

Description of video games inspired by H.P. Lovecraft

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Chapter 1. Game Review & Guide Development

Game Review & Guide Development

As part of a Master's thesis on H.P. Lovecraft's influence across culture , I focused Chapter 3 on interactive content. I conducted independent, hands-on game-play of several Lovecraft-inspired video games to create primary source materials. My outcome for this project included:

- Detailed technical reviews and of game-play, story, and atmosphere.
- Comprehensive player guides and instructions.
- Content of specific elements of Lovecraft's original literary works.

Chapter 2. Alone in the dark 1992

Game Review: Alone in the Dark (1992)

Alone in the Dark, developed by Infogrames and released in 1992 for MS-DOS, is a landmark title celebrated as the **forefather of modern survival horror**. Despite its aged mechanics, the game offers a **fantastic and rewarding experience** for those willing to brave its challenges

Lovecraftian Influence and Atmosphere

The game's narrative is deeply rooted in **occult and supernatural horror**, drawing heavily on H.P. Lovecraft's style and mythology.

- **Setting:** The action is set almost entirely within a **1920s Louisiana mansion**, a fitting background for cosmic horror.
- **The Occult Plot:** The central mystery revolves around the mansion's original builder, the ruthless pirate known as **Ezekiel Pregzt**, who sought **immortality through the occult**.
- **The Necronomicon:** The infamous book of magic, the **Necronomicon**, a creation of Lovecraft, is explicitly mentioned as being used in forbidden rituals beneath the mansion, directly connecting the game to the Cthulhu Mythos.
- **Atmosphere:** The story is **uncovered** by the player through **notes and documents**, gradually revealing a history of great evil connected within the mansion. This method of drip-feeding information creates a compelling, unsettling atmosphere that is both **classical and time-appropriate**.

Technical Writing: Game Instructions

Alone in the Dark is a survival horror title blending exploration, puzzle-solving, and combat. It is played with either of the two protagonists: **Emily Hartwood** or the most common choice, **Edward Carnby**.

I. Controls and Movement

1. **Control Scheme:** The game utilizes **tank controls**. This means directional input (e.g., left/right) turns the character, and forward/backward input moves them.
2. **Input:** All movement is typically done via the **arrow keys**. The original version does not support controller or key-binding without modding.
3. **Running:** To run, the player must **double tap and hold the directional key**. Movement animations are slow, so mastering the run is crucial.

II. Interaction and Inventory

1. **Actions Menu:** Actions such as **searching and pushing** objects must be **activated from the pause menu.**
2. **Inventory Management:** All item inventory and management are also accessed and performed through the **pause menu.**

III. Survival and Combat

1. **Save Frequently:** The game is unforgiving. Players should **save often** and treat each area like a **puzzle to be solved**, learning from deaths and mistakes.
2. **Resource Management:** Ammo and supplies for the various melee weapons and guns are **scarce**. **Caution is advised** when deciding whether to fight or flee.
3. **Combat Tip:** Combat can be tough at first, with enemies able to **stun lock** the character. Persistence is key to mastering the timing and positioning required to deal with foes.

IV. Puzzle Solving

1. **Exploration:** The core game-play involves **solving puzzles and moving between areas** in the **labyrinthine mansion.**
2. **Adventure Logic:** Many puzzles follow an **adventure game style logic**, requiring players to use items in specific, non-obvious ways. Progression is highly **satisfying** once the game's many mysteries are unraveled.

Chapter 3. Shadow of comet 1993

Game Review: Call of Cthulhu - Shadow of the Comet (1993)

Call of Cthulhu: Shadow of the Comet, released in 1993 by Infogrames under the Chaosium Inc. license, is a classic point-and-click adventure that successfully translates the cosmic horror of H.P. Lovecraft into a video game format.

Climate and Lovecraftian Influence

The game specializes in creating an **incredible climate of suspense and lurking threat**. *Shadow of the Comet* builds its atmosphere through **unsettling dialogues**. The game initially is set in the town of Ilsmouth (a reference to Lovecraft's Innsmouth) appears calm, but the sense of a deep-seated wrongness makes the player constantly feel "something is not right. This **suspense is persistent** throughout the whole game.

The influence of H.P. Lovecraft is central. The game holds the **Chaosium Inc. license** for the Cthulhu mythology, allowing it to officially belong to the Lovecraft canon . The plot, featuring journalist John T. Carter sent to Ilsmouth to observe Halley's Comet, directly adapts elements from Lovecraft's story *The Shadow Over Innsmouth*.

Graphics and Era Context

The graphics, were **very good considering the time when the game was issued**. Released in 1993, the game's visuals, particularly the use of **portraits and close-ups of characters based on famous actors** like Jack Nicholson, were a common stylistic choice of the era. Importantly, the limited graphical ability of the time allowed for a crucial element: **imagination**. The player's mind filled in the blanks, enhancing the horror and mystery presented through the script and dialogues.

Paper Version of Letters (Immersion Elements)

The premium CD-ROM edition of the game included a fantastic addition that greatly increased the player's **immersion** into the game: a packet of **paper documents, letters, and certificates** . These real-world physical items, often printed on paper made to look old , included:

- A list of hospital patients.
- Information about the **Necronomicon**.
- A detailed **death certificate**

These items weren't just collector's items; they were **integral to building and developing the game's history and story**. This type of immersive content was a hallmark of 90s adventures, using physical props to compensate for graphical limitations and enrich the narrative.

Player Instructions and Tips

Shadow of the Comet is a typical adventure game where players **walk, collect items, and use items** to solve puzzles.

Basic Gameplay Instructions:

- **Control Scheme:** The game primarily uses the **keyboard** for character movement and interaction, with specific keys mapped to functions.
- **Interaction Keys:** Utilize dedicated keys for core actions, such as:
 - **G** for "Get" (take an item).
 - **L** for "Look" (examine an object/area).
- **Narrative Focus:** The story is heavily conveyed through extensive **dialogues**, reflecting the common style of early 90s adventure titles. Pay close attention to what characters say, as this is your main source of plot and puzzle clues.

Essential Player Tips:

1. **Save Frequently:** The game is "old school" and operates on a **permadeath** mechanic. You can die, and there are **no checkpoints**. If you do not save, you will be forced to restart from the beginning.
2. **Examine Everything:** Use the "Look" function (L) on objects and environments. The subtle clues needed to solve the game's puzzles are often hidden in the descriptions or dialogues.
3. **Appreciate the Climate:** Focus on the story and the building sense of dread. The game is for those who enjoy **adventures** and appreciate the narrative, character development, and atmospheric tension over graphic realism.

Recommendation: This game is a **must-have** for any fan of Lovecraftian mythology and classic 90s adventure games.

Chapter 4. Prisoner of ice 1995

Prisoner of Ice (Call of Cthulhu) - Review and Operational Manual

1.0 Executive Summary

Prisoner of Ice (1995, Infogrames) is a classic point-and-click adventure game based on H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos, as explicitly titled *Call of Cthulhu*. The game successfully merges a historical setting (World War II) with cosmic horror.

Table 1.

Attribute	Assessment	Notes
Release Year	1995	Created by Infogrames.
Genre	Point-and-Click Adventure	Focuses on item collection and puzzle solving.
Setting	World War II, Antarctic, Global	Initial claustrophobic setting on a submarine
Pacing	Fast (Initial), Moderate (Mid-Game)	Begins with a compelling, high-stakes sequence.
Difficulty	Low to Moderate	Puzzles are logical, but item discovery is challenging.
Technical Merit	High	Hand-drawn cards (150 locations), 3D-rendered characters (60,000 animation frames), and impressive 3D-rendered intro sequences.

2.0 Systemic Analysis (Review)

2.1 Core Mechanics and Gameplay

The game sticks to the **traditional point-and-click adventure model**: the player navigates through locations, interacts with Non-Player Characters (NPCs), collects items, and uses these items to solve puzzles to advance the plot.

- **Puzzles:** Puzzles are generally , guiding the player smoothly through its plot. The main objective is consistently clear.
- **Obstacles:** The only significant difficulty and source of frustration is the requirement for "pixel hunting"—discovering two-pixel-sized objects (e.g., a needle) on large, detailed backgrounds.
- **Duration:** The game is characterized as **very short and very simple** once the required items are located.

2.2 Technical Implementation and Visuals

The visual presentation was a key differentiator at the time of release (1995):

- **Backgrounds:** All 150 unique locations are **hand-drawn**, contributing to a strong atmospheric quality.
- **Characters:** Characters were created using **3D rendering** (possibly on 3D Studio 4.0) and animated using **motion capture**.
- **Graphical Modes:** The game shipped with two display modes:
 - **VGA (320x240):** Lower resolution for weaker systems.
 - **VGA (640x480):** Higher resolution, recommended for optimal visual fidelity.

3.0 Thematic Integration: Lovecraft Analysis

The game is explicitly licensed under the **Call of Cthulhu** banner, directly integrating the Mythos into its core narrative.

Table 2.

Lovecraftian Motif	Transcript Connection	Thematic Role in Game
Cosmic Horror/Mythos	Concerns the mythology of Cthulhu, gods of Cthulhu.	Provides the antagonist, narrative stakes, and setting for the adventure.
The Menace from the Ice	Frozen creatures from the mythology of Cthulhu found in mysterious boxes somewhere on the Antarctic.	Directly mirrors Lovecraft's <i>At the Mountains of Madness</i> where ancient, frozen horrors are unearthed, triggering global catastrophe.
Claustrophobia	Action starts on a submarine in a claustrophobic situation .	Establishes early tension and psychological horror before expanding the scope. The initial

Table 2. (continued)

Lovecraftian Motif	Transcript Connection	Thematic Role in Game
		setting is described as the best and most memorable element.
Forbidden Lore/Villain	References to pre-culture of the castle and an evil German general seeking to use the Mythos for his own goals.	Integrates common Lovecraftian antagonists (cultists, mad scientists, secret societies) with the historical WWII setting.
Interconnected Lore	Mention of the Infogrames catalog including <i>Shadow of the Comet</i> , a related Lovecraftian title.	Confirms the game is part of a deliberate, interconnected franchise exploring the Mythos.

4.0 Operational Manual: Game Instructions

4.1 Game Setup

1. **Installation:** Insert the *Prisoner of Ice* CD-ROM. Select the desired installation path.
2. **Resolution Selection:** Choose the preferred display mode:
 - **640x480 (Recommended):** For clearer visuals.
 - **320x240:** For computers with lower graphical capabilities.
3. **Start Game:** Launch the application. The game begins with an initial 3D-rendered introductory sequence before transitioning to the Antarctic setting.

4.2 Main Objective

As the protagonist, **Ryan**, your main task is to **survive** the outbreak of Cthulhu Mythos creatures in the Antarctic and subsequently **prevent** the machinations of the evil German general who seeks to exploit these entities, requiring travel to various locations.

4.3 Basic Controls

The game uses a **point-and-click interface** driven entirely by the mouse.

Table 3.

Movement	Left-Click on a destination.	Moves the character Ryan to the selected location
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Table 3. (continued)

Observation/Look	Left-Click on an object/area (Context Dependent).	Provides a description of the object or environment.
Interaction/Use	Left-Click on a collectible item or an interactive puzzle element.	Picks up items, opens doors, or performs contextual actions.
Inventory	Right-Click	Accesses the collected items for selection and use.
Item Combination	Select an item from the Inventory and Left-Click it onto another item or an environmental object.	Solves puzzles by applying the correct item.

5.0 Investigator's Field Notes (Useful Tips for Players)

In order to avoid the game's noted frustrations and ensure a smooth experience, apply the following strategies:

- **Pixel Hunting Protocol:** The single greatest obstacle is finding tiny objects.
 - **Systematic Grid Search:** Move the mouse cursor slowly over **every pixel** of the screen, especially in static scenes, watching for the cursor to change, indicating an interactive hotspot.
 - **Focus on the Unusual:** Pay close attention to seemingly random or insignificant objects on tables, shelves, or in the corners, even if they are only a **single pixel** in size.
- **Inventory Management:** Although the game is straightforward, constantly **review your inventory** and attempt to use every new item on current puzzles. Puzzles are logical, so the correct item is usually clear once it's found.
- **Atmosphere Over Speed:** The initial **claustrophobic water tank sequence** is highlighted as the strongest part of the game. Take time to **absorb the atmosphere** and dialogue in this section, as the pacing becomes more varied later.
- **Dialogue is Key:** As with most adventure games, **listen carefully all dialogues** with characters. Clues for the next puzzle or the location of a hidden object may be found in the text.
- **The Narrative Flow:** The game is designed to **guide us smoothly through its plot**. If you are stuck, the solution is likely a hidden item on the current screen, not a complex, multi-step puzzle requiring travel to a distant location.

Chapter 5. Necronomicon: The dawning of darkness 2001

Necronomicon: The Dawning of Darkness, developed by Cryo Interactive, is a first-person point-and-click adventure game released in 2001 that successfully translates the atmosphere of cosmic horror into an intriguing digital investigation.

Lovecraftian Influence and Atmosphere

The game is overtly and explicitly **Lovecraft-inspired**. Set in Providence (Lovecraft's hometown), Rhode Island, in the late 1920s, the plot immediately establishes a foundation of Lovecraftian mystery. Players take on the role of William Stanton, whose quest begins with a warning and the handover of a mysterious object from his childhood friend, Edgar Witcherly.

The protagonist, William Stanton, embodies classic Lovecraftian traits: displaying **curiosity and courage despite being somewhat timid and faint-hearted**. The initial stages of the game, set in the seaside town, deliver a genuinely **enjoyable Lovecraft investigation**. This segment is rich with familiar, intriguing elements, compelling the player to research newspapers and interview townspeople. The game's **effective use of atmosphere** and the overall feeling of being immersed in a dark, occult world is a definite strength.

The plot involves an investigation into a mysterious housefire, shady activity, and the smuggling of Egyptian mummies, successfully create a **vague atmosphere of Lovecraft ideas**, giving the narrative a rich, dense, and unsettling texture. The most memorable sequence is the investigation of a strange basement, complete with **dimly lit subterranean passages, monsters from other worlds, and an alchemy lab**, providing moments of pure atmospheric horror.

Game Instructions

Necronomicon: The Dawning of Darkness utilizes a first-person perspective with a full **panoramic camera** in a classic **point-and-click** style.

I. Control and Navigation

1. **Perspective:** The game is played from a **first-person perspective**.
2. **Movement:** Navigation between static, pre-rendered screens is accomplished via **point-and-click interface**. Look for the cursor to change, indicating possible directions of travel or points of interest.
3. **Visuals:** Player movement is accompanied by **pre-rendered video transitions**, creating a sense of smooth progression through the environments.

II. Core Gameplay Mechanics

1. **Focus on Investigation:** This title places a heavy emphasis on **research and investigation**, rather than solely complex item-based puzzles. Players should diligently search for information in documents and through dialogues.
2. **Inventory Use:** Players will still need to collect and use items. Be prepared to solve puzzles that involve **finding an object to place in a specific location**.
3. **Pixel Hunting Tip:** Due to the game's **dark and low-light environments**, item collection and cursor activation points can be challenging to locate. Players may need to systematically move the cursor across the screen to reveal hidden objects.

III. Puzzle Solving

1. **Deductive Puzzles:** Many puzzles require players to **take note of information** read in texts or heard in dialogue and use that knowledge to unlock locks or solve challenges.
2. **Alchemy Puzzles (Advanced):** The latter half of the game introduces more **esoteric, chemistry-based puzzles**. Success in these requires careful experimentation and linking abstract concepts from your investigation to the required alchemical steps.

Conclusion

Necronomicon: The Dawning of Darkness starts strong, providing an **interesting investigation** that immediately hooks the player. The early hours are compelling, delivering a sense of being deeply involved in a chilling Lovecraftian mystery, thanks to its detailed pre-rendered environments and effective sound design. Though the plot and gameplay can become challenging to follow later on, the dedication to creating an immersive, dark, and unsettling adventure inspired by the Cthulhu Mythos makes it a worthwhile experience for dedicated fans of the genre.