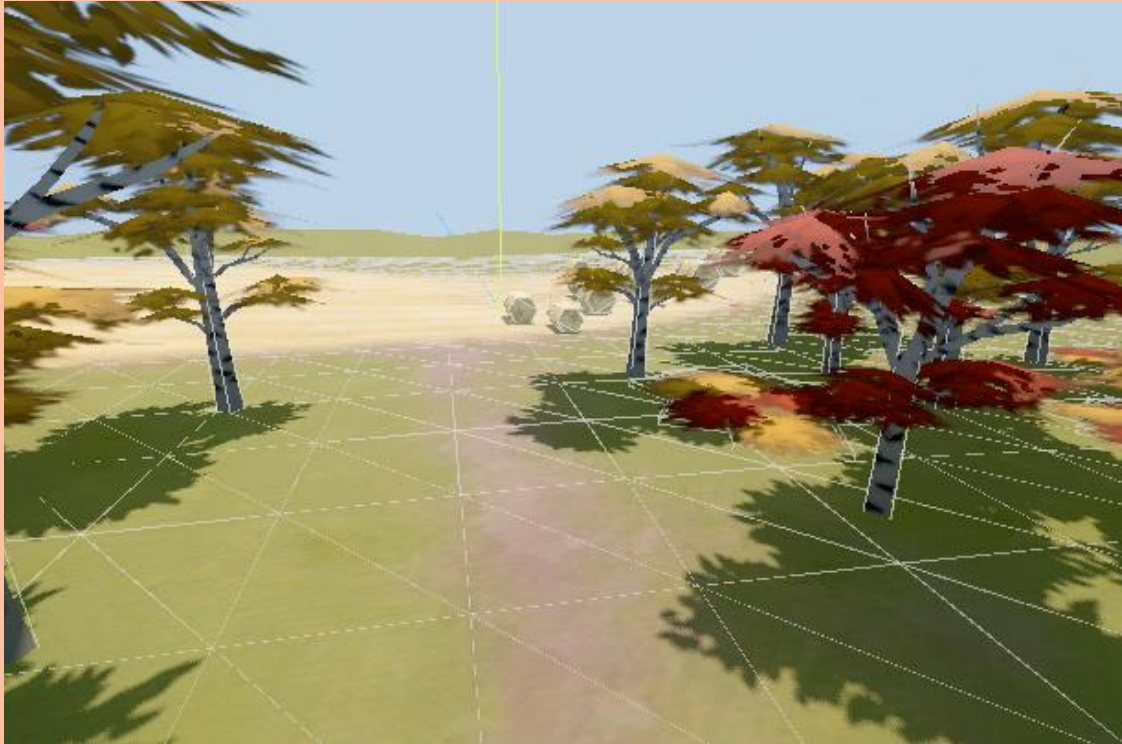




# Life of a Fallen Leaf



GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT

R. T. LEONE

Premise | Project | Team | Programming | Art | Sound | Writing

# PROJECT

**Title:** Life of a Fallen Leaf

**Engine:** Godot 4.1.2

**Perspective:** 3D First-Person

**Resolution:** 1280 x 720

**Development Cycle:** October 13 – 22, 2023

**Game Jam:** Godot Wild Jam 62

**Project Management:** <https://trello.com/b/T339JpsF/godot-wild-jam-62>

**Repository:** <https://github.com/DPM2/GWJ62.git>

# TEAM

**2D Artist:** Silivar (<https://silivar.itch.io/>)

**3D Artist:** Nick Baiz (<https://nickbaiz123.wixsite.com/portfolio>)

**Producer / UI Designer / Writer:** Ricky Leone (<https://rtleone.itch.io/>)

**Programmer / 3D Modeler:** Joe Cloutier (<https://smokin-joe.itch.io/>)

**Programmer:** Yoad Levanda (<https://devpm.itch.io/>)

**Sound Designer / Composer:** Taylor Brook (<https://www.taylorbrook.info/portfolio>)

# PREMISE

A retired army vet has been settled on a farm outside of Eau Claire, Wisconsin for some time. In the midst of the autumn season (**Wildcard:** Autumn/Falls), it's only two weeks before Halloween. Taking an imminent trip to nearby Minneapolis to see his daughter and grandchildren, Errol Sapher must collect matured pumpkins from the farmland (**Theme:** Harvest)—at least three for his grandkids, up to an additional eighteen for his daughter's grade one / two class. If the player collects just three, the game can be ended prematurely (**Wildcard:** One or Two?), and the player receives an ending about doing the least is sometimes the easiest way through life.

If he continues, Errol is inundated with phone calls, one of whom is his former lieutenant and protégé, Bartholomew “Holo” Simpson, who lives nearby and is much more preferential to being called “Holo” than “Bart Simpson.” The conspiracy theorist deep into mythology worries that today could be the day he dies, since all sorts of strange events are occurring (but they’re relatively innocuous). Errol calms him down, and explains such paranoias are normal for those suffering from PTSD. Holo laments some of the things they did in the Iraq War, but Errol has shut these thoughts out of his mind, and doesn’t want to hear it.

As Errol collects his first pumpkin, the sky instantly dims a slight shade of blue (**Wildcard: Carpe Noctem**). He notices and remarks on it. This will occur for each pumpkin he collects, until it is nighttime. Gradually, the sounds of the area will also begin to reflect random irregularities, and once he’s crossed a certain threshold, his keys will no longer be able to open his cabin. It will eventually disappear.

Closer to collecting most of the available pumpkins, it will become the dead of night. Around corners and at the end of rows between maize, a villain will begin to appear. Errol will frantically run away, and call for help. Those on the other end will not understand him, or the help *they* will call for will not help him. He must resolve how to banish this entity.

The method to get rid of the villain will be to return all of the collected pumpkins to where he originally harvested them, while the villain is still on the loose. He will then need to call his daughter and explain that he will no longer be able to see them tomorrow, but loves them dearly. Finally able to understand fear, he will also call Holo, and regret his role in the torture of [Abu Ghraib prisoners](#).

Errol will then go the field and offer himself up to the villain, who is the ghost of all those who suffered his wrath and died under his abuse. He will suffer stabs and stare up at the sky as his life drains away, and a melancholic song plays along with innocent laughter of children as leaves flow through the air.

# PROGRAMMING

## REQUIREMENTS

To realize this vision, we will require the following:

- A player controller that walks and runs, inputted by WASD + “shift” key for run toggle, and can pick up items using the “E” key.
- A first-person camera that views the environment from the player’s point-of-view.
- An item-spawning and -pickup system, so the player can collect pumpkins and advance through the game.
- Interactable objects (pumpkins) that can be added to an inventory and emit a sound when collected.
- A simple inventory system that allows the player to remove objects from the environment (visibility toggle) and add them to their inventory.
- A villain spawning system that can gracefully spawn the enemy outside the view of the player, and begin chasing the player upon seeing them.
- A villain character that is modeled, textured, rigged, animated to chase, and can be programmed in Godot with a behaviour system.
- Hardcoded events that can emit phone calls + play certain sounds / music at certain times, and allow us to have the game events flow the way we want.
- A phone call UI where a call can be received by pressing an input (“R”), which plays the soundbite and pauses villain-spawning while call audio is being listened to and can also be captioned (for accessibility).
- An autoloaded scene that can store global variables and run global nodes across all scenes.

- An outdoor 3D environment of a farmland, including many trees, hayfields, and cornfields. The more coverage, the better.
- Optional: An indoor 3D environment of a cabin, to give the player a home base at the beginning of the game and store information related to the character's backstory and local mythology.
- Sound effects and music reflecting a serene autumn atmosphere at the beginning of the story, and progressively getting darker as the game progresses towards full horror.
- A splash screen that shows the game is an entry to Godot Wild Jam 62, and a main menu that starts the game, shows controls, lets the player adjust volume, shows credits, and closes the game. Art of the 2D isometric style, consisting of parallax-ready backgrounds, tiles, objects, and a character spritesheet.
- Sound effects and layered music reflecting a serene atmosphere.
- A main menu that starts the game, shows controls, lets the player adjust volume, shows credits, and closes the game.

## PLAYER JOURNEY

A step-by-step of how the user will navigate throughout the game:

- Upon pressing "Start" on the Main Menu, the player will spawn in their cabin, and mutter a cynical comment to themselves.
- The cabin has certain interactables that allows the player to get an idea that the main character used to be in the army (IE: medals on the wall, and American flag folded triangularly).
- A phone call from the main character's daughter will introduce the phone-based narrative system. A HUD of a phone will popup from the corner, and the player will answer it with "R". The main character and his daughter talk very casually about his visit to Minneapolis, and how he has to pick up pumpkins for her kids to carve. She asks him to bring more for the

elementary school class she teaches. By all perception, the main character is just a normal grandfather who loves his family.

- The player can choose to navigate around the cabin, and discover more information about the main character and the local lore. This is optional, and the player can instead exit the cabin and begin scouring the farmland for pumpkins.
- Pumpkins are spawned in random spots around the farmland. The first pumpkin collected must be picked up, and manually brought back to cabin to be placed on top of a table. Once placed, it will add to the "pumpkins\_collected" variable, and this will trigger a sound + HUD popup.
- Collecting the first pumpkin will also dim the sky a slight shade instantly.
- Each subsequent pumpkin collection will increasingly progress the game towards night, trigger random environmental events (like Iraqi voices), and cue phone calls that develop the characters, lore, and story. The player can end the game as early as four pumpkins, and receive a subpar ending, or continue to collect the full twenty-two pumpkins.
- After fifteen pumpkins have been collected, the villain can begin to spawn, with probably of spawning increasing per each subsequent pumpkin collected. The player can choose to call either Holo or his daughter for help after losing the villain the first time.
- The player can return home at this point (the key will work after several failed attempts), but staying inside will not progress the game. The player will need to return outside, and now, the places where he previously harvested pumpkins are lit up with a warm light in the darkness. This is to indicate to the player that they must return all the pumpkins collected.
- The main character will muse to himself between these events to ensure there's an understanding of what's going on. He will begin to accept responsibility for his actions, and that he's not entitled to harvest anything since he's taken too much from the world already. He hasn't earned any happy memories.
- After all pumpkins have been returned, the player will return to the cabin. He will make two calls, one to his daughter, not dwelling the situation but rather explaining he won't be able to make it tomorrow, but he loves her very dearly, and to tell her children he loves them too. The daughter knows something is wrong, and questions him, but he casualizes it and tells her not to worry. He then calls Holo, and elaborates on the feelings of guilt and regret

that he's suppressed for so long about humiliating and torturing victims in Abu Ghraib in 2003. He knows what he knows to do to "make things right."

- The player then returns to the field and walks around until the villain spawns. When they do, inputs no longer work. The player is frozen until the villain passes through him, and the main character falls back and looks up to the sky as melancholic music plays, and the sky returns to daytime blue while leaves fly through the air. The screen will fade to red, and then to black.

# A R T

## ENVIRONMENTS

We are targeting a real-world story, so an outdoor world with a blue-to-black sky, greens for grass and some foliage, oranges / yellows for the rest, and yellow hay / cornfields will create a spectrum of colours typical for the autumn season, and will place us in the realistic environment that will support the story.



The cabin is intended to be a small indoor environment that will shed light on the character's life both in his rural living and as a former army captain (so may contain medals, a folded US flag, and so forth). Documents may also be found and foreshadow the lore and backstory that will otherwise be later expressed through the voice clips.

Since the cabin is non-essential, and also taxing prop-wise without adding much to the gameplay experience, it is a low priority / optional integration assuming the necessary outdoor environment, character model, and props are completed first. We most likely do need the exterior of a cabin, however.

## PROPS

We will require balls of hay, maize plants, and trees to fill out the environment. A pumpkin will be our main collectible. Other props like outdoor tables, chairs, pitchforks, and typically farmland accessories will help fill out the game world.



## CHARACTERS

Aside from first-person hands to better immerse the player as the character, we will only require one character: the villain. This character was originally called "Pumpkinhead," but as many pumpkinheads exist in film and literature (the headless horseman from Sleepy Hollow), we are leaving the design of the character to the interpretation of our concept artist, which will then allow our 3D artist to model, texture, and rig the character.

# SOUND

## SOUND DESIGN

In correlation with a first-person narrative-heavy story, we will be looking to fully immerse the player with footsteps across multiple materials (creaky wood floor, dirt, grass, rock, leaves) and breathing during / after running. The environment will be made authentic the sounds of wind and leaves flying through the air, and possibly the sound of crickets / insects / birds. The main menu UI will have sounds attached to select, hover, back, and start. Collectively, these will polish every area of the game.

## MUSIC

The game will start off serenely, blending into acoustic guitars to evoke the atmosphere of rural life. As the game progresses and the intensity of the story picks up, the music will then become more synthesized and darker. Finally, when the villain appears, the score will shift to full terror to elicit maximum fear from the player.

## VOICEOVERS

We will also utilize our vocal capabilities to voice the narrative / phone calls, adding further realism to the story. We have four participants to voice characters, and have correspondingly written in four characters:

- **Errol Sapher** - the protagonist
- **Candy Sapher** - the protagonist's daughter
- **Bartholomew "Holo" Simpson** - the protagonist's former lieutenant and current friend
- **The Villain** - the antagonist (perhaps speaking in Arabic)

# WRITING

The narrative of the game will be delivered vis-à-vis phone calls that the player receives between collecting pumpkins, as well as messages he leaves and comments he mutters to himself throughout.

## INTERACTIONS

**Call: Errol and Candy #1 (Do not record until number of pumpkins are settled)**

**Errol:** Did you—

**Candy:** Hello?

**Errol:** Hello?

**Candy:** Dad.

**Errol:** Hello?

**Candy:** Dad. I'm here.

**Errol:** Did you take the CRV to the mechanic?

**Candy:** When was I supposed to do that? I've got class till 3:30, and don't get off until 5:15.

**Errol:** Afterwards?

**Candy:** They close at 5:30, your pals. Could've gotten it fixed last month if you'd let me take it to the dealership.

**Errol:** They'd have ripped you off big.

**Candy:** It's right down the street, but instead I've got to drive all the way to your private shop in Maple Grove *every time*. Paid more in gas than it would've cost to fix.

**Errol:** Fine, go get ripped off.

**\*silence\***

**Errol:** How are you?

**Candy:** Not as good as I was before this phone call! Only six minutes before the lunch break is over. So that's what you called about?

**Errol:** No... just have to hear your voice sometimes. About to head out to the field.

**Candy:** How many pumpkins are ready?

**Errol:** Oh, I thought I'd leave them in the ground some to let them grow.

**Candy:** You planted the seeds, when, in July?

**Errol:** June.

**Candy:** They're ready!

**Errol:** I know, I just...

**Candy:** What?

**Errol:** Was hoping you and the tykes would come out and help me pick them. Get a fun day out of it.

**Candy:** It's an hour-and-a-half from Minneapolis to Eau Claire.

**Errol:** On the weekend?

**Candy:** The kids have friends, dad. They were playing this, I don't know, *Tears of the Kingdom* or something or other on the Nintendo Wii.

**Errol:** Switch.

**Candy:** Huh?

**Errol:** The Nintendo Switch. The one I bought got so riddled with dust that I locked it up in the cupboard. Five hundred bucks with the games for nothin'. Wasn't enough to get you to bring 'em over every weekend.

**\*Other voices on Candy's side telling her that class is in three minutes\***

**Errol:** ... It's just, I don't know how many more of these seasons I have. I want to spend it with you all. With yours. To see what it was all for, and know it was worth it.

**Candy:** Oh because you're *soooo* close to the end at 59.

**Errol:** Candy—I've... the things that I did back in the service, you know what I'm talking about? You know I did them for you, right? To make sure you'd have the life you do right now. The wedding. The down-payment on your condo. It was all to secure your position in life, so you could do the same for your kids.

**Candy:** Huh?

**Errol:** Haha, never mind, I'm just... lonely—getting stir crazy out here. Nothing much to do except stew in your own thoughts. Stew like caribou soup with chopped up carrots and green onions and black beans, remember how much you liked that when you were a pretty little girl?

**Candy:** No.

**Errol:** You used to love it every winter. Those times... I think about those times *all* the time. What I wouldn't give. Anyway. How's your mom?

**Candy:** I've gotta go. Look dad, if it's too much trouble, I can get the pumpkins from the Walmart. They're a buck fifty each, and I need one for Alex, Mandy, and Caroline, and maybe another eighteen for my class, so, thirty bucks or so?

**Errol:** Thirty-one and a half. You teach multiplication to the second-graders, don't you?

**Candy:** That's third-grade material, and I can't calculate when I'm running to class. About the same as the cost of gas for you to come here tomorrow.

**Errol:** No, no. It's no problem. What else am I going to do.

**Candy:** Got to go, dad! Bye!

**\*hang up\***

**Errol:** Love y...uh.

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## **Call: Errol and Holo #1**

**Errol:** You get the Monsanto shipment yet?

**Holo (demoralized):** Yeah, I got it.

**Errol:** Damn, so why aren't they here yet? Must've gotten a flat or somethin'.

**Holo:** Mmm.

**Errol:** Why so glum, chum?

**Holo:** I don't know.

**Errol:** You do know, spill it Holo.

**Holo:** I'm off. I don't know. Just feel like jumping into the sky and ripping apart the clouds before it rains.

**Errol:** Oh, the PTSD syringe, attacking random pores of the soul. Take a nap. Not raining today anyway. You take your med—

**Holo:** It's not that.

**Errol:** It's *always* that. You see Quack recently.

**Holo:** I haven't seen any doctors recently.

**Errol:** Well, there's your problem. Can't fix an engine without a drill.

**Holo:** Huh?

**Errol:** I don't know what to tell ya. Farmlife ain't for everyone. Gotta find some joys in life. Take me for example. Going to see my grandkids tomorrow. Carve some of these pumpkins lyin' around. Two bucks worth of seeds creating memories that make this life all worth it.

**Holo:** Whatever.

**Errol:** Don't envy. Be inspired. Go out and start a family. You've earned it.

**Holo:** You're just... delusional as all hell. Living a lie.

**Errol:** Listen Bart. You're my lieutenant, and my protégé, and deeper yet my pal, and I guess my neighbour too. I like you, but you're talkin' a whole lotta nonsense today. Get with it, or don't. Dismissed, private.

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### Call: Errol and Candy #2

**Errol:** Hey Candy—bun, out catchin' your pumpkins. Just wanted to—

**Candy:** Dad—I'm in class! Emergencies only.

**Errol:** Oof, sorry, sorry, I forgot!

**Candy:** Off in an hour. Talk to you then.

**\*Candy hangs up\***

**Errol:** An hour? She's only been in the afternoon shift for a few minutes?

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### Call: Errol and Holo #2

**Errol:** I told you it wouldn't rain today.

**\*silence on the other end\***

**Errol:** You're always putting chips on zeros at the roulette table.

**\*static\***

**Errol:** Hello?

**Holo:** Today's the day...

**Errol:** If you're anticipatin' for some nighttime rain, then you best be out on the fields sowing your little tail off. I'm half-an-hour down the road, but if you think I'm drivin' your combine again, when I got all this business of my own—

**Holo:** It's happening. I told you it would.

**Errol:** What is?

**Holo:** My house is missing.

**Errol:** *What?*

**Holo:** I came back from the mowing around the barn, and the house. Is. Not. There. There's just a brown square with rounded corners where it used to be.

**Errol:** Huh? Well what happened?!

**Holo:** It's all catching up to us, man. You were the lieutenant-colonel! You were supposed to protect me. You put all these demons in my soul. I can't live with myself anymore. I'm gonna do it.

**Errol (very casual):** Holo, Holo, Holo. Private Bartholomew Simpson. "Bart Simpson," remember how much you hated—

**Holo:** I'm going to kill myself!

**Errol (very casual):** ... Then *go aheead*. Do it.

**\*Holo in crisis on the other line\***

**Errol:** I've been hearing that stupidity for years now. Stop for a second, and listen to me. Did you take the Thorazine today?

**Holo:** Nooo...

**Errol:** What about the benztropine, prednisone, Tylenol 3, the somas?

**Holo:** Nooooo....

**Errol:** And you're off-cycle on the steroids too?

**Holo:** The drugs only cloud the world. They cover what we actually are.

**Errol:** That's *exactly* what they do. What was the point of me hooking you up with my stock doc, and negotiating a discount for you? The idea here is to distract and numb until the end of your days. After you die, it won't matter anymore. We become dust and maggot food. Just like they did. There's a beautiful equality to it all.

**Holo:** What we did at Abu Ghraib—

**Errol (angry):** Ahh! I don't want to hear it!

**Holo:** ... to those Iraqi prisoners. The cutting, the rape, the humiliation!

**Errol (angry):** If you don't shut your Goddamn mouth, I *am* going to come down there and bury your ungrateful ass in the same hole you think your house got swallowed up into.

**\*Holo sobbing\***

**Errol:** I can't be bothered with this. I have important things to do today. Take a walk around, get your head together, *go in your house*, and take the medication that's been prescribed to you. They'll make you feel good and healthy, and you'll get back on your feet. May miss the last of the seeds, but harvesting season is over anyhow.

**Holo:** ... okay, okay.

**Errol:** Good... And by the way. Now that you brought it up, remember this. Those dogs got exactly what they deserved. *We toughen brown goo from the kick of our shoe*. Remember? And if the shoe was on the other foot, don't you think they would've done it to us?

**Holo:** They weren't on our soil. We were on theirs!

**Errol:** Enough! Treachery! You're a goddamn American with service stripes, start acting like one.

**\*Holo hangs up\***

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### Call: Errol and Candy #3

**Candy:** So what did you want?

**Errol:** The pumpkins are a little soft this season. May not hold to carving.

**Candy:** That's fine. If they do, they do. If they don't, you get replaced by the Walton family next year.

**Errol:** Haha. So how's everything with you?

**Candy:** How many times are you going to ask me that?

**Errol:** Just wanna know. You used to come through the front door everyday not too long ago. Go right up to your room and drop your backpack in the closet, not touching it until the morning after. You hated homework. Now you're assigning it.

**Candy:** That was twenty-one years ago dad. Before you got deployed. A lot's happened since.

**Errol:** Yeah, but feels like last week. Feels like you went on a school trip to Kearney and never came back.

**Candy:** Actually, it feels like you went to Abu Ghraib and never came back.

**Errol:** ... Candice, you know about all that stuff over there, right? By now?

**Candy:** I knew it then.

**Errol:** Yeah.

**Candy:** Yeah.

**Errol:** ... And? What does it make with you?

**Candy:** You came back a different person anyway. Like there were three of you inside with drastically different moods trying to compete over one body. Trying to say three different things at once. Then you started seeing the psychiatrist, and you took medication, and calmed down, and were like calm and happy and overly-enthusiastic but then you moved out to the farm and got away from us. Why?

**Errol:** You know about the things I did over there?

**Candy:** I know a little. Before I didn't want to know anymore.

**\*silence\***

**Candy:** I think I have to go now.

**Errol:** All these leaves.

**Candy:** What?

**Errol:** These dead autumn leaves. Nothing more useless in this world than something that was nice and green once, then falls and slowly loses its colour.

**Candy:** Is that your off-handed way of saying I'm being a bitch?

**Errol:** No. I'm just saying there are a lot of leaves on the ground and I could either go pick up the rest of your stupid pumpkins or rake them up since they could be covering pits, and once you fall into a hole where there's no one around, you die a slow, painful death like these ugly red and orange leaves themselves, and nobody hears your screams because nobody cares.

**Candy:** Okay, don't bother coming tomorrow. Bye.

**Errol:** You said "bye" to me a long time ago.

**\*Candy hangs up\***

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Holo leaving a message for Errol (right before the villain begins to spawn / last Holo appearance).

**Holo:** The vengeful ghost of those who we tortured has found our hidden place in the world. They bring the pain that we cultivated, and their blood has fertilized the fields of anger. And it's grown. They will cut right through us, and continue in the world causing more horrors. That was our contribution to this world. We doused gasoline on the fires of Hell, and laughed while we did it. We doused gasoline on those poor Iraqis. It did nothing to our moral fiber because we didn't have any. We are demons infesting bodies. No empathy, no compassion, no reason to exist. Evil incarnate. Our only gesture is to give ourselves willingly to the Shabahan of Abu Ghraib. It may then spare our families.

**Errol:** What?

("Shabahan" Pronunciation (first entry): <https://www.wordhippo.com/what-is/the/arabic-word-for-c4745785181de931cfd5bd79294cb1687d82aea9.html>)

## SOLO

Errol collects the first pumpkin.

**Errol:** Whoa, did it just—never mind.

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Errol collects the second pumpkin.

**Errol:** Is there like a light switch being flicked on and off on a tree or something?

---

Errol collects the third pumpkin.

**Errol:** What the hell is going on with the sky today?

---

Errol finds his cabin is missing.

**Errol:** *What? WHHHAAATTT?*

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Errol leaving messages for Holo.

**Errol:** Hey man, give me a ring. Thanks.

**Errol:** Holo, you know I love ya, right? Tough love is sometimes what's needed. Let's talk before today ends.

**Errol:** Call me, immediately. That's an order.

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**Monologue to be played after player has returned all the pumpkins and has faced his fate with the Shabahan of Abu Ghraib.**

**CHOICE** (Errol can either leave a message for Holo or Candy; this is selected after the after the player has retreated to safety once collecting all the pumpkins and encountering the villain, but doesn't hear the clip until the ending sequence of the game; "One or Two" Wildcard)

**Errol's final voice message to Holo.**

**Errol:** Hey Holo. No point in leaving this message. But I never got to say I was sorry. We got off scot-free in the investigation, and it was wrong. But you were right. The pills obscured reality. The penance was always the cure for the

guilt. But it still wouldn't have made it right. We made mistakes in life that were so severe they were unforgivable, and I don't know if, after it's all over, if there's a chance we can—I don't know. I know what feels right though. What you said this morning. But we didn't have that conversation this morning, did we? We had it the week before you took your life in 2007. I'd imagined us in, I don't know. Some sort of happily ever after. Numbing our mutual sorrows. Throwing leaves over pits.

**Errol's final voice message to Candy.**

**Errol:** (clearing of throat) My sweet Candice. I'm sorry about earlier. I'm sorry about everything. I'm so sorry I took enjoyment in other people's pain. And I'm sorry I've been covering up my own since. I know you don't want to talk to me right now, and I don't blame you. You deserved a better father than what you got in this life. And if I stand here and tell you "I love you" and that I love my grandchildren, I wouldn't know if that would be affection or more bullets thrown towards innocent people I was sworn to protect. I just don't know how this life went the way it did. I just know that I'll be leaving it with an understanding of what was right and what was wrong, if that means anything. You were the best daughter I could ever hope for. I have to go now. I—have to go rake these leaves.