**Game Design Document (GDD)**

**Game Title: The Forgotten Patient**

**1. Game Overview**

**1.1. Game Concept**

This is a single-player, third-person psychological horror walking simulator made in Unity. The game features low-poly, pixelated graphics reminiscent of *Haneko's Late Homework* and employs fixed camera angles like the original *Resident Evil*. The game is slow-paced, focusing on atmospheric horror and narrative, where the player uncovers their forgotten identity in a psychiatric ward.

**1.2. Genre**

* Psychological Horror
* Walking Simulator
* Fixed Camera Adventure

**1.3. Target Platform**

* PC (Windows)
* Optional: Console (PS, Xbox)

**1.4. Target Audience**

* Ages 16+
* Fans of classic survival horror, fixed camera adventure games, and psychological horror.

**2. Gameplay**

**2.1. Core Gameplay Mechanics**

* **Third-Person, Fixed Camera Perspective**: The game will feature fixed camera angles similar to early *Resident Evil* games. The player moves the character through pre-determined, cinematic camera perspectives that add tension and uncertainty.
* **Note Discovery**: Scattered notes reveal fragmented pieces of the story. Players must collect and piece together these notes to understand the protagonist's identity and situation.
* **Flashlight Mechanic**: Players can use a flashlight to illuminate dark areas. The flashlight flickers intermittently, and its battery is limited. Players need to find batteries to keep it functioning.
* **Environmental Storytelling**: The psychiatric ward gradually becomes more surreal and distorted as the story progresses, reflecting the protagonist's mental state.
* **Jump Scares**: Carefully timed jump scares punctuate key moments to maintain a sense of dread.

**2.2. Additional Mechanics**

* **Mental Health Meter (Optional)**: A hidden meter that tracks the protagonist's mental health. As it deteriorates, the environment and enemies become more distorted, intensifying the surreal horror.
* **Puzzle Solving**: Basic puzzles that unlock new areas or story elements. These could include finding combinations for locked doors or piecing together fragmented notes to reveal hidden messages.
* **Enemy Encounters**: Enemies are symbolic manifestations of the protagonist's inner demons. They could be avoided or outsmarted rather than fought directly.

**3. Story and Narrative**

**3.1. Overview**

The protagonist wakes up in a psychiatric ward with no memory of how they got there. As they explore, they uncover notes that tell a fragmented story of a patient’s struggles. Over time, the player learns that the patient is actually the protagonist, and the psychiatric ward is a representation of their mind. The game’s twist reveals that the protagonist is a programmer trapped in their own mind, having experienced a mental breakdown.

**3.2. Key Themes**

* Memory Loss and Self-Discovery
* Reality vs. Perception
* Burnout
* Identity Crisis
* Sleep Paralisis

**3.3. Plot Progression**

* **Beginning**: The protagonist finds themselves in the psychiatric ward, lost and disoriented, with no recollection of their identity.
* **Middle**: As the protagonist explores, they discover notes and clues that slowly build a story about a mentally disturbed patient. The ward becomes increasingly distorted, and the protagonist begins to question their own reality.
* **End**: The protagonist uncovers the truth—the patient they've been reading about is themselves. They are a programmer who has experienced a breakdown, and the ward is a mental construct. The game ends with this realization, leaving players questioning what is real.

**4. World and Environment**

**4.1. Setting**

The game takes place in a dilapidated psychiatric ward or hospital. This environment represents the protagonist's fractured mental state, shifting and distorting as the player progresses. The game features low-poly, pixelated graphics for an indie horror aesthetic, similar to *Haneko's Late Homework*.

**4.2. Environment Features**

* **Low-Poly, Pixelated Visuals**: The environment will use blocky, simple models with pixelated textures to create a retro-horror vibe. While the visuals are simplistic, they will be used to create unsettling and eerie environments.
* **Lighting**: Low light and heavy shadows will obscure much of the environment. The fixed camera angles will make certain areas more terrifying by limiting the player’s view and increasing tension.
* **Props**: Broken hospital equipment, decayed walls, rusted doors, and scattered papers. Everything should feel worn and abandoned, adding to the eerie atmosphere.
* **Distortions**: As the protagonist's mental health deteriorates, the ward becomes increasingly surreal. Hallways may loop endlessly, rooms might warp or change layout, and objects might disappear or transform.

**5. Characters**

**5.1. Protagonist (The Player)**

* **Role:** The protagonist is a programmer suffering from a mental breakdown, trapped in a distorted psychiatric ward that represents their own mind.
* **Backstory:** Through the notes found in the environment, players gradually uncover the protagonist’s story—an overworked programmer struggling with burnout, identity crises, and sleep deprivation.
* **Inner Conflict:** The enemies and the environment symbolize these internal battles.

**5.2. Enemies**

Each enemy is a metaphorical representation of a major struggle in the protagonist’s life, becoming more aggressive or distorted as the protagonist’s mental state deteriorates.

**1. Burnout (The Overworked One)**

* **Appearance:** A hunched, grotesque figure that is visibly overworked, carrying heavy loads like stacks of books, computers, or office supplies. Its body is covered in cracked skin and wires, symbolizing the merging of human and machine.
* **Behavior:** This enemy moves slowly but relentlessly. It follows the player at a constant pace, never stopping, representing the relentless pressure of work. When near, it emits heavy breathing and the sound of typing or clicking. The environment around it becomes more stressful—lights flicker faster, and hallways distort.
* **Symbolism:** The Burnout enemy symbolizes the protagonist’s exhaustion from overworking, their inability to escape the pressures of their profession, and the physical toll it has taken on them.

**2. Identity Crisis (The Faceless One)**

* **Appearance**: A humanoid figure with no face or distinct features. Its body constantly shifts and changes, as though it's made of clay, struggling to form a coherent identity. Clothes, hairstyles, and faces flicker in and out as it approaches the player.
* **Behavior:** The Faceless One is unpredictable. It teleports between fixed camera angles, making it hard for the player to keep track of where it will appear next. It can block doors or lead the player into looping hallways that disorient them. Sometimes, the player may catch glimpses of their own reflection in its face, further confusing their sense of identity.
* **Symbolism:** This enemy represents the protagonist’s identity crisis—uncertainty about who they truly are, both professionally and personally. The shifting forms represent the internal struggle of trying to hold onto one’s sense of self amidst the chaos of life.

**3. Sleep Paralysis (The Watcher)**

* **Appearance:** A tall, shadowy figure that resembles a dark silhouette with glowing eyes. It remains unnaturally still, standing in the corners of rooms or at the end of long hallways, watching the player but rarely moving. Its presence fills the air with dread, and it seems to grow larger the longer it remains in view.
* **Behavior**: The Watcher rarely moves, but when the player’s back is turned or when they leave a room, it can appear in a new spot, staring silently. The player cannot outrun or hide from it, as it appears wherever they least expect it, representing the inescapable feeling of sleep paralysis. The player may experience moments of being "frozen," where the camera locks, unable to move.
* **Symbolism:** The Watcher is a manifestation of the protagonist’s experience with sleep paralysis—the sense of being awake but unable to move, trapped and helpless. Its ominous presence induces anxiety and fear, symbolizing the mental toll of sleeplessness.

**6. User Interface (UI)**

**6.1. HUD Elements**

* **Flashlight Battery Indicator**: A small gauge in the corner of the screen to show remaining battery life.
* **Note Display**: Notes appear on-screen when found, allowing players to read and re-access them later through a simple menu.
* **Mental Health Meter (Optional)**: A color-shifting indicator that subtly reflects the protagonist’s mental state, affecting the game world accordingly.

**7. Sound and Music**

**7.1. Sound Design**

* **Ambience**: Low-frequency hums, distant sounds of crying or whispering, and the echoes of footsteps help set the mood.
* **Environmental Sounds**: Creaking doors, flickering lights, and sudden loud noises enhance tension.
* **Jump Scare Triggers**: Sudden loud noises or unsettling sounds punctuate key story moments or scares.

**7.2. Music**

* Minimalist, eerie tracks that slowly build tension as the player explores. Music should fade or intensify to match the tone of different areas and narrative moments.

**8. Technical Requirements**

**8.1. Engine**

* **Unity C#**: The game will be developed using Unity, with scripting in C#.

**8.2. Graphics**

* **Low-Poly Aesthetic**: Simple, pixelated models and textures with emphasis on lighting and environmental effects.
* **Fixed Camera System**: Pre-determined, fixed camera angles to capture different perspectives of each room and corridor, adding cinematic tension and atmosphere.

**8.3. Performance**

* **Target Frame Rate**: 60 FPS on PC.
* **Graphics Settings**: Provide scalable graphics settings for varying PC performance levels while maintaining the low-poly aesthetic.

**9. Development Timeline**

**9.1. Pre-Production**

* Finalize narrative, character design, and environment layout.
* Prototype core mechanics (fixed camera system, movement, flashlight, etc.).
* Test different camera angles for maximum tension.

**9.2. Production**

* Create low-poly assets for the environment, characters, and props.
* Implement core gameplay mechanics: exploration, note system, flashlight, and environmental distortions.
* Design the psychiatric ward layout, ensuring the fixed camera angles enhance tension.

**9.3. Testing and Polish**

* Test for pacing, puzzle difficulty, and atmosphere.
* Polish visual and sound design for maximum effect.
* Optimize the game for various performance settings.