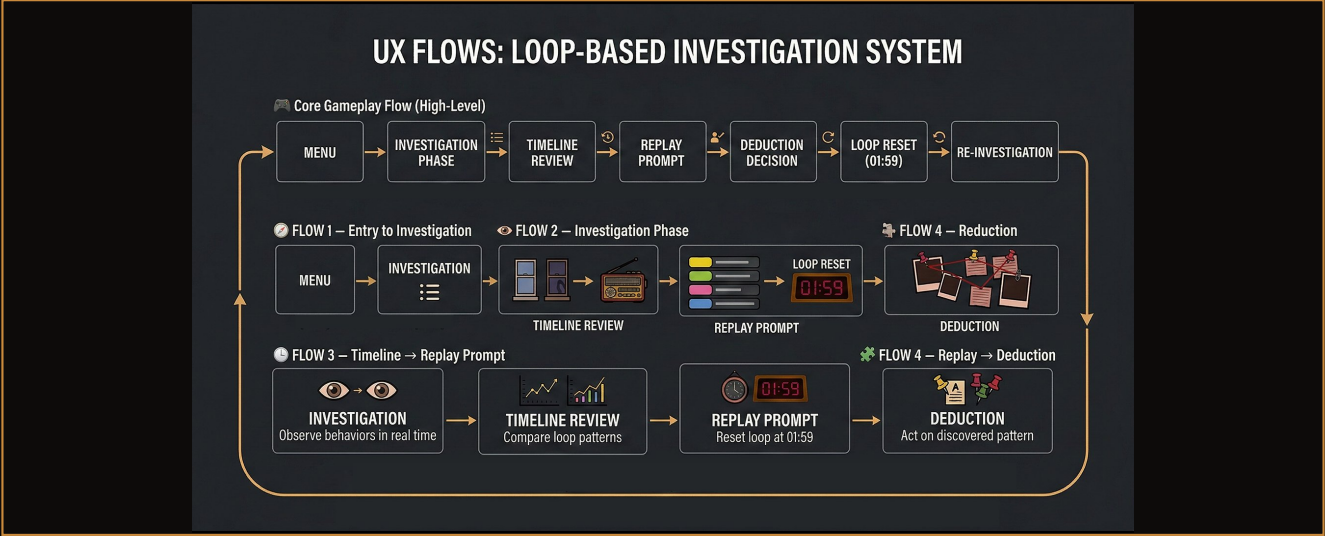


FIG 05 — SCREEN 1: Surveillance Window + Clock + Radio — System Rationale Annotations

DESIGN RATIONALE: SCREEN 01

TIMELINE ANCHOR — 01:59 Clock

The always-visible countdown establishes the loop constraint without a separate progress bar. Players subconsciously track urgency; the clock drives tension passively.

DIEGETIC INTERACTION — Radio

Audio clues emit from a physical radio object. No abstract panel — the player feels like they are investigating, not navigating a menu system.

MINIMAL HUD

Zero floating health bars or quest trackers. Reducing cognitive overhead lets players dedicate full attention to NPC behaviour patterns.

FRAMED OBSERVATION WINDOW

Fixed framing through the telescope limits scope, encouraging focused surveillance instead of chaotic free-roam exploration across the apartment building.



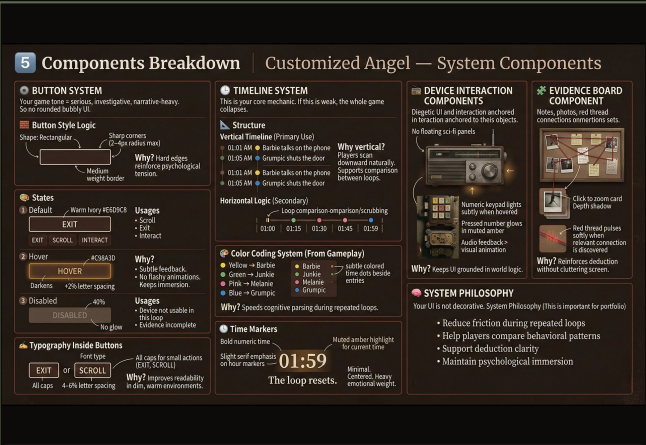
SPATIAL DEDUCTION BOARD

Externalize player deduction through tactile realism and manual evidence arrangement.



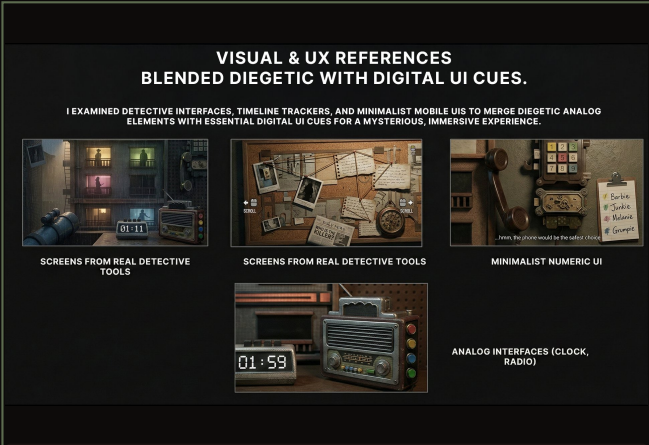
BEHAVIOR TRACKING TIMELINE

Track NPC behaviors and pattern discovery across time loops with color-coded entries.



DIEGETIC KEYPAD INTERFACE

Immersive interaction with a physical device — numeric simplicity, world-grounded framing.



FINAL SCREENS COMPOSITE

Full UI system overview showing diegetic and digital elements in their living context.

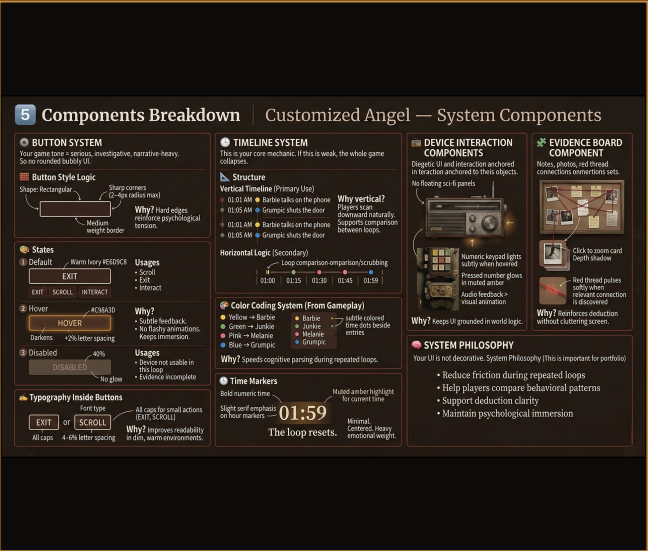


FIG 06 — Diegetic Keypad (Extension 1–9)

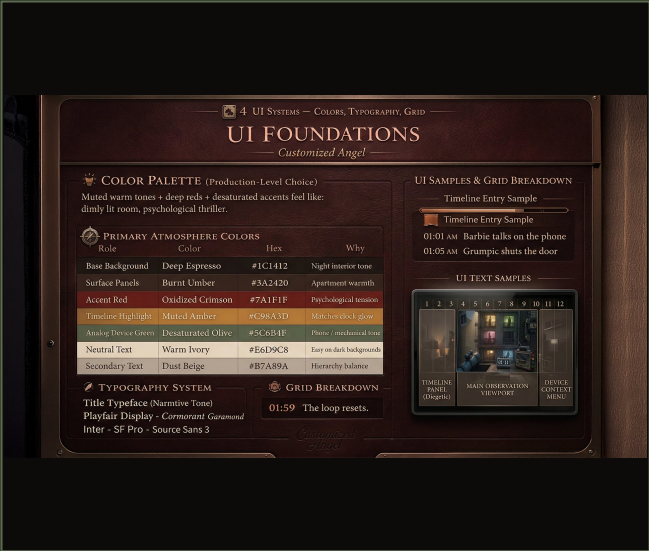


FIG 07 — Final Design Philosophy Visual

KEYPAD DESIGN RATIONALE

NUMERIC SIMPLICITY

Extensions 1–9 map directly to characters (Barbie=1, Junkie=3, Melanie=5, Grumpic=9). Color-coded keys match character identity colors established across all UI.

DECISION TENSION

The handwritten sticky note listing characters creates a paper-feel deduction moment. Players must cross-reference their evidence board before dialing.

WORLD-GROUNDED OBJECT

The phone is a physical prop visible in the game world — not a pop-up dialog box. Calling a character feels consequential and irreversible.

AUDIO-FIRST INTERACTION

Audio feedback takes priority over visual animation — a click, a dial tone, a voice. Keeps UI receding behind the narrative experience.



FIG 08 — Behavior Tracking Timeline in situ



FIG 09 — Final Screens Overview

TIMELINE SYSTEM BREAKDOWN

VERTICAL PRIMARY LAYOUT

Players scan top-to-bottom naturally. Entries stack chronologically, allowing direct comparison between loop passes at a glance.

HORIZONTAL SCRUBBER

Secondary scrub bar allows loop comparison mode — slide to see how behaviour at 01:30 differed loop 1 vs loop 3.

COLOR-CODED NPC IDENTITY

Yellow=Barbie · Green=Junkie · Pink=Melanie · Blue=Grumpic.
Cognitive parsing speed increases dramatically in repeated loops.

TIME MARKERS

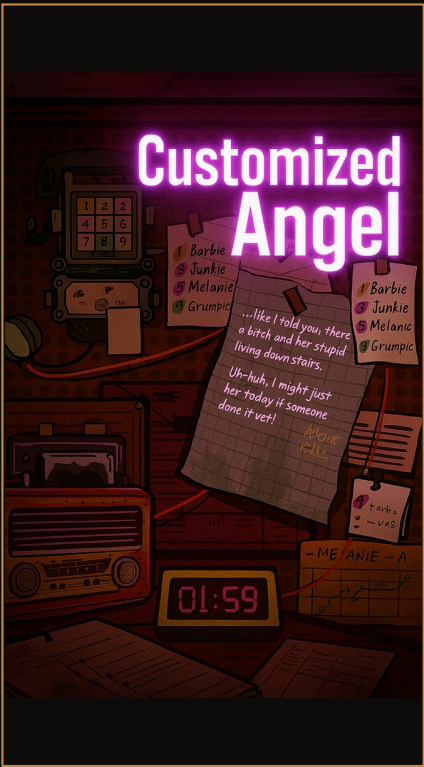
Bold numeric timestamps. Muted amber highlight for current loop time.
Slight serif weight on hour markers adds emotional gravity.

THREE-ACT LEVEL STRUCTURE

TUTORIAL LEVEL — Initial Loop Simplified room layout. Single NPC sequence (Melanie + 1 other). Introduces telescope → radio → timeline in linear sequence. Limited clues avoid overload; curiosity about loop mechanics is seeded. Flow: Enter Room → Observe NPC → Find Clues → Add to Timeline → Realize Influence on NPCs.
PROGRESSIVE LEVELS — Middle Loops Multiple rooms visible through telescope. Each NPC follows a unique schedule. Players combine clues across loops and use telephone to unlock complex interactions. Mix of visual and audio clues requires replay to capture all details.
FINAL LEVEL — Climactic Loop Same layout, but player actions directly impact outcomes. All clues are available — the mystery must be solved by correctly piecing together the timeline. Time-sensitive observation windows demand quick, decisive action. True ending: prevent Melanie's death by correctly identifying the killer.

KEY NPC PROFILES

NPC 1: Estranged Ex-Boyfriend Paces his barren room. Stares at Melanie's window. Clues: old voicemails, torn photos. Motive: bitterness and loss of control.	NPC 2: Envious Younger Neighbor Mimics Melanie's mannerisms. Keeps notes on her routine. Clues: scribbled comparisons, fashion magazine mimicry. Motive: resentment.	NPC 3: Resentful Landlord Mutters about ungrateful tenants. Angrily slams doors. Clues: overdue notices with Melanie's name circled. Motive: emotional turmoil.
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WHAT WORKED

- Diegetic UI removed the HUD-immersion tension completely
- Color-coded NPC system drastically reduced cognitive load in repeated loops
- Vertical timeline matched natural reading direction — faster pattern recognition
- Keypad phone interaction felt consequential and world-grounded
- 01:59 clock created passive urgency without a dedicated UI element

KEY LEARNINGS

- Game UI must serve the mechanic, never compete with narrative
- Repeated loops demand UI that is scannable in under 2 seconds
- Atmospheric restraint is harder to achieve than feature density
- Diegetic objects require worldbuilding consistency to earn player trust

TOOLS USED

"A restrained, loop-aware UI system designed to support deduction and psychological tension without sacrificing clarity."

PHOTOSHOP

Screen mockups, atmospheric image treatment

ILLUSTRATOR

Diegetic icon set, device illustrations, UI assets

01:59

THE LOOP RESETS. THE INVESTIGATION CONTINUES.