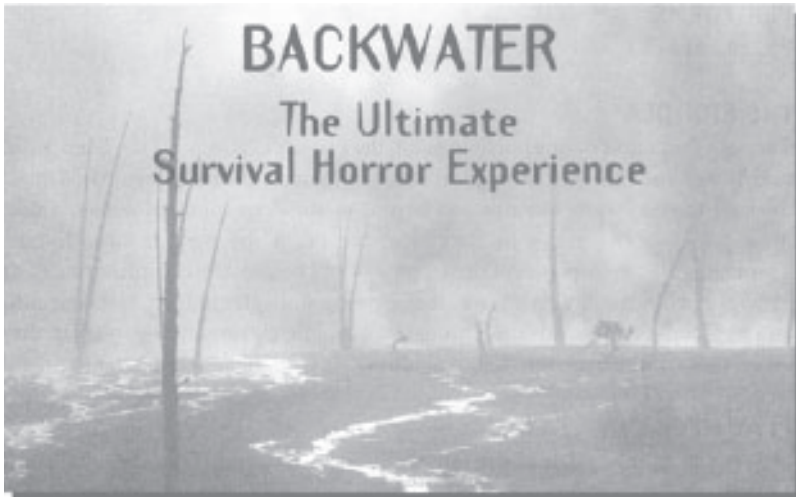




APPENDIX A

BACKWATER GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT



**Game Proposal by Ground Zero Productions
Version 2.1
Proprietary and Confidential**

ONE-SHEET—SUMMARY

TITLE

Backwater

GENRE

Survival-Horror/Action-Adventure Hybrid

VERSION

2.1—Preliminary Proposal

CATEGORY

Backwater is an exciting, heart-stopping action adventure that brings a number of unique gameplay elements to its terror-inducing thrills. The game combines exploration, combat and puzzles with an innovative character interaction system that allows the Player to hide, fool and trap the main antagonist, Mr. Jangle.

PLATFORMS

PS2 and Xbox

THE BIG IDEA

Through the course of one horrible night, the Player's Character (PC), Eden, must outwit and outfight her tormentor, a classic horror villain named Mr. Jangle, through the backwater swamps and bayous of the deep south. However, unlike most games in the genre, in *Backwater*, the PC is the prey, not the hunter. Throughout the gameplay experience, players will be constantly confronting their feelings of vulnerability and fear as they develop strategies to fight, trap and contain Mr. Jangle. As they advance through the completely nonlinear gameplay, they reveal more of the backstory that will ultimately help them defeat Mr. Jangle.

PLAY MECHANIC

Players will control Eden as she moves through the various locations that comprise the worlds of *Backwater*. Eden can walk, run, crawl, climb, hide, fight, shoot, use items, sneak, manipulate props, solve puzzles, interact with other characters, jump, and control her breathing. Exploration and combat are key components of gameplay. Most interaction happens in highly cinematic third-person perspective. However, Eden will also have a look function, which will allow the player to see the world through her point of view, or first person.

LICENSE

Backwater is envisioned as a franchise with immense ancillary market potential. The main villain, Mr. Jangle, has

an elaborate fiction and backstory that puts him squarely in the realm of other classic horror creations, such as Freddy Kruger, Hannibal Lecter, and Michael Myers.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Targeted for 16- to 35-year-old gamers, both male and female. *Backwater* has a strong female heroine and eerily beautiful worlds that will appeal to fans of strong gameplay and visual stunning experiences. To reach the broadest possible audience, the game will have intuitive controls and a quick learning curve.

CONCEPT

Backwater is a game in which you are the prey of a modern-day boogiemán. The entire game happens over the course of one night in and around a Louisiana swamp.

If you are to succeed, you must survive until morning. To do so, you will have to hide, run, distract, and repeatedly kill your antagonist, Mr. Jangle, as he relentlessly pursues you.

Backwater turns the standard 3D game on its head. Unlike traditional 3D action-adventures, you must both evade and attack your pursuer. Your options are to both fight and flee. Rather than firepower alone, your wits and courage are also your tools of survival.

Backwater will be designed as a real-time horror game, one in which creating a tension-filled, heart-pounding experience is

the ultimate goal. Playing the game should not only be fun ... it should be terrifying.

The story of the game unfolds as you move your way through the world on that fateful evening. The narrative will be filled with crosses and double crosses, and by the time the story ends, the real identity of our killer, Mr. Jangle, the unfortunate tow-truck driver, will create the final jolt of terror.

Designed to be an interactive *Deliverance* and *Southern Comfort* meets *Halloween* and the *Scream*, *Backwater* is an intense, heart-racing action-adventure. Danger and death lurk around every tree, horror hides in the shadows ... even the crickets sound menacing.

You are an outsider in this world, with a simple objective: Stay alive and get to the highway by morning. To do that you will have to face your tormentor, Mr. Jangle, and find a way to destroy him.

GAME SUMMARY

In the tradition of story-driven experiences like *Fear Effect* or *Half-Life*, *Backwater* is about creating emotional responses that move beyond the satisfaction of pressing buttons.

Because we are putting you into the familiar world of 3D, but standing the expectations of this genre on its head, we are creating a new gameplay dynamic. The intent is to make *Backwater* not only the most frightening game ever created, but to make it the most terrifying experience one can imagine.

Currently, we are planning to license an engine to build *Backwater*. Traditional level building techniques will be employed to create the worlds. Aggressive AI structures will be implemented to bring our main antagonist, Mr. Jangle, to life. This is especially true since many of the sequences in the game will involve extended sequences in which Mr. Jangle will be moving and searching for you, and you will need to study his actions if you are to escape.

As the game progresses, the story of *Backwater* unfolds. For instance, you might make it to a side road when you see a state trooper's vehicle. You scream for help, but when you arrive, the trooper is nowhere to be found. You climb into the vehicle and try to get the shotgun locked inside when you see Mr. Jangle holding the key and the trooper's severed hand ...

In addition to exploration of the world, you will be able to gather objects that will help you in avoiding/and or distracting Mr. Jangle. Objects you can gather might include: Flashlights, flares, rope, welding torch, etc. These and other items may also become Weapons of Opportunity.

Because the objective of the game is survival, rather than ammo counters and health meters found in traditional 3D games, there will be a Fatigue Meter.

Running causes you to become fatigued, eventually slowing you down and causing the sound of your breathing to become louder. This increases the chance of being detected by the killer as he searches for you, so part of playing the game is balancing your energy as you avoid Mr. Jangle. And facing Mr. Jangle is always a dangerous proposition in *Backwater*.

You will also be able to utilize an Adrenaline Rush. A Rush will increase speed, coordination and stamina to perform actions during gameplay. Rush moments can come in one of two ways. You may either Scream (which will, of course, let Mr. Jangle get a bead on you) or perform a specific milestone within the game to obtain the Rush moment. Over time, the Rush will dissipate, and your abilities will return to normal. The Scream “power-up” can also be utilized while facing Mr. Jangle.

During gameplay, you will come to realize that although you can kill Mr. Jangle, you cannot stop him until the very end of the game. In fact, the objective of the game is to kill Mr. Jangle thirteen times. You see, much like a cat, he has many lives.

The mythology of why Mr. Jangle has thirteen lives can be found within the ritual of the Black Milking, which is explained in the **Backstory** section of this document. However, this conceit allows you a number of unique opportunities to kill Mr. Jangle, including impaling him, crushing him under a freight car, tossing him into a metal shredder, shoving him into an alligator pit and igniting him with high-octane whiskey from the moonshine still.

However, like the Terminator, Mr. Jangle is an unstoppable machine until the very end. And every time Mr. Jangle is dispatched, he returns with even more power (though he will look the worse for wear). In fact, Mr. Jangle, in essence, is an ever-evolving level boss that becomes more and more disturbing in both appearance and action as the game progresses. This means that although you will interact with

Mr. Jangle often, his fantastical nature will create a variety of gameplay opportunities and “new” enemies to face.

And in addition to Mr. Jangle, you will be faced with all manner of enemies and creatures related to the powers of the Black Milking that he can manipulate.

Only after you have caused Mr. Jangle to use up his thirteen lives can he truly be destroyed. To aid you in dealing with Mr. Jangle, you will be able to gather weapons of opportunity, such as a rack, an ax handle, a shotgun, a welding torch, etc.

Mr. Jangle’s Achilles’ heel is the thirteen snakes that created him. There will be one snake located in each of the Thirteen Locations of the game that must be captured into Miss Lady Em’s suitcase (which you will find early in the game).

Once the snake is back within the case, the power of that lifetime’s evil is vulnerable to attack. This creates the hunting and gathering component of *Backwater*. Many of the snakes will be in difficult locations to obtain, and require creative solutions and/or puzzle solving to acquire. (Once again, the mythology and explanations of *Backwater’s* story are discussed later in this document.)

With these ground rules firmly established, you will be as concerned with your own survival as with trying to destroy Mr. Jangle. The design of the game is based around your role as prey and all level design and story points will reinforce your vulnerability.

The best defense throughout the game is to run, distract, trap, and/or hide from Mr. Jangle as he continues to chase you until the snakes of the Black Milking are collected.

There will be unique opportunities for concealment during the game, including climbing trees, or perhaps hiding underwater with a breathing straw fashioned from the plants growing along the water.

However, that is not to say that you are without an offensive capability to attack Mr. Jangle. Once a snake has been trapped in the suitcase, you can then go on the attack and try to take away one of Mr. Jangle's lives.

In fact, in a number of instances, doing battle with Mr. Jangle and other enemies within the *Backwater* universe is the only path to survival. The key point is that your character, Eden, will never come across unlimited ammo, über-weapons, or other gameplay conceits that create the sense of invincibility. Throughout the game, you will always feel vulnerable to both Mr. Jangle and his minions.

TARGET PLAYER

Our Target Player is a fan of the survival-horror genre, and also action-adventure games in general. *Backwater* will appeal to horror fans, both the hard-core gamer and the casual player.

While *Backwater* is not about overt violence and massive bloodshed, its tone and content will make it an MA title.

The game is about an ever-increasing tension brought on by your need to confront your fears. To survive in, and ultimately win *Backwater*, you will engage in a number of terrifying gameplay elements, including having to defeat Mr. Jangle multiple times. While the game has crossover appeal, it falls strictly into the same category as Resident Evil, Silent Hill, System Shock, etc.

Our goal is to create the most horrifying, terror-inducing interactive experience ever. To accomplish this, *Backwater* will be designed within the MA guidelines structure.

INTRODUCTION

The following is a potential opening cinematic that establishes the mood and overall sensibility of *Backwater*.

OVER BLACK we HEAR a young WOMAN’S voice that betrays an urgency that will soon become panic ...

WOMAN

That last stop was at least fifty miles back.

An apologetic MAN’S voice responds.

MAN

I’m sorry, okay? You’re right, Eden, I should’ve checked ...

We FADE IN on ...

EXT. GAS STATION—NIGHT

The CAMERA MOVES in on a deserted and long-abandoned Gas Station deep within the heart of the Bayou. Greenery crowds what remains of the equipment under the awning. A broken sign on rusting hinges reads “KINDLY SERVICE AND GAS”.

Struggling with one of the '40s-style pumps is the man whose voice we've heard. His name is TED, early twenties and in good shape, obviously the adventurous-type. He pulls the fuel nozzle away from his late model SPORTS CAR.

TED

Nothin' ...

TED gets into the car where the woman, EDEN, waits anxiously in the passenger seat. Early twenties, Eden has more curves than Ted's German wheels, and one suspects from her pout on her beautiful face, a better motor as well.

Ted fires the engine and looks at the FUEL GAUGE. It is pinging EMPTY. He puts the car into gear and it pulls out of the station, showering a trail dust and debris.

The CAMERA tracks through the empty station, until it stops in front of the darkened service bay beside the pumps. Inside, we can see an old, beaten and battered TOW TRUCK. A beat, then suddenly ...

The LIGHTS of the Tow Truck turn ON, blasting the screen with illumination. A split second later, the engine of the truck ROARS to life with a menacing rumble.

Kindly Service is back in business ...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TED'S CAR-LATER

Ted is negotiating with his car and losing.

TED

Come on, come on ...

He looks at Eden as he pulls over. The engine of Ted's car complains loudly as the fuel tank can no longer quench its thirst. Ted drives across a small rickety BRIDGE and onto a dirt culvert beside the road as the car sputters to a stop.

EDEN

So now what, Ted?

TED

Guess we walk ... Forgive me?

EDEN

You are kidding, right?

Ted closes the difference between them, moving his face next to Eden's.

TED

Please, Eden. I'll make it up to you ... right here if you'd like ...

EDEN

Now you are kidding.

TED

Why not? It'll give us something to talk about while we hike. Besides, who's out here but us and the gators ...

EDEN

Shut up.

Eden pulls Ted to her, and they begin to kiss when the entire rear window of the car is BLASTED with light. Ted and Eden struggle to look out into the light.

EDEN'S POV

We see the outline of the Tow Truck from Kindly Service BACKLIT against the night sky of the Bayou.

EDEN

Looks like a tow truck.

TED

I'll be damned. I was kinda hoping that this crisis would've lasted a little longer. I could ask him to come back in fifteen if you want ...

Eden smiles and laughs disarmingly.

EDEN

What I want is gas and directions.

TED

Right. Lock it behind me.

Eden gives Ted a peck on the cheek as he exits the car. He shuts the driver's side door and Eden reaches across, locking it.

Eden loses sight of Ted as he steps into the light radiating from the Tow Truck. She is alone for a painfully long moment, then SPLAT ...

Ted, bloodied and screaming, crashes into the side window of the car. Eden SCREAMS. Tow HOOKS attached to metal CHAINS are painfully imbedded into Ted's SHOULDERS.

TED

Help me, EDEN ... Help ME!

The sound of a WINCH drowns out Ted's pleas for help and Eden's terrified cries. Ted claws at the car window as he is

suddenly jerked backwards by the Chains toward the tow truck.

Eden is in shock, breathing heavily. As she sits alone and terrified in the car, we hear Ted's anguished scream fade, then abruptly stop. Eden doesn't move. And we realize that she won't. The next move Eden makes is ours to control.

It's time to play ...

GAMEPLAY DESCRIPTION

What follows is a description of the opening few minutes of the *Backwater* Gameplay Experience that would come after the introduction found at the beginning of this document.

Player-Controlled Actions and Effects are CAPITALIZED. Your PC is Eden.

Following the opening Cinematic, Eden USES the car door and exits the vehicle. She finds herself outside among the dangers of the Bayou. In the distance, Eden LOOKS toward the tow truck. Its engine is running and its lights are on. Eden CROUCHES, then CRAWLS away from the car towards the brush beside the road. Her FATIGUE METER is still at the minimum, so her breathing is quiet as she HIDES under a fallen tree and LOOKS for a path toward the bridge behind the tow truck.

To her right, Eden HEARS the metallic jangling of keys. She LOOKS back toward the sound as the side window of Ted's car CRASHES OUT. Eden SEES the shadowy FIGURE of

MR. JANGLE blur past in the Background. The SOUND of the keys grows louder as Mr. Jangle comes nearer.

Eden slips from her hiding spot and RUNS for the tow truck. As she moves, her Fatigue Meter begins to RISE. Her breathing INCREASES in volume, and her coordination is affected. Eden stumbles as she LOOKS behind her while RUNNING toward the truck.

Reaching the cab of the truck, Eden USES the door. A large BLACK, WATER MOCCASIN strikes out at her, then quickly slithers down onto the floor of the truck as she WATCHES. Eden HEARS the sound of the keys getting louder still. Her FATIGUE METER begins to return to normal as she reaches the back of the truck and finds TED flailed upon the towing arm. Eden SCREAMS, increasing her ADRENALINE METER and rewarding her with a RUSH. She USES a BOX of FLARES in the bed of the truck, and adds the FLARE to her INVENTORY. Then Eden DASHES for the bridge, her speed increased by the RUSH. She looks back and sees MR. JANGLE closing on her as she reaches the bridge.

As the RUSH expires, Eden stumbles, falling BACKWARDS onto the bridge as Mr. Jangle appears beside her.

Eden USES the FLARE from her inventory, and attacks with the FLARE as a weapon. It ignites, shooting flame into Mr. Jangle's face. He cries out as he is driven back. Then, seizing the moment, Eden LEAPS onto a branch beside the bridge. She CLIMBS down the branch toward the water below, but her FATIGUE METER is maximized, so she can't SWIM into the water. Instead, the FLARE that Eden holds

illuminates a drainage pipe under the bridge. Eden hesitates for a moment until her FATIGUE and ADRENALINE METERS stabilize, then she CLIMBS into the pipe and begins to CRAWL, hoping the flare burns long enough for her to find the other side. Her FATIGUE METER begins to rise as she struggles to find her way through the pipe.

From the shadows, Mr. Jangle watches the red glow of the flare radiate from the drainage pipe and begins to move.

Eden can HEAR the sounds of the keys once again.

MR. JANGLE

Mr. Jangle, the killer, is a classic horror movie villain. Mr. Jangle gets his name from the hundreds of keys he wears around his waist. We will find out that these are the keys of his victims, his trophies, and he plans to add yours to the collection of Janitors keychains he wears on his belt. As Mr. Jangle moves closer to you, you can hear the rattling of the keys. That is how you know that he is getting nearer.

Mr. Jangle can be killed, but only temporarily. And each time he returns from the dead, he is progressively more powerful and supernatural than before. Mr. Jangle is relentless in his pursuit, and won't stop until he finds you. But Mr. Jangle can be distracted, giving you time to escape. You will also be forced at times to hide from him.

For instance, you may have to seek cover in a tool locker located within the engine room of the Sunken Riverboat as he searches for you.

In addition to Mr. Jangle, you will have to face other dangers, including Alligators, Water Moccasins, Bogs, Quicksand, collapsing Mine Shafts, etc.

As the story and game move forward, the supernatural aspects of Mr. Jangle will begin to be revealed. Before the game is over, you will find ourselves facing Mr. Jangle's unique powers and abilities as reality bends to the magic of the Black Milking. However, you may find a way to use the power yourself ...

NONLINEAR GAME STRUCTURE AND STYLE

The world of *Backwater* is composed of real-time 3D Interior and Exterior Environments.

The feel of the locations is very Gothic. Everything is overgrown with weeds and vegetation. The world is damp. The colors are cool with dark tonality. Fog lies close to the ground.

Stylistically, the characters and worlds, although 3D, will have the illustrative look of a graphic novel. The intent is to put you into a stylized hyper-reality, creating a unique and compelling world to explore.

Since all of the action of the game takes place within a moonlit Louisiana Bayou, you will not only have to explore the swamp, but also a number of unique locations within it. All of the locations are disturbing and scary, adding to the ever-increasing sense of dread. Each location includes plenty

of places where Mr. Jangle might suddenly appear. They all project a sense of dread and foreboding. Heavy shadows, creaking floorboards, windswept trees, etc.

The game is built around thirteen chapters with unique end-level narratives that can be played in a nonlinear fashion. Each of these narratives represents one part of the larger backstory fiction that will finally be revealed and will give you the ultimate solution on how to defeat Mr. Jangle once and for all. Other game narratives that relate to what is happening that evening in the swap are location (level) specific, and will be revealed when preset triggers are hit.

All of the narratives in *Backwater* will be RTV (in game) Cinematics.

At the end of each level, the player will unlock a backstory narrative as part of winning (completing) the level.

To accomplish this, the player must destroy Mr. Jangle and gather the snake rattle hidden with the location. This is our established gameplay mechanic for the entire game. The main object is to find the snake and destroy Mr. Jangle. Subobjects will include fighting other NPCs, solving puzzles, finding items, exploring environments, etc.

Visual representation of the uncovered backstory narratives in the game shell will be a Circle, so that the beginning and the end of the story will not be obvious until it is almost completed.

Snake rattles will serve as placeholders for the missing story lines. The rattles of the snakes will shake when highlighting a

finished backstory element. Art direction will make this look like the final sacrificial voodoo circle that releases Mr. Jangle's power.

When you have all of the elements of the backstory completed, they will unlock the final location of Mr. Jangle's wrecking yard (Kindly Service).

The beginning and end of the game happen in linear fashion at their respective locations (the abandoned road and the wrecking yard) and are not part of the thirteen chapters, but bookends on the overall fiction and gameplay.

The rest of the game and story are nonlinear, and it is completely up to you to decide on how you wish to tackle the game. A foreshadow element will preview each separate location (level), before you enter the level, because once a location is entered, a "door" is locked behind the characters, trapping them in that chapter of the experience until they have reached the end of the level, found the snake rattle, dealt with the unique enemies and puzzle challenges of the location, and defeated the level-boss version of Mr. Jangle.

Listed below are the level/locations in the game. Each of these locations will be populated with a number of NPCs; some human, some creature, and later in the game, some supernatural.

✱ **Swamp/Bayou Location.** The classic Bayou. Waist-high water filled with trees. A thick canopy of vegetation overhead. Sounds of creatures in the darkness. Stillwater on a moonlit night. Fireflies and insects. Alligators, snakes ... the works.

✱ **Abandoned Mansion.** Overgrown with swamp foliage. A classical southern mansion, huge in scale. Inside, sheet-covered furniture, cobwebs, etc. You can move through the location, and search all of the various room of the place. Plenty of places for you to hide. Unfortunately, plenty of places for Mr. Jangle to hide as well.

✱ **Destroyed Bridge.** Part of the old interstate, but left to rot in the damp swamp for thirty years. Could be a bridge of a canal, with a mechanical room full of gears, etc.

✱ **Cemetery.** The classic southern cemetery, with crypts above ground because the water table is so high that burying the dead is not practical. Much of the Black Milking secrets can be found within the gates of this eerily silent place.

✱ **Sunken Riverboat.** Destroyed casino, wheel house, engine room, paddle wheel, etc.

✱ **Moonshine Still.** Drums for the ingredients, machinery. Maybe a couple of guys working at the still. A fast '49 Mercury with its key in the ignition. But will they help you, or are they out for something?

✱ **Deserted Oil Platform.** Drilling equipment, Rough-necks huts, office trailer etc. Oil drums everywhere.

✱ **Alligator Farm.** Complete with worn-out, tired attractions and very hungry Alligators.

✱ **Mardi Gras Float Storage-yard.** An overgrown lot of abandoned floats from the Mardi Gras festivals. Surreal and terrifying in equal measure.

✱ **Railcars.** Rusted track with a few passenger and freight train cars that can be explored.

✱ **Voodoo Shack.** The location in which the Black Milking took place. Disturbing, dark. This location will contain a number of items that you will need to unleash the Black Milking's power. This is also where the final, thirteenth snake must be captured.

✱ **Old-Timer's Cabin.** Right out of *Deliverance*. Could have a Swamp Boat nearby that would have enough fuel to take us across part of the Bayou.

✱ **Kindly Service and Gas Station/Junkyard.** Your final location, and where you will find the ultimate truth about Mr. Jangle. You will also discover Mr. Jangle's other victims, or what remains of them. Filled with rusting hulks of cars. Weeds and car parts everywhere. A Vehicle graveyard that is home to rats, maggots and half-dead victims welded into steel boxes. In the back, a shack with car winch, underground mechanics pit, etc. Off to one side, a huge car-crusher and shredder (where Mr. Jangle meets his final demise).

GAMEPLAY HIGHLIGHTS

There are two main components to playing *Backwater*. They are exploration (including object gathering/usage, trap setting and NPC interaction) and combat. All of the elements of *Backwater* will be tied together with seamless RTV and Pre-rendered Cinematics.

EXPLORATION/INVENTORY ITEMS

Exploration of the world will involve searching through the various environments in the experience, meeting up with other characters that may be out to harm or help you, and looking for areas to hide from or trap Mr. Jangle.

When objects are found, they can be added to your inventory. Objects will include items like lanterns, racks, moonshine etc. Occasionally, you will also be able to get your hands on some weaponry, but the inventory system of *Backwater* is based on realism.

The more items you are carrying, the slower and less agile you are, which will of course have a direct effect on your encounters with Mr. Jangle. Also, the inventory will not be Felix the Cat's bag of tricks. There is a finite number of items that can be carried at any one time. Part of the game strategy will involve which items to carry. For instance, you won't be able to carry a shotgun, a rake, and a pick-ax all at the same time. However, there will be places in the worlds where items can be hidden and later retrieved.

The most important objects that you must find during gameplay are the thirteen snakes that created Mr. Jangle. Through the course of *Backwater*, you will come to know their significance, and realize that the Water Moccasins are the Achilles' heel of Mr. Jangle. The snakes will have to be gathered, along with the other items needed for a ritual sacrifice to free the evil they possess. Some of the snakes will be difficult to find, others will be easy to find but difficult to gather.

For instance, when you reach the Alligator Farm, you can see one of the snakes on a small island. Unfortunately, that island is in the middle of an Alligator Pit. Also, some of the snakes will put up a fight and become boss-characters that must be subdued.

As the thirteen snakes are collected and you tick off Mr. Jangle lives by confronting and repeatedly killing him, the experience will become more supernatural because the powers of the Black Milk are beginning to come under your control.

Using the environments and objects found within them to create traps to slow down Mr. Jangle will also be a key gameplay component. You will have the opportunity to set traps that will hurt or distract Mr. Jangle, giving you time to make your escape.

For instance, you will be able to booby-trap the still so that when Mr. Jangle opens one of the moonshine barrels, the still will explode. To accomplish this, you will have to find the necessary elements that make the bomb, and then find a way to lure Mr. Jangle to search for you in the still.

COMBAT

In addition to surviving Mr. Jangle's numerous attacks, you will also find yourself facing off against a number of diverse enemies, both real and supernatural, in *Backwater*.

As an example, as you approach the Moonshine Still in the above example, the Good Ol' Boys brewing the white lightning may think that you are the local police, and open

fire on you. You will have to dodge their fire until you've convinced them that you are not the cops. However, they have no intention of being friendly. In fact, you are an outsider in their backyard, and although you think that the Moonshiners will help you once they hear your story, instead they attack you.

You must now combat the Moonshiners, knowing that all the while Mr. Jangle is on your trail.

When the magic of the Black Milking come into full force later in the experience, you will find yourself facing the undead victims of Mr. Jangle, reanimated by his powers. This means you will be fighting horrific creatures brought back into existence by the Voodoo that created Mr. Jangle. And the only way to defeat them will be to use the Black Milking talents that you acquire, such as Paralysis (freezing internal organs and brain functions), Immolation (causing enemies to ignite into flames), Projection (instantly moving from one area to another), and Splintering (shattering limbs with directed thoughts).

To ultimately defeat Mr. Jangle, you may have to use his own power against him, and infect yourself with the Black Milking. This will give you not only additional strengths and abilities, but also allow you to resurrect yourself by gaining a life. This twist will be the ultimate leap of faith within the game, since the evil and consequences of the Black Milking must be accepted to reap its power.

KEY GAMEPLAY FEATURES

Because *Backwater* is about moving beyond traditional expressions of 3D gaming, we will incorporate a number of features that are designed to heighten the gameplay experience. These include both unique elements and also re-interpretations of standard gameplay devices:

SCREAM/ADRENALINE RUSH

A big part of any horror experience is the scream of terror that your character cries out when faced with a frightening situation. In *Backwater*, your scream can both help and hurt your character. Unlike traditional survival-horror games, your character Eden will react to the fear she experiences, rather than moving through the world without emotion.

In *Backwater*, things will make both you and your character scream. When Eden screams, she receives an Adrenaline Rush Power-Up. These are triggered, pre-scripted events controlled by the design of the game. These events can also be conditionals, and determined by your proximity to Mr. Jangle, your current status, etc. While you cannot control the scream, you can exploit the power that it provides.

The scream induces an adrenaline rush giving you additional power for a brief period of time, but causing your energy to drain faster.

The game will have an adrenaline and status “bar” to monitor during the game. Adrenaline (character energy) reduces over

time as distance from Mr. Jangle increases and activity slows down. Status (character health) regenerates over time.

Adrenaline directly affects your Status.

The scream power up will actually boost adrenaline beyond what is possible by simply acting within the environment. For instance, Eden can never get her adrenaline past 80 percent by simply running through the swamp. However, the scream can jolt the adrenaline up to 100 percent. The Status of your character affects your ability to perform actions such as climbing, jumping, weapon targeting, hiding, etc.

The more “rushed” (adrenaline high/status low) Eden is, the more noise she will make (heavy breathing), which means that Mr. Jangle will be able to more easily track her. You will also be less agile, which will affect all of your skills.

When you are at Maximum adrenaline, you can take more damage and perform at enhanced levels. However, the game remains basically one or two hit death, so increased adrenaline only gets you so far. When status reaches zero, your character dies.

Note: If we have a health kit in the game, it will only exist in a logical location and will be story related. (This rule applies to ammunition and any other usable items that the player can interact with during gameplay.)

CINEMATIC VS. FIRST-PERSON CAMERA

Our intention with *Backwater* is to create a highly playable, addictive gaming experience that is also both beautiful and

disturbing. A first-person horror game is really not feasible to create the experience we are after, so a cinematic, third-person camera will be our default view.

However, you will be able to go into first-person (Point of View) mode if desired, when an indicator lets you know that it's active. As mentioned, this option is accessible through a toggle command.

Smart Camera

The smart camera (real-time director) will create a unique, cinematic feel to the game. The camera might actually help you by providing clues and foreshadowing danger that Eden might face. Camera views will include all of the elements relevant to your character within specific situations, i.e., enemies, traps, puzzles, etc.

We will create an aggressive design flowchart consisting of conditionals that will affect the camera AI.

This will include issues such as relative distance to Mr. Jangle and other NPCs, world geometry, plot points, level triggers, time, character adrenaline, previous cameras, continuity, etc.

From these conditionals, the camera will create a cinematically viable choice that also is optimized for the gameplay that is happening. For instance, we may weight certain conditionals for combat so that most of the time the smart camera might choose a higher angle overhead shot when this occurs. We will also create “magnetic” locations within the levels that will attract the cameras to specific, pre-scripted areas for maximum impact.

However, as stated, it is the camera AI that will ultimately create the angle.

First-Person Look Function with Tracking (Padlock)

First-person view is only available at specific locations and at certain triggers within the game.

In *Backwater*, you will normally explore the world with cinematic third-person perspectives of Eden, your PC. However, an indicator will at times activate, letting you know that a first-person view is available. In this mode, you can go into Eden's Point of View (POV) to look for items, manipulate objects, solve puzzles and target enemies.

This mode also allows you to constantly track Mr. Jangle (or any other selected target) while moving as long as that object remains within the field of view. This will be especially useful in watching Mr. Jangle approach while you search for cover.

This feature allows you to keep Mr. Jangle in constant view. This is only available as first-person view. You can trigger this action with a function button when first-person view is available as an option.

We will place this feature on a toggle so that it doesn't clutter the controller.

OTHER KEY FEATURES

✱ **H.U.D./On-Screen Interface.** All H.U.D. functions, including inventory, adrenaline and status “bars” will only be visible when the player activates a hot-button. This will keep the clutter off the screen during most of the game, but allow you to always have it available when you need it.

✱ **Useable Items.** Any item that you can interact with has value, and therefore you know that this item is something that you need to use, take or destroy if you are to succeed.

Puzzles are built around this idea, encouraging interaction with the environment. We will attempt to keep the worlds tactile, and to feature elements that are obvious to use. The goal is to avoid wall-surfing or mouse-fishing while playing the game. Instead, logical reasoning and common sense will address the problems the game presents and help you find the items that can be used.

✱ **Hide Mode.** In Hide Mode, you can slow your breathing, creating as little noise as possible while presenting the smallest visual profile. You will be forced to hide often if you are to survive. However, if Mr. Jangle discovers you, hiding is the hardest action to start running from.

✱ **Player-Directed RTV.** Throughout *Backwater*, you will be able to control how you choose to experience the game by having the ability to change camera angles during specific sequences and view the action in ways that are unique to your style of play. Extreme camera angles preset by the director with real-time editing will be the default during RTV. However, you may choose to see the sequence through the

POV of any of the NPC or enemy characters as well, including Mr. Jangle. In addition to adding visual complexity and interest, this feature also will allows you in certain sequences to keep track of Mr. Jangle by seeing what he sees, enhancing gameplay.

CONTROLS

Listed below is a possible controller configuration for *Backwater*. All forward movement is on the shoulder buttons, freeing the D-PAD for movements in any direction.

Up	Action Up (Stand Up, Climb Up, Reach, Hang) Look Up
Left	Action Left (Roll, Crawl, Duck) Look Left
Right	Action Right (Roll, Crawl, Duck) Look Right
Down	Action Down (Climb Down, Crawl) Look Down
Triangle	Target Nearest Enemy or Object
Circle	Mode Toggle (Walk, Run, Sneak, Crawl, Hide)
X	Fire Selected Weapon or Use Selected Object
Square	Jump
Select	Inventory
Start	Pause
L1	HUD/Display Toggle
L2	POV (First-Person) Toggle
R1	Move Forward
R2	Move Backward
Left Analog	D-Pad

Right Analog	Move Forward/Backward
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TECHNOLOGY

We are currently exploring Licensed Engine Technology as our first choice (Unreal, Quake, or Lithtech).

Main issues that the engine must support are the aggressive AI for Mr. Jangle, including complex animation trees.

Since Mr. Jangle is constantly on the prowl, and may appear at any time, we need to be able to elegantly incorporate his presence within *Backwater*. His AI must be able to identify triggers such as an open door, and know to explore the room that connects to it. Mr. Jangle should also try and trick the player if they are hiding by stepping out of a room, taking a beat, then suddenly reappearing once the player thinks that the coast is clear. As mentioned, a main element of the gameplay experience is feeling vulnerable in Mr. Jangle's presence. Much of the Technology R and D will go into delivering this component of the game.

For instance, you may be hiding under the bed while Mr. Jangle explores a room. He may pause for a couple of minutes, then search again before he goes. You will have to keep your cool during this entire episode. This is part of the game mechanic that builds tension, because the design will force you into these life or death situations.

And once Mr. Jangle discovers you, he will be relentless in his pursuit.

BACKSTORY

The story of *Backwater* is a fusion of mythologies that exists around Bayou cultures, including, but certainly not limited to, Voodoo Worship and Fundamentalism.

25 YEARS AGO

EXT. BAYOU—RAINY NIGHT

Over BLACK, we hear RAIN and then the slow but steady crescendo of a throaty V8 engine ... a big block American with its carburetor wide open.



We FADE IN on a desolate and muddy road cutting through the middle of a swamp so overgrown with vegetation that the sky has little hope of intruding on the scene with anything other than the continuing downpour. In the BG, a single-lane BRIDGE, wooden and weathered, crosses over some of the deeper water of the swamp.

On the side of the road sits a dark maroon PACKARD with a blown rear tire. The car at first looks abandoned. But as the sound of the distant engine grows louder and louder we realize that there is someone waiting by the Packard. A figure is silhouetted against the approaching headlights. A stranded motorist. It is a slender WOMAN clutching a large SUITCASE. She stands in the center of the road, shielding her eyes from the light as help arrives.

The sound of the engine abruptly stops ...

From a REVERSE LOW ANGLE, we see the side door of a TOW TRUCK. Torn fifties-fenders, dented body, rusting paint, the patina that only comes from work and abuse. In the BG, we see the woman. She is black, middle-aged, wearing clothing that implies that she is unconcerned with the water pouring down on her. She squints through the light toward the truck, pulling the suitcase closer to her as if it can offer some security, some protection while she scans for her savior.

The door of the Tow Truck simply reads "TOWING." It opens and a pair of well-worn DICKIES shop BOOTS steps down from the cab of the truck into one of the large puddles hiding most of the pavement. The camera moves UP to reveal the back of the MECHANIC, a large man wearing grease-stained OVERALLS. We do not see his face. The Mechanic wears a large leather belt, with an industrial-sized janitor's KEYCHAIN attached. From it hang what appear to be hundreds of keys. They glimmer like jewels as he moves toward the woman, taking measured and deliberate steps.

We don't see what happens next ...

INT. CAR—CONTINUOUS

Three TEENS roar through the night in huge, black, sixties CONTINENTAL with suicide doors. THUMPING MUSIC and whoops of joy drown out the sound of the land-yacht's motor.

Behind the wheel is KAI. Asian cool. Nineteen. All attitude and slick haircut. Sitting next to him is his girlfriend PETRA. She is a swirl of dyed hair and flesh, just about eighteen. Curvaceous. Deep eyes. Petra's transition from cute to beautiful is not quite complete, yet her crooked smile easily straightens all the boys who know her.

Sitting in the back of the car is MARCUS, eighteen. Everyone calls him Cus. Clearly a follower. He is dumb-jock blond and muscular.

The teens are talking about swamp. Petra wants Kai to slow down a little, but he replies that that's why there out on these roads. No other cars, no speed limits, no rules. Cus readily agrees, goading Kai into going faster.

Kai lets out a whoop, then gives it the gun as the car leaps forward at what is obviously an increasingly unsafe speed. Reluctantly, Petra plays along, smiling at Kai as Cus fights to hold on to the front seat and stay in the conversation. The laughter, music and engine get louder as the car races over the single-lane bridge.

It happens so fast that Kai is not on the brakes until it's over.

Petra SCREAMS.

Through the windshield, we SEE the mechanic working on the flat tire. The black woman holding the suitcase stands alongside him. They both look up just as the hood of the Continental hits them squarely. Metal tears against metal as the sides of the cars scour past each other.

Petra, Kai, and Cus are tossed around the inside of the car as the out of control Continental careens over the side of the road and violently impacts the moss-covered trees beside the roadway ...

All is quiet. Kai and Cus come around, checking on Petra and swearing beneath their breath. After they regain their composure, they tell Petra to wait in the car, then bail out to have a look at the damage. Petra watches as Kai and Cus step through the rain toward the twisted wreckage, illuminated by the Tow Truck's headlights.

Upon seeing the destruction they've caused, the teens panic. Kai and Cus put the body of Miss Lady Em back into her car, then push it into the swamp. Petra can only watch in disbelief as Kai and Cus then drag the lifeless body of the Mechanic back to the Tow Truck and shove him inside. As they are pushing toward the water, Petra sees the suitcase. She grabs it and gives it to Kai. He opens the door of the Tow Truck and tosses the suitcase inside the cab, hitting the Mechanic and causing him to move ever so slightly.

Kai realizes that the man is alive, but it's too late ... the Tow Truck is already sinking below the swamp water. The mechanic comes to and looks back through the rear window at the teens on the road, not quite comprehending what is happening as he sinks below the surface.

As the mechanic struggles to free himself, he inadvertently kicks open the suitcase. Thirteen Water Moccasins are released into the cab of the truck from the broken suitcase.

The snakes attack ...

In time we will learn that the Woman on the Road was in fact a Voodoo Priestess on a mission. Her name is MISS LADY EM. Inside of her suitcase were THIRTEEN SNAKES, Water Moccasins that were used in a ceremony for the dying known as the Black Milking (extracting snake venom is known as milking).

Miss Lady Em visited the soon to be departed and performed a ritual in which a snake bites the subject. She and her followers believed that the snake's venom would drive all of their sins from the bloodstream before they die.

Unfortunately for Mr. Jangle and you, these snakes were used on the most vicious and vile individuals, murderers whose families agreed to the Black Milking as a last chance at salvation for their fallen relatives.

When bitten, the sins of the subject are released and the evil is transferred to the snake. To get rid of it once and for all, the snakes must be buried on sacred ground within the swamp. And the snakes must be buried in a group of thirteen, without food or water. Eventually, the snakes feed on each other, and in the process, evil devours evil until only one Water Moccasin remains. Miss Lady Em then retrieves the final snake and, having now identified the most dangerous evil, sacrifices it in a ritual that proves the triumph of man over his

sins. She was on her way to perform this ritual when she met the bumper of Kai's Continental.

This is the mythology that forms the foundation of BACKWATER, and drives the gameplay and story forward. When the lowly tow-truck driver from Kindly Service and Gas kicked open the suitcase full of snakes, they had something more to feed on than themselves, and they wasted no time in getting started. Every strike was another lifetime's worth of sins and evil from the murderers transferred to the mechanic.

This is how Mr. Jangle was born.

And because the Black Milking was not completed, each of the murderers that was to have been saved by the ritual have instead become spiritually undead. They are trapped within Mr. Jangle, driving his power and his appetite for mayhem.

We will also learn of the legend of Mr. Jangle and how the three teens each met a horrible demise within a couple of years of this horrible event. Finally, before the game is over, we will realize that Eden has arrived at the Bayou by more than just a random chance. She will be revealed as Marcus's and Petra's daughter, whose search for the truth turns into a chaotic struggle for survival against the horror her parents helped create.

ADDITIONAL MARKETS

As content creators, we are uniquely positioned to exploit *Backwater* in a number of other markets and media. Since our

talents include success as game designers, producers and writers, as well as successful film-makers with established relationships in traditional media and proven track records in delivering hi-profile, hi-impact, hi-production value entertainment, our intention is to develop *Backwater* as a franchise ... a license that can seamlessly move into other media, including an original sound track CD, a Graphic Novel Serialization, and Feature-Film/TV possibilities.

Backwater is envisioned as a three-act story, with the first act (including character back-stories, mythology and establishing the worlds) playing out on the Internet during production of the game. This allows a community of Players interested in *Backwater* to be built in conjunction with the game.

The released game will pick up at the end of the online story experience. Those who have not followed along online will have no trouble following the story, but those Players who've experienced the online component of *Backwater* will have a greater understanding of the situation confronting them.