

# Three Nights Until Midnight

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## Experience Goal

As this game revolves around the story of mystery and puzzle-solving, our goal was to achieve tension as well as suspense in the gameplay. In this game where choices matter and lead to different endings, we aimed for the players to feel the weight of their actions as well as the nervousness that follows. And as they progress in the story and face the mysteries that they must solve, we hope to create an atmosphere that is unsettling and mysterious that can help the player to feel as though they are part of the story.

## Narrative Stance + Rationale

We employed a third-person narrative with our main character Clark as our focalizer. Through this narrative stance, it gave us more freedom on the details that we can add that the main character may not initially notice, allowing us to control the number of clues as well as the atmosphere and scene. The narrative style was subjective, as the story must be uncovered at the same pace as the character to allow the player to experience the mystery. Through this, we were able to create tension and suspense by limiting the player's knowledge of the situation and future by limiting that of the character's.

## Structure:

Our story uses the branch and bottleneck story structure. This structure often relies on states to maintain continuity in the narrative. We might track an overall score or adjust another part of the consequences or intrinsic feedback based on earlier choices. Our story has several different endings. In a branch-and-bottleneck structure, you enter different options over time, but then all paths lead back to a single bottleneck. In our story, the main character, Clark, will explore an old house, interacting with characters and making choices. As the exploration continues, the story will also lead to many different endings. Starting from the second day, each day is a bottleneck and the hero will usher in a different story line depending on his choices. We have multiple different endings at different bottlenecks in an attempt to give players a different and unique plot each time they play, and each plot is carefully designed so that it does not logically conflict back and forth. Through this structure, we hope to create a progressive, from ordinary to horrible atmosphere, so that players can feel step by step what is happening to Clark. The benefit of our use of this structure is that it usually works better for building unique stories and also helps us manage the plot better.

[https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVOgHLoHI=](https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVOgHLoHI=/)

## Key Ink Variables / State Tracking

```
342 ===3241latch
343 Clark saw a latch that looked way out of place.
344 *{221latch}[Remember last time pulling the latch] ->3242latch
345 *{not 221latch}[Pull the latch] -> 3242open
346 *[Don't pull the latch and keep going] Clark disregarded the latch and kept on moving
    until he stumbled upon a door. -> 325block
347
348 ===3242latch
349 Clark remembered last time he pulled the latch something terrifying happened.
350 *[Pull the latch anyway] -> 3242open
351 *[Stray away and keep going] Clark kept going forward and soon he stumbled upon
    another door. -> 325block
352 ===3242open
353 Clark opened the latch and saw a pair of eyes looking straight back at him. Staring
    for what felt like more than a minute, they seeming stared to swirl leaving Clark
    with an even more uneasy feeling than he already had been feeling.
354 ~Insanity+=1
355 *[Turn around and keep going] As Clark was horrified by the scene, he quickly turned
    around and kept going. Not soon after, he calmed himself down and stumbled upon a
    door. -> 325block
356
```

Insanity is a Variable and mechanic that acts as a path the player can be led down to show their mental states progression throughout the game. The concept came to be when we planned out specific endings, but realized there is no real ending that shows how the estate the player stays at actually takes a toll on him as different odd events happen throughout the story. If the player discovers enough secrets to drive up their insanity an alternate ending will unlock on a later day that isn't necessarily the worst ending but isn't good.

## Ink affordances

```
▼ ===232Talking_Jareks
Clark noticed Jareks who was reading the newspaper, and asked him something about the inheritance.
*{221Diary}I found Mr. Marshall's notebook.
->2332Discussing_witchcraft
*What kind of person was Mr. Marshall in his lifetime?
->2321Marshall's_lifetime
▼ ===2332Discussing_witchcraft
Mr. Jareks, with grave eyes, sighed and said, "This is Mr. Marshall's diary, a diary which records all the efforts he has made since the death of his son." Efforts? "Yes, he has been obsessed with witchcraft, and spent most of his remaining years trying to bring his son back from the dead" Clark felt a bad chill run through him, as if he felt something and couldn't say it, as if a stone was weighing on his heart.
->24rest_of_dav
229 ▼ ===325block
230 There were voices coming from behind the door, vague but familiar. Clark pressed his ear up to the door to get a better grasp of what the voices were saying.
231 "...Ma..."
232 "Haha.....Shall"
233 Although Clark cannot quite comprehend what the voices were saying, but he was sure that they were human voices, and they sounded very very familiar.
234 "Mr.... and Mrs. Quinn?" Clark mumbled the words to himself as he finally recognized the voices of the distant conversation behind the door. He was sure that it was the Quinns behind the door.
235 *{2321Marshall's_lifetime and 321fake_couple}[Try to find a way to open the door] -> 326normalhe1
236 *{333leo}[Try to listen to their conversations] -> 3261bigFinding
237 *[Try to open the door with force] -> 3262psychicbe
238
```

We wanted to push the player to explore dialog paths or other rooms where they can obtain items that will allow them to unlock different paths at later points in the story. In the examples above the player discovers a Diary that allows him to learn more about the owner of the estate which he would not have figured out if the

Dairy was not found. This also impacts the paths that player takes on other days and also endings as well.

For many paths we gave the player the opportunity to “chicken out” which gave the feeling of risk and reward, further pushing the agenda that the player forges their own path which can be affected very easily if they are rather careless with their decisions. This gives the player agency in the decisions they are constantly making and thinking about the possible consequences they might have in the future.

## Discourse

She stood still behind him, almost unmoving.

"What would you like to know?"

"What kind of person was Mr.Marshall"

"What do you know about witchcraft in the house?"

"How did you get behind me?"

"Witchcraft?" Suddenly, her composure broke, and her giggles echoed along the corridor. "I'm sorry, but I don't know anything about witchcraft here".

"Although," she looked around and leaned in. "It might be in your best interest to look around the library", she whispered, "third case, third shelf, third book from the right". She stepped back in her original spot and her smile disappeared from her face, as if whatever possessed her at the moment had left her body.

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She stood still behind him, almost unmoving.

"What would you like to know?"

"What kind of person was Mr.Marshall"

"How did you get behind me?"

"Nothing else"

In this example the player is prevented from continuing on in the story unless they explore certain options which will give them information on where to head next. We wanted the player to explore and get more of a feel of what is going in the story rather than skip right through parts that build suspense. Manipulating the player into exploring the world allows for a more immersive experience, and to better understand the path they want to take the main character down.

## Something Cool

We are very pleased with how the horror and thriller elements worked out, with careful and proper use of verbs to give the player an idea of how the character feels in game. This was particularly challenging in a shorter text driven game with new images, so being able to paint a picture in the players mind was a big focus. This is also made

possible by the working structure that our group implemented, having each of the members work on separate “days” and piece the story together. Being able to show different perspectives in one story and at the same time keeping it consistent enough to be a whole is what we aimed for, and we are glad that we succeeded.