

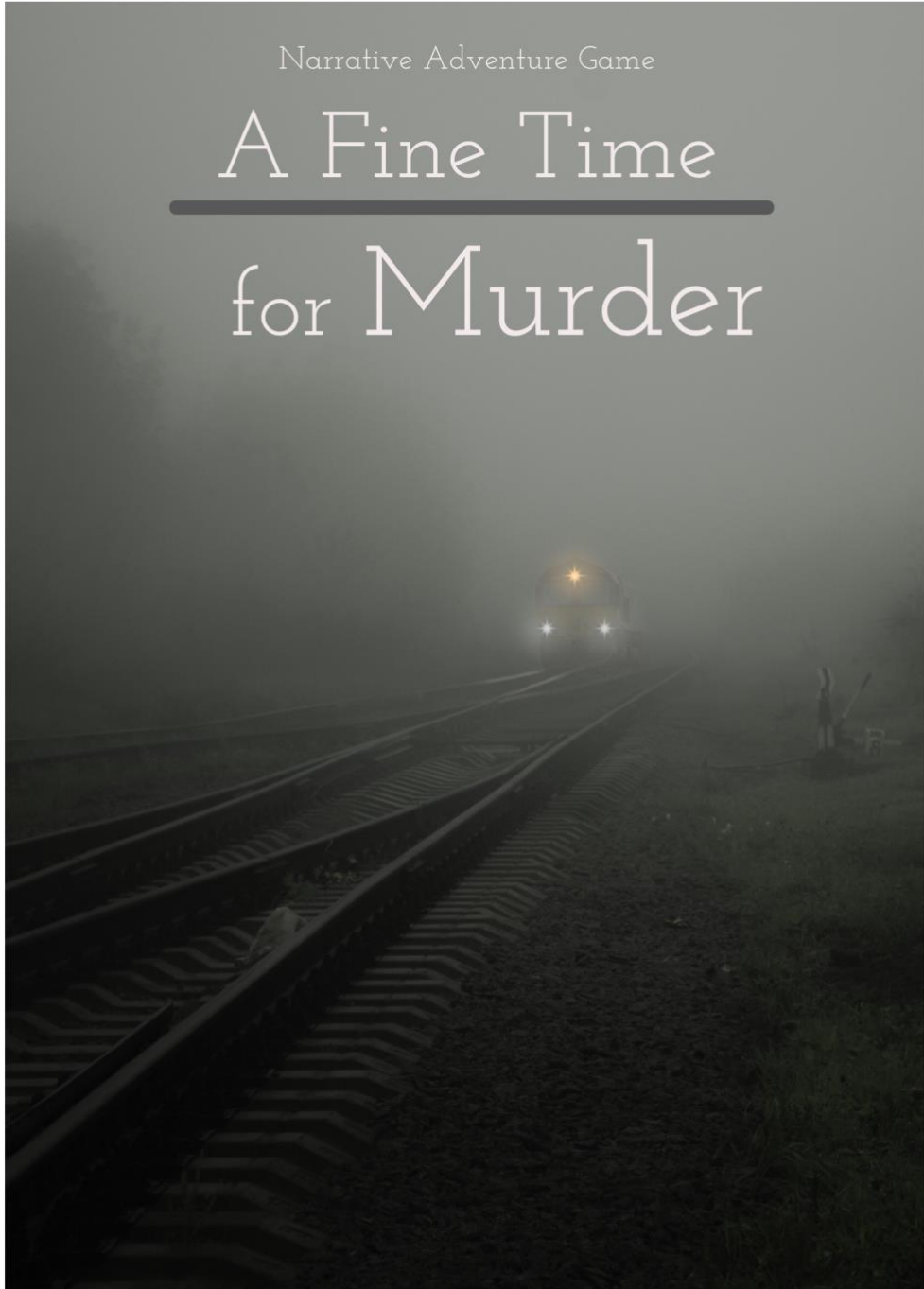
A Fine Time for Murder

Pitch Document

Written by
Ashley Andrews

Narrative Adventure Game

A Fine Time --- for Murder



Executive Summary

A Fine Time for Murder is an interactive fiction that hinges on the butterfly effect of player choices with ten potential endings. Targeting crime thriller fans but offering a rich experience for "Choose Your Own Adventure" game fans, *AFTM* provides a unique spin to the murder mystery genre.

Audience Analysis

The target players of *A Fine Time for Murder* are casual-style and narrative-heavy gamers (age 18-55), especially those with an interest in "Choose Your Own Adventure" type games. This game takes the detective thriller-style narrative and flips it on its head, having players plant and destroy evidence and potentially frame someone else to ensure they aren't convicted for the crime.

With elements from the crime thriller and narrative adventure genres, *AFTM* puts the player in control of who takes the fall for the sudden and "unexpected" murder of Detective Jacob Marconi. With a train full of people that hate him, the options are vast.

No one aboard this train has an alibi, but everyone has a motive.

Story

A Fine Time for Murder follows one of eight different characters (depending on who the player chooses to play) as they travel aboard a train. For this example, the player decided to play Audrey Van Sloan. Audrey begins her story on the platform of the train station. She will have options right from the start to either build or burn relationships with other characters. Aboard the train, she can journey anywhere throughout the train and investigate and gain information about other passengers on board.

At the end of Chapter One, Audrey finds herself going to meet with Detective Jacob Marconi, only to find him dead in his room. The other passengers are all acting suspicious, including Marconi's partner, Detective Collins. No one aboard the train except the conductor seems to have an alibi, and everyone has a motive, including Audrey.

Someone will stand trial when the train reaches its destination. It's up to Audrey to determine who it will be. As Audrey looks into each passenger's motive for killing Detective Marconi, slivers of character past will be shown that might not be revealed in another character's playthrough.

With evidence pointing to her being the one that committed the murder, Audrey now has another chapter full of decisions to make. Audrey still has the full range of the train to explore, including the crime scene, if she plays her cards right. She can work as a junior detective alongside Detective Collins, work alone to solve or sabotage the murder investigation, pair up with other passengers on board to bring the truth to light, or bury it forever.

Will she destroy evidence that incriminates herself? Should she plant evidence to point the finger at someone else? How far will Audrey go to ensure she gets off the train a free woman when she reaches the end of the line?

Endings

The endings are all similar where the cutscenes are concerned. However, the journey to the ending, the combination of evidence against the person, whether they were framed, failed to protect themselves, or properly framed someone else, is all considered. For example, the player could choose to play as Audrey Van Sloan, dispose of all evidence against Audrey, set up Margo Walter to take the fall but plant the wrong evidence, and watch Dixon King be removed from the train in handcuffs.

- Audrey Van Sloan in Handcuffs
- Dawn Hart in Handcuffs
- Drake Malone in Handcuffs
- Margo Walker in Handcuffs
- The Death Is Ruled a Suicide
- Carmen Collins in Handcuffs
- Dixon King in Handcuffs
- Frank Walker in Handcuffs
- Walter Abel in Handcuffs
- Walkers in Handcuffs Together

The Suspects (The Playable Characters)

Audrey Van Sloan [Lawful Good] - Audrey is an heiress and a social media influencer. In her 20s and aboard the train on vacation, she claims her friends bailed on her last minute, so she decided to go without them. She's headstrong and a natural-born leader. She tries to see the best in others and holds herself to a high standard in everything she does. Throughout the game, Audrey will either become more trusting (which could potentially be a detriment when it comes to clearing her name) or end up jaded at the end.

Carmen Collins [Lawful Neutral] - Carmen is a detective. As a recent divorcee in her 30s, she knows how to drown herself in her work. She's aboard the train, headed to a work seminar with her long-time partner on the force, Jacob Marconi. Since her divorce, tensions are high between her and Marconi since he regularly hangs out with her ex. She's never been the kind of cop to make decisions based on her heart and consistently strictly enforces the law. Over the course of the game, she will explore toeing the line between right and wrong in the law's eyes and will either end up an officer of justice or a jaded cop by the end of the story.

Dawn Hart [Lawful Evil] - Dawn Hart is a fiction writer in her late 20s. She's aboard the train headed for a writers' conference. She jumps at anything unexpected, from a knock on the door while she's reading to something falling off a seat. It's unknown if Dawn Hart is her real name or a pen name for her readers. Over the course of the game, Dawn will either grow bolder and less afraid of the world outside of books, or she will withdraw even more and spend the rest of her life looking over her shoulder distrustfully.

Dixon King [Neutral Good] - Dixon King is a college football quarterback. In his 20s, he's aboard the train on a recruitment trip. He doesn't think it's weird that he's traveling alone. He spends a lot of time with other males his age and not much time around normal adults. This makes his conversation skills a bit lacking compared to typical college students. Throughout the game, Dixon will either become a strong-minded individual with slightly improving social skills, or he could turn down a dark path, choosing to look for ways to exploit others' weaknesses in real life, like he's taught to on the field.

Drake Malone [Neutral Evil] - A reporter in his 30s, Drake lives alone and spends most of his time searching for the next big story. His priority in life is to make a name for himself, no matter the cost. He's not above snooping through others' personal belongings, spying, or hacking into devices to get what he wants. In the end, Drake could begin to change his unethical ways of getting information for a story, or he might decide to stoop even lower.

Frank Walker [Chaotic Good] - Husband to Margo Walker, and in his 40s, Frank is aboard the train headed for a vacation with his wife. All Frank has ever wanted in life was to be happy, have a lovely house that others were jealous of, and have a beautiful wife that stayed home to take care of their litter of children. He doesn't like the idea of raising children, just the idea of the image of a perfect little family. After all, raising the kids is what his wife is for, right? Frank could improve his relationship with his wife throughout the game, potentially agreeing to go to couple's counseling, or he could make decisions that push their marriage to divorce.

Margo Walker [Chaotic Neutral] - Wife to Frank Walker, and in her 30s, Margo is aboard the train headed for a vacation with her husband. Margo has always made decisions with her heart over her head. She doesn't know what she wants in life, but she knows that there has to be more to it than being Frank Walker's wife. Throughout the game, shy and unconfident, Margo will either grow more independent, learning to put herself, her happiness, and her health first, or she could lose her identity altogether. With the fate of her marriage hanging by a thread, Margo will have to determine what matters most.

Walter Abel [Chaotic Evil] - His job is unknown, age is unknown, and his reason for being aboard the train is unknown. Walter doesn't interact with other passengers unless they have something he wants from them. Throughout the story, Walter will have the opportunity to bond with others on the train. Will he realize that they aren't as bad as he expected? Or come to believe that they are everything he always knew people to be?

The Victim

Jacob Marconi [True Neutral] - (The Victim) Detective. 40s. Long-time partner to Carmen Collins. He was seen arguing with both Carmen Collins and Frank Walker before his death. He was also trying to follow Dawn Hart into her private rooms but stopped by Drake Malone.

Competition Analysis

The narrative adventure market is flush with decision-based games that allow players to experience the game in whatever way they want. However, not many of these releases build their characters from the alignment system, allowing players to play as an entire diverse cast, all stringent on not only their own tendencies like *A Fine Time for Murder*.

Sherlock Holmes: The Devil's Daughter, released in 2016 for Xbox One, PlayStation 4, and PC by Frogwares and Bigben Interactive, utilizes similar character exploration and clue retrieving mechanics but lacks the diverse branching narratives offered by *AFTM*. While players can choose to solve the crime, they can also choose to destroy evidence, frame other characters, and be pursued to form alliances with other characters to ensure neither of them falls for the crime.

Life Is Strange, released in 2015 for Xbox One, PlayStation 4, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and PC/Mac by Dontnod Entertainment and Square Enix, and *Firewatch*, released in 2016 for PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PC/Mac, and eventually Nintendo Switch by Campo Santo, both offer similar player choice mechanics. However, with only one playable character and only two potential endings, one of which being a simple blank screen before the credits roll, it fails to offer the true feeling of choosing your own adventure as the player of your choice.

Until Dawn, released in 2015 for PlayStation 4 and Android by Supermassive Games and Sony Interactive Entertainment, offers the player multiple endings and the opportunity for various playthroughs. However, it fails to provide the player complete control over who they play, as *AFTM* does. Allowing the player to experience the full game through the eyes of one player allows for a more immersive experience where they can learn nearly everything there is to learn about their character while walking in that character's shoes.

What Remains of Edith Finch, released in 2017 for PC/Mac, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, and eventually Nintendo Switch, offers a diverse cast of characters for the player to play and learn about, much like *AFTM*. However, *What Remains* does not allow the player control over who they wish to play as but instead follows a linear story route, allowing glimpses into each character's life and death. *AFTM* will offer the player control over who they play as and enable the player to play the entire story as the same character, offering more opportunities to get to know each character throughout the game.

Gameplay

Aboard a train, the passengers discover a murder has been committed! Luckily, there are two detectives on board. Except—One is the victim and the other a suspect.

...

The player begins their story at the train station, where they find themselves amidst an unlikely group of travelers. As Detective Jacob Marconi joins the group, everyone on the platform shifts uncomfortably.

The player will choose one of eight characters as they journey across the country aboard the train. As character backstory is explored and potential motives revealed, Jacob Marconi is found dead in his room. Each character on the train is a suspect, no one seems to have an alibi, and all believe they committed the murder.

The game focuses on the "butterfly effect" of player choices, both large and small. Players will experience life the character of their choice in first person or third person, and this can be changed at any point in the game. They will make decisions based on what they know about the character—the character's life and the player's preference—and will ultimately come to a potential ending for the story based on their choices.

Choices made early in the game can affect the outcome later on, but not always in ways the player might expect. Dialogue options will be presented on the screen similar to games from Tell-Tale Games, where the player will have multiple choices to choose from in any conversational instance, as well as the option to stay silent. Conversations will unfold in real-time, some of which will be timed interactions. This means that if the player doesn't respond promptly, the default 'stay silent' option will be chosen and the person or persons they are speaking to might close off, freak out, accuse, or end the conversation entirely and refuse to talk to the character again.

Interact with hotspots throughout the game to trigger scenes, dialogue tags, and potential character interactions that uncover backstory, motive, and more. Players can dig into their inventory to interact with certain items at any point, like a cellphone or notepad for example to check their progress thus far and get hints and tips for further gameplay. Other inventory items will be triggered instances, such as when the player has the chance to plant evidence, destroy evidence, or reveal evidence to another character.

AFTM is a narrative adventure game with nine potential endings, each one leaving a different suspect in handcuffs at the end or, if played perfectly, no one in handcuffs. Work to solve the murder, hide incriminating evidence, stop others from destroying evidence, choose to plant fake evidence or not, and see who stands trial at the end of the rail.

Inventory

Audrey Van Sloan - Cellphone, train ticket, lipstick, mirror, wallet

Carmen Collins - Badge, wallet, business cards, train ticket, gun

Dawn Hart - Hotel notepad, cellphone, business cards, lipstick, fake reading glasses

Dixon King - Wallet, pen, cellphone

Drake Malone - Notepad, pen, gum, lighter, cigarettes, cellphone, business cards

Frank Walker - Wallet, two train tickets, cellphone, reading glasses

Margo Walker - Wedding ring, hard candy, Chapstick

Walter Abel - Knife, sleeping powder, beanie, sunglasses, lighter

Evidence

Audrey Van Sloan - traveling alone, lipstick on pill packet in victim's room, found the victim's body, had messaged the victim to meet around the TOD, no alibi.

Carmen Collins - seen fighting with victim an hour before he was last seen, recently went through a nasty divorce with victim's good friend, recently found out that she was passed over for a promotion due to her most recent partner evaluation, no alibi.

Dawn Hart - lipstick on pill packet in victim's room, real name or pen name, the victim was seen trying to force his way into her room but was stopped by Drake, looked nervous when the victim first boarded the train and wouldn't maintain eye contact, no alibi.

Dixon King - has files from the victim's room in his room, the victim was the head detective in Dixon's father's murder investigation (the case was never solved), often seen following Audrey around, no alibi.

Drake Malone - stopped the victim from forcing his way into Dawn's room when she was trying to get away from him, caught going through other passenger's stuff, no alibi.

Frank Walker - seen fighting with the victim the last night he was seen alive, seen arguing with his wife about the victim around the time his body was found, no alibi.

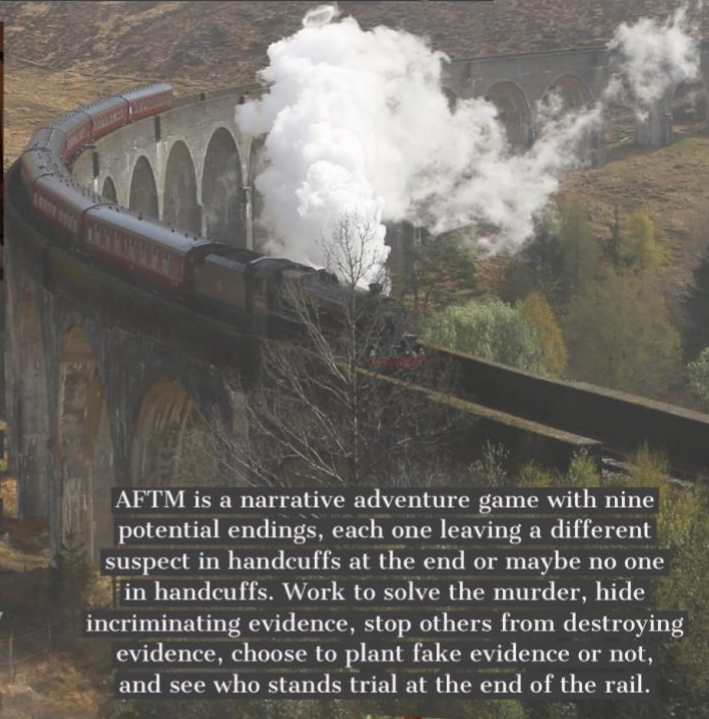
Margo Walker - frequent communication with the victim over the past few months (as seen in the victim's phone), her cellphone was found in the victim's room, no alibi.

Walter Abel - suspicious inventory, background unknown, reason for being on the train unknown, confrontational around victim when they both first boarded the train, no alibi.

Aboard a train, the passengers discover a murder has been committed!
Luckily, there are two detectives on board.
Except—One is the victim and the other a suspect.



Choose one of eight characters and journey across country as character backstory is explored and potential motives revealed. When Jacob Marconi is found dead in his room, each character on the train is a suspect. No one seems to have an alibi, and all believe they committed the murder. The game focuses on the “butterfly effect” of player choices, both large and small.



AFTM is a narrative adventure game with nine potential endings, each one leaving a different suspect in handcuffs at the end or maybe no one in handcuffs. Work to solve the murder, hide incriminating evidence, stop others from destroying evidence, choose to plant fake evidence or not, and see who stands trial at the end of the rail.



1 PLAYER

3.56GB MINIMUM

**ONLINE PLAY
OPTIONAL**



Terrible Coffee Games

If this were a real, actualized, and completed game, this is where you might find similar warnings and explanations about copyright and trademark information. As this is just a pitch document for a game concept and this back of the case artwork was created for fun, none of that information is found here. For more information, visit alandrewswriter.com

Terrible Coffee Games



**Terrible Coffee Games
Alandrewswriter.com**

RATING PENDING



May contain content inappropriate for children. Visit www.esrb.org for rating information.



WARNING IF YOU HAVE A HISTORY OF EPILEPSY OR SEIZURES, CONSULT A DOCTOR BEFORE USE. CERTAIN PATTERNS MAY TRIGGER SEIZURES WITH NO PRIOR HISTORY. BEFORE USING AND FOR MORE DETAILS SEE INSTRUCTIONS FOR THIS PRODUCT.

References:

Life Is Strange. - Wikipedia. Retrieved 18 October 2021, from

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Life_Is_Strange

Sherlock Holmes: The Devil's Daughter. - Wikipedia. Retrieved 18 October 2021, from

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sherlock_Holmes:_The_Devil%27s_Daughter

Until Dawn. Retrieved 21 October 2021, from [https://www.playstation.com/en-](https://www.playstation.com/en-us/games/until-dawn/)

[us/games/until-dawn/](https://www.playstation.com/en-us/games/until-dawn/)

What Remains of Edith Finch. - Wikipedia. Retrieved 18 October 2021, from

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What_Remains_of_Edith_Finch

Cover image created in Adobe Post. Image from Adobe Stock.