

# Lost Light

Spiral Studios

Design Document

**Table of Contents**



## **1 Design Details**

- 1.1 Game Name
- 1.2 Target Audience
- 1.3 Game Setting
- 1.4 Characters
- 1.5 Challenges for the Player
- 1.6 Outline of Levels
- 1.7 Key Choices and Cutscenes for the Player
- 1.8 Audio
- 1.9 Dialogue
- 1.10 Inspiration
- 1.11 Mood and "Feel"
- 1.12 Imagery and Concept Art

## **2 Production Details**

- 2.1 Anticipated Challenges
- 2.2 Overall Contingency Plan
- 2.3 Milestones
  - Milestone 1: Team Formation - Jan 12, 2017
  - Milestone 2: Concept Presentation - Jan 19, 2017
  - Milestone 3: Design Document - Jan 28, 2017
  - Milestone 4: Walkthrough with EP - Week of Feb 8 2017
  - Milestone 5: Walkthrough with Prof - Week of Feb 27, 2017
  - Milestone 6: Beta Release - Mar 21, 2017
  - Milestone 7: Beta Evaluation - Mar 28, 2017
  - Milestone 8: Game Trailer - April 6th, 2017
  - Milestone 9: Gold Release - April 11th, 2017
  - Milestone 10: Team and Course Evaluation - Week of April 10th, 2017

## **3 Credits**

# **1 Design Details**

## **1.1 Game Name**

The name of our game is Lost Light, abbreviated to LL. This name was chosen to reflect the primary mechanic of the game, a lantern, the main protagonist carries. The name gives off a sense of wonder, while hinting at the potential interpretation of the storyline of “lost souls”. The alliteration is a nice added bonus.

## **1.2 Target Audience**

### **Age Range**

The target audience is primarily focused on players of ages 13+ since younger children may find the game unsettling due to its dark atmosphere and lighting, and may find less enjoyment in the game. There are some slightly more mature themes, such as the discussion of death, potential coarse language, and cartoon violence but there will be no blood, gore, or sexuality.

### **Skill**

This game itself will not be incredibly skill intensive to play and will be enjoyable by a variety of players. It will primarily be targeted at those who like exploration, puzzle solving, and a little bit of combat. The game will have a persistent feeling of tension because there will be a constant need to keep moving in order to survive. When the player runs out of fuel, the player will get a game over and be allowed to reload a previous checkpoint. This allows the player to keep trying and memorize a successful route if needed. Combat will not be particularly difficult but will require the player to stay alert. Puzzles will generally vary in difficulty but usually will attempt to build up so help prepare the player.

### **Interest**

Players familiar with RPG Maker will find this a refreshing take on the system. Players who enjoy stories, discovery of the world and themselves will likely enjoy this game. See section 1.10 for a list of games that we drew inspiration from.

### **Gender**

Lost Light will appeal to any gender as the primary focus of the game is a mixture of exploration and resource management with a little combat and puzzle solving thrown in. We have a fairly evenly balance of character genders,

with a female protagonist. Therefore, this game is not tailored to any gender in specific.

## **Platform**

Lost Light is built using RPG Maker VX Ace and will be playable by PC users. The graphics are not intensive and the requirements to run the game are negligible. The game is single player and will be best enjoyed by players who enjoy solitary games.

## **1.3 Game Setting**

### **Backstory**

A teenage girl named Lucy has a twin brother, Aiden, who is slowly dying in a hospital. As he grows nearer to death, he begins to dream of a dark forest, haunting his thoughts, which it unnerves him with its loneliness. He grows increasingly obsessed and paranoid about the forest, and makes his sister promise to not leave him alone there.

The forest is actually the afterlife, and our game begins when Lucy enters afterlife to rescue Aiden, who has now died. Her life force is tied to a lantern that she carries, and as long as the lantern is burning she will remain alive and tied to the real world. She interacts with the lost souls found in the afterlife and fights dark monsters known as Shades, progressing through the game to find her brother. Part of the way through the game, she meets a soul who transforms into a Shade, whom she can turn back into a human. He explains that the Shades are really souls that have been twisted into darkness by staying too long in the afterlife. The change can be reversed in a certain time frame if the sister uses her lantern, but at cost to the lantern's fuel. She also interacts with a cryptic man, who constantly warns her away from continuing on into the afterlife, but also offers helpful advice. He reveals that he too was a lantern bearer who entered the afterlife in order to rescue someone, but he failed in his quest.

At the end of the game, Lucy reunites with Aiden. He refuses to return with her to the real world, and asks her to stay in the afterlife with him. When she says no, he will twist into a Shade, which she has to defeat. When she does, she initially wants to walk away. However, the cryptic man appears and warns her that abandoning her brother would be an even worse mistake than the entire journey. Lucy transforms Aiden back into a human at the expense of her

lantern. The brother and sister then reawaken (post credits), in an ambiguous spring-like setting.

## **Time period**

While the time period of the game will be modern, the story will mostly take place in the afterlife where time has little meaning. All brief flashbacks of our main protagonist's life will be modern, however, they will mostly be only in audio and text format, rarely using any graphics. The afterlife, on the other hand, will feel like it exists in a much older setting, with medieval ruins and statues scattered throughout the forest and characters dressed in cloaks.

## **Locations**

The game takes place in a mysterious dark forest. The forest is filled with statues and ruins of old stone buildings. The forest slowly transforms as the players delve deeper into its depths. The first segment of the forest will appear to be in early fall, with green trees and bushes. Throughout the game there will be glowing blue flowers that follow the path and provide direction for players. The second major area will begin like the first area, but will transition into being colder and bleaker. The final major area will be akin to a heavy winter, with snow and ice covering everything. Occasionally, small abandoned buildings or shacks will be found to provide shelter as well as places to restock on fuel. This world is not what it seems, for it is a representation of the afterlife that the player character has to traverse to reach their fallen comrade.

# **1.4 Characters**

## **Protagonist**

Our main protagonist and player controllable character, is a human girl. She will appear to be in her late teens, with brown hair, and green eyes. She will be wearing a dark green cloak, and carrying a lantern. Her name is Lucy, but many non-playable characters will also refer to her by the title "Lantern Bearer." As she is rescuing her brother from the afterlife, she will be a brave and determined character, willing to risk death for those that she cares about. The player's choice in interactions with non-playable characters will also help define her character, as she can either act apathetically or help some of them out at the expense of her lantern fuel. She made the choice to save her brother during a conversation they had shortly before his death. She has a complex relationship with her brother, as he began to act increasingly paranoid and angry towards his death, and has a tendency to overlook her. Although she

wants to save her brother, she also cares about living as she will refuse to stay in the afterlife with him when he asks.

## **Twin Brother**

The protagonist's twin brother (named Aiden) will be our second major character. He will appear primarily in flashbacks until the end of the game, when he is revealed to be the final boss. Physically, he will be fairly similar in appearance to the protagonist, with similar hair colour. He will be dressed in red and is sardonic and cynical. Throughout his time in the afterlife, he has grown bitter about the living world, and does not want to return there as (due to his drawn out death) he believes that it is filled only with suffering. He still cares about his sister, but will respond cruelly when she asks him to come with her back to the living world, and grow angry when she does not want to stay in the afterlife with him, twisting into a Shade.

In the final cutscene, the brother will wake up in a meadow with his sister. It will be left ambiguous whether this is the real world or simply another second of the afterlife, but he will be smiling and appear to have found peace.

## **Lost Souls**

There will be several interactions with "lost soul" non-playable characters who are wandering through the afterlife. There are four key lost souls that the player can interact with: a young girl named Grace, her sister Sarah, an old man, and a cryptic man who keeps reappearing during the player's journey. Grace will want your help lighting her candle, so that she can find a way to contact her older sister Sarah, who is also trapped in the afterlife. She will appear innocent but scared about being alone, as she wants to string lights up in the trees so that her sister might see. She will be wearing a frilly dress, and have her hair in pigtails. The player will encounter Sarah in the second level, where she will be searching for her sister as well. A conversation with Sarah will lead to the player's realization that their brother is actually dead (implying that this world is the afterlife). If you have helped Grace out in level one, you will see the two sisters reunited during the boss fight, and they will offer you helpful advice. If you have not helped Grace, you will see her again during the boss fight, but her soul will be twisted by her fear of being alone and she will transform into a shade that you have to fight. The old man will be weary and tired, clearly fatigued. He will have a long beard. He will twist into one of the Shades you have been fighting, but you can turn him back into a human with the help of your lantern. He will explain how souls can turn into Shades, and how the change can be reversed.

The cryptic man will likely be the most important lost soul that the player can encounter. He will appear once in every level. He will initially warn the player against continuing forward into the afterlife, but will later explain that his reason for doing so is because he too tried to rescue a loved one from the afterlife, but he failed and was trapped. Directly after the boss fight, he will convince Lucy to save her brother by admitting that the thing he regrets most about his journey into the afterlife was that he turned away from his friend in the end. He is dressed in orange.

Other, less plot relevant NPCs include a strange old woman who will offer confusing advice, and a soul trapped in a tree that will offer you a lantern upgrade if you find pieces of his soul for him.

## 1.5 Challenges for the Player

### Challenges

The challenges the player will face can be split into three major categories: **Resource Management**, **Combat**, and **Puzzle Solving**.

#### Resource Management

Resource Management refers to dealing with the ever draining supply of fuel that sustains the lantern. Running out of fuel for the lantern pitches the character into darkness and forces a game over, resetting the player back to their previous checkpoint. The lantern will lose fuel over time and through certain actions. At certain thresholds (~80%, ~60%, ~40%, ~10%, ~1% of the initial fuel cap), the light provided by the lantern will drop down in visibility almost proportionately. The change from increments of ~20% near the end is to give the player a last opportunity to redeem themselves before reaching the gameover state.

Initially the player will start with a rather low amount of fuel for their lantern and have an opportunity to collect some nearly right away, letting the player know the benefits of having a higher amount of fuel in their lantern. A fully fueled lantern will provide vision around the majority of the screen, really letting the player see around them. As the supply of fuel decreases, the circle of light around the player will decrease in radius and the brightness of the lantern will go down. As time goes on, it will be more and more difficult to see

around the player and make exploration more difficult as well as more dangerous.

This challenge is overcome by the player having to determine a way to refuel their lantern. There will be certain areas where the player will be able to collect fuel in designated areas, just hovering around in small crevices and nooks around the world, as well as other locations such as wells of fuel which also serve as save points.

The other way to obtain fuel will be to solve puzzles, mostly out of the way for exploring. Some side objectives and puzzles will reward either fuel or lantern upgrades, which will then allow for the lantern to have more fuel, thereby making this overall challenge easier for the player to deal with. A full lantern upgrade can be found early on in the game or the player can find lantern pieces scattered throughout the game, in each chest they find. Collecting 3 lantern pieces will lead to an upgrade to the lantern, increasing the amount of fuel the lantern can hold.

## **Combat**

This leads into combat being the second primary challenge of the game. The player will have one resource bar to manage: the fuel contained within the lantern. While this ties a little into resource management with managing fuel, it deserves its own section to properly explain. Combat will take place on the overworld similar to the video game *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past*. Combat will be simple, involving the player recognizing a hostile spirit or Shade is nearby, and swinging the lantern in an arc towards their foe through a button input, the "Z" key. Swinging the lantern will drain a little bit of fuel. Some spirits will move more quickly, or have particular movement patterns where the player will have to time their attack effectively to dispel the dark spirits. The spirits will be relentless and continue to spawn if the player revisits the map they are on, so the player will have no choice but to move on towards their destination or eventually be overrun by the spirits. Spirits serve as a nuisance and will generally be a drain on the player's fuel. Any sort of successful attack on the player will remove fuel from the player while any sort of attack by the player will also lose fuel, creating a challenge of trying to balance fuel usage and deciding whether to slay enemies to help lower the distractions while trying to solve puzzles.

If possible, we will explore adding additional depth to the combat system, such as enemies swooping in with invulnerability frames in a predictable attack



cycle, hostiles with ranged projectiles and larger sized enemies. This is rather ambitious and likely not to make it into the game, but should we come out ahead of schedule, it will be a potential option to help make a better game.

## **Puzzle Solving**

The third challenge will center around the player using their lantern to solve puzzles. Players will have the option to explore the world asides from the main path and will run into a variety of other puzzles to solve for additional benefits. Some puzzles will be mandatory to progress while others will reward additional benefits for the player such as lantern upgrades. Puzzles will involve the player using the lantern in somewhat unconventional ways. The lantern will be used to light torches and braziers to unlock secret passageways and open up doors. There will be burnable objects such as trees that can be burned to reveal additional locations and paths. Through the affordances created by having unlit torches, players will naturally gravitate towards lighting them and will likely solve the simple puzzle of “two torches, one is unlit” puzzle incredibly quickly and from there, understand the concept of lighting torches without difficulty.

Other puzzles will continue to expand upon the use of the lantern. Such examples include using the lantern to burn grass away to reveal hidden entrances to small underground caverns, burning down barricades to open up the path, setting ropes on fire to spread flames, igniting a bridge to stop a group of foes from spawning and to escape them, melting ice and lighting torches. Hints will be given to the player through the use of art showing that particular things look different than the environment, as well as NPCs will hint at and inform the player of possibilities involving lighting things up and spreading the light.

All of these puzzles should be relatively easy to do with the use of variables and switch controls. It will be more a matter of ensuring the appropriate sound effects play as well as the appropriate graphics within the right timeframe.

List of Puzzles (more specifics given under level design):

- Burn down a barricade such as a fragile tree or a spider web to progress
- Light four torches in a certain order, sound cue when the correct one is lit in the correct order, solved by using sound cues as well as an additional hints elsewhere in the level for those playing without sound
- Burn down grass to reveal either additional lantern fuel or upgrade parts for the lantern
- Light unlit torches to trigger some sort of event

- Burn bridges to prevent enemies from spawning in a location
- Matching the lighting: Several torches are arranged in a pattern that are unlit and nearby is a visual indicating which torches need to be lit to progress.
- Melting ice to reveal treasure
- Light a rope to burn something on the other end
- The enemy puzzle: all enemies must be defeated to move on
- Block/Boulder Puzzle, moving several blocks around to create a certain configuration
- Fetch quest puzzle: Where an key must be found before the player can unlock a door

## **Modifying the Difficulty**

There are a few ways to relatively easily modify the difficulty of the game should it prove to be too easy or too difficult without having to completely redesign levels and maps. If a difficulty option is included in the game, these are some things that could be changed to implement different difficulties:

- Modifying the amount of hostile spirits
- Increasing/decreasing locations where souls are lying on the ground or can be refilled from such as the wells and rivers
- Giving hints to solving puzzles through NPC dialogue, graphics and various other texts
- Modifying the rate at which the lantern burns out if it proves to be difficult with it burning out constantly or the game being too easy if this element of the game is completely invalidated by the lantern burning out too slowly
- Modifying the radius and brightness of the lantern, but this element is more central to the design and should be looked at last
- Changing enemy behaviour and stats, such as damage dealt on contact, and movement speed

## **1.6 Outline of Levels**

Levels are divided up primarily by resting points. Once a player reaches the next safe spot, a cutscene will play and then a checkpoint will occur (see Section 1.9 for outline of cutscene dialogue). After leaving it, they will appear in a similar looking area to where they just were, which is actually a replica and part of the next level. They will be unable to backtrack into a previous level at this point.

### **Level One: Zone One:**

## Dark Forest with Castle-like Ruins (~8 minutes)

Player interaction: Learning the controls and playing around with the lantern for the first time. Solving simple puzzles with the lantern.

A dark screen appears, telling the player how to play the game. Refer to 1.9 for cutscene one dialogue. Afterwards, the player begins in a dark forest and is able to see a lantern in the distance. Upon walking over the lantern, the player picks up the lantern. An information about the lantern telling the player that picking up fuel will replenish the amount of time the lantern will stay lit. There are three parts to level one. In this first segment, the goal is for the player to get acquainted with the lantern light radius and the map environment. The player will walk around the map trying to find the way out and along the way pick up lantern fuel. The fall setting of the map will have hues of brown and red.

Initial theoretical Sketch:



Level One: Zone Two:

The 2nd segment of level 1 introduces the player to enemies, combat mechanics, and using the lantern to light items and solve puzzles.

Sketch:



There will be some dialogue near the start of the map to tell the player that they can use their lantern to attack enemies and use it to light up the torches near the river to create a bridge to cross. There will be enemies called Shades that the player can fight after crossing the river. The Shades are spirit like monsters that are dark in color (see 1.12 for example). When the player reaches within 7 tiles of the enemy they will follow and attack the player within range. The Shades will also be able to walk through impenetrable objects like the trees. There is also more fuel north of the bridge before crossing the river. After crossing the bridge there will be more enemies to fight. Fuel and a bin to tell the player that old trees are burnable. After burning the trees to exit the area, there will be a cutscene showing the player entering a building in the next area and a checkpoint.

#### Level One: Zone Three:

At this location, the player will run into their first friendly NPC. The NPC will ask the player if they want to help light her candle. If the player decides to light her candle, the area's candle will be lit during the boss fight. The area will not be lit if the player did not help the NPC earlier.

Sketch:



After this zone, on the next screen, the player will run into a checkpoint, a well as well as a strange man that they can interact with for advice.

#### Level One: Zone Four:

This last zone will have a variety of small puzzles to solve involving finding treasure chests to give the player additional fuel and fuel upgrades. Puzzles will be simple and there will be relatively few enemies here. Two optional branching paths will lead to optional side objectives. One will reward the player with additional fuel, while the other will lead the player to an NPC that loosely hints at the story. The player will then reach the end of the first level and watch a small cutscene before resuming play of the next level.

### Level Two

Fall Forest with Transition into Winter Theme (~8 minutes)

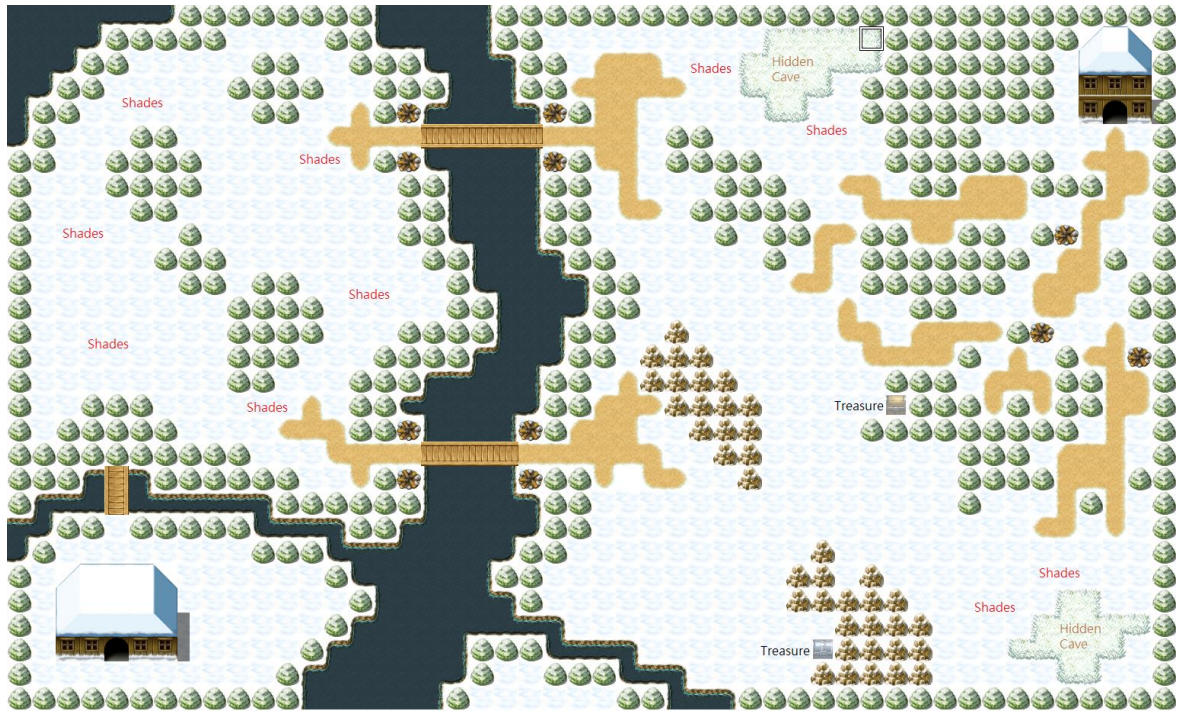
After exiting the house, the player will find them outside with no way of going back. With a little exploration, more side upgrades can be found, as well as a new bat-like enemy that moves around incredibly quickly. The player will be able to find an optional boulder puzzle nearby that rewards the player with another fuel upgrade, as well as a false puzzle where lighting three torches will cause an enemy to appear to attack the player.

There will be an NPC with the appearance of an old man. When you talk to the old man, he will turn into a shade, and then turn back into a human when you use your lantern. He will explain that this world corrupts souls and turns them into shades.



Another checkpoint will be found nearby that will trigger a cutscene with Sarah and a flashback. Afterwards, the player will reach the more snowy regions of the level with another encounter with the helpful man.

Sketch:



There are many offshoots containing treasure chests as well as wisps of light floating around the map. The helpful man makes a reappearance after a mandatory boulder puzzle, giving more advice and helping provide additional story. Near the river, another fire trap is set up which causes a shade to spawn, but not far away is a torch which when lit opens up the primary path. Another nearby puzzle involves lighting four torches in a particular order.



This image showcases the start of an initial sketch of what sort of design secret caves might have.

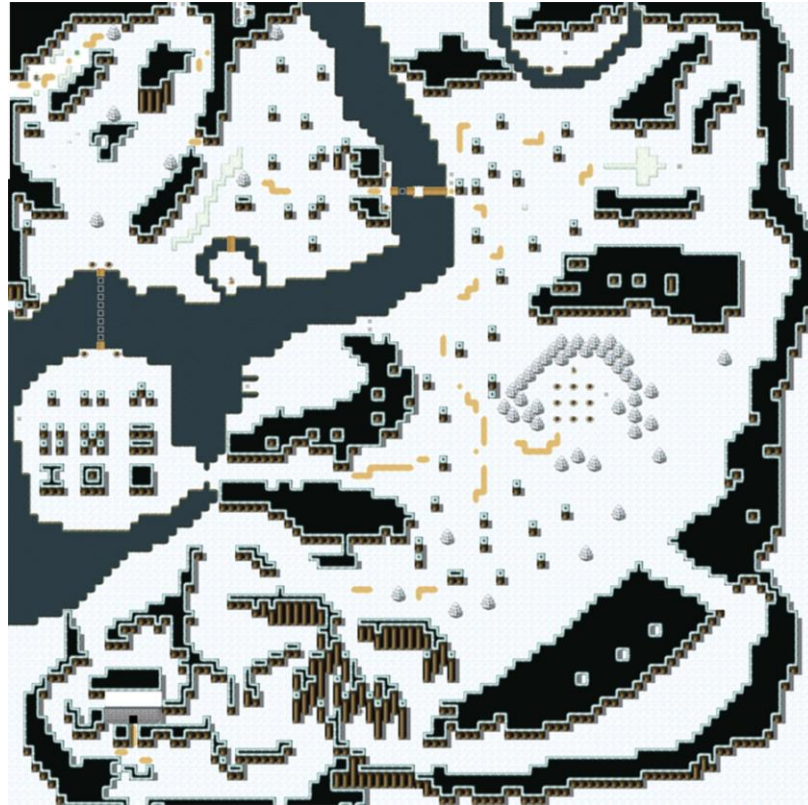
The player will then be able to enter the next house of safety to the far left side of the map and thereby end the level upon making contact with the bed in the upper floor.

### **Level Three**

Heavy Winter, Permafrost Sets In (~8 minutes)

Sketch:





This last level in the game will take place on one large map and several smaller maps. There will be several more difficult puzzles that will need to be solved to progress through the story. The player starts in the top left of the map and must reach the safe house at the bottom left of the map. Unfortunately, the player will not know where the safe house is until they reach it and as such must wander until they find it although hints provided by NPCs and signs that aid the player in finding the safehouse.

The top left portion of the map is cut off by a river that is initially uncrossable. A small path up to the north that may be overlooked but if followed rewards the player with a lantern piece. To the right of the island there are two torches that the player can set alight to which opens up the bridge to allow the player to exit off of the island. On the other side of the bridge, the path is blocked by a tree which will be needed to be burnt to allow the player to advance.

In this top-right quadrant, the player can see an unreachable torch on the other side of a small stream near the top of the quadrant. The treasure near it is actually obtained in level 2 and is unobtainable at this point in the game. A little south of the stream, there is a large set of tall grass in the shape of an arrow pointing to an isolated bush, that when interacted with allows the player to burn it, revealing a hole into an underground cavern with another lantern



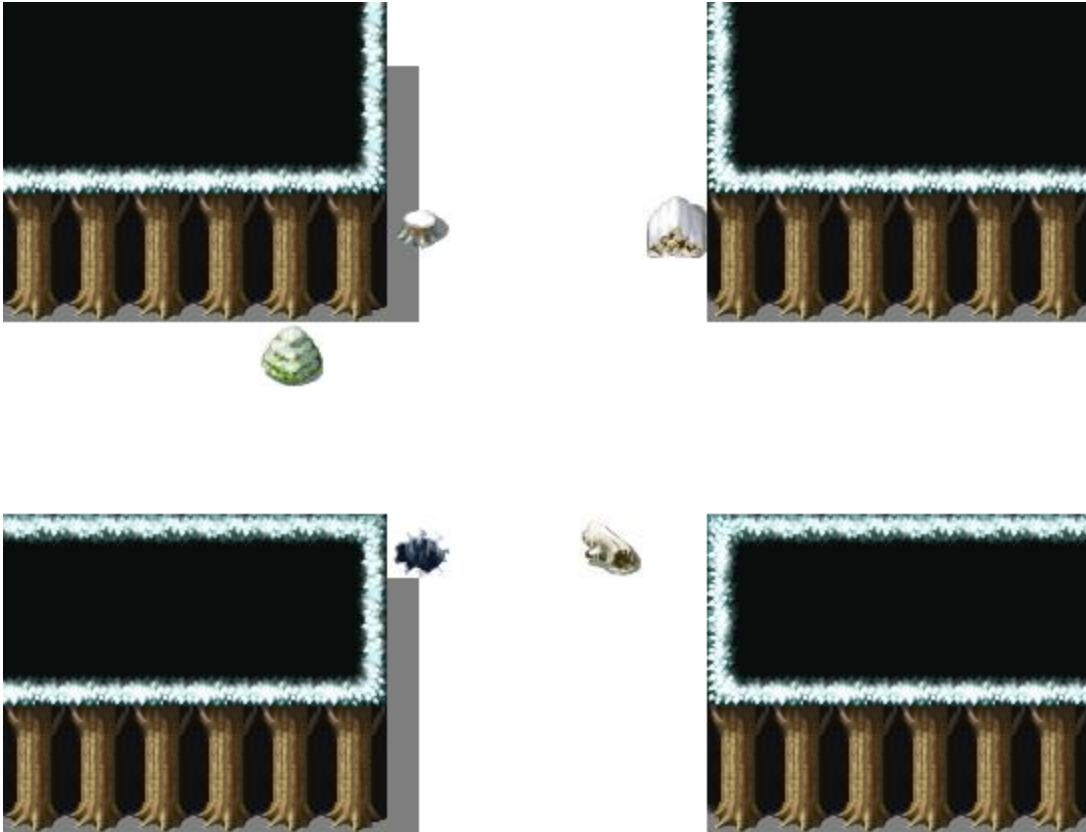
fragment. There is also a block of unmeltable ice here. This can be melted with the lantern after pushing the boulder nearby onto it, cracking the ice and allowing the player to melt the damaged ice to reveal another lantern fragment as well as part of the Spirit Tree's soul (more on this in a second). The player is relatively free to explore around the quadrant, and travel to the center of the map after solving a mandatory puzzle, lighting a rope on fire which then creates a bridge. Near here will be another well as a savepoint plus the helpful man for the third time.

Near the center of the map lies another burnable tree which is followed by a short path near the river. At the end of the path, there is treasure frozen inside a block of ice. To the west is a grove of large snow covered trees with several unlit torches lying around in a grid-like pattern. A nearby sign gives hints at what order to light the torches in. This puzzle can be solved with this information, using the group of trees arranged in a grid nearby. Lighting the torches in the order bottom right, top left, top right, bottom left and lighting all the rest will reveal another treasure containing a fragment of the Spirit tree's soul.

Just south of the helpful man is the Spirit Tree which will ask for your help in finding his soul fragments. If you have not already found them, it will ask you to recover the fragments but you are able to burn down the tree if you wish, opening up the required path.

Towards the end of the level the player will have to run to the next zone, finding a variety of the other minor optional secrets rewarding lantern upgrades before further continuing on with the story.

Level 3: zone 2:



After completing the majority of the third level, the player's final major task prior to the boss fight is to go through a part of the forest without getting lost. This portion is very similar to the forest maze in the original NES Legend of Zelda game.

The image above shows a portion of this map. The player will have to move left, up, left, down and left again to escape. The player will be moved to an identical map at each transfer point, and thus will not realize that they are progressing until they escape the maze. Any wrong move will take the player back to the beginning of the first map in this maze sequence (shown above), giving the illusion of being lost in the forest. A note will be found at the start of the maze stating the path (left, up, left, down, left), so the player has some knowledge to figure out the path.

### *Boss Fight:*

After solving the forest maze and passing through some minor terrain, the player will finally reach the end of their journey. They will find their twin brother waiting for them in the final safehouse. The player will engage in a conversation with their brother, who will refuse to leave the afterlife as he

feels that there is nothing left in the living world for him. He will ask the player to give up their lantern and stay with him in the afterlife. When Lucy refuses, Aiden, corrupted from his long stay in the afterlife, will transform into a Shade similar to the ones the player has been fighting throughout the game. He will be the final boss that you need to defeat. He will pick the player up and drop them into a familiar map (see level one, zone two), knocking the lantern from their grasp. The player will have to use trees and the terrain to dodge fireballs that are thrown toward them by the Shade, retrieve their lantern, and hit the enemy 5 times with the lantern in order to defeat his first phase. The player will then be teleported to a new zone, where they will have to solve a boulder puzzle to reach the Aiden shade to attack it again, where upon slaying it, will be teleported into a new area into the woods. Here they will solve a modified version of the Lost Woods (just like Zone 2 of this level) puzzle again before reaching Aiden again for the last time. Upon Aiden's defeat, another cutscene will activate, showing the player destroying their lantern by giving up their light in order to turn the brother back into a human. In the final scene, they will be shown waking up in a meadow with their brother next to them.

## 1.7 Key Choices and Cutscenes

The majority of the game will not center on key choices, allowing the player to explore the world in a semi-linear fashion. Where they choose to explore will up to them and so long as their fuel bar is not depleted, the order in which they choose to explore the forest will not matter beyond finding the correct path and potentially missing some optional objectives such as learning about the story or minor non-mandatory side upgrades for their lantern. However, there will be three cases of choices the player can make to affect the story.

### *The Lights:*

The player will encounter a young girl NPC named Grace in the second level in a circle of trees, holding a dying, flickering candle. When the player approaches Grace and talks to her, the candle will blink out. She will be saddened by the loss of her candle, as she was hoping to hang lights on the trees as a beacon to her older sister, who is also trapped in the afterlife and who is searching for her. The player has the option to relight the candle for her, at a cost to their lantern fuel capacity. This choice becomes significant, as the player returns to these trees for the boss fight. If the player chose to relight her candle, the young girl will be visible with her sister at the beginning of the fight. They will offer some helpful advice about the fight. The surrounding trees will also now be lit up, dramatically increasing the visibility of the player. If the player does

not help Grace, the forest will be dark during the first part of the boss fight. Grace will not have found her sister and, twisted by her fear of being alone for so long, will turn into a shade that you have to fight.

#### *The Darkness:*

The player will encounter a tired looking old man NPC in the third level. The NPC will transform into a Shade part way through your conversation with him, like the other Shades you have been fighting throughout the game. He will initially be still, and you will have the command option to “give light” to the NPC. If you do, he will transform back into human at the cost of some of your lantern capacity, and explain how darkness corrupts those who have been too long in the afterlife, but can be reversed with the help of the lantern. If you do not, and deny him, he will eventually start to attack you.

#### *The Tree:*

In the third level, you will encounter a tree that talks to you. It will explain that it is a lost soul, who has been fragmented. Pieces of its soul are scattered around the map. You will have the option to gather together pieces of his soul, and in return will receive a lantern fuel upgrade. You can also ignore the tree and burn him down, but doing so will not provide any benefit.

#### *Cutscenes:*

There will be cut scenes throughout the game, providing backstory for the player on why their character is travelling throughout the forest. Each cut scene will take place at a checkpoint at the end of the level. There will be a bed that the player can sleep on, to unlock the next level. When the player sleeps, they will get snippets of conversations the girl had with her brother shortly before his death. These cutscenes may be mostly dialogue over a black screen.

There will also be a cutscene at the very end of the game after credits, where the girl and her brother wake up in a bright and spring-like world. They will be standing next to each other in the middle of a flower-covered meadow, as sunlight streams down.

## **1.8 Audio**

**Music:** All music is composed using MuseScore notation software, and will be exported as either MIDI (if extra synth sounds are required) or .wav files. This

will allow us to get the best quality sound that we can for this game. Some live instruments may have to be recorded depending on synth quality, and we will find the musicians appropriate to do so.

The music for the majority of the game will be very simple in terms of instrumentation, using piano as the main instrument, while being complemented with some light strings and light percussion. Some other instruments such as bells will be thrown in as needed, but the music for the most part will stay away from brass and woodwind instruments to avoid feeling too “heavy”. We are trying to evoke feelings of isolation and uncertainty, and so by keeping minimal in terms of instrumentation, we should be able to achieve that. We have composed five themes for this game: a main theme, a theme for the brother, and a theme for each level. Though the final product may not necessarily use the exact themes pictured below, we are planning to use at least five themes.

The themes aren’t tied together using a common melodic motif as in most video game music, but rather are tied together by the use of altered chords, to create a sense of unease, since the music does not change as one would expect it to. Also, all of the themes, save for one, are in a minor key. This coupled with the altered chords creates the feeling that something isn’t quite right with the world that the player is in.

Some of the influences for this music include the soundtracks to *Mass Effect 3*, *Skyfall*, and *Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge*, as well as the Lumineers album *Cleopatra*.

The five themes are pictured below. For all themes, the theme is notated in the treble clef of the piano, with chords either absent, arpeggiated, or simply notated in the bass clef.

### **Main Theme:**

**Allegretto**

Piano

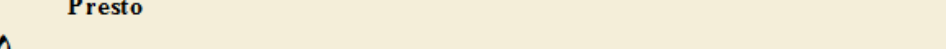
15

Pno.

### Theme for Level 1:

Piano

Presto



### Theme for Level 2:

**Allegretto**

Piano

Pno.

### Theme for Level 3:



### Brother's Theme:

Con moto

Piano

Pno.

5

9

This musical score is for a piece titled "Brother's Theme". It is written for piano and consists of three systems of staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The music features a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the bass clef and a melody in the treble clef. The melody starts with a half rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

**Ambient sounds:** These sounds, such as leaves rustling, wind howling, fire crackling, and the whispers of the dead, will be either recorded, or taken from royalty free websites like [soundbible.com](http://soundbible.com). The sounds will be compiled to make ambient tracks. Depending on the limitations of the engine, the music tracks and ambient tracks may have to be compiled together for use.

**SFX:** RPG Maker VX Ace has a wide variety of sound effects to choose from. We will use these general sound effects for most of our needs, but if there is a sound we need that we cannot find we will record sound effects as needed.

**Voice Acting:** We have decided to not include any voice acting in the game at this time as we think it would detract from the feeling of the game. This is subject to change.

## 1.9 Dialogue

Dialogue, for each of the cutscenes (other in game dialogue not included in order to save space):

*(Cutscene one, before the game)*

(black screen—the sounds of a hospital fade in, beeping can be heard)

BROTHER: I had that dream again, last night.

**SISTER:** What dream?

BROTHER: The one with the forest. I'm standing in a circle of trees, alone. There are blue flowers all around me.

**SISTER:** AIDEN—

BROTHER: It's dark, but it's beautiful. It's so, so beautiful.

**SISTER:** AIDEN, I—

BROTHER: You think I'm delusional, don't you? (not surprised, but still bitter)

**SISTER:** ...I talked to your nurse. She said coping mechanisms like this aren't unusual—

BROTHER: I know what I saw. What I see, every night. And it's out there somewhere.

BROTHER: I know the forest is real.

*(Cutscene two, after checkpoint one)*

(dark background, hospital sounds)

**SISTER:** The nurse says that you have been drawing a forest every day. The same picture, over and over again.

BROTHER: So what?

**SISTER:** I'm not sure that it's healthy...

BROTHER: And what would you know about it? You don't see it in your dreams, night after night.

BROTHER: It's colder there now, and darker.

BROTHER: I feel like the forest is going to swallow me whole.

*(Cutscene three, after checkpoint two)*

BROTHER: Let me tell you something you something, Lucy. You come here every day and pretend to be so concerned, so worried. You try to be understanding. You try to be helpful.

BROTHER: Well *not a single thing you do is helpful.*

BROTHER: You think that you can understand what it's like to be slowly dying? That you can imagine what it is like to have your body be slowly falling apart on you? Well, newsflash, you can't.

BROTHER: And having you stand you stand there, wring your hands, and say that I'm delusional because I talk about trees sometimes is the last thing I need.

BROTHER: You should just go away.



**SISTER:** You know, for someone who is supposed to be my twin, you feel more like a stranger sometimes.

## 1.10 Inspiration

### Legend of Zelda

*Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* (1991) and *Legend of Zelda: Four Swords Adventures* (2004): Both of these games feature a top down perspective as well as real-time combat which will be incredibly similar to what our game will be trying to achieve. Four Swords also uses a lantern mechanic that we will be trying to replicate, as well as looking at the lantern based puzzles in that game for some inspiration. A Link to the Past features a Light and Dark world concept that we are also inspired by as our primary setting is in a “Dark World” replica of reality. The general gameplay of Legend of Zelda will be mirrored in our work.

### Alan Wake

*Alan Wake* (2010) - This game has a similar atmosphere to what we are attempting to make. The player must use their flashlight to help find clues and hints to solve the overall mystery. While this game is labeled as a psychological horror, our game will not be quite so intense mentally.

### Outlast

*Outlast* (2013) - While our game is not intended to be horror and jump-scare filled, the overall mood may lead to feelings of isolation, confusion and a sense of desperation. The constant search for batteries in Outlast is mirrored in our game by the constant search for souls to replenish the lantern.

## 1.11 Mood and Feel

We want the game to feel lonely, melancholy, and occasionally unsettling, although it will never move into outright horror. We want to immerse the player, making them feel alone and lost in a dark world. They will run into no other living people until the very end of the game, and their encounters with other lost souls will always have an element of the bizarre. Having the player feel uneasy but determined to survive will be key to the feel of the game, and their time will be limited by the lantern mechanic, adding an element of tension. At the end, having finally reached the goal, finally having a feeling of accomplishment and success be taken away when the brother transforms into a

dark spirit will add a sense of loss to the game. Although the ending is happy, the player will also have to give up their lantern in order to achieve it, leaving an object that they have grown attached to.

## 1.12 Images and Concept Art



**Image 1:** Concept Art of Lantern



**Image 2:** Forest Level Concept



**Image 3:** Example of an enemy Shade

## 2 Production Details

### 2.1 Anticipated Challenges

Due to the restricted nature of RPG Maker VX Ace, we want to try and differentiate ourselves from a typical JRPG. Some quick research revealed that Action Battle Systems have been scripted as well as dynamic lighting scripts, so our idea was completely doable. The challenge will be to implement it in such a way that is interesting and fun.

- The player should feel a little lost, but not frustratingly so. Ways to combat this include giving hints for players that explore, and musical jingles to signify success in overcoming a puzzle
- The constantly draining light source may be frustrating to some players, but it must not feel like a chore that the player is forced to do simply because that is

the mechanic of the game. To avoid having it feel like a chore, the lantern will not drain too quickly and there will have to be just enough fuel to find for it as well as opportunities to recharge to full for players who adventure.

- In regards to puzzles: Puzzles must be well enough designed to have a growth in difficulty throughout the game, but also have some level of intuitiveness to them. Creating a variety of concepts for the lantern to be used on may be challenging and a number of puzzles will be reused.
- The length of the game is going to vary a lot, because the nature of the game focuses on the concept of exploration and seeing the world. Some players will by chance find the right way to go much more quickly than others and as a result, may find the game to be substantially shorter. The opposite will also hold true where some players will find the game to take quite some time as they potentially wander in circles without realizing it or stumble across every optional secret. The length of the game is an interesting challenge because we want players to experience a great game and not, instead, by chance miss everything and be done in ten minutes. Having NPCs or signs to point the player in the right direction as well as the road will help. Lowering the size of each individual map can also help.
- The sequence where the NPC turns into a Shade and then turns back into a human may be difficult to implement in RPG maker. We will do more research, but we could also explain how Shades are twisted souls in dialogue with the NPC rather than an actual demonstration if we cannot figure out the process.
- With all these challenges in mind, the biggest and most important challenge is making sure the game is fun! The sound effects should feel satisfying, the game should feel fair and the music soothing but not overly unnerving. The art should be pleasant to look at. The game should take itself seriously. Even with all that, the game still might not be fun. We simply won't know until we start playing around with it. It won't appeal to everyone, but hopefully someone is able to find the fun within.

## 2.2 Overall Contingency Plan

The primary focus of the game is the light mechanic. It is of the utmost importance that the lantern held by the player feel important but also be useful. The combat mechanic will be kept at the simplest level if expanding upon it proves to be difficult. AI will be a challenge here as well, as creating AIs that respond properly without being stuck in certain areas or attacking

incorrectly can be a issue. Since the enemies are Shades we can let the AIs walk through walls.

In regards to game length, the levels are mostly designed around the concept of exploration and game length may be difficult to measure but will primarily be done through beta testing. However, levels can be modified in their designs in which the map size could either be expanded or shrunk or more puzzles to be added if either the map feels too long or too short. Additional lights and other tools to guide the player in the correct destination can always be added if the sense of direction is too convoluted and the player becomes too confused. The third level is rather large in scale and lowering the amount of paths available to the player will drastically help lower the amount of time spent wandering around aimlessly. If necessary, we will cut the second level as it doesn't contribute much to the story.

If one of our members are sick or away we will assign the task that is most appropriate to our remaining members. For example, our lead designer will be away for a couple of days and we have assigned a back up lead designer to fill his role.

Should the team be largely ahead of schedule, the generally practice will be to work on the next milestone as well as polish up the current content. Each milestone will detail the specifics. If possible as stretch goals, there is the consideration of adding stat trackers to the game that are displayed at the end. This would be in the form of a statistics screen. If time permits, an achievement system could also be added for completing a variety of tasks such as slaying a certain amount of hostile spirits, discovering all the secrets and beating the game in under a certain time.

Worth mentioning is the possibility of conflict arising within the team about work not getting done on time or disagreements about aspects of how the game should play out. Fortunately members of our team have strong people skills and are rather negotiable. Should any conflicts arise, the producer will be the first point of contact to help resolve any such issues. If necessary, the executive producer will also weigh in and offer great wisdom. Finally, moving the issue up to the head instructor is possible but will likely not happen. The best solution to dealing with conflicts is to prevent conflicts. Having everyone understand what needs to be done and when it needs to be done by will smooth out any problems and naturally we will communicate as a team to get the job done.

## 2.3 Milestones

~~Milestone 1: Team Formation - Due Jan 13th, 2017~~

~~Milestone 2: Concept Pitch - Due Jan 24th, 2017~~

~~Milestone 3: Design Document - Due Jan 31st, 2017~~

~~Milestone 4: Walkthrough with EP (Vertical Slice I) - Due Week of Feb 13th, 2017~~

Time Estimate: 5-10 hours each

- Show a "vertical slice" of our game to our EP, Andrew, with about 5 minutes of content that is as completely polished as possible
- Level One will be completed

Programmers:

By January 28th:

- Simple Combat mechanics
  - Players can attack enemies including sound and attack animation
- HP bar and Fuel Bar
- Fuel consumption through time
- Rough design of the first level in the engine made

By February 14th

- Basic AI for enemies
  - Enemies will attack and follow the player when near
- The polished level with all element including puzzles, health/ oil meter, and basic AI
- Intro cutscene and level one cutscene completed with help of Writer
- Lighting system should illuminate the game world properly
  - Shadows and lights should look appropriate

Art:

By February 5th:

- Tileset for the level
  - Includes trees, buildings, and items.

By February 14th:

- Character sprites for protagonist
- Modified Light images

Audio:

By February 5th:

- Audio cues for ghosts, lantern swinging, flame extinguishing

By February 14th

- Music for the cutscenes in level 1

- Voice acting for this level should also be done. Our scheduled date for voice acting will be Sunday Feb 12.
- SFX for this level should be completed. SFX for this level includes wind, lantern effect for melee attack, enemy sound effects including being struck by enemy as well as ambient enemy noises such as grumbling/moaning,
- Voice acting for cutscenes also completed on Feb 12.
- Voice, Music, and SFX will be integrated by the 13th.

Writer:

By February 14th

- Dialogue, notes, any interactable text in the level
  - Interaction with young girl NPC a priority
- Cutscene dialogue for level 1 cutscenes.
- Any dialogue the protagonist says/thinks

### **Contingency plans:**

If things go well:

- Programmers will start implementing the next level into the engine
- Create sprites for spirits
- Additional music for the next level can be composed
- Start working on the next milestone (Vertical Slice II)

If things go poorly:

- Move any cutscene-related material back
- Character sprites will also be moved back
- If needed puzzles may be simplified

### **~~Milestone 5: Walkthrough with Head Instructor (Vertical Slice II) - Due Week of Feb 27th, 2017~~**

Time Estimate: 5-10 hours each

- Show another "vertical slice" of our game with our professor (Dr. Vadim Bulitko), about 5 minutes in content that is completely polished and different than the first slice
- Level Three which is being shown must be completely done

Programmers:

By February 27th:

- Polish the combat system, making sure it feels good and crisp (ask for feedback on this from relatives/friends/whoever we can find to try this out)
- Experiment with modifying enemies

- The chosen level for this vertical slice must be done with all events included

Art:

By February 27th:

- A new level means an update to the tile-set for new components. Winter aesthetics will be needed (e.g. snow on trees)
- New animations will be needed for the new tiles

Audio:

By February 27th:

- SFX will have to be assigned as appropriate for the various sounds within the level, similar to vertical slice 1
- With a new level, new music will be needed
- Plan and complete voice acting for the level with help of writer
- Plan voice acting for cutscenes
- Voice acting will be completed over reading week

Writer:

By February 27th:

- New interactions will be available in the level requiring additional dialogue
  - Interaction with old man NPC a priority
- Revisit old ingame text to see if anything needs to be changed
- Continue working on the overall script
- Start work on final dialogue with the twin brother

### **Contingency plans:**

If things go well:

- Beta test
- Polish anything we noticed that didn't go so well (ask feedback from whoever we can find to play the game)
- Pat ourselves on the shoulders, we've completed two major milestones in the development of the game

If things go poorly:

- Look at the criticism and understand what needs to be changed
- Consider simplifying second level in order to focus on already existing levels
- Talk with Andrew

### **~~Milestone 6: Beta Release - Due Week of Mar 20, 2017~~**

Time Estimate: ~15-20 hours each



- Upload the completed, functional but not yet completely polished game

#### Programmers:

##### By March 16th:

- Bug testing--Try to find a wide variety of testers to try out our game and give feedback
- Final design of the second level

##### By March 19th:

- Integrate the second level with all scripts and events

##### By March 20th:

- Finish the second level and have it integrated with level one
- Final bug testing in which all events and scripts are tested to see if there are any glitches

#### Art:

##### By March 16th:

- Additional textures will be needed for the construction of the last level, mostly involving a fall/ winter theme
- Touch ups on various art assets as needed

#### Audio:

##### By March 20th:

- Select appropriate SFX and ambient sound to match ingame objects, mostly on the second level, but for any other things that have not been done, i.e. if there is an issue with sfx for the lantern, it should be fixed before the 20th
- Music for every level needs to be done by now
- Voice acting for the cutscenes in the second level as well as the remainder of the game will be completed
- The planned date for voice acting is March 5th.

#### Writer:

##### By March 20th:

- Editing text for spelling and grammatical mistakes
- Revise dialogue as needed, including in cutscenes

#### **Contingency plans:**

##### If things go well:

- Work on title screen and credits music
- Title screen art may be considered
- Polish on the combat system
- Bug testing continues

##### If things go poorly:

- Push back title screen art and various touch-ups for later

- We will reuse music and SFX cues as needed if we're behind
- If we are pushing for time the second level could potentially be dropped

### **~~Milestone 7: Peer Reviews of Betas - Due Mar 28, 2017~~**

Time Estimate: ~2.5 hours each

- Play through the other five games, reading any additional instructions the group gives such as things to keep in mind and necessary instructions to properly run the game
- Write an appropriate review for each game
- Be respectful, considerate and thoughtful. We're here to help each other.

### **~~Milestone 8: Game Trailer - Due April 6th, 2017~~**

Time Estimate: ~2-3 hours each

- Create a trailer of our video game of no more than 2 minutes in length that gets people excited about our video game. Be prepared to answer some questions.

Programmers:

By April 4th:

- Cutscenes may need polish
- Final level should be done, start polishing up the game
- Look for bugs, inconsistencies and anything else that isn't fun

Art:

By April 4th:

- Ingame Logo will be needed
- Executable logo if possible

Audio:

- Music, SFX, and voice acting for trailer must be completed
- Trailer Voice acting is scheduled for April 2nd

Writer:

- Writing for the trailer

### **Contingency plans:**

If things go well:

- Continue bug testing the game to see if there are any glitches with encounters or walls
- 

If things go poorly:

- Take criticisms and see if there are any problem areas that need to be addressed. If needed we may drop certain elements or puzzles in a level

- Drop the second level and work more on the first and third level to increase the feel and polish of the levels.

## **Milestone 9: Gold Release - Due April 11th, 2017**

Time Estimate: 5-10 hours each

- This is it. Everything is finished. Everything must be done by now. The finished game will be handed in, along with: instructions for installing and playing the game, a written walkthrough of everything in the game including spoilers, a brief description of any interesting source code, art assets or music that appears in the game and where, and the finalized Design Document
- Note: Once the deadline passes, nothing else may be uploaded or modified, else a mark of ZERO will be received

Programmers:

By April 11th:

- Polish anything that seems unfinished or feels off
- Create a credits scene in game with help of writer

Art:

By April 11th:

- Title screen image
- Add any missing sprites or graphics

Audio:

By April 11th:

- Look for any missing SFX, musical cues or anything else that seems off
- Fix anything that seems off with the help of the programmers

Writer:

By April 11th:

- Polish, polish, polish. Look for any typos, grammar mistakes and fix anything that's off, such as plot holes if any, and discontinuities in dialogue
- All dialogue and text boxes will be read over by the writer, producer, and lead designer, to ensure there are no grammatical mistakes

### **Contingency plans:**

If things go well:

- Add statistics page with things like steps taken, ghosts slain, souls collected, time spent, lantern pieces collected, zone transitions, hit percentage/accuracy(?), souls helped and secrets found
- Achievement system

If things go poorly:

- Keep polishing anything that is unfinished

## Milestone 10: Team and Course Evaluation - Due week of April 10th, 2017

Time Estimate: ~1 hour each

- Give criticism and feedback about the team and the course

## 3 Credits:

Lost Light  
A CMPUT 250 Project  
Dr. Vadim Bulitko  
Winter 2017

Spiral Studios:



Executive Producer: Andrew Bernakevitch  
Producer: Jonathan Bates  
Lead Designer: George Owen

Story and Writing: Brynn Lewis  
Music and SFX: Jonathan Bates  
Art: George Owen  
Programming, scripting, and implementation: Boris Fleysher, Kevin Lim, Canopus Tong

Scripts and other resources used:

=====

RyuFirestorm (Fire animation)

=====

DT's GameOver +  
Version: 1.0.0

Author: DoctorTodd

<http://rmrk.net/index.php?topic=45882.0>

=====

Khas Light Effects  
Author: Khas

<http://arcthunder.blogspot.ca/>

=====

Falcao Pearl ABS Liquid v3

Author: Falcao

<https://falcaorgss.wordpress.com/category/pearl-abs-liquid/>

=====

Galv's Region Effects

Author: Galv

<https://galvs-scripts.com/2012/10/04/region-effects/>

=====

Galv's Variable Timer Functions V.1.2

Author: Galv

<https://galvs-scripts.com/galvs-variable-timer/>

=====

Shaz's Remember Event Position 1.0

Author: Shaz

<http://www.rpgmakercentral.com/topic/1518-remember-event-position/>

=====

Yanfly's Stop All Movement

Author: Yanfly

<https://yanflychannel.wordpress.com/rmvxa/utility-scripts/stop-all-movement/>

=====

KilloZapit's Dynamic Lights for Khas Light Effects

Author: KilloZapit

<http://www.rpgmakercentral.com/topic/12270-using-khas-lighting-on-a-fireball/>