# Cebarti Manor – Prototype Game Design Document (GDD)

## 1. Overview

**High‑Concept:**  
*Cebarti Manor* is a single‑player roguelike set in a haunted mansion built over the River Styx. Players assume the role of a ghost (or other occupant of the house) trying to escape into the mortal world before their **Essence** runs out. Each run tells a different spirit’s story through procedural maps, a flexible ability system, and a mix of combat, exploration and drafting.

**Theme & Mood:**  
Gothic horror with dark humor. The mansion acts as a paranormal nexus curated by the eccentric Helen Cebarti. It is both a museum of cursed relics and a labyrinth that pulls spirits from the Styx. The aesthetic blends haunted house, Victorian cabinet of curiosities and subtle comedy (e.g., Helen’s flippant attitude toward interns who die on the job).

## 2. Core Loop & Player Goals

1. **Draft Starting Memories** – The ghost awakens in the Styx well and drafts three Memories from sets of three options. Memories determine how actions are generated (see section 4.2).
2. **Navigate Corridors & Rooms** – Progress upward through the procedurally generated Manor. Each Corridor shows three elements (doors, features or encounters). The player may refresh the corridor (costing Essence) or select a door or event. Running out of Essence ends the run.
3. **Fight, Loot & Trade** – Rooms may contain combat encounters, merchants, treasure or events. Combat rewards new Memories or Relics and gold. Merchants sell Memories, Relics, consumables and Essence.
4. **Reach the Foyer** – Complete 10 rooms and defeat the final boss to escape. Win conditions differ for each character archetype; failure occurs if Essence reaches zero or the player is defeated in combat.

### Essence

Essence functions as both **health** and a resource for certain abilities. It constantly drains during a run (being in the mortal world is difficult for spirits). Essence is gained from Infused rooms, certain relics and consumables (e.g., Potion of Essence). If Essence reaches zero, the spirit fades back to the Styx and the run ends.

## 3. Characters & Archetypes

Each run features a different character archetype. All use the same core mechanics (Memories, Action Set, etc.) but vary in goals and starting loadouts.

| Archetype | Goal | Notes |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **The Alien (default ghost)** | Escape the Manor before fading. | Blank slate; discovers memories during the run. |
| **The Intern** | Collect lost relics for Helen. Survive long enough to return them. | Gains tools to locate relics quickly but starts weak in combat. |
| **The Zealot** | Destroy Helen and her collection, freeing trapped spirits. | Mortal exorcist; uses AP‑intensive disruptive abilities. Drain Essence to power exorcisms. |
| **The Gravedigger** | Collect and bury remains to give spirits rest. | Summoner/utility; manipulates corpses and terrain. |
| **The Medium** | Commune with spirits to learn the Manor’s secrets. | Leverages enemy abilities, conjures temporary allies. |
| **Helen Cebarti** (unlockable) | Map the shifting Manor and find her fragmented memories. | Starts with many weak actions; must rebuild her identity via exploration. |

## 4. Combat System

### 4.1 Action Points & Action Set

* **Action Points (AP):** Each turn the player gains AP equal to their Agility stat. Unspent AP carries over (Fallout‑style). Most actions cost 1–3 AP; some cost more or have variable cost.
* **Action Set:** At the start of the player’s turn four actions populate a bar (the Action Set). Actions are drawn from the **Action Soup**, burn off at the end of the enemy’s turn and are replaced at the start of the next player turn. Players can use any or all actions if they have enough AP.
* **Cycling & Chains:** Many actions form **Action Chains**, sequences of predefined **Action Links**. When a player uses an action that belongs to a chain, it cycles to the next link in that chain. Some chains contain penalty links (e.g., *Dazed* or *Fatigue*) that must be cycled through to reach strong payoff actions. **Facing Effects** provide passive bonuses while an action is face‑up in the Action Set.
* **Burning & Retaining:** Using an action or ending the enemy’s turn causes that action to burn off unless marked as **retained** (persistent). Chain links cycle within a single slot; once the last link is used, that slot becomes empty until the end of the enemy’s turn.

### 4.2 Memories

Memories are fragments of past lives that define the rules for generating actions. Each memory belongs to one of four **Emotional Archetypes**—**Anger**, **Fear**, **Joy** or **Sadness**—corresponding to a design space similar to a “color pie.”

* **Soup Contribution:** Each memory adds weighted entries to the **Action Soup**. A primary action is added at 100 % weight (full chance); secondary entries contribute fractional weight (e.g., 50 %). Overweight entries (150 %+) push certain actions to appear frequently even with many memories. During the Action Set generation, four actions are drawn from this soup.
* **Drafting & Hybrid Memories:** At the beginning of a run the player drafts three memories. Additional memories are obtained from combat, events or merchants. Hybrid memories combine aspects of two emotions and contribute actions from both categories (e.g., *Memory of the Duel* adds *Strike* and *Counterguard*). Random memories add one action from three of the four emotions (excluding one) to add variance. Ambiguous memories provide generic mechanics like temporary AP or action duplication.

#### Emotional Archetypes and Their Flavor

| Emotion | Core Playstyle | Sample Actions | Associated Buffs/Conditions |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Anger** | Fast aggression, status pressure | *Strike → Grapple → Throw* chain, *Bloodlash* (Bleed), *Roar* (cycles enemy actions), *Overdrive* (spend all AP to deal burst damage) | **Bleed, Vulnerable**, **Crit Chance** |
| **Fear** | Defense, attrition, AP hoarding | *Ethereal Shroud* (Block), *Counterguard* (retaliate), *Withdraw → Hide* chain (dodge), *Stall* (force enemy skip) | **Dazed**, **Armor, Retaliate** |
| **Joy** | Buffs, long chains, sustain | *Festival Light → Sparks* chain (crit buff & AoE), *Cheer* (generate temporary AP), *Laughter* (heal), *Song of Triumph* (team buff) | **Confused**, **Essence Regen** |
| **Sadness** | Setup, combo payoffs, Essence costs | *Fatigue → Stumble → Breakthrough* chain, *Dirge* (AoE + Bleed), *Remembrance* (duplicate last action), *Widow’s Veil* (gain AP after burning last action) | **Fatigue**, **Block** |

#### Example Memories

| Emotional Memory | Soup Contribution & Effect |
| --- | --- |
| **Memory of the Bar Fight (Anger)** | +1 *Strike* (100 %), +1 *Grapple* (50 %). Provides a basic attack chain. |
| **Memory of the Paranoid Watchman (Fear)** | +1 *Counterguard* (75 %). Facing: doubles **Retaliate** damage while Counterguard is face‑up. |
| **Memory of the Festival (Joy)** | +1 *Festival Light* (100 %), +1 *Sparks* (50 %). Enables long chain for buffs and AoE. |
| **Memory of the Long March (Sadness)** | +1 *Fatigue* (100 %), +1 *Stumble* (50 %), +1 *Breakthrough* (25 %). Heavy penalties to reach a huge payoff. |
| **Memory of the Duel (Anger + Fear)** | +1 *Strike* (50 %), +1 *Counterguard* (50 %). If you block all damage, your next Strike costs –1 AP. |
| **Memory of the Trick Candle (Ambiguous)** | +1 *Shuffle Memory* (75 %). Allows rerolling a random action slot. |

### 4.3 Relics

Relics are haunted objects from Helen’s collection that permanently modify the rules of play. They do not generate actions; instead they alter AP costs, damage scaling, conditions and cycles. Relics encourage specific archetypes but also have cross‑archetype utility.

**Examples:**

* **Candle of Red Wax (Anger Relic)** – Bleed deals double damage. Heal for half the damage Bleed deals.
* **Porcelain Rat Figurine (Fear Relic)** – When an enemy attack misses, apply a **Dazed** link to one of the enemy’s chains.
* **Lantern of Festival Glass (Joy Relic)** – While any buff is active, gain **Essence Regen (1)** each turn.
* **Burial Urn with Cracked Lid (Sadness Relic)** – When you burn your last action, gain +3 AP next turn.
* **Victory Banner (Anger + Joy Relic)** – After playing a buff, your next attack deals double damage.
* **Candlelit Hourglass (Fear + Joy Relic)** – At end of turn, gain Essence equal to unspent AP.
* **Fractured Mirror (Colorless Relic)** – The last action played each turn has a 25 % chance to auto‑repeat at +1 AP cost.

Relics are obtained from elite fights, treasure rooms and merchants. Some relics are powerful, others quirky. Helen’s flavor text describes their origins (e.g., “Recovered from a merry‑go‑round fire; still spins merrily”).

### 4.4 Buffs & Conditions

Conditions and buffs are keyworded effects applied by actions, relics and enemies. Each emotion owns specific debuffs and buffs to maintain design symmetry.

| Emotion | Conditions | Buffs |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Anger** | **Bleed** – At start of turn lose 1 Essence per stack. |  |
| **Vulnerable** – Take +50 % damage until next turn. | **Crit Chance** – Attacks have +X % chance to deal double damage. |  |
| **Fear** | **Dazed** – Dead action link; costs 2 AP to cycle; no effect or facing bonus. | **Armor** – Reduce incoming damage by X (resets each turn). |
| **Retaliate** – When struck, deal X damage back. |  |  |
| **Joy** | **Confused** – At end of turn replace one random action with a random soup action. | **Essence Regen** – Restore X Essence each turn. |
| **Sadness** | **Fatigue** – While face‑up reduce AP regen by 1; costs +2 AP to cycle. | **Block** – Prevent the next X damage (one‑time shield). |

## 5. Progression & Map Generation

### 5.1 Corridors

The manor’s map is built from corridors and rooms:

* Each corridor displays three slots—doors, features or encounters. The player chooses one of the three to engage with or may **continue down the corridor** to refresh all slots. Refreshing costs 2 Essence, plus 1 additional Essence for each subsequent refresh of the same corridor.
* **Doors** lead to rooms. Doors may be ordinary, locked or flooded (see below). **Features** include hazards/traps, special events or non‑combat interactions. **Encounters** are wandering spirits (mini fights) or micro‑events that may grant or steal resources.

### 5.2 Doors & Room Types

Doors have modifiers:

* **Ordinary** – Standard version of the room.
* **Enhanced** – Requires a **Key**; offers ~30 % better rewards (e.g., more gold, better merchant discounts).
* **Infused** – Flooded with Essence; provides Essence recovery (~30 % boost to Essence rewards) and enhances spirit‑related effects in combat.

Room types:

1. **Combat Room** – Standard fight against normal enemies. Reward: gold and either a Memory or a Relic (player chooses which).
2. **Elite Combat Room** – Tougher fight; reward: gold plus both a Memory and a Relic.
3. **Boss Room (scaled)** – A normal enemy scaled to boss level. Reward: large gold and a draft (choose one of three) of both a Memory and a Relic.
4. **Recovery Room** – Restore Essence, remove conditions or heal. Some recovery rooms trade AP regen for larger heals.
5. **Treasure Room** – Contains one or more relics, keys and consumables.
6. **Merchant Room** – An NPC merchant sells Memories, Relics, consumables or Essence for gold. Merchant rooms can be enhanced or infused.
7. **Event Room** – Random events; 5 outcomes (2 good, 2 bad, 1 very good).

To complete a run, the player must survive 10 rooms (mix of combat and non‑combat) and then defeat a final boss in the foyer.

### 5.3 Hazards & Traps

Hazards block doors but guarantee an enhanced or infused room behind them. The player must pay a cost to clear the hazard or use a consumable:

| Hazard | Cost to Clear | Outcome |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Spiked Floor** | Take 8 damage | Gain access to the enhanced/infused room |
| **Soul Snare** | Add a **Cursed Memory** (secondary soup pollution) | Access enhanced/infused room |
| **Mirror Maze** | Be **Confused** in your next 3 combats | Room behind is enhanced/infused |
| **Rust Lock** | Pay 1 random consumable | Room behind is enhanced/infused |
| **Flooded Hall** | Lose 10 Essence | Guarantees an **Infused** room |

### 5.4 Cursed Memories

Cursed memories act like colorless curses. When acquired they add bad actions to the Action Soup at a secondary weight, diluting the pool. Examples:

* **Memory of Ash in Your Mouth** – +0.5 *Cough* (1 AP, no effect, cycles).
* **Memory of Breaking Glass** – +0.5 *Cut Palm* (2 AP, take 2 damage).
* **Memory of Rotten Bread** – +0.5 *Stomach Ache* (2 AP, apply Fatigue to self).
* **Memory of Betrayal’s Whisper** – +0.5 *False Command* (3 AP, discard a random action).
* **Memory of Drowning** – +0.5 *Thrash* (2 AP, deal 2 self‑damage).

A **Shroud Talisman** consumable prevents the next cursed memory from being added.

### 5.5 Events and Merchants

Event rooms feature five possible outcomes:

* **Forgotten Toy (good)** – Gain one random Joy memory.
* **Vigil Candle (good)** – Gain one random consumable.
* **Stolen Breath (bad)** – Lose 10 Essence.
* **Splintered Doll (bad)** – Gain one cursed memory.
* **Heirloom Chest (very good)** – Draft one of three Relics.

Merchant rooms present one of four NPCs:

| Merchant | Specialty | Notes |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **The Ragpicker** | Memory trader | Sell two memories to buy one new random memory. |
| **The Collector** | Relic trader | Trade or purchase relics; sells rare relics at high cost. |
| **The Candleman** | Essence & minor consumables | Sells Potions of Essence, Shroud Talismans, Purity Symbols. |
| **The Bellringer** | Consumables | Sells keys, nails, courier bells, guiding candles. |

Enhanced merchant rooms offer larger inventories or discounts. Infused merchant rooms sometimes allow bartering Essence for goods.

## 6. Enemies

All eight enemy types below can be encountered as normal, elite or boss versions. Stats and mechanics scale accordingly (elite ~+50 % Essence; boss ~×2 Essence with enhanced mechanics). Rewards scale: normal → Memory or Relic + small gold, elite → Memory + Relic + medium gold, boss → draft one of three Memories and one of three Relics + large gold.

| Enemy | Essence (normal) | AP per turn | Actions & Mechanics | Scaling |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Wailing Widow** | 35 | 6 | *Piercing Wail (2 AP)* – AoE 5 dmg + add 1 **Dazed** to each player chain; *Grief Lash (3 AP)* – 10 dmg; if target has Dazed, apply **Vulnerable (1)**; *Shroud of Mourning (1 AP, Facing)* – +2 **Armor** while face‑up | Elite: +1 Dazed per Wail; boss: Wail becomes 0‑AP cycling action repeated twice |
| **Possessed Armor** | 40 | 5 | *Rusty Slam (2 AP)* – 8 dmg; *Deflective Stance (2 AP, Facing)* – 5 Block; **Retaliate (3)** if hit; *Haunted Advance (1 AP)* – forces player chains to cycle | Elite: doubled retaliation; boss: retaliation also applies **Bleed (1)** |
| **Greedy Shade** | 30 | 7 | *Essence Drain (3 AP)* – Steal 6 Essence, heal self for 3; *Gold Toss (2 AP)* – 7 dmg; bonus gold on kill; *Hollow Hunger (2 AP, Facing)* – while face‑up, player’s AP regen –1 | Elite: Drain also applies **Fatigue (1)**; boss: passive steal 2 Essence per turn |
| **Jester Wraith** | 28 | 8 | *Mischief Cycle (2 AP)* – Randomly cycle 1 player slot; *Mocking Slap (1 AP)* – 4 dmg; double dmg if a slot was cycled this turn; *Chaotic Laughter (3 AP, Facing)* – 20 % chance to scramble all actions at end of turn | Elite: cycles two slots; boss: scrambles entire Action Set once every three turns |
| **Stygian Hound** | 32 | 6 | *Gnash (2 AP)* – 6 dmg + **Bleed (2)**; *Howl (2 AP)* – apply **Vulnerable (1)** to all enemies; *Rending Bite (2 AP, Chain)* – deals 10 dmg if target is Bleeding | Elite: Bleed ticks for +1; boss: Bleed duration doubled |
| **Mourning Choir** | 36 | 6 | *Dirge Note (2 AP)* – add **Fatigue** link to one player chain; *Choral Wail (3 AP)* – AoE 8 dmg; *Lingering Tone (1 AP, Facing)* – while face‑up, player AP regen –1 | Elite: two Fatigue per Dirge; boss: summons an additional singer (duplicates actions) |
| **Corridor Mimic** | 38 | 5 | *Bite the Curious (3 AP)* – 12 dmg; locks one player slot for next turn; *Chain Snap (2 AP)* – forces a random player chain to advance; *False Door (Facing)* – reduces probability of Enhanced/Flooded rooms by 10 % | Elite: locks two slots; boss: lock persists until the Mimic is damaged |
| **Oathbreaker Knight** | 40 | 7 | *Shield Wall (2 AP)* – Block 10; facing: +Armor; *Betrayer’s Slash (3 AP)* – 9 dmg twice; +5 each hit if target is **Vulnerable**; *Oath Cycle (2 AP)* – add **Fatigue** to both player and self | Elite: automatically applies Vulnerable before slash; boss: gains Block and attacks in the same action |

### True Final Bosses

1. **The Archivist** – 120 Essence, 8 AP. Creates fake relic effects that debuff the player, copies the player’s last action at +1 AP cost, and increases Essence costs while its *Ledger Seal* is face‑up. This fight mirrors the player’s deck and punishes their reliance on expensive actions or relics.
2. **The Flood Bride** – 110 Essence, 9 AP. Uses *Drowned Embrace* (12 dmg + adds Dazed and Fatigue), *Torrent Burst* (10 AoE + drains Essence from all), and *Rising Waters* (applies Bleed to all at end of turn). The fight demands sustain or rapid burst to overcome continuous Essence drain.

## 7. Consumables & Items

Players may carry up to three consumables at a time; keys count as consumables. Consumables can only be used in corridors.

| Consumable | Effect |
| --- | --- |
| **Key** | Unlocks a locked door; the room becomes **Enhanced**. |
| **Potion of Essence** | Recover 15 Essence immediately. |
| **Guiding Candle** | Refresh the corridor for free; all doors become Enhanced or Infused. |
| **Iron Nail** | Destroy one memory from your pool permanently (useful for trimming the Action Soup). |
| **Purity Symbol** | Remove a hazard/trap without penalty; door behind is Enhanced. |
| **Courier Bell** | Refresh corridor for free; the next refresh yields a single merchant room (Enhanced or Infused). |
| **Shroud Talisman** | Prevent the next cursed memory from entering your collection. |
| **Broken Hourglass** | Skip corridor cost once; refresh corridor for 0 Essence. |

Consumables are purchased from merchants or found in treasure rooms.

## 8. Draft Archetypes

The emotional “color” system naturally creates draft archetypes similar to trading‑card games. Players can build **mono‑emotion** decks or mix two emotions for synergistic effects. Wildcard memories and relics support colorless strategies or fill gaps.

### Mono‑Emotion Strategies

* **Anger (Aggro/Pressure):** short actions, Bleed and Vulnerable stacking, critical hits. Relics like Candle of Red Wax and Iron Gauntlet support this style.
* **Fear (Control/Attrition):** focuses on Armor, Block and Retaliate; slows the game and punishes enemies over time. Relics like Carousel Key and Porcelain Rat Figurine enhance AP hoarding and defensive loops.
* **Joy (Buff/Sustain):** long chains with repeated buffs and Essence Regen; reliant on staying alive to stack power. Relics like Bell of Persistence and Lantern of Festival Glass keep the party buffed and healthy.
* **Sadness (Combo/Setup):** invests AP and Essence in slow chains to unlock devastating payoffs. Relics like Burial Urn and Tattered Mourning Veil reward players for burning their last action and risking resource loss.

### Two‑Emotion Archetypes

| Pair | Synergy & Playstyle | Key Cards/Relics |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Anger + Fear** | Attrition Bruisers – pressures enemies with Bleed and Vulnerable while surviving via Armor and Retaliate. | *Memory of the Duel*, **Bloodied Prayer Beads** (Retaliate applies Bleed). |
| **Anger + Joy** | Tempo Burn – uses buffs to amplify burst damage; e.g., applying Festival Light before Overdrive. | *Memory of the Victory Feast*, **Victory Banner**. |
| **Anger + Sadness** | Self‑Destructive Combo – combines Bleed and Fatigue to punish both parties; invests in big Breakthrough payoffs. | *Memory of Betrayal*, **Rusted Shackles** (adds Fatigue but increases big hit damage). |
| **Fear + Joy** | Long‑Game Sustain – hoards AP and stacks buffs/regen; outlasts opponents. | *Memory of Vigil*, **Candlelit Hourglass**. |
| **Fear + Sadness** | Attrition Control – uses AP stall and AoE attrition; triggers Breakthrough finishers once enemies are weakened. | *Memory of Funeral Procession*, **Funeral Wreath**. |
| **Joy + Sadness** | Buff‑Combo Loops – duplicates actions to stack buffs or chain payoffs; thrives on synergy between Laughter, Remembrance and Dirge. | *Memory of Mischievous Tears*, **Twin Masks of Comedy and Tragedy**. |

Wildcard memories and relics (e.g., **Broken Hourglass**, **Fractured Mirror**) operate like colorless cards, enabling off‑path strategies or facilitating mid‑run pivots.

## 9. Prototype Scope & Next Steps

This document outlines a complete framework for a playable alpha version of *Cebarti Manor*. To build an initial prototype, focus on:

* **Core Mechanics:** Implement Action Points, Action Set generation via Soup, Memory drafting, chain cycling and facing effects.
* **Content:** Use the 35 memories and 20 relics described above. Start with a small set of actions (20–30) drawn from the memory pool.
* **Map System:** Generate corridors with three slots, room types (combat, elite, recovery, treasure, merchant, event). Incorporate locked and infused doors, hazards and consumables.
* **Enemy Roster:** Implement the eight scalable enemies and two true bosses with their stats and movesets.
* **Economy & Progression:** Balance Essence drain, gold, consumables and room requirements (10 rooms + final boss) to create a challenging but winnable run.

**Expansion:** Future iterations can add more memories, relics, consumables, enemies and room types, as well as story events tied to Helen’s past and the Manor’s history.

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