



# the Black grimoire

*A presentation by  
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# The Black Grimoire

## *A witchcraft simulator*

Gather herbs, brew potions in your cauldron, study your grimoire, read the future in tarot cards...

## *Narrative driven*

Meet the townsfolk of Wölfelsgrund, form relationships with them, help them, curse them...

## At a glance

The Black Grimoire is a **witchcraft simulator**: part 2D, first person crafting game; part visual novel.

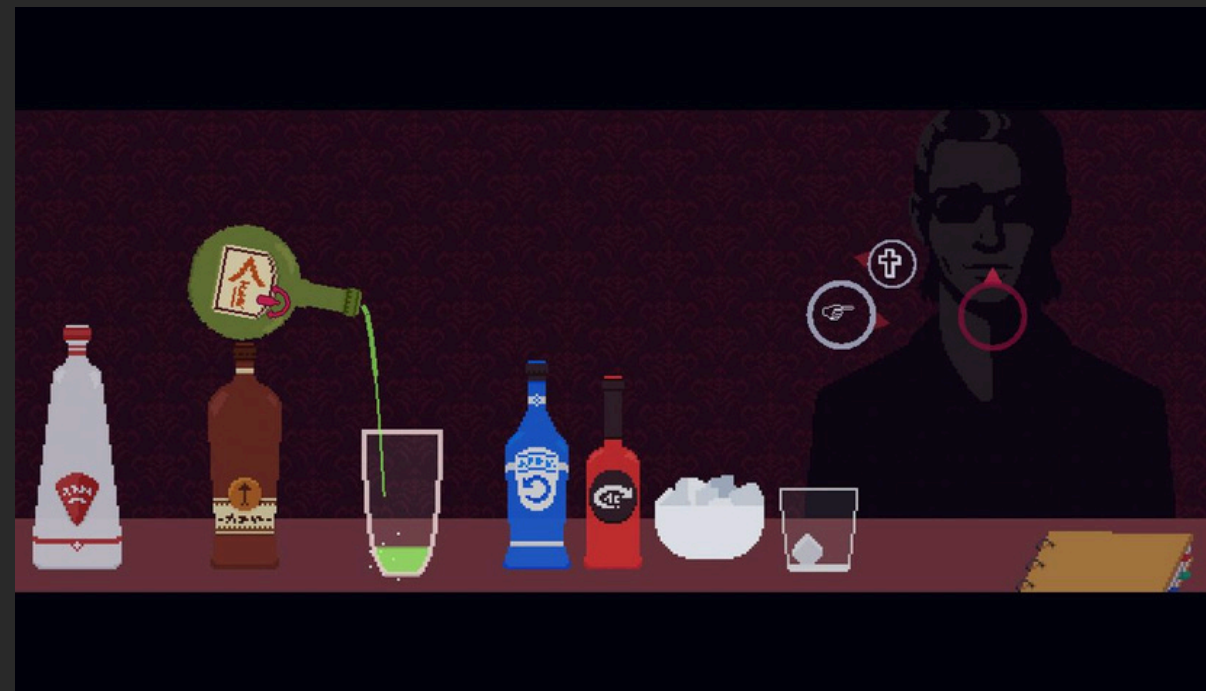
You'll speak to the people of **Wölfelsgrund**, take orders from them, gather ingredients, mix them, and deliver results.

Some special orders will require the use of the **Black Grimoire**, an ancient tome of black magic.

# References

TBG takes inspiration from the recent trend of "bartender simulators", highly narrative experiences that combine elements of visual novels with stripped back crafting systems; its most well-known examples being **VA-11 HALL-A** and **Coffee Talk**.

At the same time, it takes a more traditional point&click approach to ingredient-gathering and exploration. This combination was also tried in the critically acclaimed **The Red Strings Club**.



## The Red Strings Club



## Universe for Sale



## VA-11 HALL-A



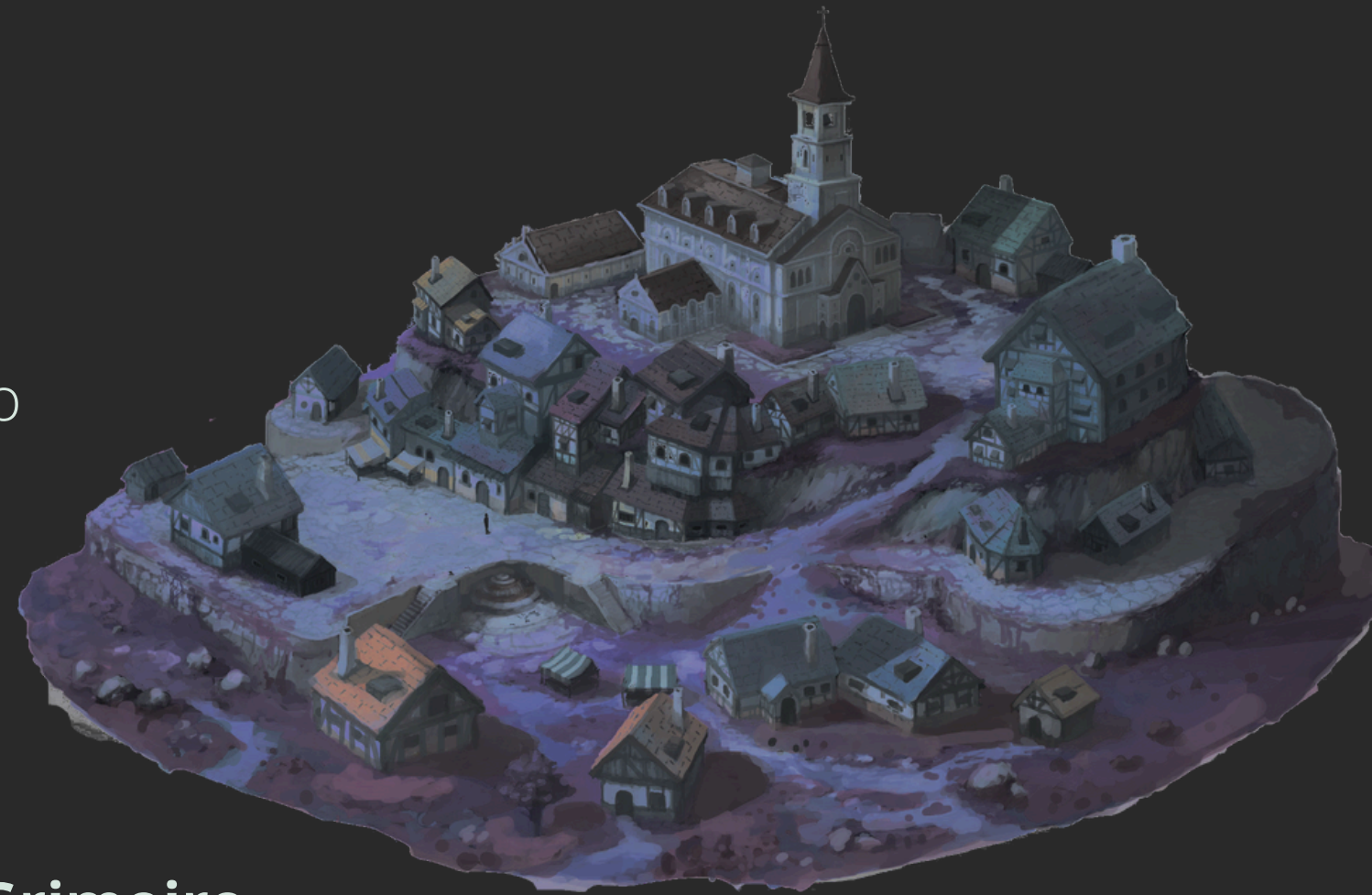
## Coffee Talk

# Story

**1359, Duchy of Bavaria, HRE**

**Yslana** has just arrived to the village of **Wölfelsgrund** to take over its empty apothecary after the passing of the previous owner. She's to provide healing services to the townsfolk: tending of wounds, herbal remedies...

However, along with herbs, vials, and tinctures, **Yslana** carries with her the forbidden knowledge of **the Black Grimoire**, an ancient tome of folk magic given to her by her mother, the witch **Ysentrud**. In shuddered whispers, word gets around town that Yslana's services extend far beyond those offered by the previous apothecary--for the right price she'll craft love potions, divine the future in tarot cards, cast bad-luck curses... all of this and more, but she must be careful not to raise suspicions, for the ever wary **Holy Inquisition** is never far away.



# Characters *Yslana*



Yslana is a novice practitioner of the dark arts, and the daughter of the infamous witch Ysentrud. She was born in the capital city of Regensburg, where her mother acted as an advisor to the Duke himself.

Life in the court was never to Yslana's taste--she much preferred roaming the winding alleys of the city rather than the study halls and hallowed corridors of the ducal palace.

Still, her mother managed to instill in her the basics of the craft--from botany to physiology, astrology, and anatomy--before her untimely death, resulting from power struggles at the court that led to the rising influence of the Grand Inquisitor Lothar.

Alone and suspected of heresy and witchcraft, Yslana fled Regensburg and started a new life in the countryside.

# Characters *Arsu*



Yslana's familiar, Arsu, is a pitch-black raven with whom she shares a psychic connection, allowing them to communicate telepathically.

Arsu is immeasurably wise, and wary of humans. They have served other many other witches before Yslana since time immemorial, and their motivations are obscure, though they ostensibly serve and help Yslana in her magical practice.

# Characters *The townsfolk*



Wölfelsgrund is a small village on the Bavarian countryside, home to a colorful host of characters: the Inkeeper, the Blacksmith, the Widow, the Chaplain, the Baker, the Beggar, the Mayor, and the Knight.

They all need the services of a trained apothecary, for reasons as diverse as themselves. The local intrigues, their rivalries, romances, friendships, and decades-old grudges will intertwine with Yslena's practice, and she will be able to touch their lives and bring change to the town in the way the player chooses.

# Characters *Grand Inquisitor Lothar*



An ambitious man, leader of the office of the Inquisition in the Duchy of Bavaria, Lothar has also significant political influence in the court, having successfully gained the trust of the Duke and used it to further his goals.

Under the guise of fighting heresy, the Grand Inquisitor has prosecuted political rivals, such as the former court physician and adviser to the Duke, Lady Ysentrud.

His ambition and zealotry have spurred the office of the inquisition in a frenzy, and it is said that he himself travels the country to find and punish heretics.

# Gameplay

The Black Grimoire consists of three main gameplay mechanics:

- Crafting
- Exploration/resource-gathering
- Dialogue

All of which are necessary to advance through the game's *missions*: the contracts or orders Yslana takes on as an Apothecary and a Witch. Missions start with a *dialogue* to set the requirements of the client, and then move to resource gathering, exploration (if required), and crafting. Finally, a dialogue finishes the transaction (successfully or not), and a new contract begins.

Some missions will require the use of the **Black Grimoire**, such as when a townsfolk asks for a curse to be cast on their enemies. This special missions will require the player to explore and gather information and/or more unique ingredients: blood of the victim, their astrological sign... Use of the Black Grimoire, however, can raise the **suspicion** of the populace, a crucial metric that can lead to an early end game.

# Gameplay Core loop



# Gameplay Dialogue

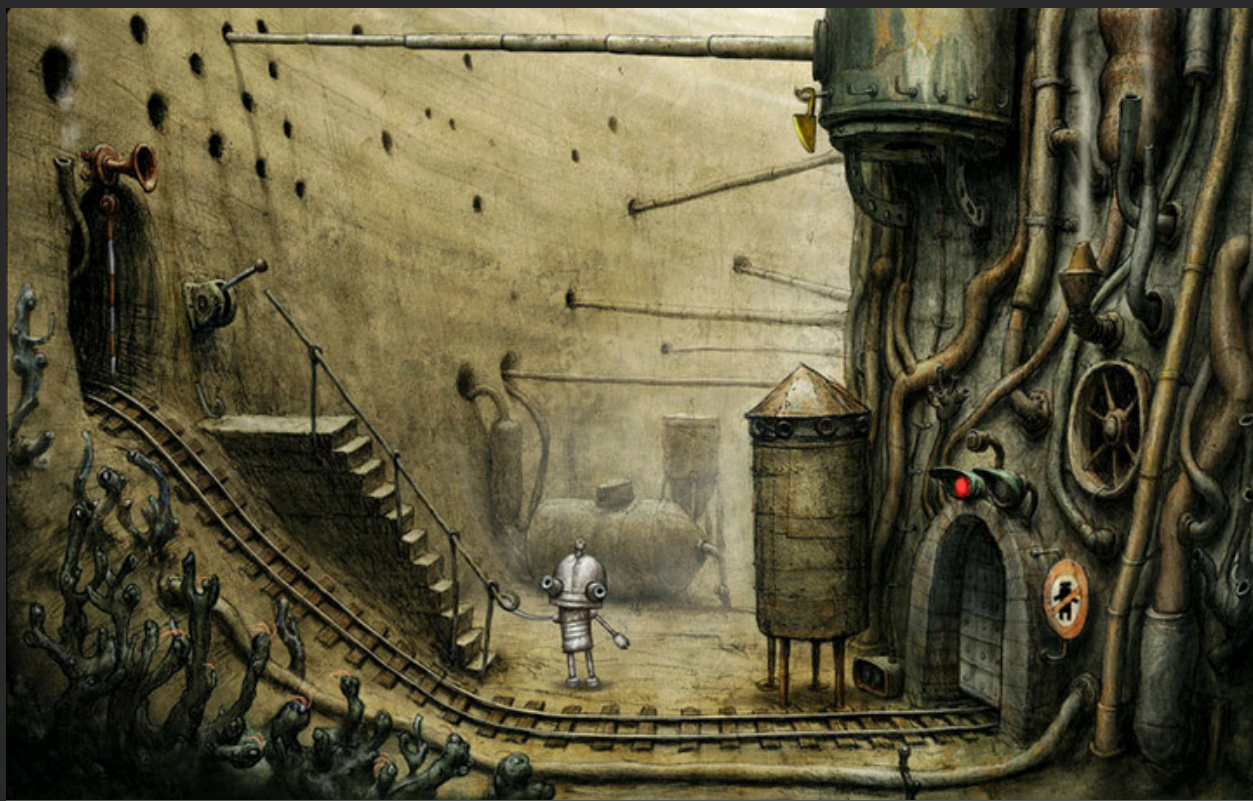
Dialogue is an integral part of the experience, and the main way the narrative is presented to the player.

Every time a costumer visits Yslana's apothecary, a dialogue will occur. This will showcase the personality of the villager in question, and establish the goal of the contract. To better signal their quirks and their identity, very expressive portraits of the characters will accompany the text.

At important points in the story, the player will be able to make a dialogue choice, which will meaningfully branch the story.



# Gameplay Resource Gathering - Exploration



**Machinarium**

The player will be able to explore Wölfelsgrund at will, its cobblestone alleys and quaint little houses, and visit its different establishments and interact with its inhabitants.

Some special recipes will require the player to acquire information from certain characters (i.e., "the ritual has to be performed when the moon is in the same phase as it was when the victim was born", "the full name of the victim has to be carved into the stone..."), and some others, will require special ingredients that can only be found by exploring the town ("a hair from the victim", "a stone from the graveyard").

Exploration will play out like more traditional point&click adventures.

# Gameplay Crafting

Crafting will play out in first person, and it will require to "physically" do the things the recipe calls for, i.e., if a potion needs ground sage, the player will have to pick the sage, use the grinder to turn it to dust, and pour the results into the cauldron.

There will be a variety of things for the player to do: grinding, cutting, mixing, boiling, etc. The necessary tools will be physically present at the apothecary, and the player will need to pick them up and use them.

Some recipes may not end with a "product" at all: a bad-luck curse may require the player to burn a hair of the victim while reciting a specific incantation, for example.



**The Red Strings Club**

# Gameplay *The Black Grimoire*



Everyone can craft an ointment for treating back aches, but only actual witches can cast hexes, brew love potions, divine the future... dark magic is a craft in an of itself, and its more demanding recipes and rituals can only be found in the Black Grimoire.

Players will need to peruse the book in search for recipes, and follow the instructions it lays out. A small deviation from them can have terrible consequences.

Black Grimoire recipes will require special ingredients such as hair from the victim, or intimate knowledge of their lives.

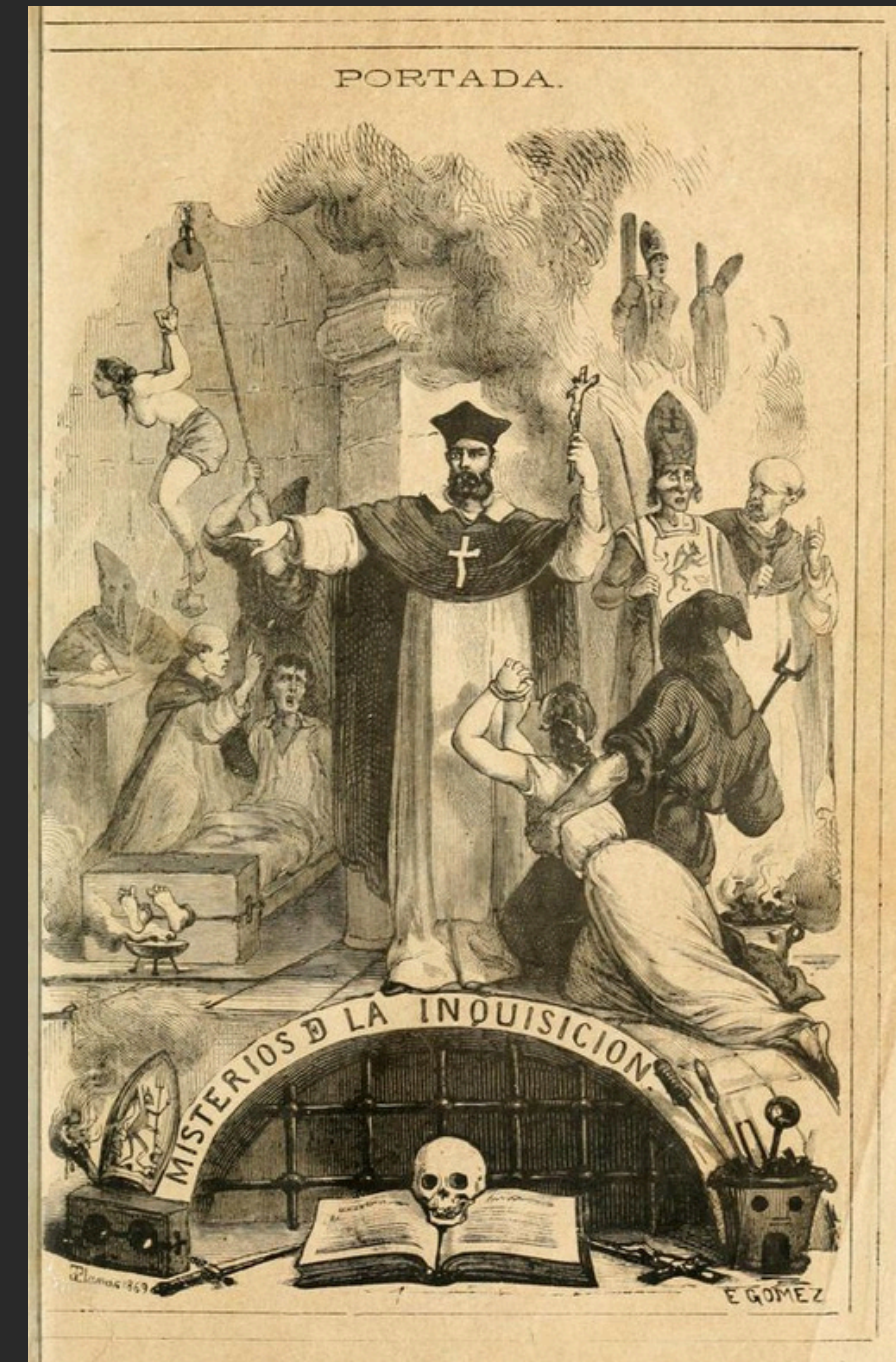
If a player is caught in a conspicuous activity, the suspicion meter will rise. A high enough score can trigger the attention of The Inquisition.

# Gameplay *Suspicion*

A suspicion meter will keep track of the actions of the player, rising when they get caught doing something that can be associated with witchcraft, and being lowered at certain points.

If the meter ever gets past a certain threshold, the Grand Inquisitor will be notified, and an early game over will be triggered.

Additionally, the level of suspicion can change the course of the story at certain key points.



# The Black Grimoire

## *In Summary*

- The Black Grimoire is a **narrative-driven game** where the players take control of Yslana, a novice witch setting up shop in a rural village in a fantasy-infused medieval Germany.
- The story progresses through a series of **contracts**, purchased by the villagers from Yslana, which range from crafting simple ointments, to casting hexes, brewing potions, etc.
- Fulfilling the contracts requires **crafting**, which is done in first person and "physically" interacting with witchcraft instruments such as grinders, cauldrons, pentagrams, etc.
- The **player can influence the story** at key points, and a **suspicion metric** keeps them on their toes and can diverge the narrative.
- Dialogues will play out like they do in **visual novels**, highlighting the character-driven, story-rich nature of the game.

