

7 Sins

A psychological survival horror in which our inner demons take shape.

At a glance

Genre: Psychological survival horror, single-player, linear (7 levels)

Platform / engine: PC, Unreal Engine

Role: Game design, level design, puzzle design, narrative design, story and lore

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Status: Design complete for levels 1–6; level 7 in outline. Unreleased, pre-production.

What this document shows. How one design idea, “*the monster you flee is a version of the truth you are told*”, is turned into playable systems: a recurring enemy (the Shadow) that changes behaviour in every level, a dynamic-light mechanic that couples player choices to difficulty, and puzzles whose solution states are written down and can be verified.

How to read it. Section 3 is a full case study of one level (Level 2), with map, flowchart, pacing curve and puzzle logic. Sections 4 and 5 add a tutorial level and a puzzle-focused level. Section 6 lists all seven levels side by side. Section 7 is honest about what is still open.

1. Design pillars

Three systems recur in every level. They are what makes a set of seven very different spaces feel like one game.

1.1 The Shadow (enemy)

Every level has an entity that hunts the player. Direct contact ends the run. What changes each level is its form and rules, and each form comes from the level's sin and from one interpretation of the story. The Shadow is therefore both an enemy and a piece of narrative information.

1.2 Dynamic light (safety, difficulty and feedback in one system)

- **Safety:** Shadows cannot cross certain light sources. A lit spot is a refuge that buys the player a few seconds during a chase.
- **Difficulty:** light levels rise and fall over the level. Less light means a more dangerous level, so difficulty is not a slider set by the designer alone but a result of what the player chose.
- **Not all lights behave the same:** flicker, fade-out and malfunction are used so the player must read each light before trusting it.

1.3 Numinous objects (choices that carry moral weight)

Optional collectibles come in two kinds, sacred (+) and profane (–). Picking one changes light intensity and adds a piece to one of three competing versions of the story: the victim, the killer, or the secret society. The player therefore builds their own reading of events through mechanics, not only through cutscenes.

Why this matters for design

Narrative, difficulty and player agency all run through the same variable (light). A single choice, such as taking a key rather than a bar, teaches the system, tunes the level and adds a clue at the same time.

2. How each level is documented

All seven Level Design Documents share the same skeleton, so a new designer or programmer can find the same information in the same place:

Section	Content
Overview	Setting, the event of the story the level is tied to, the sin, and the level's role in pacing.
Main goal / Secondary objectives	What the player must do to leave; optional numinous objects and what they change.
Flow chart & pacing	Node-by-node flow of the level with a pacing curve underneath, so intensity peaks can be checked against spawns and puzzles.
Shadow	Every form of the entity, where and when it appears, how it behaves.
Puzzles	Rules, required items, solution and side effects on light.
Plot / Environment / Lore	What the level tells, how it should look, and the narrative source text.

The maps use one shared legend, so any level can be read the same way:

Colour	Meaning
Blue (dashed area)	Gameplay dynamics: spawns, chases, traps, obstacle courses.
Green (dashed area)	Puzzle areas.
Brown-grey (dashed)	Narrative elements: places or objects that tell a version of the story.
Yellow (dashed circle)	Dynamic light points, i.e. the safe spots.
Red / pink / brown boxes	Numinous objects / key objects / doors, drawers and locks.
Green A / red B	Level entrance / level exit.

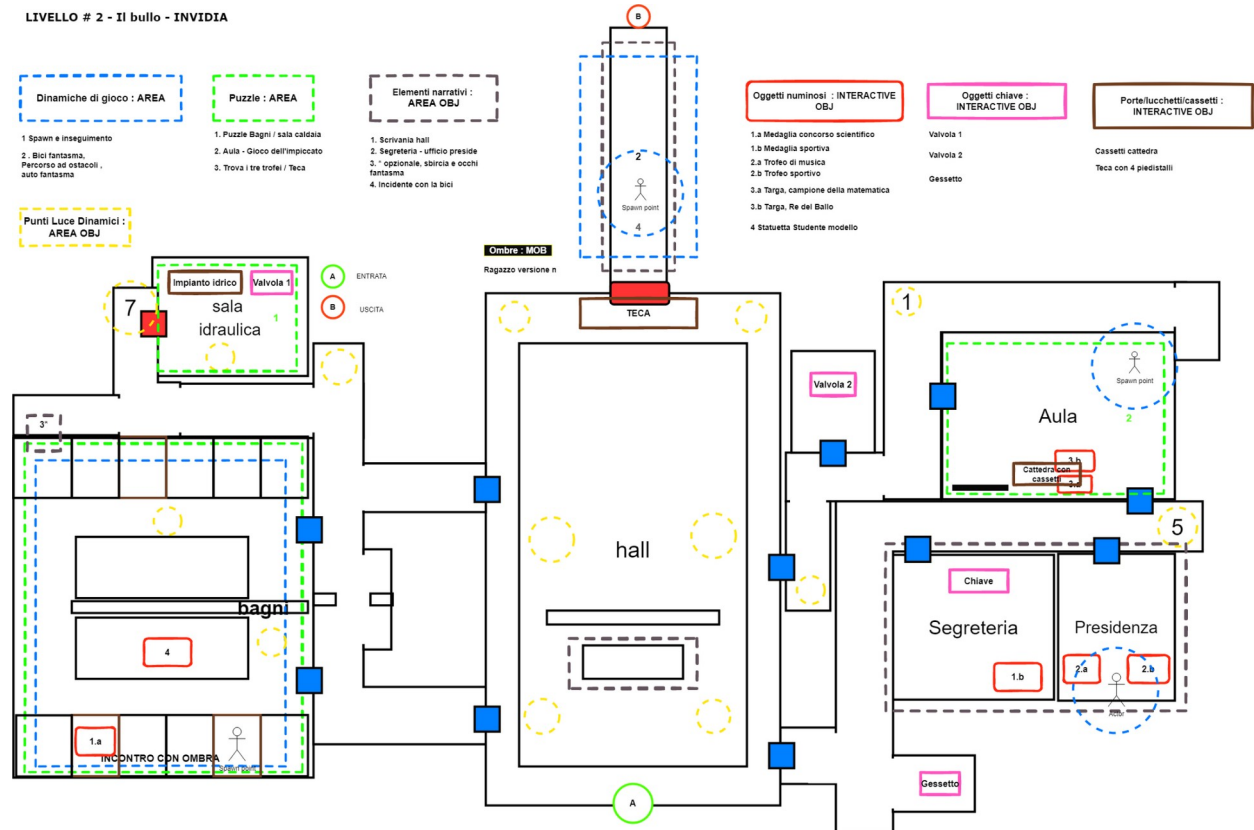
3. Case study: Level 2 — “The Bully” (Envy)

Setting. A building that is at once Elia’s middle school and the psychiatric hospital where he spent seven days as a child. The two spaces are blended so the player feels a controlled confusion.

Story link. The premeditated (or accidental, depending on who tells it) death of Samuel Liveri Jr., the class bully. Envy is the thread that ties every version together.

Goal. Collect four trophies and place them in the display case in the hall to open the secret door behind it. Crossing the final corridor completes the level.

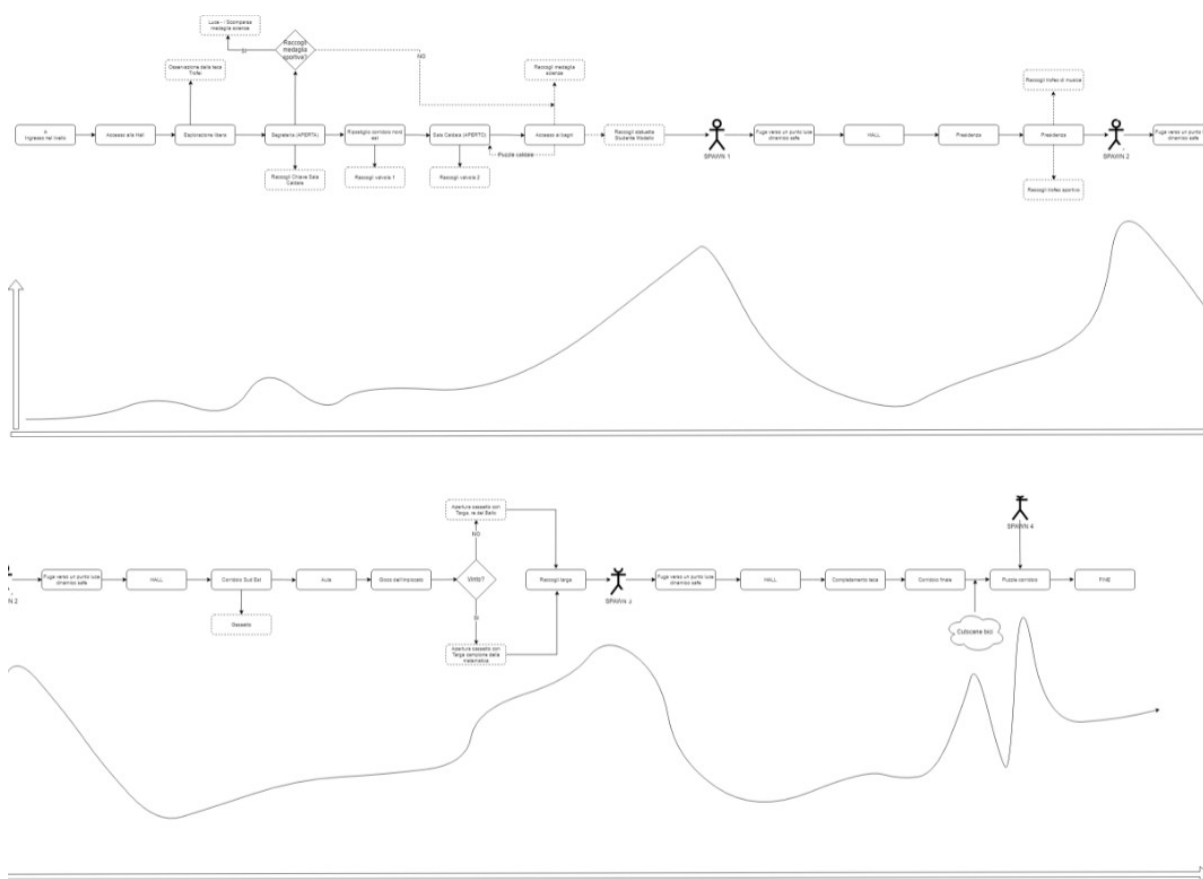
3.1 Level map



Level 2 map: hall hub with west wing (bathrooms, boiler room), east wing (classroom, secretary, principal) and the final wind corridor to the north. Original design document.

3.2 Flow and pacing

The level is modular: the player can approach the wings in a different order, so the flow chart shows a typical route. The curve under the flow marks intensity. Each Shadow spawn coincides with a peak, and the quiet valleys between them are where the player explores and solves puzzles.



Level 2 flow chart (typical route, shown in two rows for legibility). Stick figures mark the four Shadow spawns; the pacing curve is drawn under the first row of the original.

3.3 The Shadow: four states of the same enemy

The bully appears in four physical states, from an intact athletic teenager to a nearly headless body. Which form spawns depends on how many spawns have already been triggered, not on where the player is, so the wings can be played in any order without breaking the escalation.

Form	Description
Bully v1	Athletic ~15-year-old, shadow features and a different skin texture.
Bully v2	A body that has been through an accident: wounds look superficial but foreign objects protrude.
Bully v3	Body visibly torn, upper head missing from the nose up. Still moves and speaks.
Bully v4	Zombie-like, almost headless; upper skull collapsed around the jaw and nape.

Persistence rule. The hall has timed spawn points that activate after the first spawn. If the player re-enters the hall after some time, one of them (random) spawns the bully in his last known form. The hub therefore never becomes a safe zone.

3.4 Puzzles

Bathrooms and boiler room (west wing)

Completable only after collecting three items: boiler key, valve 1, valve 2. The player uses the valves on the boiler panel to close the tank that hides a trophy. After completion the Shadow bursts out of a toilet stall.

The valve panel drives four lights. The table below is the state logic from the design document, where V0 and V1 are the two valves and L0–L3 the four lights; the light labelled L1 is the one that hides the object.

Valve 0	Valve 1	Lights ON
true	true	L1, L2
false	true	L0, L2, L3
false	false	L0, L1
true	false	L0, L1, L3

Reading of the table. The source only states that L1 hides the object. If a lit L1 hides it, only one valve combination turns it off (V0 = false, V1 = true), which would make the puzzle solvable by watching the lights. If a lit L1 reveals it, the solution is any combination with L1 on. The source does not say which, and this is one of the points to confirm.

Principal's office

Two trophies sit on the desk, one sacred and one profane. The player takes one and the other disappears. A short, deliberate choice that changes light intensity and triggers a Shadow spawn.

Classroom: hangman

A hangman game is already in progress on the blackboard and the player has three guesses left. Solving it opens a desk drawer with a sacred trophy, failing it opens the profane one. The Shadow spawns in the last row of desks once the puzzle ends.

Final corridor: wind course

A short cutscene shows a bicycle sweeping through the corridor and being blown away by a gust that shatters the glass. The corridor then has 7–8 sections where gusts sweep through at intervals. The player must read the rhythm of each. After the second step the Shadow spawns behind the player and follows at constant speed, unaffected by the wind. It is a chase that turns timing puzzle into pressure.

What this level demonstrates

Modular, non-linear level structure with a controlled escalation of the enemy.

Puzzles that use the shared systems: valves change lights, trophies are numinous choices, wind sections are timing checks.

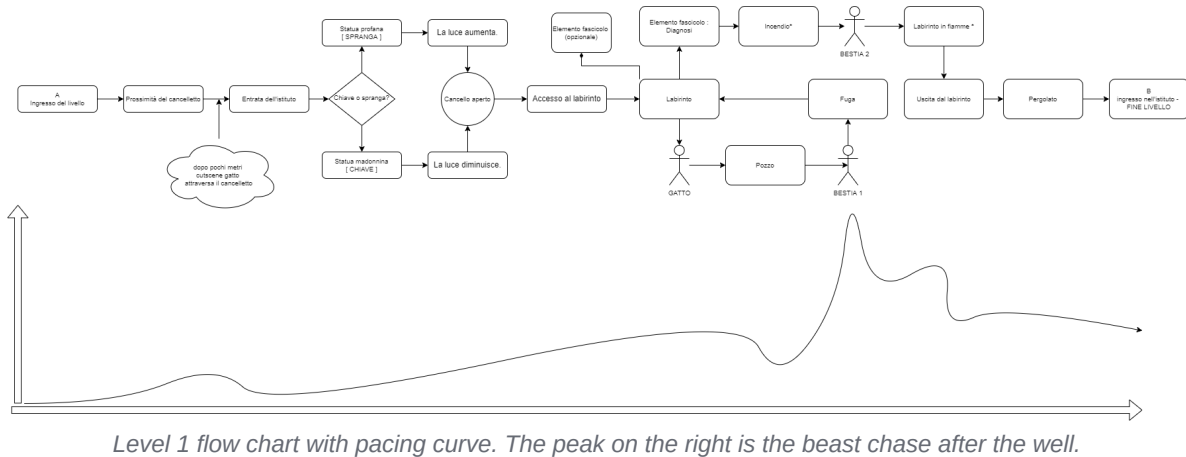
Every peak on the pacing curve is tied to a specific design event.

4. Level 1 — “The Cat on the Well” (Wrath): the tutorial

Setting. Half psychiatric-hospital garden, half childhood courtyard. Open-air spaces that are not really open: hedges, walls, gates and bars.

Goal. Enter the institute. Admission requires documents that the player gets by going through the garden maze.

4.1 Flow and pacing



4.2 How the level teaches

- **Non-threatening guide.** In this level only, the Shadow is a cat. It is seen near the gate, vanishes through the closed bars, and reappears inside the maze to show the way. The player learns to follow the Shadow's path before learning to fear it.
- **The first moral choice is a system tutorial.** Two statues flank the entrance. Near one is a key and near the other a bar. Both open the maze gate, and once one is taken the other is gone. The key counts as a positive action and raises the dynamic lights, the bar lowers them. The choice has no puzzle in it. Its purpose is to show how a decision changes the light before the light matters.
- **Threat escalates in three steps.** Cat (harmless guide) → beast (chases the player through the maze) → burning beast (optional, more dangerous). The maze has lights of different behaviours (flicker, fade, malfunction) where the player can shelter for a few seconds.

Open issue found while preparing this document

The text and the flowchart of Level 1 disagree. The text says the key raises the lights and the bar lowers them. The flowchart shows the statue with the key lowering the light and the profane statue raising it. This document follows the text, which is consistent with the rest of the system (a positive action gives more light), and the flowchart should be corrected.

5. Level 6 — “In the Shade of the Willows” (Sloth): the light-refraction puzzle

Setting. The Elmi family villa: two floors, a cellar, a large garden and a small private chapel hidden among the trees.

Shadow. A very tall figure with undefined features: the mirror of Elia's depression. Its themes are sloth and the suicide that two of the three versions of the story attribute to Elia. During the level it tests the player with childhood games (“1-2-3 star”, “hide and seek or death”).

5.1 Main puzzle: three coloured beams, one lock

The main puzzle unlocks a secret door and defeats the entity. It has a cascade solution in three steps.

Step 1 — Activate the statues

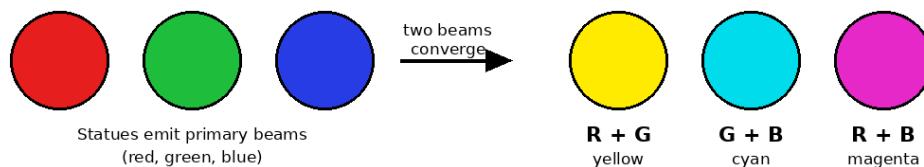
Each of the three statues needs to be able to rotate (freed from obstructions or given a missing part), to have its coloured plate in its slot, and to have its switch activated. An active statue emits a beam.

Step 2 — Find the three symbols

The player rotates the statues with their levers to send beams into one of five wall slots. A projected symbol is readable (“in focus”) only if the beam is unobstructed, is allowed to reflect and continue, and is in the right colour.

Solution

The three statues emit the primary colours. The three symbols only appear in the secondary colours, so the player must make two beams converge on the same slot: red + green = yellow, green + blue = cyan, red + blue = magenta.

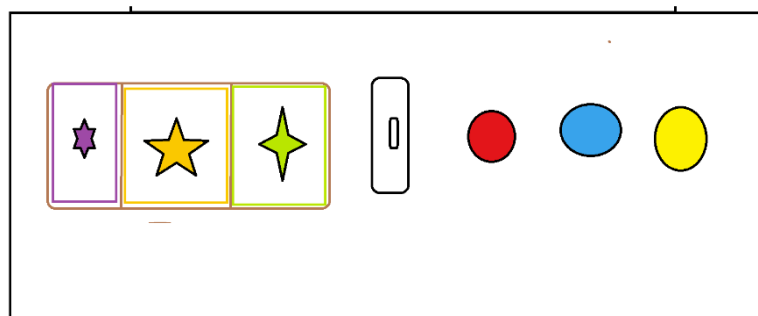


A symbol is readable ("in focus") only when projected in a secondary colour

Solution logic: primary beams combine into the secondary colours that make the symbols readable. Diagram redrawn for this document.

Step 3 — The lock

The lock has three elements: a snap combination on the left (three symbols), a central keyhole, and three coloured LEDs on the right that can be on or off. The rotation of the statues lets the player pick the right symbols for the left and switch on the LEDs on the right. Only then can the key be turned.



Lock design from the level document: symbol combination, keyhole and three LEDs.

What this level demonstrates

A puzzle with an explicit rule set and a verifiable solution state.

Use of a real-world principle (colour mixing) as the solution, so the player can reason from knowledge, not from trial and error.

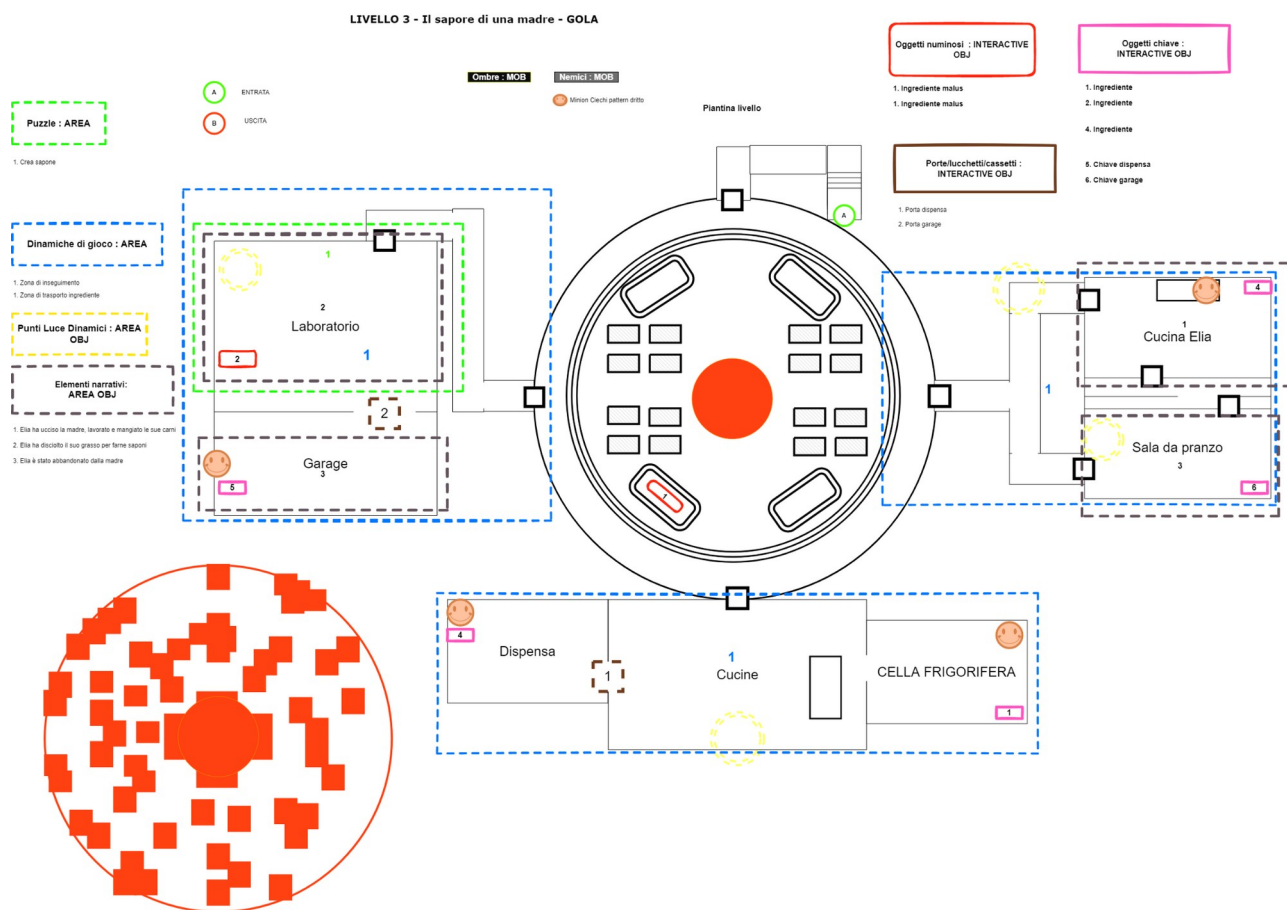
A layered structure (activate, aim, combine, unlock) that can be tested step by step.

6. The seven levels at a glance

Each level pairs a sin with an event from Elia's life, a setting, a Shadow with its own behaviour, and a core mechanic. The seven differ in structure on purpose.

#	Sin / title	Setting	Shadow (enemy)	Core mechanic
1	Wrath The Cat on the Well	Hospital garden / childhood courtyard	Cat (guide) → beast → burning beast	Tutorial, key-or-bar choice, maze with shelter lights
2	Envy The Bully	School + psychiatric hospital	Bully in 4 physical states, spawns triggered by progress	Modular hub, valve puzzle, hangman, wind corridor
3	Gluttony The Taste of a Mother	Hospital canteen + villa kitchen, lab and garage	No humanoid: "the Oblivion", a growing hole; plus blind minions	Carry heavy items to the pit, drop minions into it, cook with odd ingredients
4	Lust The Rooms of Shame	Early-20th-century brothel, three floors, catacombs	Three female entities, each bound to a doll	Collect dolls, lure each shadow to its doll on stage, timed kill per shadow
5	Greed The Sewers	City sewer system over old underground tunnels	Father: first ranged attacker, hunt and attack modes	Restore power, route water through valve cells to a final basin
6	Sloth The Willows	Elmi family villa and chapel	Tall undefined figure, tests with childhood games	Light-refraction puzzle with colour mixing
7	Pride The Seven-Pointed Circle	Underground complex	Not yet defined	Seven rooms, a ritual in each; outline only

Level 3 in one paragraph. It replaces the humanoid Shadow with an "Oblivion", a hole in the central round room that grows and decays unevenly as the level advances. The choice is argued in the document: in Elia's self-persuading version his mother left him, so there is no body to chase, and in the darker version her body was never found. The pit stands for both. Small blind minions about one metre tall move in straight lines toward the last spot where they smelled the player, and can only be removed by making them fall into the pit, after which they respawn.



Level 3: a central round hall with four wings (laboratory and garage; kitchen and dining room; larder and cold store).

Level 4: three floors and a descent

The three dolls are the level's puzzle spine. Picking one up makes a scream echo through the building and starts the hunt by its Shadow. Sheltering under a dynamic light makes the Shadow vanish and respawn at a random spawn point. The player then places the dolls on the stage so that the entities can be eliminated, and each of the three needs a different action: a simple lure, a lever with the right timing, and a cabinet dropped at the moment the Shadow looks down from the balcony.

LIVELLO # 4 - Le camere della vergogna - Lussuria

Ombre : MOB

1. Soubrette
2. Dama di compagnia
3. Cameriera sexy

Nemici : MOB

1. Monaciello
2. Uomo d'affari 1
3. Cardinale
4. Uomo d'affari 3 (padre di Elia)
5. Dr. Prodis

Oggetti chiave : INTERACTIVE OBJ

1. Bambola 1
2. Bambola 2
3. Bambola 3
4. Pin cassaforte
5. Chiave della cameriera / sgabuzzino terzo piano

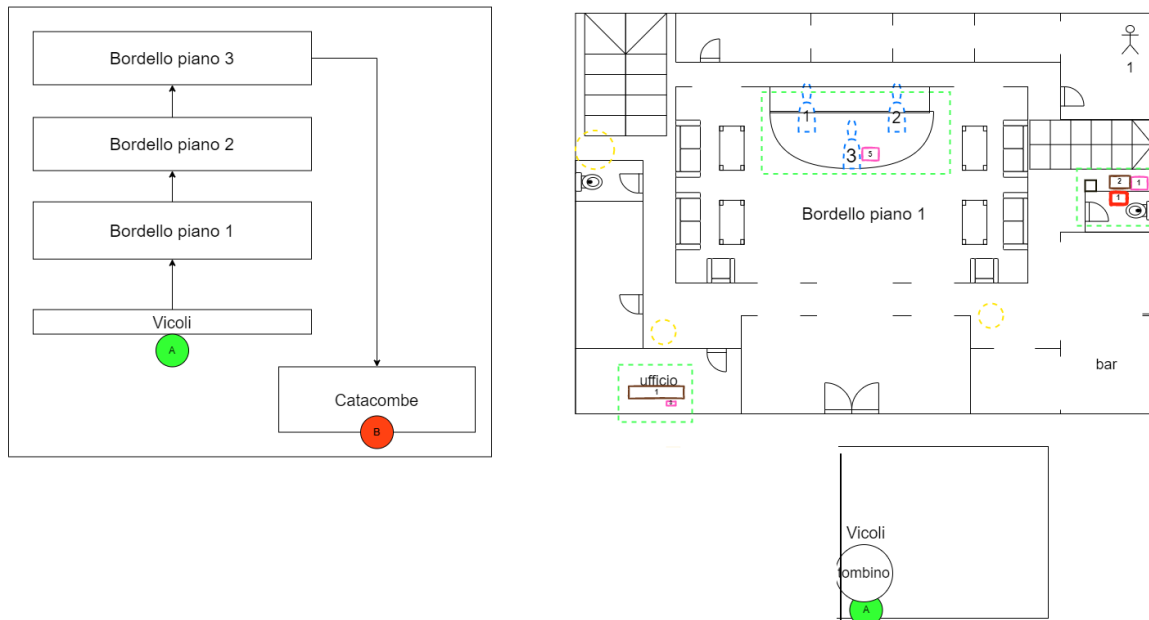
Oggetti numinosi : INTERACTIVE OBJ

1. Martello

Porte/lucchetti/cassetti : INTERACTIVE OBJ

1. Scrivania con cassaforte
2. Mobiletto

Piantina livello



Level 4: overall route (alleys → floors 1–3 → catacombs) and floor 1 with the stage where the three dolls are placed.

Punti Luce Dinamici : AREA OBJ

1. ASD

Puzzle : AREA

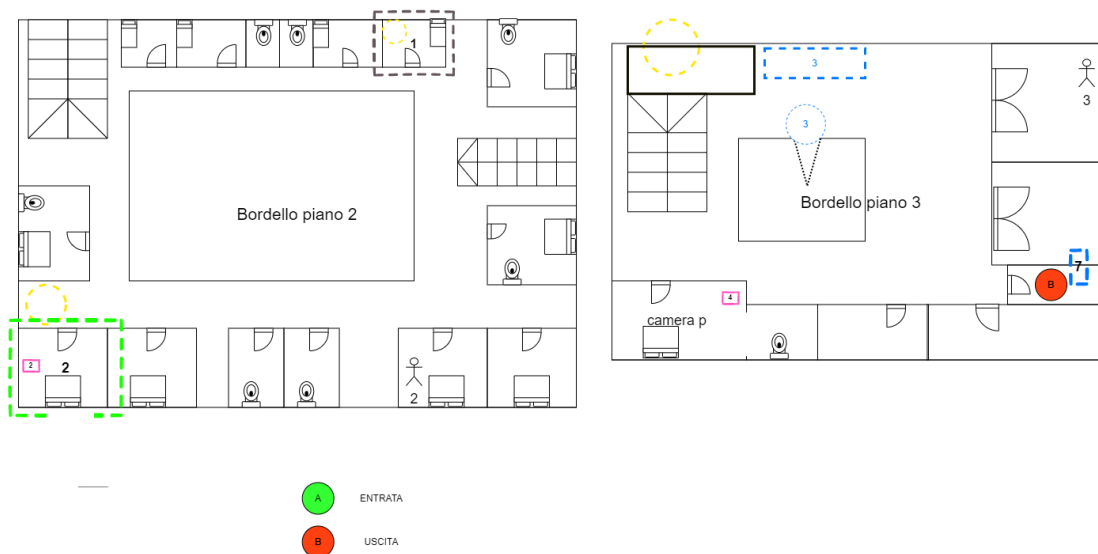
1. La bambola murata : mobile o muro
2. La bambola nel filo spinato
3. Pin scrivania cassaforte

Dinamiche di gioco : AREA

1. Trappola di magia indefinita
2. Trappola di lame
3. La spada, il mobile e la ringhiera traballante
7. Spioncino

Elementi narrativi : AREA OBJ

1. Camera del padre / zona franca
2. Camera con bambola / zona franca



Level 4: floors 2 and 3, with puzzle areas (walled-in doll, doll in barbed wire, safe PIN), traps, and safe zones (the father's room, the room with the doll).

7. Open issues and next steps

This section lists what is missing or inconsistent. It is here on purpose: a design document that hides its gaps is harder to trust than one that names them.

Area	State
Level 7	Outline only. Seven rooms, a ritual in each, coloured lights luring Shadows into rooms, cart-and-rails puzzle. No LDD sections written.
Level 1 light logic	Text and flowchart contradict each other (see section 4). To be fixed in the flowchart.
Level 2 valve puzzle	The light table is written down, but the source does not say whether a lit L1 hides or reveals the trophy. The solution state has to be fixed.
Level 3 flowchart	The link in the document points to the Level 1 file and is marked “to be changed”.
Levels 5 and 6	Flow chart & pacing sections are empty in the document; level 6 also has empty Plot and Environment sections.
Numeric tuning	No values yet for chase speeds, respawn times, light durations, wind-gust intervals or level length. Descriptions such as “after some time” need a parameter.
Difficulty curve	Escalation is implied (level 5 is the first with ranged attacks) but not written as a curve across the seven levels.
Vertical slice	No level is formally declared as the slice. Level 2 is the strongest candidate: it has map, flow, pacing curve, puzzle logic and a full Shadow spec.

Proposed first tuning pass (Level 2)

These are the parameters that a prototype would need first. They are listed as questions, not as values, because no numbers exist in the source documents.

- Shadow movement speed per bully form (v1–v4) and whether it increases with each form.
- Minimum time in the hall before a timed spawn can trigger, and the number of spawn points active at once.
- Duration of light shelter: how many seconds under a dynamic light before the Shadow disappears.
- Wind corridor: gust interval and safe window for each of the 7–8 sections, and the speed of the following Shadow relative to the player’s walking speed.
- Target level duration for a first-time player, and the number of deaths at which a hint should be offered.

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