

# The Graveyard – Development Log

*January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Brainstorming Initial Ideas*

## Idea 1 - Forest & Graveyard

A peaceful setting that transforms into a scary one, I thought of this idea because I think it would make for an interesting cinematic and narrative by focusing on building suspense through ambience, audio, colour theory and symbolism.

- It starts off in a tranquil forest setting with birds chirping, the camera focusing on a stream and flowers blooming with the sun setting, overall making for a peaceful atmosphere.
- Eventually reaches a graveyard, where the sky has darkened, giving it a more ominous atmosphere. (People being afraid of the dark comes from the fear of the unknown which links into the theme of the hidden monster, hinting to the player that something isn't right. Graveyards too are obviously associated with death so combining them makes the scene even more eerie. Also the juxtaposition of the previous bright and cheerful atmosphere makes it jarring and sinister.)
- The chirping birds are replaced by the squawking of crows (Crows are typically a bad omen and symbolize death and danger.)
- Maybe a particular grave could be focused on which has a skull symbol or a statue of an angel or the Grim Reaper. Instead of blooming flowers it has vines that grip around the graves and floor. A layer of fog could grow through the graveyard.
- The camera works its way through the graveyard with a variety of shots, where some kind of monster is hinted at - claw marks, blood, shredded clothing. Eventually the monsters' eyes are shown in the darkness of the mausoleum entrance and the cinematic ends.

## Idea 1 - Forest & Graveyard Moodboard



## Idea 2 - Abandoned City

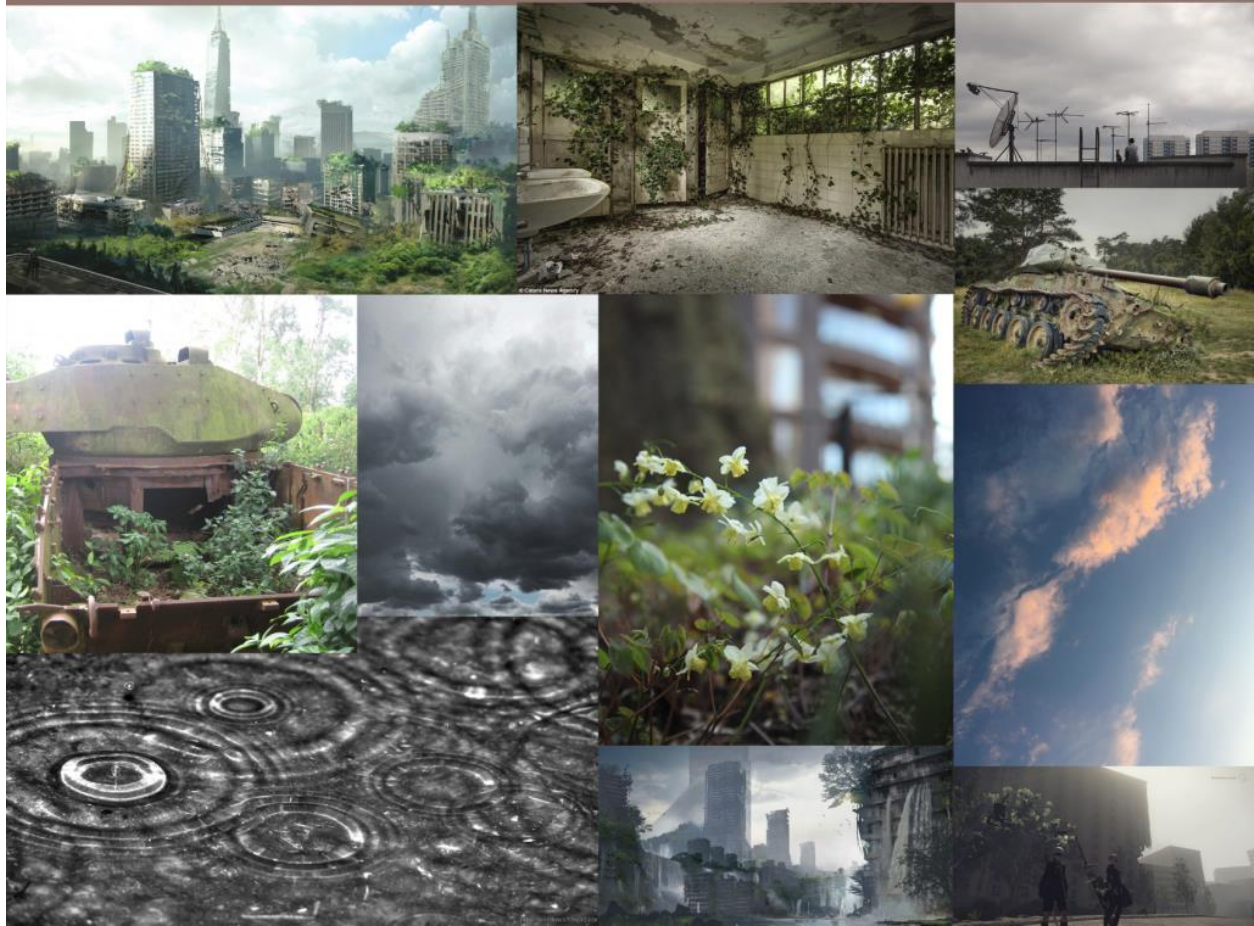
This is the second idea I have thought of as I think it would make for an interesting choice as there are a lot of avenues to go down with it. In my head, I have the City Ruins from Nier: Automata where you see that nature has reclaimed the city. I think making a

lonely atmosphere sounds like an interesting challenge as it is a less obvious emotion to convey through an environment compared to fear or comfort.

- The idea I have is to make it a bleak, lonely atmosphere with some tranquillity in its' silence. The sky would be grey, there would be rain sounds, maybe the occasional bird heard in the distance.
- Rain symbolises a lot of things that fit in with the theme of the cinematic, the first being that it symbolises sadness and destitution, which fits in with the bleak, lonely side of the narrative that I want to convey, but also symbolises growth and rebirth which ties into the focal point of nature's growth through the city, and how the land has once again been claimed by nature.
- The idea could maybe lean into hinting at the event that caused the city to be abandoned - abandoned war tanks, explosion craters, discarded weapons. Showing vines growing on these could show a contrast between destruction vs nature.
- The focal point of the cinematic would be the beauty of nature - the muddiness of the grey sky and buildings almost merge into one another, whereas the nature growing around the buildings is much brighter and more vibrant, catching the viewers' eye.
- The main colour palette will involve cool tones like grey, green, white and some blue, as cool tones are associated with calmness, peace and serenity, but also stillness, despair and sadness, which is the exact atmosphere I am going for.

## Idea 2 – Abandoned City Moodboard

## Idea 2 - Abandoned City Moodboard



## Idea 3 - Temple Adventure

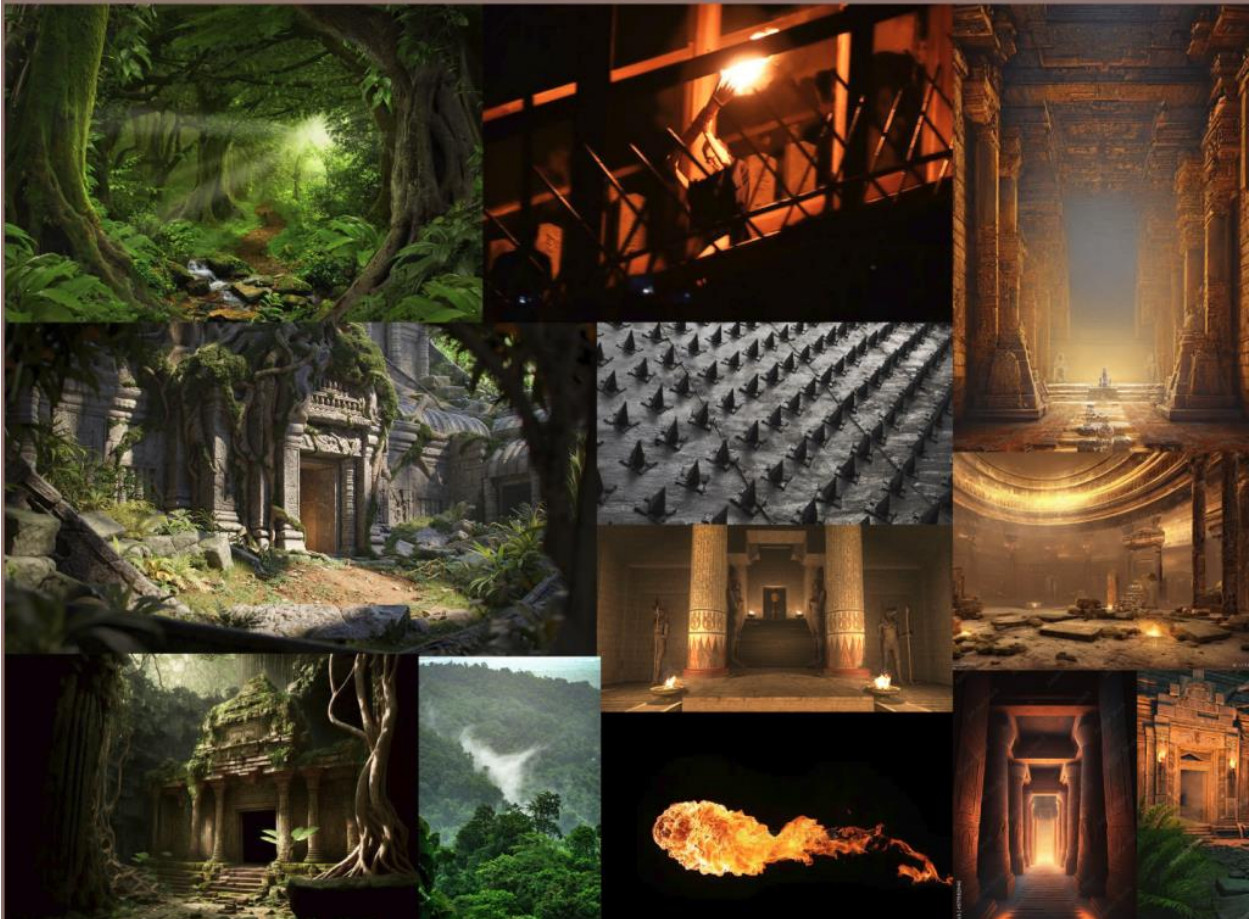
For this idea, I thought of a jungle biome that focuses in to a temple that has swinging traps, jumping pedestals and balls of fire. I thought of having a character at the start of the temple using Mixamo which is doing an action either approaching the temple, reading off a puzzle or running through an area with traps. There is load of treasure at the end that shows a narrative.

- I wanted to go for a different angle when thinking of a final idea - I've thought of a suspenseful/horror cinematic, a more desolate, lonely one so I thought I would go for action for the final idea.
- The cinematic starts by showing a temple enshrouded by vines in a jungle biome.
- The cinematic then goes into the temple itself, showing an adventurer walking towards the first stage. This shows there is a character in the cinematic who has a goal. They could be a repetitive character who is shown progressing through the temple.
- There could be some action music playing in the background to add some intensity to the cinematic.
- There will be more warm tones used in the colour palette such as red, orange, gold and brown, as warm tones symbolize urgency, and promote activity and are more stimulating.
- The treasure will be used as the 'goal' of the cinematic and the character will be seen advancing through the temple (using simple animations) the character won't be the focal point of the cinematic, but something used to break up shots of the environment.

### Idea 3 – Temple Adventure Moodboard



### Idea 3 - Temple Adventure Moodboard



January 14, 2024 - Preproduction Planning - Genre Research

I looked at some resources on YouTube to help with researching horror since it is a big part of my cinematic. I watched part 1, 2 and 3 of The Callisto Protocol Mastering

Horror Docuseries. I found this to be really insightful and gave me a better idea of how to incorporate horror into my cinematic.



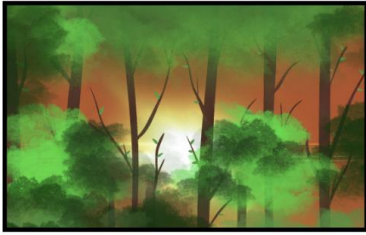
## Research Notes

- Some key points of horror are the atmosphere, tension, helplessness and humanity.
- Use the viewers' anticipation against them to build suspense.
- Atmosphere's key elements are lighting, space (wide open/tight/claustrophobic), sounds, and immersion.
- Make the viewer think - leave clues in the environment that link in with the narrative.
- Use colours to influence the fear elements - use colour theory throughout the environment.
- Confusion is a big part of horror - giving and withdrawing information from the player to disorient them and add to the tension through the fear of the unknown.
- Audio is very important for tension - sound effects and especially music.
- Hopelessness is a big part, but there is a fine line to make sure there is still some hope in the story, or the player will lose interest.
- Having empathetic characters helps with immersion and makes the player more engaged with the narrative.

- Video games are good at immersion as it is the player themselves completing the tasks rather than just being a viewer.



SHOT 1



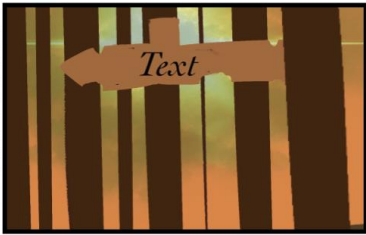
SHOT 2



SHOT 3



SHOT 4



SHOT 5



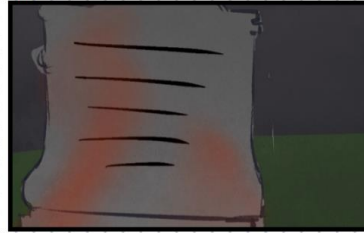
SHOT 6



SHOT 7



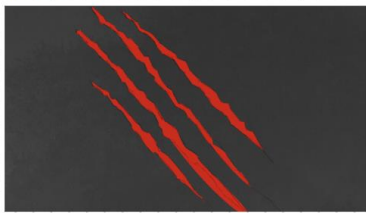
SHOT 8



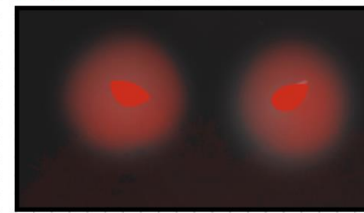
SHOT 9



SHOT 10



SHOT 11



**Shot 1** - The cinematic fades in from black with a shot of the sunset through the trees. This establishes the first. setting and time of day straight away.

**Shot 2** - Establishing shot of the track the character is on, leading line through the middle.

**Shot 3** - Close up shot of the environment, focusing on a small detail like a flower.

**Shot 4** - Shot of a sign that points towards the graveyard. The text will say something ominous like 'Beware'. Dolly shot for dramatic effect.

**Shot 5** - First person shot of the camera emerging through the trees. Lighting dims in the background into night.

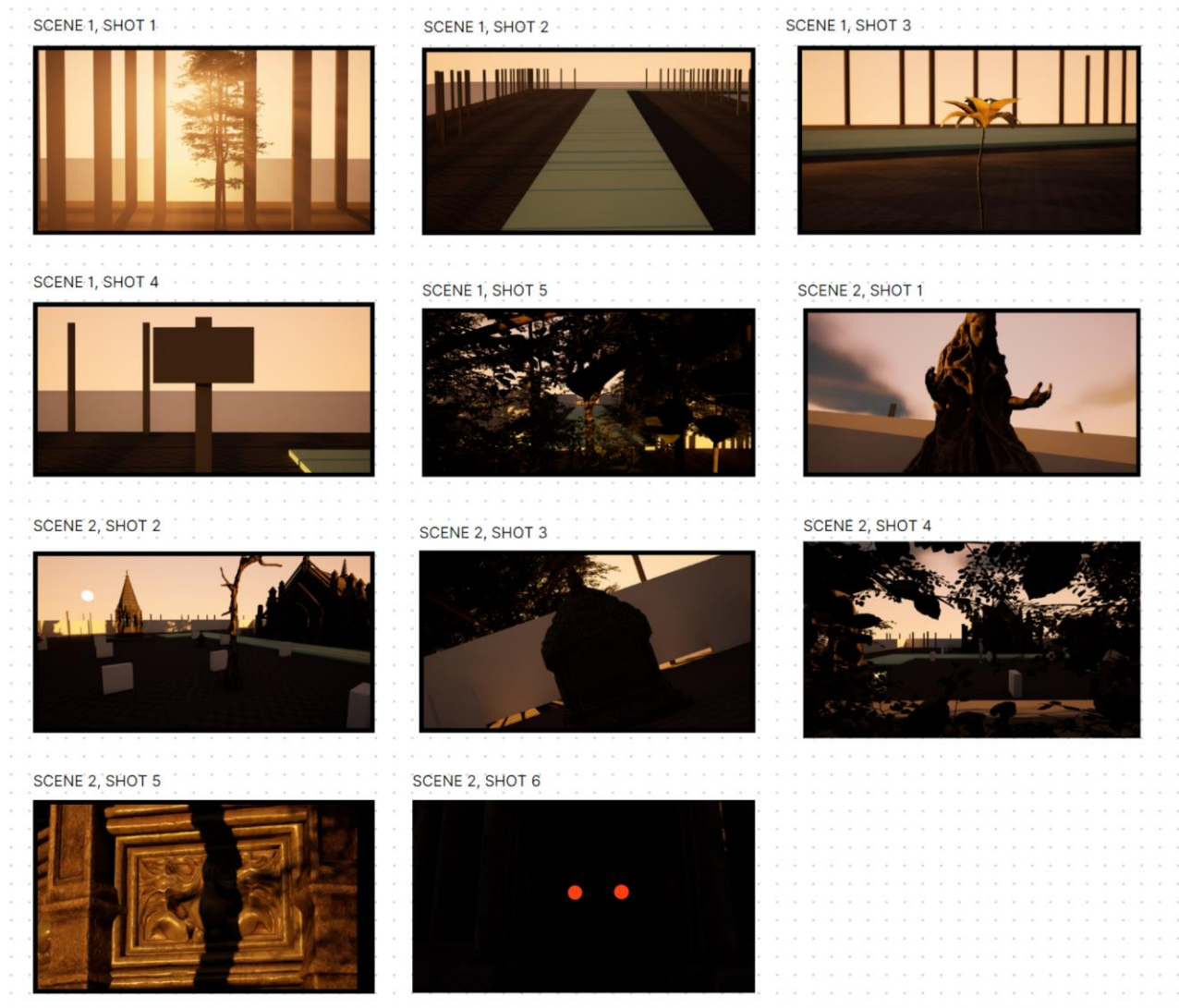
**Shot 6** - Slow panning shot of the new environment. (New ambient sounds and lighting)

**Shot 7** - Low angle of a statue of an angel or grim reaper. The low angle is to show weakness and vulnerability, making the statue tower over the camera/viewer shows that the environment is dominating the viewer.

**Shot 8** - Zoomed in shot of a clue, blood on a gravestone - use of Dutch angle to evoke feelings of uneasiness and add to the tension.

**Shot 9** - A far away shot of the character looking at the clue. The camera is enshrouded in leaves, showing the player is being watched by something hidden in the bushes. The leaves could form some sort of shape around the character and the gravestone they're looking at to keep them the focal point of the shot, similar to image below. Also reiterates the idea that the monster is watching the player.

*February 2nd, 2024 - Blockout Environment Storyboard*



For this iteration of my storyboard, the shots remain unchanged, but I thought I should update them with the scene number below:

Scene 1, Shot 1 - The cinematic fades in from black with a shot of the sunset through the trees. This establishes the first. setting and time of day straight away.

Scene 1, Shot 2 - Establishing shot of the track the character is on, leading line through the middle.

Scene 1, Shot 3 - Close up shot of the environment, focusing on a small detail like a flower.

Scene 1, Shot 4 - Shot of a sign that points towards the graveyard. The text will say something ominous like 'Beware'. Dolly shot for dramatic effect.

Scene 1, Shot 5 - First person shot of the camera emerging through the trees. Lighting dims in the background into night.

Scene 2, Shot 1 - Slow panning shot of the new environment. (New ambient sounds and lighting)

Scene 2, Shot 2 - Low angle of a statue of an angel or grim reaper. The low angle is to show weakness and vulnerability, making the statue tower over the camera/viewer shows that the environment is dominating the viewer.

Scene 2, Shot 3 - Zoomed in shot of a clue, blood on a gravestone - use of Dutch angle to evoke feelings of uneasiness and add to the tension.

Scene 2, Shot 4 - A far away shot of the character looking at the clue. The camera is enshrouded in leaves, showing the player is being watched by something hidden in the bushes. The leaves could form some sort of shape around the character and the gravestone they're looking at to keep them the focal point of the shot, similar to image below. Also reiterates the idea that the monster is watching the player.

Scene 2, Shot 5 - The camera focuses on another clue found in first person. The camera could be slightly shaky to simulate the characters' unease. A squeaking noise is heard and the camera spins around quickly.

Scene 2, Shot 6 - In the Mausoleum's entrance there are two red eyes glowing. The camera uses a shaky dolly shot on it - leaving just a black background contrasting against the red glowing eyes of the monster.

Note: In the final cinematic, in scene 2 the lighting will be night time, but for the sake of the blackout, I kept it light because it's clearer to see the shots and more needs to be done to the lighting in later stages to make it look clearer.

### *February 9th, 2024 - Environment Reference Moodboards*

To help with creating my environments, I've compiled a two moodboards of real life references for both scenes so I can make sure my environment looks as accurate and true to life as possible.



### Environment Reference Document - Forest Trail



### Environment Reference Document - Graveyard



### February 19th, 2024 – Storyboard Blockout Render

This is the blockout render I have made using MRQ based off of my first storyboard. This render has been to get my initial storyboard ideas implemented and let me plan the shots' composition and length in Unreal. There are a few changes I plan on making to the current storyboard. I want to make some adjustments to a few shots, mainly camera movement, and also the length of some shots, as after watching the cinematic a few



times over I see there are a couple of shots that linger too long, and I think the cinematic could do with being cut down slightly regardless.

Now that my blockout render is complete, I can now make an iterated storyboard and then focus on the environment. This part of the planning process was also helpful as it helped me get used to using MRQ and Adobe Premier Pro for my future renders.



### *February 22nd, 2024 – Cinematic Research: Colour*

Now that I'm in the process of building my environment, I've been looking into researching the environments of both scenes. When researching colour grading, I found an article linked below that helped me to understand more about warm and cool tones. It states that warm colour palettes are described as inviting and soft. This is definitely the mood I am trying to convey for this first scene. The idea of the forest is to lure the viewer into a false sense of security by using an initial inviting, tranquil atmosphere that quickly changes to an eerie and foreboding one. The article states, 'I know instinctively that a warmer image will make the viewer feel more comfortable, while a cooler image

will make them feel more unsettled. It's just how we're wired.' The article also states you can subvert this by having warm tones in an unsettling scene or vice versa. I considered this, but I think that because I'm going for two extremes, it is best to play to the viewers expectations - the forest that uses warm tones is undeniably peaceful and inviting, is suddenly switched into a graveyard with unsettling, cool tones, the harsh contrast making it intentionally more jarring. If I was going for the monster being in the forest itself, this subversion could have been a better approach.

Warm vs Cool Tones:



### Colour Theory & Symbolism

Since both of my scenes take place outside, most of the colour palette will be dictated by the general colours of nature (e.g green for grass and trees, orange for leaves, brown for the pathway) I've tried to look for some ways I can use symbolism in my cinematic and I think the main way is through flowers. For the Forest Trail, I looked for flowers with positive connotations. This I thought was especially important for scene 1, shot 3, as a flower is the focal point of the shot. I used a yellow lily which I found out have an interesting meaning - they symbolize gratitude and happiness, but in some cultures, they have negative associations such as falsehood and lies, which could be a subtle hint to the true nature of the cinematic even if most people won't pick up on it.

Some other symbolism I thought of is having white lilies (representing purity) down the final pathway towards the graveyard, then as you get closer, the lilies are dying, which symbolises that anything pure has died near this area. For the graveyard scene, the main piece of colour used is the eyes at the end which I made glowing red - red symbolises danger, urgency and rage. Another piece of colour symbolism is that in the forest scene, there are a lot of vibrant colours, whereas the graveyard is set at night, has mostly grey stone, and no colourful flowers, which shows that colour and vibrancy has been sucked out of the cinematic and been replaced by a sinister and bleak feeling.

Overall, when it came to colours for my environment, my main focus was finding symbolism and contrasting the two environments to make the cinematic feel as jarring as possible.



*The Psychology Of Color Grading & Its Emotional Impact (noamkroll.com)*

### *February 23rd, 2024 – Cinematic Research: Sound Effects & Ambience*

For my first scene, the forest trail, I looked at sounds to create a calming and peaceful atmosphere. The main sounds I am looking to use are a breeze/wind, rustling of trees and birds chirping. I found tree assets that sway slightly as though there is a breeze so they will pair well. The idea I have for the swap between the two scenes audio wise is: the cinematic goes from sunset to night time as the camera gets closer to the graveyard, so the bird chirping could phase out slowly, then as the player emerges through the leaves into the graveyard, there could be an uncomfortable silence, the use of negative space gives a sense of suspense as the viewer anticipates what is behind the leaves and where the camera is taking them. This YouTube video will be the type of ambience I will be looking for:



Ambience and SFX are a huge part of horror and making it work well, so I specifically looked at horror techniques when it comes to creating my graveyard ambience. I found a useful article linked below that helped me to give me some ideas. Breathing sounds could be useful, maybe the character hears breathing behind them, or the characters' shaky breathing in can be heard in scene 2, shot 5, where the camera is shown from the characters' perspective, to emphasize the anxiety they feel in that moment. Ghost sound effects are something I could consider too, since the cinematic has a supernatural feel to it. I also watched some horror ambience videos on YouTube, and I want to add a more subtle version of them in the background to add to the atmosphere on top of the sound effects.

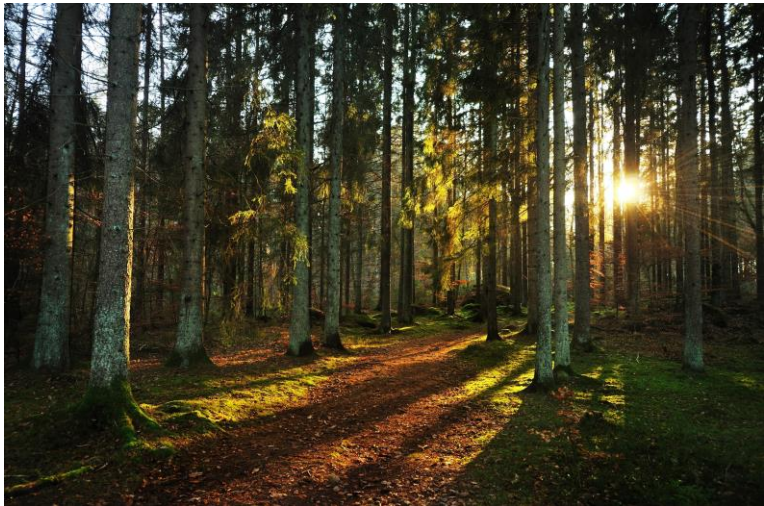


### *Horror Sound Effects Tips and Tricks | Artlist*

#### *February 23rd, 2024 – Cinematic Research: Lighting*

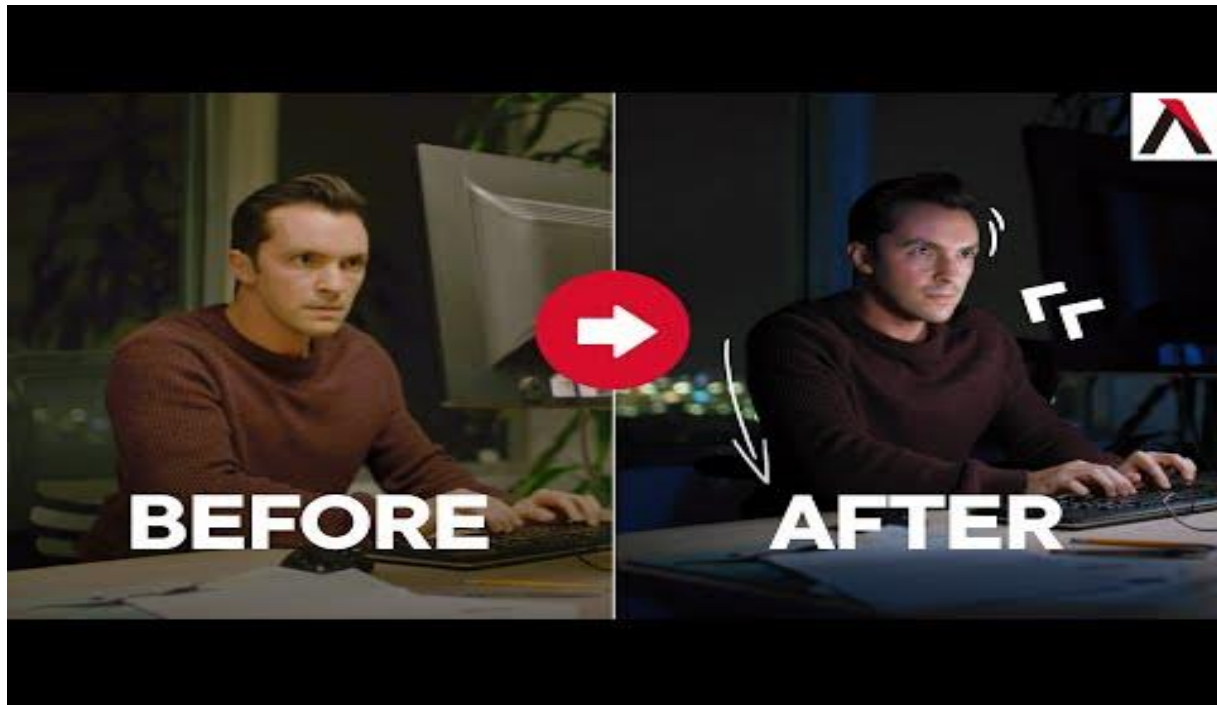
For the forest, I plan to use the light from the sunset which is emphasized in scene 1, shot 1. The natural light from the sky will be enough to light this part of the cinematic. Since the sun is setting and the sky will be dark by the time the camera reaches the graveyard, the sun will be gradually setting as the cinematic goes on. These are the references I will be looking at when creating the sky:







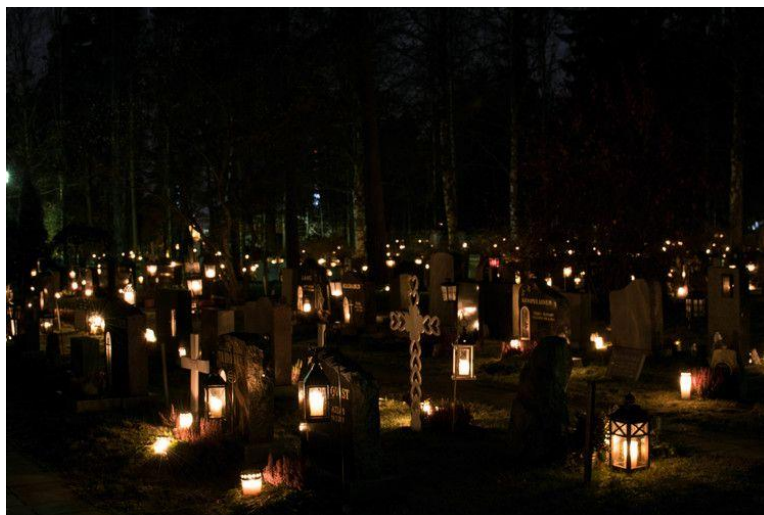
For the graveyard scene, originally, I didn't want to have any lighting besides the moonlight as I wanted to show that the graveyard was abandoned. However, I think having some lights like candles can help to bring some extra light to make the scene look more interesting and helps to bring the viewers' attention to certain areas. For example, having a newly lit candle placed on top a grave, illuminating a clue in the background like a bloody scythe, handprint, claw marks or a goat skull. The contrast of the darkness and the light from the candle will drag the viewer's gaze over to this area, making it useful to bring attention to areas of interest. Also, the blue from the moonlight and the orange candlelight contrast well together. From a narrative perspective, the fact that there are candles gives a hint that something has newly been in the graveyard, yet the path from the forest to the graveyard has obviously not been in use for some time, which adds mystery and a sense eeriness as the viewer knows the character is not alone. It's something I will have to experiment with in Unreal and depends on what assets I can get a hold of if I decide to include candles/lamps in my final cinematic. I found a YouTube video that talks about how to light dark areas which I found insightful. I found the moonlight part especially useful:



Here are some real life references I thought were useful lighting-wise for my graveyard scene:



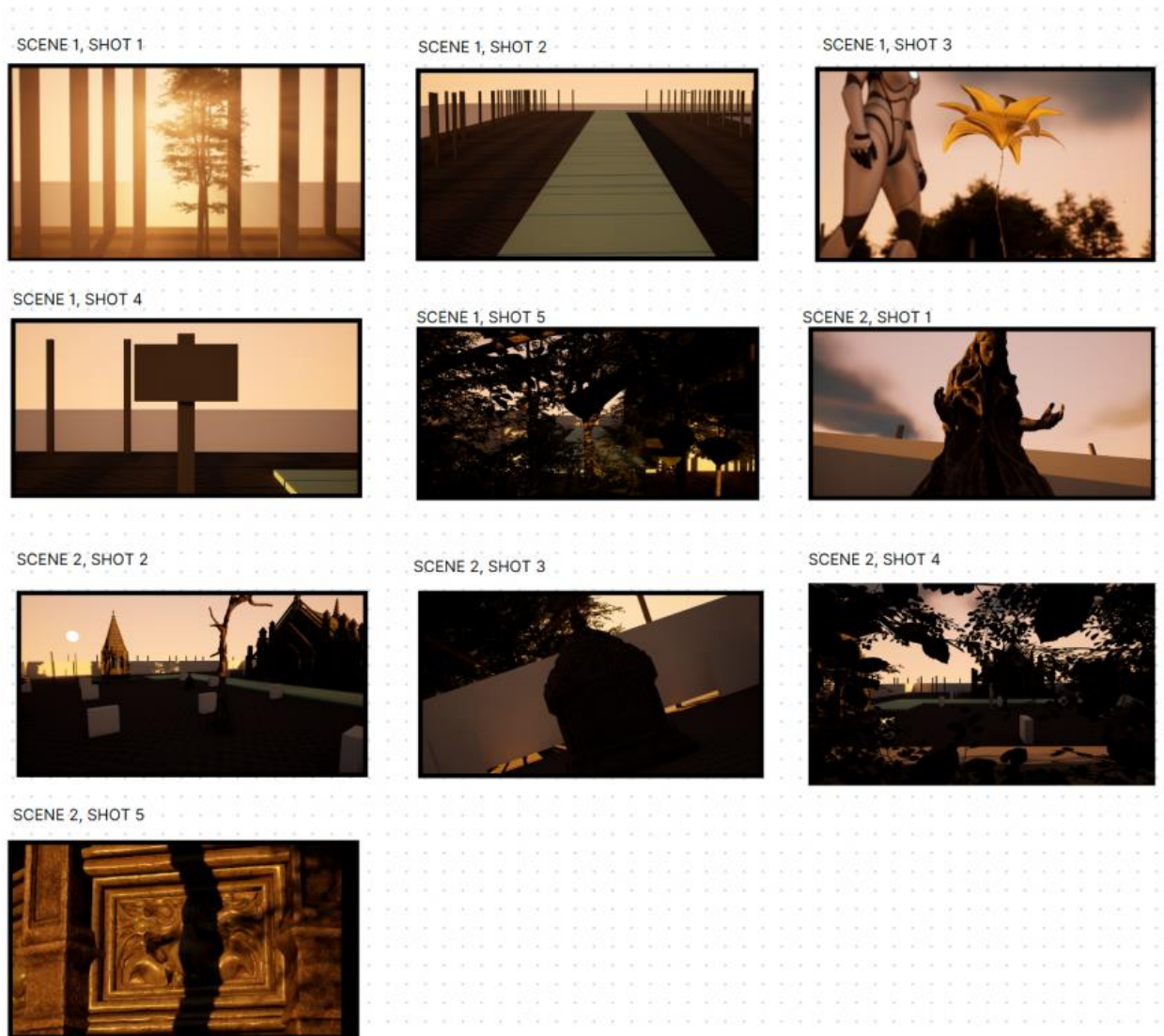




### *February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024 - Updated Environment Storyboard - Third Iteration*

For my second storyboard iteration, I focused on getting my sketched storyboard down into Unreal to see how my idea looked as a cinematic. This iteration, I focused on altering some shots that I think would benefit from some adjustments, and cutting

down some shots I thought lingered too long, and I also removed a shot I thought didn't work as well in the cinematic form.



## Changes & Justifications

**Scene 1, Shot 3** - I changed this shot for two reasons. The first is because I wanted to break up the three back to back still shots; I originally went for three still shots at the start because I wanted a calm, lazy atmosphere, but I think adding some camera movement to this shot just helps to keep interest and make it more engaging. The second reason was to add the woman in the background. When looking over my storyboard and first render, I realised that the character is only really established



halfway through the cinematic when the first clue is discovered. I wanted to change this because I want there to be more suspense when the environment shifts over to the graveyard. Instead of the viewer just seeing it as a spooky environment, they see that there is a character actually entering it and that builds a feeling of anticipation and foreboding.

**Scene 1, Shot 4** - Minor changes, a few seconds were shaved off the start of the shot for reducing the run time.

**Scene 2, Shot 6** - I decided to cut this, as I think it's a redundant shot, the cinematic can end on scene 2, shot 5; it has a different feel to it, but the more abrupt cut makes it more mysterious and interesting rather than having another shot that lingers on it.

### New Shot Order

For reference, this is the new shot order and the way I will be referring to my work onwards from this iteration. Also, I noticed I accidentally mixed up scene 2, shot 1 and scene 2, shot 2 in my previous storyboard explanations which I have now fixed. Just to clarify, the storyboard images were correctly ordered, only the text was mixed up.

**Scene 1, Shot 1** - The cinematic fades in from black with a shot of the sunset through the trees. This establishes the first setting and time of day straight away.

**Scene 1, Shot 2** - Establishing shot of the track the character is on, leading line through the middle.

**Scene 1, Shot 3** - Close up moving shot of the environment, focusing on a small detail like a flower. Woman is seen walking through the forest which changes focus from the flower to the woman halfway through.

**Scene 1, Shot 4** - Shot of a sign that points towards the graveyard. The text will say something ominous like 'Beware'. Dolly shot for dramatic effect.

**Scene 1, Shot 5** - First person shot of the camera emerging through the trees. Lighting dims in the background into night. (New ambient sounds and lighting)

**Scene 2, Shot 1** - Low angle of a statue of an angel or grim reaper. The low angle is to show weakness and vulnerability, making the statue tower over the camera/viewer shows that the environment is dominating the viewer.

**Scene 2, Shot 2** - Slow panning shot of the new environment. (New ambient sounds and lighting)

**Scene 2, Shot 3** - Zoomed in shot of a clue, blood on a gravestone - use of Dutch angle to evoke feelings of uneasiness and add to the tension.

**Scene 2, Shot 4** - A far away shot of the character looking at the clue. The camera is enshrouded in leaves, showing the player is being watched by something hidden in the bushes. The leaves could form some sort of shape around the character and the gravestone they're looking at to keep them the focal point of the shot, similar to image below. Also reiterates the idea that the monster is watching the player.

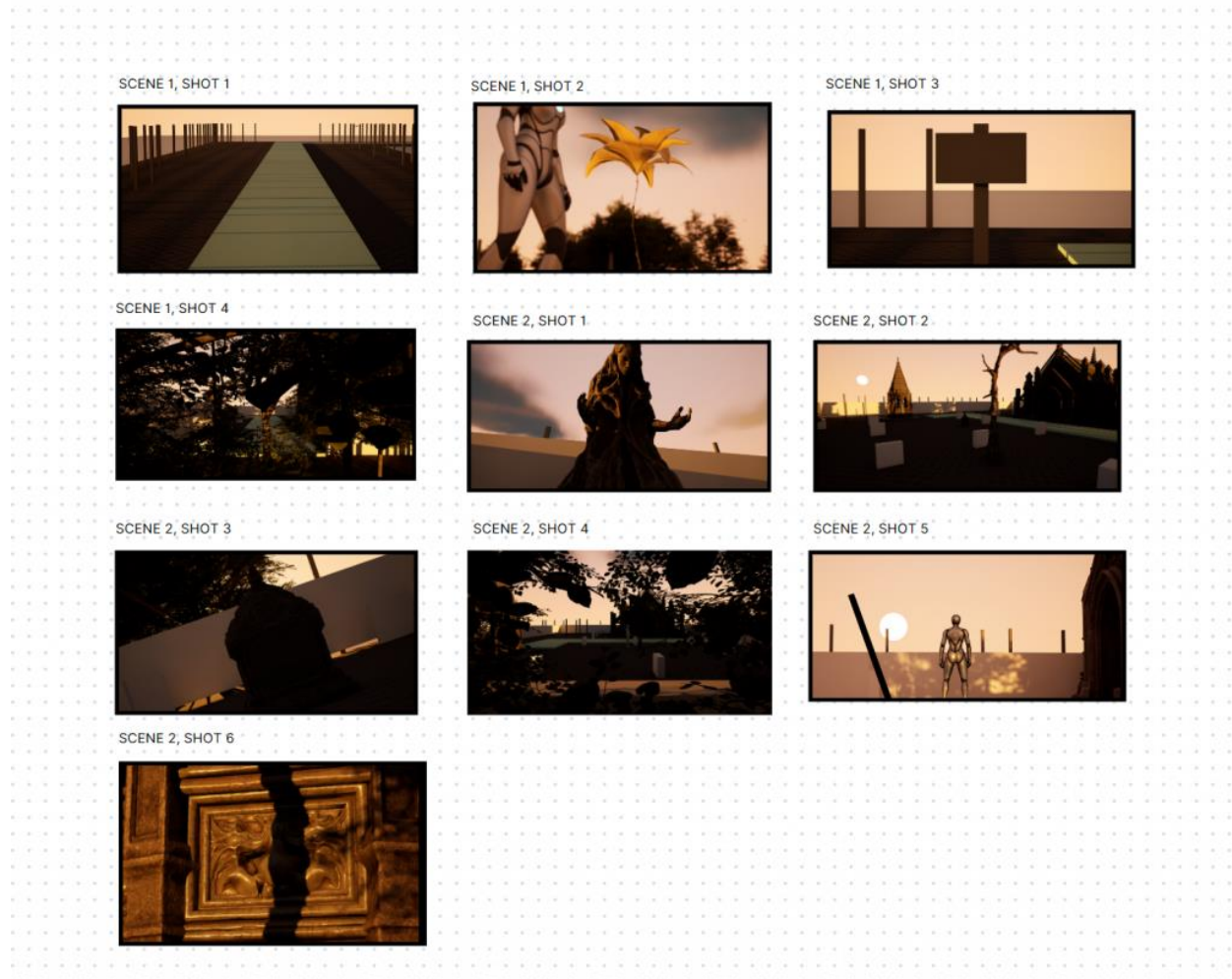
**Scene 2, Shot 5** - The camera focuses on another clue found in first person. The camera could be slightly shaky to simulate the characters' unease. A squeaking noise is heard and the camera spins around quickly to the Mausoleum entrance, where there are two red eyes glowing. The cinematic then suddenly cuts to black.

## *March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024 - Progress Update – Environment*

These are some screenshots of my environment. Now that this is complete, I have been looking at reworking some of my shots further. Since adding foliage and altering the lighting using the env. light mixer, I can see there a few more adjustments I need to make as I am now starting to view it from the lens of it being my final render rather than the block out, and there are a few shots I want to change to make the cinematic look more cohesive.



*March 4th, 2024 - Environment Storyboard - Fourth Iteration*



## Changes & Justifications

I made a copy of my blackout environment so I can quickly adjust shots and get the basic concept of the shot down instead of making a new storyboard based in the finished environment where I could get caught up on perfecting the shot straight away.

**Merged scene 1, shot 1 and scene 1, shot 2** - I made a few alterations here by merging the shots together. The shot I now have is that the camera starts off looking at the sky, and then pans down to the pathway. I did this because it reduces the run time slightly, and also think it is just a general improvement and that it looks more engaging than 2 still shots back to back.

**New Shot between scene 2, shot 4 and scene 2, shot 5** - I decided to add another shot here setting up scene 2, shot 5 as after watching the render a few times, I think the cut from scene 2, shot 4 to scene 2, shot 5 is a bit random and disjointed, so having an extra shot between the two also helps to set up the reveal at the end. I wanted this shot

to be an opposite to scene 1, shot 3, where the camera starts off with the flower, then blurs to focus on the character. This time, the camera starts off with the character, then blurs to focus on the scythe. This is supposed to be another clue to the player, while being an contrast to the flower shot. (eg. the flower representing the beauty of the forest, whereas the scythe represents the creepiness of the graveyard.) I also like it as it is similar to scene 2 shot 1, where the graveyard is blurring everything else, as if it is dominating the character in the scene by forcing the viewers attention away from her.

Another change unrelated to the shots but the environment, is that I have decided to change the lighting from dusk - night, to day - dusk. The reason for this is that I don't want my environment to be difficult to make out. My thought process is that if I were making it for a horror game cutscene, then dark lighting would work better even if it meant enshrouding the environment in darkness. However, since I'm doing 'The world is the character', making the environment the focal point of the cinematic, I don't want my environment to be really dark and unable to be seen properly, so I have decided to go for day approaching sunset for the forest, then an early evening feel for the graveyard, still making it eerie as it is apparent that night is fast approaching, but more easy to view the environment.

For reference, this is the new shot order and the way I will be referring to my work onwards from this iteration.

**Scene 1, Shot 1** -The cinematic fades in from black with a shot of the sky with some trees. This establishes the first setting and time of day straight away. The camera then slowly pans down towards the pathway, establishing shot of the track the character is on, leading line through the middle.

**Scene 1, Shot 2** - Close up moving shot of the environment, focusing on a small detail like a flower. Woman is seen walking through the forest which changes focus from the flower to the woman halfway through.

**Scene 1, Shot 3** - Shot of a sign that points towards the graveyard. The text will say something ominous like 'Beware'. Dolly shot for dramatic effect.

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**Scene 2, Shot 2** - Slow panning shot of the new environment. (New ambient sounds and lighting)

**Scene 2, Shot 3** - Zoomed in shot of a clue, blood on a gravestone - use of Dutch angle to evoke feelings of uneasiness and add to the tension.

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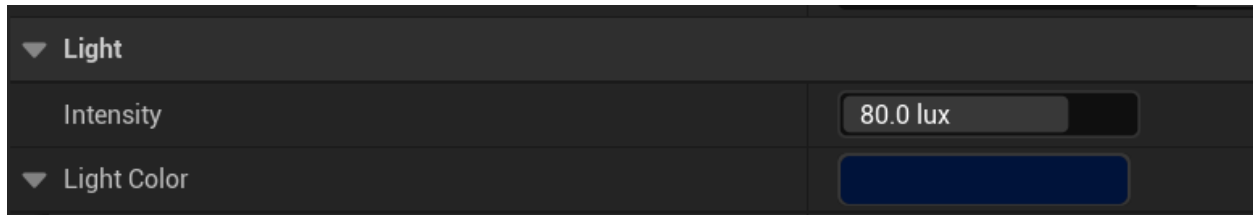
**Scene 2, Shot 6** - The camera focuses on another clue found in first person. The camera could be slightly shaky to simulate the characters' unease. A squeaking noise is heard and the camera spins around quickly to the Mausoleum entrance, where there are two red eyes glowing. The cinematic then suddenly cuts to black.

### Thoughts

Overall, I'm content with the shots now and how they look in the environment. My final step now is to render the shots out with MRQ, add ambience and SFX.

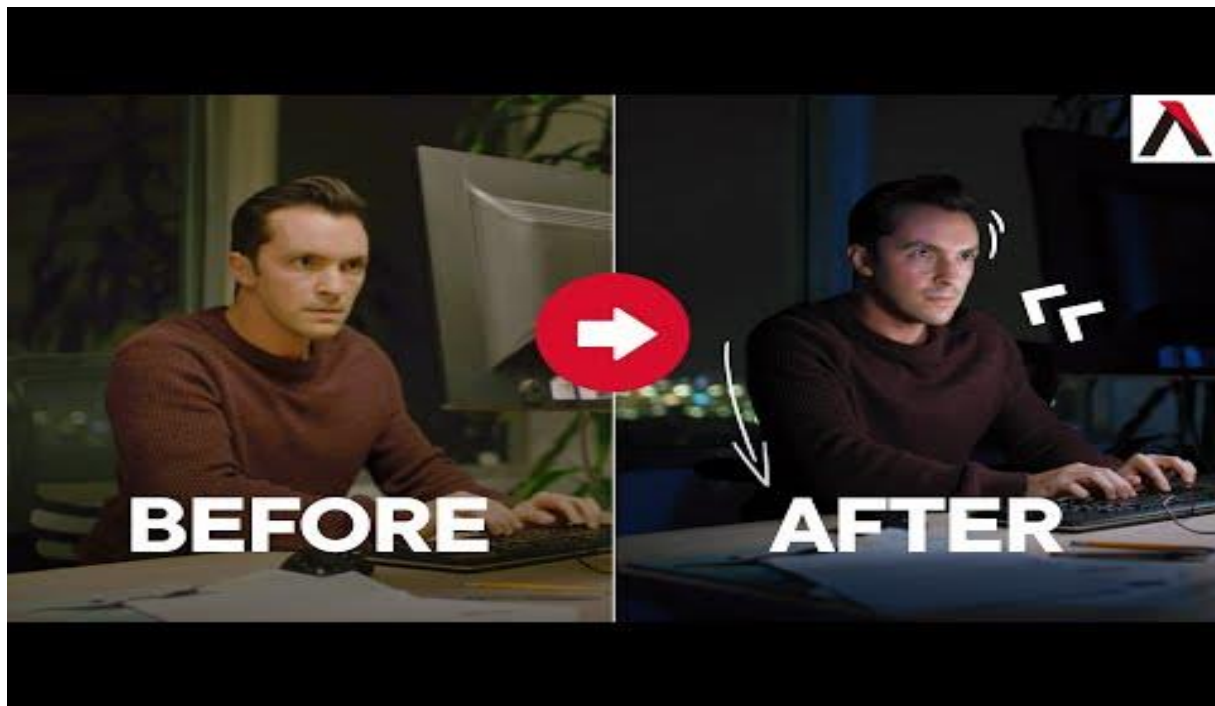
## *March 7th, 2024 – Lighting Alteration*

I've decided to change my lighting back once again. When rendering out a sunset in the graveyard, I felt like it wasn't eerie enough, so I had another go at creating moonlight in a way where the scene would still be easy to see. I found a YouTube tutorial for making a night time scene in Unreal where instead of lowering the brightness, instead you set the light colour to be a darker blue colour rather than the default white, so you get the sun to give off a moonlight effect, while not making the scene hard to see because you can still maintain the brightness. Meaning it is day time, but with a blue tint.



This is a cinematic technique used in real life movies too, called 'Day for night'. Scenes filmed at night are often underexposed to the point where nothing is visible. To counter this, night scenes are filmed in the day time, and then given a blue tint in post. This is something I previously looked at back in my research in this video below, which explains why blue is used to convey moonlight.

My lighting now starts at daylight, changes to dawn between S1, S3 and S1, S4, then slowly fades into night time for the start of Scene 2.



## *March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – Critical Reflection*

In terms of what went well, I went into this module with barely any idea on how to use sequencer, and now I am familiar and confident in using it, which is something I am grateful to have learnt as it is a really useful tool to know. I also have a much better understanding of cinematic theory and I was able to incorporate it alongside colour theory and symbolism to construct a more impactful narrative. I think the pre-production process went well, I was able to stick to the image I had in my head from the first storyboard of how I wanted the environment to look and the atmosphere I wanted to create, while also making iterations along the way which helped to translate the cinematic from the initial sketched idea to the final render.

In terms of what could be improved, I struggled with keeping the cinematic within the time limit. I wanted the shots in the Forest scene of the cinematic to drag on a fair bit longer to make the change more juxtaposing, however, keeping in all the shots was getting my cinematic too far away from the time frame so I knew some shots had to be omitted. I also think that in my attempt at trying to keep the cinematic shorter, some of my shots ended up too fast and if I were to redo it again I would make sure I cut my cinematic down to the desired time at an earlier stage instead of it appearing in the final render. Looking on the final render, I think another thing I would fix is that I should have put a longer fade transition between scene 1 shot 3, and scene 1 shot 4, as a longer fade would have better gotten across the passage of time and that

the environment has gone from day to dusk. Another change I would make is to scene 1 shot 2 - the small pause at the start should have either been prolonged or cut entirely.