

**Twine Project: The Darkest Venture**

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## **Development Process**

### **Cultural Background:**

Choosing ancient Chinese ghost stories and tomb exploration as the theme allows us to utilize these stories' rich cultural background and mystery fully. This enhances the story's appeal and gives players a unique and exciting horror atmosphere.

### **Emotional Resonance:**

Themes such as family secrets and curses can evoke emotional solid resonance in players, especially those who like horror novels. They can be more involved in the story, enhancing the game's immersion. Players can quickly develop a deeper connection with the story by exploring the protagonist's mystery in the second person and facing supernatural events related to the family.

### **Horror Elements:**

Chinese horror stories have unique elements and atmospheres, such as ghosts, curses, and mysterious rituals. These elements effectively create a horror atmosphere that appeals to horror genre fans. The cultural specificity of these elements adds a unique flavour to the game's horror experience, making it stand out.

### **Interactive Narrative:**

The core of Twine games is interactive storytelling. Players progress through the story by making choices at various decision points, directly impacting the story's progression and

outcome. For example, deciding whether to explore a particular room or solve a specific puzzle can trigger different events and narratives, allowing for a personalized gameplay experience.

### **Puzzles and Exploration:**

Each chapter of the game includes elements of puzzle-solving and exploration. Players must solve puzzles and explore the environment to find clues and items, gradually uncovering the story's truth. For instance, players need to find the correct path in the maze while avoiding traps and dangers. In addition, players may need to remember some hints found in previous games to help solve the puzzles later, which adds some difficulty.

### **Incorporating Horror Elements:**

The game uses text descriptions, sound effects, and images to create a haunting atmosphere. Descriptions of ghostly appearances, eerie sounds, and terrifying visuals enhance the player's immersion.

### **Character Growth:**

Players witness Alex grow and evolve as the story unfolds, from initial curiosity and fearlessness to courage and determination in the face of terror and truth. The revelation of family secrets and his father's curse add an emotional layer to the story, presenting players with not only puzzles and adventures but also emotional challenges to overcome.

By integrating these elements, the game delivers a rich, immersive, and emotionally engaging experience that combines cultural depth with an interactive horror story.

**Role Distribution:**

Project Organizer: Huanwen Zhang

Lead Writer: Xiaoyi Wang

Game Level Designer: Xiaoyi Wang, Huanwen Zhang

Game Developer: Haoran Wang

Game Tester: Haoran Wang

Art and Audio Director: Gengda Lyu, Yun Zhu

Reflective Analysis: Gengda Lyu, Yun Zhu

**Challenges and Solution:**

We faced our first challenge soon after the project started. When we were looking for images that could be inserted into the game to enhance immersion, finding suitable pictures on the Internet was difficult. Thanks to AI drawing software, with the professor's permission, we used an image generator to obtain illustrations more aligned with the game plot.

In addition, inserting pictures and audio in Twine is a technical challenge. We cannot directly upload the resources we downloaded in Twine. So, we upload photos to some websites to get URLs that can be used in Twine.

When constructing the story framework and writing the complete plot, we made a lot of modifications. We added many horror elements to the original. At the same time, in the puzzle content of the game, we made multiple balances in terms of difficulty, such as adding additional hints, etc., in the hope of ensuring a good flow for players.

Finally, we needed to control the overall playing time, so we deleted some of the original story and designed the game's ending as a foreshadowing for the second part, hoping to present it to players in the subsequent work in the series.

## **Reflective Analysis**

### **Game Overview:**

Our Twine game is a text-based immersive horror adventure inspired by the story of a famous Chinese horror novel series "Tomb Raider Notes," which tells the scary, adventurous tale of the heirs of an ancient family who have been raiding tombs for generations to explore ancient tombs. The story of our Twine game is a simplified adaptation of the novel's setting. Players would play as a young man named Alex on a family mission to explore a mysterious tomb, learn its secrets, and even uncover the hidden conspiracy lurking there.

Our game consists of three small chapters as you explore the emperor's tomb, solve puzzles, and utilize the various paranormal items you obtain to uncover more clues and truths. Throughout the game, the player will make a series of choices to determine how the game will progress. These choices can be made based on the player's attitude towards specific events or the player's strategy when faced with puzzles and adversaries. The player's choices will directly affect the following course of the game. They will provide the player with a different gameplay experience or access to a different background storyline of the game. Utilize your determination, curiosity and wit to make it to the end in this ancient, eerie tomb!

### **Design Framework and Reflection:**

The key feature of Twine games is that interactivity serves as the core of their gameplay. Interactivity is the player's ability to influence and change the game's content via inputs, and such ability comes from the delivery of information between the player and the game system (Russell, 2024). Such informational interactions are ubiquitous in our Twine game. The player will first read the textual information we provide at each node to understand the current context

and scenario, the game's information delivered to the player. Subsequently, to progress, the player will choose one of several options provided and enter the corresponding story passage. This part is the player's input to the gameplay process. Depending on the player's choices, the content and experience of the game may differ. For example, in the subsequent plot of the game, the player comes to a fork in the road. The text given at this point in the game describes each passage, and the player's choices here lead to different gameplay content. Each node of our game's choices embodies interactivity through this information exchange and the input of player behaviour. Meanwhile, player agency in video games comes with the player's changes with every action taken (Russell, 2024). Each choice allows the player to actively demonstrate a unique influence on the game's content. This not only reconciles to the features and strength of Twine games but also enhances the fun of the adventure by allowing the player to be more thoughtful while playing.

The design and production of our Twine game made the group think once again about the uniqueness of video games as a contemporary medium. Unlike traditional media, such as books, which are text-heavy, and television and cinema with choreographed audio-visual effects, video games are rich and multimedia in their presentation. Like our game, it can have and present text, images, and sound simultaneously, and each of these components plays a different role in shaping the gameplay experience. Text is the core vehicle and medium of Twine's games, and we use it for storytelling, provide the player with the necessary gameplay context, and indicate progression. After familiarizing ourselves with our game's nodes and passages, our "Art Director" and "audio Director" selected images and sound effects for key scenes and characters, such as a picture of an eerie old well or a ghost weeping. These audio-visual materials will

appear at specific gameplay nodes, triggered after players have chosen the corresponding passages, bringing them a more colourful and immersive experience. This exemplifies the unique media characteristics of video games as cinematic and interactive ensembles that shape a strongly participatory experience around the player agency (Russell, 2024).

### **Embodiment :**

In the game, players assume the role of Alex and advance the narrative through a series of choices, which enhance their identification with and immersion in the character. As Gee (2008) describes, this is an embodied experience where players use their avatar as a surrogate for their mind and body to accomplish their in-game goals. This interactive method makes players feel like they are actively exploring the game world and solving its mysteries. For example, decisions such as conversing with elders or exploring the basement influence the progression of the narrative. The detailed depiction of the environment, including elements like ancient wells, underground passages, and altars, along with specific details like the red runes around the well, heightens the sense of immersion. This scene description can enhance the sense of presence, making players feel part of the game world (Russell, 2024). These meticulous details make players feel as if they are truly navigating a historical and mysterious world. Players must also make concrete decisions, such as entering the well, reading inscriptions, and solving puzzles, which affect the storyline and deepen their engagement with the character's journey. For example, while exploring the well, players directly experience the character's fear and curiosity. The integration of audio and visual elements, such as the sound of torches, nursery rhymes, and ghostly laughter, creates a tense and mysterious atmosphere, further enhancing the players' immersion. Audio elements help establish mood and atmosphere, drawing players deeper into the

experience. Through these methods, the game effectively achieves embodiment, allowing players to connect profoundly with the character's adventures and emotions, enhancing their overall sense of immersion and engagement.



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