

CE318 - High Level Games Development

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Enigma: Haunting Labyrinth

Game Design Document for Project Enigma

Link to Project File - [Assignment 1 Game Prototype.zip](#)

Overview

"Enigma: Haunting Labyrinth" is a first-person dungeon escape horror game that plunges players into a nightmarish, procedurally generated maze. As the protagonist, you find yourself trapped within the Eldritch Maze, a place with chilling lore and surrounded by an oppressive darkness that relentlessly fights back.

Armed with a flickering flashlight, you must explore the changing labyrinth, all while being pursued by relentless spirits. The flashlight serves as both your guiding light and your primary means of defense. Its diminishing batteries adds a sense of urgency, as you must manage it wisely to avoid the darkness.

As you navigate the enigmatic corridors, time depletes fast, as every step you take the timer ticks down as if you are watching a recording. This sense of urgency fuels the discovery of fragments in the maze's dark history and piece together the enigma that surrounds it. Unveiling the hidden secrets becomes your secondary objective, offering insights into the origins of the spirits and the events that unfolded.

The core gameplay involves survival and strategy. Your primary goal is to escape the labyrinth, but you must also contend with evading the cosmic entities that hunt you, using sound and light in the environment to your advantage to avoid encounters. Encounters with these spirits are terrifying moments, requiring quick thinking and the use of your flashlights to repel them at the cost of battery.

"Enigma: Haunting Labyrinth" is an immersive experience that combines exploration, survival, and horror elements, with an emphasis on the strategic use of resources and the uncovering of a dark narrative.

Gameplay

Procedurally Generated Labyrinth: This component is at the core of the gameplay. The procedurally generated labyrinth ensures that each playthrough is unique. It offers players a constantly changing environment, making it essential for replayability and the element of surprise. Players must navigate through its dark corridors, trying to find the exit while being pursued by spirits. This dynamic element keeps players engaged and provides an ever-evolving challenge.

Flashlight Mechanics: The flashlight is not only the player's source of light but also their primary means of defense. Managing the flashlight's light and battery is vital for progression. Players must make decisions on when to use the light to reveal their path, when to conserve charge, and when to deploy it to ward off pursuing spirits. This component adds a strategic element to the gameplay and is crucial for survival.

Enemy Wraiths: The presence of wraiths that relentlessly pursue the player is a central gameplay component. These spirits represent the primary source of tension and challenge in the game. Players must outmaneuver them, use the torch's light to fend them off temporarily, and find ways to lose them. The spirits' AI and behavior are integral to keeping players engaged and maintaining a sense of danger.

Exploration: As players explore the labyrinth, they discover remnants of past explorers. This component encourages thorough exploration and interaction with the game world. Narrative elements found throughout the maze contribute to the story and players' understanding of the Eldritch Maze's history. They also motivate players to keep progressing and uncover the secrets hidden within the maze.

Health and UI: Health directly impacts the visual experience seen on the screen, as the perspective of the camera is similar to looking through a CRT screen, the players visual experience depends on the health they are on, lower health reduces visibility with stutters, screen tearing and static effects that relate to a CRT or old style video camera screens characteristics.

Consumables: Health and battery resources are generated throughout the map that can be found in various places that require exploration to be found, alongside narrative items to motivate exploration, finding health and batteries is essential to keeping players engaged in deciding on a main objective, dwindling resources heightens fear and vulnerability when encountering dangerous situations that exploring for resources becomes a primary objective and offers a sense of reward and temporary relaxation.

Timer Mechanics: Time is a tangible resource that can be spent, as players move throughout the labyrinth, they will find that the timer only depletes when they are moving, which adds depth in the players decision making process where exploration may be limited by how much time the player has left to move, this will create a sense of urgency as if the player has to progress as fast as possible and force decisions such as whether the player can afford to spend time in unknown areas that may not guarantee results.

60 seconds of gameplay

[0:00 - 0:10]

In the pitch-black abyss, I ignite my flashlight, its dim glow revealing the desolate corridor. My steps echo, eerie in the chilling silence.

[0:10 - 0:25]

A ghastly figure materializes from the darkness, I feel a growing dread as it flows towards me, a spectral demon threatening my life.

[0:25 - 0:35]

Instinctively, I raise the flashlight, and its purifying light engulfs the wraith, forcing it to retreat, vanishing into thin air. My racing heart slows for a moment until I realize my battery level is running low.

[0:35 - 0:45]

I press on, my footsteps echoing through the corridors. I look for batteries to replenish my flashlight, but I must preserve my battery incase of danger. It's difficult to see in this black abyss, only shining my flashlight when necessary.

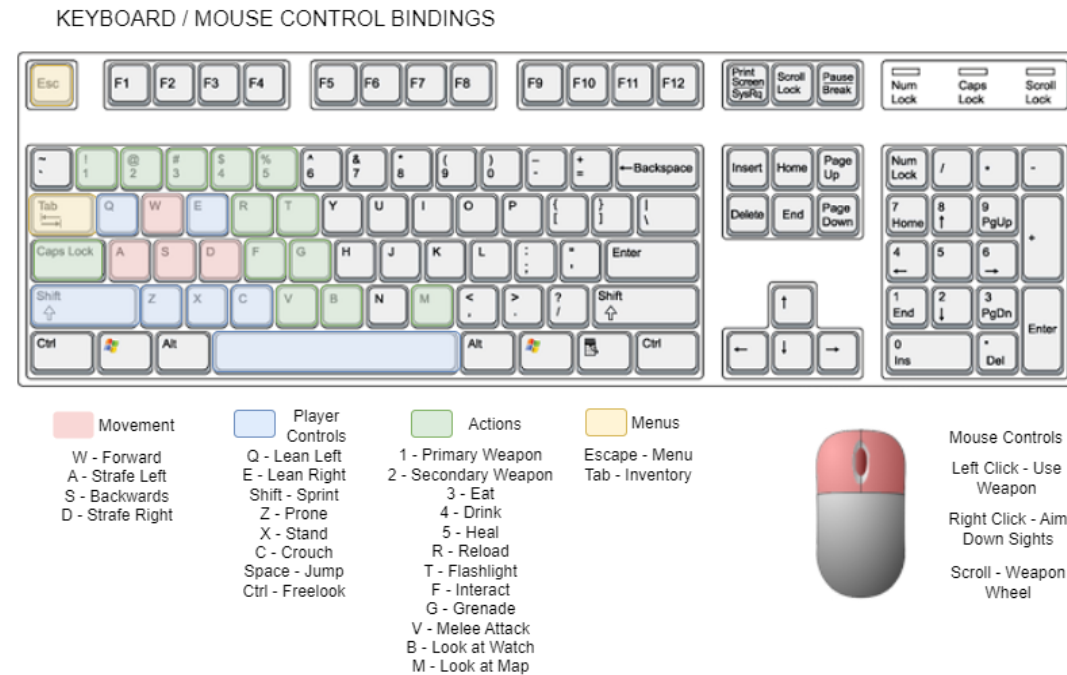
[0:45 - 0:55]

The flashlights light dimming, and the reality of my dwindling resources sets in. Time shortening by the minute as I navigate the ruins with minimal vision and a racing heart, finding nothing but an explorer note that once read, sent shivers down my spine.

[0:55 - 1:00]

The flashlight's light wanes, the sinister whispers return, and I catch the distant sound of another approaching wraith. I must make a choice: to conserve precious fuel or to explore further and risk another encounter with the relentless entities that haunt this abyss.

Interface

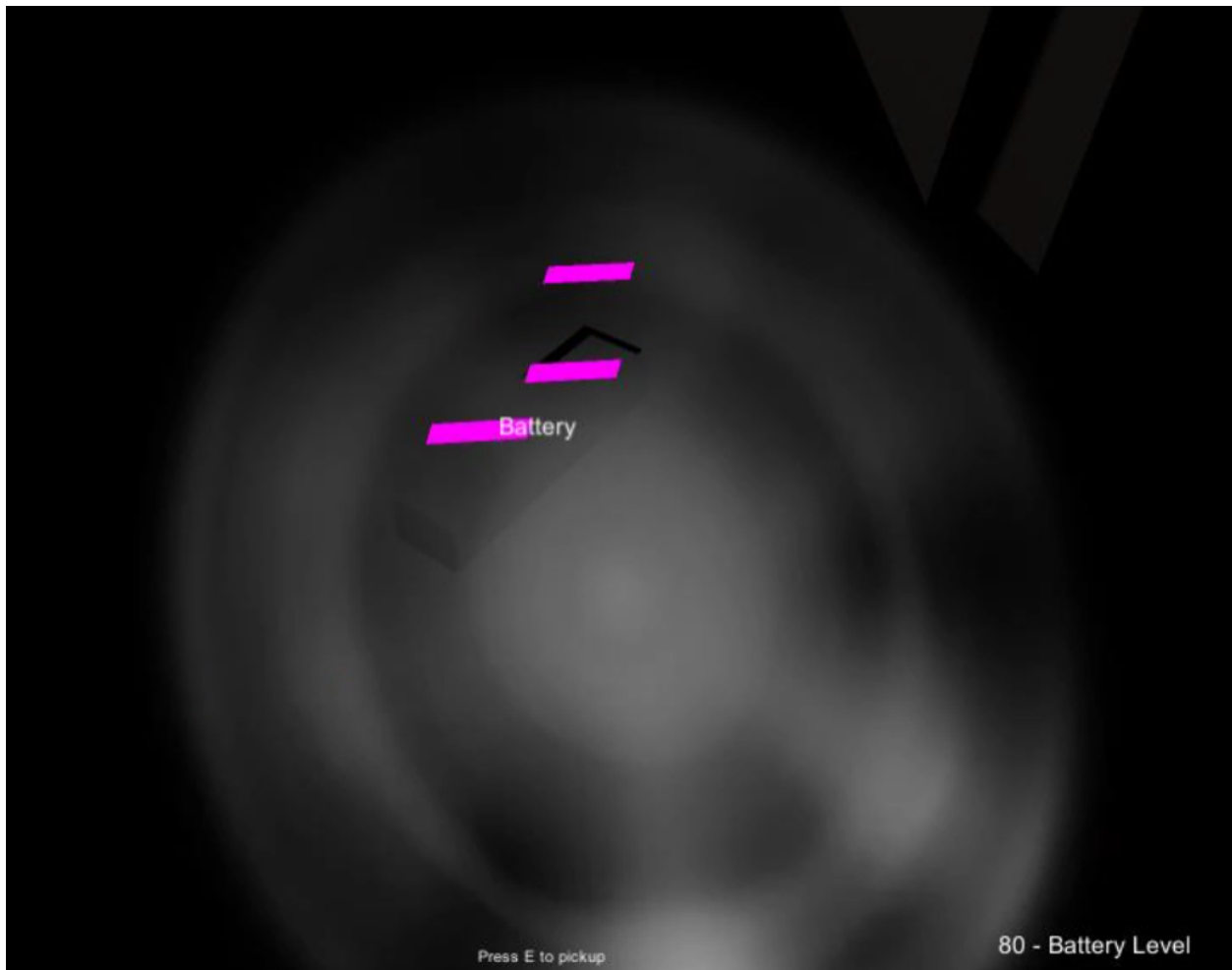


A key bindings diagram created for keyboard and mouse only with every possible functionality binded to a key, where some functionality may not be feasible for the scope of the game but planned for best case scenario, such as eating and drinking or map functionality. Traditional key bindings such as WASD for movement, shift for prone and mouse controls for using weapons such as the flashlight are common uses appealing to familiarity of players who may have played similar first person games.

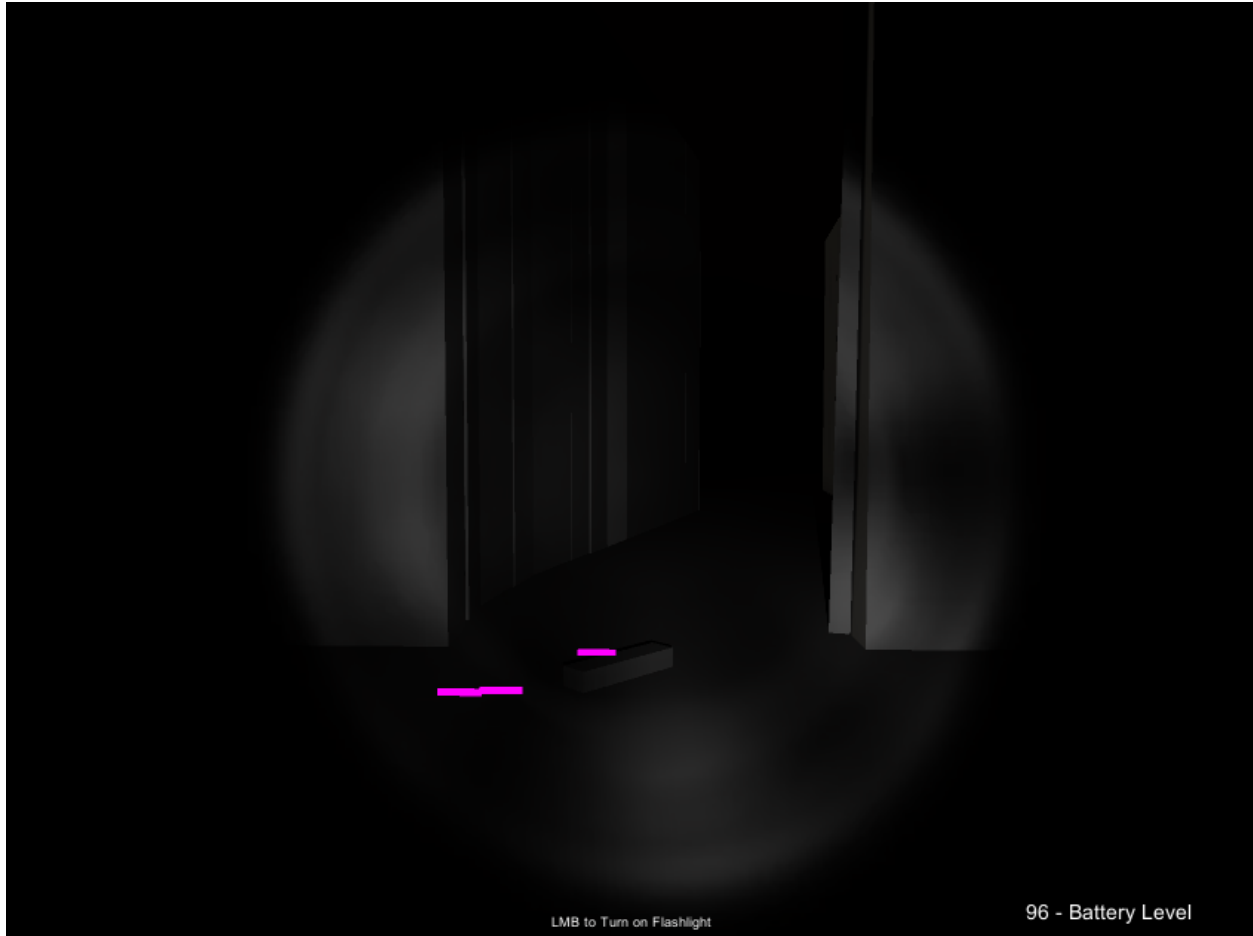


The interface of Enigma represents the same interface as a traditional camera while video recording, showing the battery percentage in the form of an icon with battery bars each representing 25 percent. Not showing the exact percentage is an intentional decision as being on the last bar of the battery can heighten suspense and force the player to prioritize a search for batteries while being uncertain how much longer they have left. Representing a more modern camera, with sans serif fonts and a central auto focus point that shows the crosshair for the player in a narrative sense complimenting immersion. Crosshair will be beneficial for aiming at interactive items and pointing a light at enemies. Further, the use of a timer at the bottom of the screen shows how much time the player has left, counting down from a set amount of time and only decreasing as the player moves. The idea that the counter only decreases as the player moves gives the impression that the player is watching back a live recording but is in control of the events that occur.

In a situation where the health bar is almost at 0, which would be shown through the use of emphasized CRT like camera visual effects such as glitches, changes in color, further delay and slowing down of reaction speed, the player's play style will change to be more careful and thoughtful to reflect the higher level of tension raised by the idea that any more damage is not sustainable, avoiding further risks that could lead to taking damage at all costs. Risks such as crossing a hallway in the open or exploring a new found room, though the player's new priority is to recover health, a potential room with unnerving sounds may guarantee medical supplies but is also a hotspot for wraiths and other hostile enemies.



The above screenshot shows the current interfacing elements when in range of an interactable object using ray casting, as part of the current prototype, when in range of 3 meters and the object is on the interactable layer, the ray cast will hit the object and retrieve its tag data to display on the HUD in the screen space location of the object. This will give key information such as that the item is interactable, as well as what the item is. As shown at the bottom, a small indicator “Press E to pickup” shows you the object is able to be picked up with a keybind.



This screenshot of the current version of the game prototype shows that the battery charge level is in place but shows the exact percentage of the battery level, not ideal. Although the tooltips indicator at the bottom of the HUD tells you key information on how to interact with the game, particle systems currently show which items in the game world are interactable, however this does not compliment the narrative or realism of the game. In full motion, the torch has independent movement from the camera with a smooth movement delay as well as view bobbing during movement to simulate how a human would move in real life.

Objectives

The overall long term object: Escape the labyrinth in 10 minutes. The central objective is to find the exit of the procedurally generated Eldritch Maze within 10 minutes. Players must navigate through its dark corridors to break free from the Eldritch Maze all while the time depletes each second as the player is moving, while not moving the time will freeze, as so the player must escape before this time reaches 0.

Following sub goals of long term objective:

Navigate the Maze: Players must effectively use their flashlight to light the way and reveal the maze's layout. This involves managing the flashlight's fuel and making strategic decisions about when to use its light to avoid getting lost in the darkness.

Evade the Wraiths: The endless pursuit of wraiths adds a layer of urgency and fear to the game. Players must use the flashlight to burn away the spirits as they get too close or evade the spirits to save resources.

Manage Resources: Players must keep an eye on their flashlight's battery level and resource supplies. Managing resources is crucial for survival, as a depleted flashlight leaves the player vulnerable to the wraiths and the lack of vision through the maze. Players must balance the use of resources with their exploration and progression.

Find Essential Items: Players must find essential items to progress in the labyrinth such as keys to unlock doors, battery pots to refuel the flashlight and consumable health items to restore health.

Staying Alive: Players must find health restoration consumables to replenish lost health from enemy AI such as wraiths, staying above 0 health to escape where the closer to 0 health the less vision you will have on the screen.

Find Hidden Items: While not a primary objective, uncovering rare items and narrative collectables can provide additional goals for players who wish to delve deeper into the game's lore and enhance their experience.

Completing these objectives advances the player through the game, ultimately leading to escape and potentially revealing the dark secrets hidden within the labyrinth.

Look & Feel

Enigma has a strong emphasis on immersion with the primary goal of building an atmosphere within the game world. Camera perspective is from a first person point of view with a limited field of view that is 65 degrees to create a deeper connection between the player and the character as it offers a level of intimacy that can't be achieved with other perspectives as it forces the player to be less sentimental about the playable character (due to inability to bond with a character that can't be seen in 3rd person) however becomes less of an observer due to a front row experience that abstracts player into the characters eyes seeing the scale of the game world similar to real life. The visual style of the game world follows a more stylistic original playstation, low-poly retro horror which juxtaposes a realistic perspective with unrealistic graphical fidelity that is unnerving and nostalgic. The limitations of old technology meant that graphics had to be rendered in a very specific way at a low resolution, where animations would warp and lack smoothness, human faces would look distorted and show sharp edges as well as game objects could never be perfectly round or seamlessly blend texture to texture all makes the player feel uncanny, as if the game world had been designed and the flaws are subconsciously filled in by the player that it gives the world dreamlike qualities. A dreamlike world emphasizes the immersion of unbelievable horror by bending the rules of the game world to suit the rules of a dream state in the real world, instantly making the horror feel more believable as if it could be experienced in real dreams. The scale of the world such as buildings and cars mimics what would be seen in the real world being relative to the characters size to achieve real world scale.

First Person POV of *DONT SCREAM*

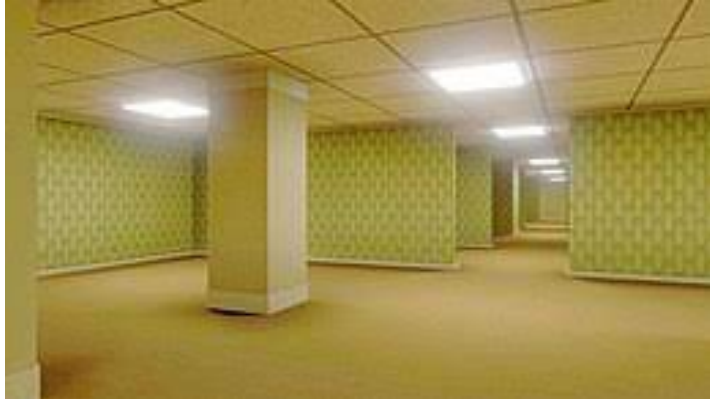


Exploring the feel of *DONT SCREAM*, the application of camera filters such as chromatic aberration and narrow field of view to capture the look of a body camera has a more believable, immersive feel that represents the idea of rare found footage. Further using camera effects such as delayed movement, low resolution pixels and radiation like interference compliments the unsettling feeling as the visual impairment forces the player to focus in on the dimly lit atmosphere to be able to see any obstructions. The world of sound in *DONT SCREAM* is as eerie as it looks, where each forward step is felt through a loud crunch as if your shuffling through leaves and the breakages of sticks is purposely loud to make the player feel vulnerable in what is thought an empty forest, heightening the terror of when the occasional stick snaps in the distance makes you feel as if something is following you. *DONT SCREAM* uses heavy breathing, hyperventilation coming from the player which is emphasized when moving which connects the character with the player and makes the player feel more realistic as a human. Audio is at times, so many disturbing sound effects can be heard at once but there are moments of silence to balance the audio and dramatize the louder moments in a way by building up to the moment keeping you on edge.

The game world is gritty and terrifying, felt unlivable and abandoned of human presence, like *the last of us* but less hope of a better tomorrow where *Metro Exodus* strikes the feeling of an unrecoverable world, where every dilapidated area tells a story of what it once was, conveying a sense of eeriness knowing that an area was once lived in yet sparking curiosity behind the mystery behind every object's position filled by a sense of nostalgia.

An element of Greek mythology has inspired depth to the narrative by exploring the labyrinth of minotaur famously associated with a minotaur that is a creature with the head of a bull and the body of a man. King Minos of Crete commissioned the architect Daedalus to construct a complex maze, the Labyrinth, to contain the Minotaur. In *Enigma*, I can incorporate elements of mystery and references to minotaur to create further depth in the narrative, as a supernatural extension of the dungeons, cosmic entities such as spirits represented as lost souls trapped within the depths, where an ancient history of torture can be explored.

Enigma is like *slender man* in feel, where you are lost in a dark world in a constant fight against a cosmic entity, as if the closer you find yourself to escaping the reality, the more dangerous and active threats become, pure tension is invoked through a lack of civilisation in a world that feels civilized.



Backroom style level design from *The Backrooms*

Enigma is like the recently trending backroom theory in feel, where you feel you are stuck in a close to reality cosmic time loop, as if at the moment you feel a sense of progression, that feeling is revoked by the emptiness, and reminder of a repeating environment, everything feels strangely familiar and uncanny in a way that a liminal space is normally populated, yet is desolate and barren. We collectively associate a liminal space as a populated environment, Backrooms are just a shared perception of a liminal space. When a human falls asleep and dreams, hallucinates visions of this dream world, as such can be viewed as dreams or parallel realities to the divine mind.

Story

In the quiet and remote town of Wraithhaven, nestled deep in the mountains, lies an abandoned complex known as the "Eldritch Maze." This maze, originally constructed during the late 19th century, was designed by a secretive and eccentric architect, Victor Holloway. Holloway had a fascination with creating intricate and mysterious labyrinths, but his magnum opus, the Eldritch Maze, became notorious for its strange occurrences and its mythological dark history that shrouds it, some citizens of Wraithhaven claim to still hear the screams of torture shrouding the town with its long forgotten past.

Emily, an adventurous urban explorer and historian, becomes intrigued by the rumors of the maze's eerie history. According to local legends, anyone who enters the maze never returns but the entrance has never been lost for years. Emily embarks on a journey to uncover the truth behind these tales and documents her findings. As Emily delves deeper into the heart of the Eldritch Maze, she becomes trapped within its dungeons. She soon discovers that the legends were not mere superstition confirming her life long research into the reality of spiritual entities, feeling both satisfied and terrified at the same time, she must live to tell the tale but the evil that shrouds the darkness prevents her from leaving. The flashlight, her only source of light, serves as her sole defense against the spirits, its purifying light burning them away but exhausting her resources.

Asset Reference List

[Unity Asset Store Pack by IL.ranch]

<https://assetstore.unity.com/packages/3d/vegetation/trees/dream-forest-tree-105297>

[Unity Asset Store Pack by Unity Technologies]

<https://assetstore.unity.com/packages/3d/environments/landscapes/terrain-sample-asset-pack-145808>