

# Game Design Document (GDD) - Survival Extraction Shooter



# 1. Game Overview

**Game Title:** LOOPBOUND

**Genre:** First-Person Survival Extraction Shooter

**Game Engine:** Unity

A survival-extraction shooter set in a **fantasy forest** with diverse biomes. Players must scavenge, survive against environmental and supernatural threats, and extract before succumbing to the overwhelming dangers of the land. Inspired by **classic PS1 survival horror aesthetics**, the game leverages **low-poly models, low-resolution textures, and an uncanny atmosphere** to enhance discomfort and tension.

The game aims to create an **oppressive and surreal atmosphere**, using **unnatural lighting, pixelation, and movement glitches** to emphasize the feeling of something being "off." By keeping animations slightly stiff and camera movement unpredictable at times, the game enhances the psychological horror experience.

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## **2. High Concept**

A fusion of survival mechanics from DayZ, The Long Dark, and extraction gameplay (Tarkov, Witchfire). Players must scavenge for resources, complete objectives, and escape before time runs out. The game combines psychological horror, immersive survival mechanics, and non-linear storytelling, trapping players in a supernatural loop orchestrated by an eldritch god.

The retro PS1 aesthetic was chosen to evoke a deep, unsettling feeling, drawing from the fear of the unknown. The inherent limitations of low-poly graphics and textures contribute to an uncanny, dreamlike horror that enhances the psychological distress of survival. Artificial distortions, missing textures, and occasional "corruptions" in the world further create a hauntingly immersive environment.

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### 3. Development Story & Design Evolution

#### Initial Concept

- Originally designed with a **Borderlands-style** cel-shaded look and grindy aesthetic.
- The gameplay focused on **snowy Canadian forests, realistic survival, and resource extraction**.

#### Changes & Final Design

- Aesthetic Shift: Moved from stylized cel-shading to a low-poly, PS1-inspired survival horror look.
  - Atmospheric Direction: Inspired by the uncanny, unsettling atmosphere of old PS1 & early PS2 survival games.
  - World Setting Change: Transitioned from a snowy Canadian forest to a dark fantasy forest with varied biomes.
  - Engine Shift: Moved from an unspecified engine to Unity for flexibility and optimization.
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## 4. Game Design Pillars

- **Immersion:** Realistic survival mechanics with **dynamic environmental storytelling**—players piece together the world's mysteries through scattered clues, NPC interactions, and the remnants of those who came before.
  - **Tension & Horror:** Psychological dread is amplified by **PS1-era graphical limitations**, where low-poly models and pixelated textures create an uncanny, dreamlike horror that leaves room for the imagination to **fill in the gaps with something far worse**.
  - **Choice & Consequence:** Every action carries weight—**who you help, what you take, and when you choose to extract** will determine not only your survival but also how the world reacts to you. Some choices **can't be undone**.
  - **Resource Management & Extraction:** Every decision matters—**hoard supplies for survival, or risk it all for a bigger haul?** The game constantly forces players to weigh risk vs. reward, making every resource a precious lifeline or a **tempting, deadly distraction**.
  - **Mystery & Discovery:** A world filled with **cryptic lore, hidden secrets, and inexplicable horrors**—some things are better left undiscovered, but curiosity is a powerful force. The deeper players dig, the more they realize that **they were never supposed to be here in the first place**.
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## 5. Gameplay Mechanics

### Survival

- **Core Needs:** Hunger, thirst, stamina, body temperature.
- **Injuries & Health:** Wounds, frostbite, infections, and exhaustion impact gameplay.
- **Stealth & Combat:** Limited weapons and ammo; **evasion is often smarter than confrontation.**
- **Fear & Sanity Mechanics:** Extended exposure to supernatural elements affects the player's perception and decision-making.

### Weather & Environment

- **Dynamic Weather:** Ranging from **clear skies** to **deadly storms**.
- **Final Blizzard:** A catastrophic storm forcing the final extraction attempt.
- **Time Distortions:** The environment warps based on supernatural interference.

### Wildlife & Threats

- **Natural Animals:** Wolves, elk, and other wildlife, both prey and predators.
- **Supernatural Entities:** Corrupted creatures warped by eldritch forces.
- **Anomalies:** Shifting landscapes, time distortions, and unnatural occurrences.
- **Sound-Based Threats:** Some enemies react to movement and sound, forcing players to stay silent.

### Exploration & Scavenging

- **Diverse Biomes:** Dense forests, eerie marshes, abandoned ruins, and corrupted lands.
- **Resource Gathering:** Food, water, crafting materials, and weapons are essential.
- **Hidden Lore:** Scattered notes, strange symbols, and NPCs provide story clues.

## NPC Interactions

- **Dynamic AI:** NPCs react based on **player choices and reputation**.
  - **Mission System:** Includes **resource gathering, investigations, and moral choices**.
  - **Trust System:** Some NPCs may betray the player or provide crucial information based on past actions.
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# 6. Level Design & Progression

## World Creation Process

1. **Concept Phase:** A rough map and biome layout were designed.
2. **Inkarnate Mapping:** The world was visualized using **Inkarnate** for top-down planning.
3. **3D Modeling:** The world was **fully recreated in Blender** for a detailed 3D environment.
4. **Asset Gathering:** Assets were sourced from **Sketchfab** and created from scratch.
5. **Integration & Optimization:** Assets were optimized for performance and immersion.

## Biome Diversity

- **Safe Town** – A starting area surrounded by stone walls and a watchtower, providing a sense of temporary safety. The town is filled with NPCs, houses, and various buildings, serving as a hub where players can trade, get quests, and gather information. While mostly secure, strange occurrences can still happen within its borders.
- **Swamp** – A damp, decaying wasteland filled with dead trees, thick fog, and murky, mud-covered terrain. Movement is slow, visibility is poor, and strange noises echo through the mist. The swamp hides deep secrets, forgotten relics, and creatures that lurk beneath the surface, waiting for the unwary.
- **Forest** – A dense and untamed wilderness teeming with wildlife—both prey and predator. While it may appear beautiful, it is one of the most hostile areas, with aggressive animals, supernatural entities, and limited visibility. Every snap of a twig could be a warning... or a trap.
- **Old Manor** – An abandoned estate, long overrun by nature and time. Its broken stone walls, decayed wooden floors, and dark corridors hold forgotten horrors. Strange figures have been seen watching from its

shattered windows, but no one dares enter long enough to find out why.

- **City** – Once a thriving settlement, now a ghost town of ruined buildings, empty streets, and overgrown parks. The city still has houses, trees, and a watchtower, but most of it is abandoned, crawling with dangers both seen and unseen. Some areas remain untouched, guarding resources and knowledge, but those who venture too deep may not return the same.
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## 7. Game Flow

The gameplay revolves around a structured cycle that immerses players in an unforgiving survival experience. Players begin by selecting a character, each with unique traits, gameplay style, and backstory, before entering the treacherous snow-covered wilderness. Upon arrival, they must scavenge for essential supplies such as food, water, weapons, and tools, all while contending with the harsh environment and its unpredictable dangers. Crafting and repairing play a crucial role, allowing players to maintain their gear, reinforce clothing for warmth, and improve survival chances. Throughout their journey, players will encounter non-playable characters, including traders, fellow survivors, and enigmatic figures who may offer missions, information, or supplies in exchange for resources. Progression is tied to the discovery and completion of "The Book," an artifact that documents the region's dark history, the player's own survival story, and every action taken by the player (giving player actions weight and consequences). As the session progresses, a deadly blizzard looms, forcing players to make strategic decisions—whether to stay longer in search of better resources or extract before it's too late. Players must reach designated extraction points before the 15-25-minute timer expires, or risk being consumed by the storm or hunted by the supernatural force that lurks in the shadows.

### **Game Flow in text format**

1. Select Character
  - Choose from available characters.
2. Enter the Wilderness
  - Start the survival run in the dangerous environment.
3. Scavenge & Survive
  - Gather food, water, and supplies to stay alive.

#### 4. Craft & Repair

- Maintain and improve gear.

#### 5. Interact with NPCs (*Branching Paths*)

- Encounter NPCs (*Decision Point*)

- Allies or Rivals

- Friendly Interaction → Potential trade or cooperation.

- Hostile Interaction → Leads to deception or direct conflict.

- Deception & Hostility → If hostile, can result in Death.

- Death → Restart the run.

- Traders

- Buy/sell gear and supplies.

- Missions & Lore

- Receive tasks or uncover pieces of the story.

#### 6. World Interaction & Progress

- Engage with the environment to advance.
- Maintain gear for survival.

#### 7. Assess The Book

- Record findings and uncover the mystery.

## 8. Time Pressure & Strategic Choice

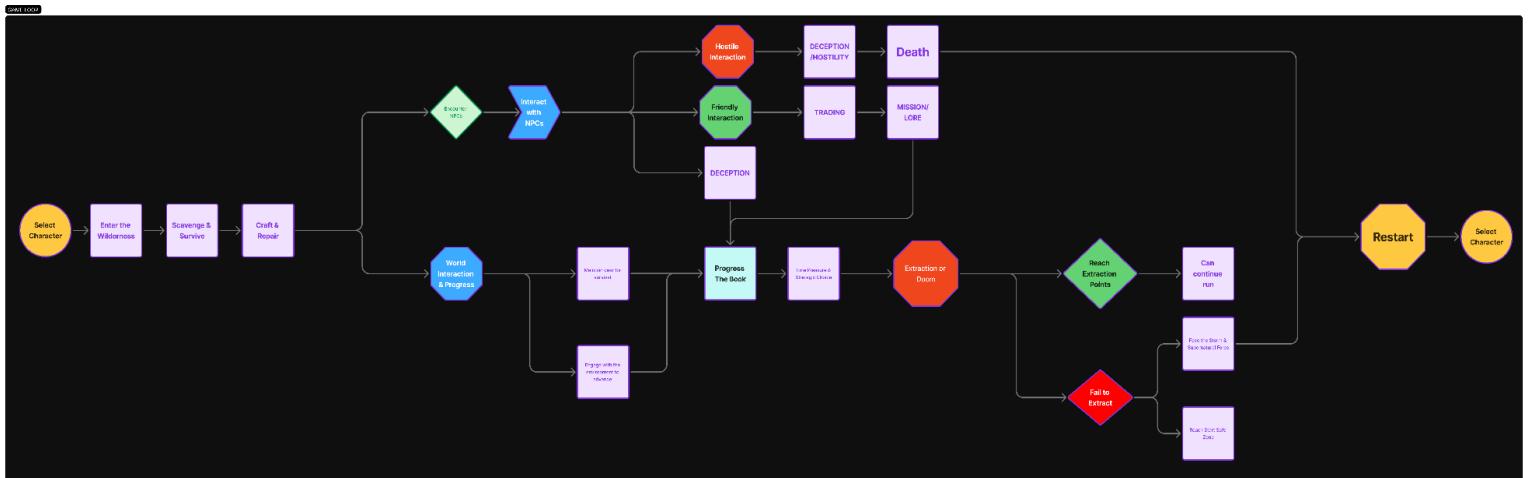
- Decide between staying longer for more rewards or extracting safely.

## 9. Extraction or Doom (*Branching Paths*)

- Reach Extraction Point → Successfully extract with loot.
- Fail to Extract
  - Face the Storm & Supernatural Force → Lose loot, potentially die.
  - Reach Start Safe Zone → Return to base but lose progress.

## 10. Restart or Start a New Run

- Begin a fresh survival attempt.



## 9. Inspirations & References

The game draws inspiration from a mix of survival, horror, and psychological tension, blending ideas from games, movies, and literature to create a unique, unsettling experience.

- **Games:** Escape from Tarkov influenced the high-stakes extraction gameplay, while The Long Dark shaped the harsh survival mechanics and environmental storytelling. Silent Hill and Darkwood inspired the psychological horror, eerie atmosphere, and fear of the unknown, while DayZ contributed to the open-ended, player-driven survival experience.
- **Movies & Books:** The Thing sparked the idea of paranoia and isolation in a hostile environment, while Annihilation and At the Mountains of Madness introduced mind-bending anomalies, eldritch horror, and the fear of an incomprehensible force. The Ritual influenced the folk horror themes and the presence of ancient, lurking entities.
- **Psychological Horror Elements:** The game taps into fear of the unknown, visual distortions, and existential dread, creating an environment where players question reality, encounter unexplainable phenomena, and feel a constant sense of unease—because sometimes, the worst thing isn't what you see, but what you think you saw.

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## 10. Future Improvements & Expansions

### Future Improvements & Expansions

The game will continue to grow with **new content, mechanics, and challenges**, keeping the experience fresh and terrifying. Here's what's coming:

- **New Playable Characters with Unique Abilities:** More survivors will be introduced, each with their own perks, skills, and backstories, offering different ways to experience the game. Some might be better at stealth, others at crafting, and a few... might know things they shouldn't.

- **Supernatural Anomalies & Enemy Types:** Expect more terrifying entities and bosses, each deeply connected to their environment. These creatures won't just be random monsters; they'll tell stories, reveal hidden lore, and embody the strange forces at work in the world.
- **Multiplayer Co-op Mode:** Survival is scary, but surviving *with* friends? That's a whole different nightmare. Team up, share resources, and argue over who takes the last medkit as you try to extract together—or leave your buddy behind when things get ugly.
- **New Maps & Biomes:** The world will expand with new landscapes and hidden horrors. Imagine an isolated island, home to a completely different kind of people and creatures, or a deserted underground facility with unspeakable experiments lurking in the dark.
- **Interactive NPCs & Emergent AI Behavior:** NPCs are being designed and will soon be finalized. Players will be able to talk to them, get quests, trade, and uncover deeper mysteries. A full quest system is in development, adding more structure to exploration.
- **Expanded Inventory & Lore Systems:** A book system will allow players to collect and read about the world, while the inventory system will be refined for better resource management and survival mechanics.

## Upcoming Systems & Features

A list of planned additions currently in development:

- **Enemies & Bosses** – Unique supernatural threats that evolve over time.
- **NPCs & Dialogue System** – Interactive conversations, lore reveals, and trading.

- **Inventory System** – Smarter block based item management for long-term survival.
- **Book System** – A way to track discoveries, lore, and important clues.
- **Quest System** – Missions and objectives that shape the world and story.

With these updates, the game will continue pushing the limits of survival horror and extraction gameplay, blending terror, mystery, and deep exploration in an ever-evolving world.

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# **11. Objective**

## **Temporary Objectives**

### **Safe Areas**

- Secure locations where players can rest, regain stamina, and strategize before venturing back into danger.
- Players must locate or create temporary shelters to protect against harsh weather, hostile wildlife, and supernatural forces.
- Some safe zones house NPCs offering supplies, side missions, or vital information to aid survival.
- Certain safe zones double as extraction points, allowing players to escape the loop and secure their progress.

### **NPCs & Missions**

- Players will encounter varied NPCs, each with unique personalities, motivations, and reactions to player actions.

### **Dynamic Interactions**

- NPCs may become allies, neutrals, or even hostile, depending on how the player interacts with them.
- Reputation matters—relationships with NPCs evolve, affecting mission availability and long-term story changes.

### **Mission Types**

- NPCs provide missions ranging from scavenging for resources, hunting dangerous creatures, or exploring hazardous locations.
- Some quests involve moral dilemmas, forcing players to make choices that alter the world.

### **Rewards & Consequences**

- Completing missions unlocks resources, lore insights, and access to restricted areas.
- Some actions carry long-term consequences, impacting future encounters, NPC trust, and even the game's ending.

## Lore & Guidance

- Certain NPCs offer cryptic hints or vital information to help players decipher the mystery of the loop.
  - However, not all NPCs tell the truth—some may deliberately mislead players, adding tension and uncertainty.
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## Primary Objectives

### Complete ‘The Book’

- Players must document every encounter, entity, and anomaly they discover.
- The book updates automatically, recording lore, player choices, and discovered locations.
- Completing sections of the book unlocks new abilities, hidden knowledge, and alternative paths forward.
- The book is both a guide and a curse—while it helps players understand the world, it also attracts unwanted attention from malevolent forces.

### Unravel the Mystery

- The supernatural presence is deeply tied to the land, shaping the world’s behavior and its inhabitants.
- Players must piece together cryptic messages, forgotten history, and disturbing truths hidden in the world.
- Lore is found in scattered pages, forgotten artifacts, and NPC dialogue, all contributing to a larger narrative.
- Choices impact the story—will players escape, become lost in the loop, or succumb to a far worse fate?

### Break the Loop

- Players must sever the eldritch god’s influence over the land to escape.
- This involves uncovering ancient rituals, supernatural anchors, and hidden pathways, each guarded by entities drawn to the disturbance.

- There are multiple paths to breaking the loop—some require destruction, others demand clever deception, and a few... force players to embrace the very horrors they seek to escape.
  - Failing to act in time may result in the player's consciousness being absorbed into the loop, dooming them to exist as another lost soul within the entity's domain.
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## Setting

- **Year:** 2002
- **Location:** A remote, snow-covered mountain range deep within the northern forests of Canada
- **Theme:** A blend of realistic survival mechanics and supernatural horror, emphasizing isolation, environmental hostility, and the psychological toll of enduring the elements while being pursued by an unknown force
- **Environment:** The game world is set in an expansive and unforgiving Canadian forest, filled with dense trees, frozen rivers, abandoned cabins, and remnants of lost expeditions. The region is known for its unpredictable weather, hazardous wildlife, and legends that whisper of something unnatural lurking within the shadows of the snow-covered pines. The supernatural presence in the area has also begun to alter the local fauna and flora, creating unsettling variations of known species. Additionally, time itself behaves erratically in this region—sometimes slowing, accelerating, or looping unexpectedly, adding to the disorienting and surreal nature of survival in the mountain wilderness.

## 12. Plot and characters

### Character's

The player takes on the role of one of three distinct characters, each with their own background and motivations for venturing into the depths of the mysterious forest. The playable characters include:

- **The Home Run Kid (20 years old):** A young and ambitious former baseball prodigy whose career was cut short, now searching for meaning and escape.



- **The Forest Ranger (43 years old):** A seasoned survivalist with years of experience navigating the unforgiving wilderness, drawn to the region by unexplained disappearances.



- **The Reporter (28 years old):** A determined investigative journalist seeking to uncover the hidden truths surrounding the strange events in the forest.



## **Plot**

Each character stumbles upon an old, tattered book of unknown origin. Strangely, no matter how many times they attempt to discard it, the book always finds its way back to them. As they reluctantly open its pages, cryptic coordinates appear, guiding them deep into the heart of the Canadian wilderness. They soon begin hearing unsettling reports of people mysteriously disappearing in the designated area, compelling them to investigate further.

Upon arrival, they realize that this region of the forest is unlike any other—it feels detached from reality itself. Time flows unpredictably, and the flora and fauna exhibit strange, mutated characteristics, blending eerie beauty with unnatural menace. As they navigate the land, encountering both breathtaking anomalies and terrifying creatures, the book in their possession begins to fill itself with details—documenting every new species, every meal consumed, and every individual encountered.

Over time, a mysterious figure begins to appear only in the players' dreams—a tall, lean man draped in a black cloak, carrying a staff and an identical book. His presence is both ominous and mesmerizing, offering cryptic riddles and vague instructions that seem to shape their fate. Every time the player falls asleep, they are drawn into eerie visions where the figure speaks in riddles, pushing them towards deeper truths. As the characters delve further into their journey, they experience unexplainable events—being caught, killed, and inexplicably waking up at the very edge of the map where they first started. It becomes clear that they are trapped in an endless loop, forced to relive their journey repeatedly in a desperate attempt to escape.

The ultimate revelation shatters their perception of reality—this world, with its storms, creatures, cultists, and looping torment, is merely a trial. A gauntlet orchestrated by an ancient cosmic force. The old god Nyarlathotep has chosen them as potential vessels for his arrival, subjecting them to this relentless nightmare as a means of testing their worthiness. The storm, the horrors, and even their own suffering are nothing more than a divine experiment—a mere flicker of dust in the eyes of an entity that exists beyond time and space.

## 12. Survival Elements

- **Weather:**
  - **Cold:** Gradual decrease in temperature affects stamina and movement speed.
    - Players must seek warmth through campfires, shelters, or proper clothing.
    - Prolonged exposure without heat sources gradually weakens the character.
  - **Extreme Cold:** Prolonged exposure can lead to frostbite and severe stamina depletion.
    - Requires additional insulation, fire sources, or consumables to counteract effects.
    - Slows movement, impairs vision, and increases energy consumption.
  - **Blizzard:** Rapid temperature drops, near-zero visibility, and high winds that make navigation extremely difficult.
    - Can disorient players, causing them to lose track of landmarks.
    - Increases risk of hypothermia and exhaustion due to harsh conditions.
  - **Storm:** Sudden bursts of heavy snowfall and strong winds, creating unpredictable conditions.
    - Temporary but dangerous, forcing players to seek shelter or adjust their travel plans.
    - Can cause treefalls, avalanches, and block access to certain paths.
  - **Rain:** Further lowers body temperature, increasing the risk of hypothermia and making survival harder.
    - Wet conditions affect grip, movement speed, and visibility.
    - Some consumables may lose effectiveness if exposed to moisture.
  - **Final Blizzard:** A catastrophic, all-encompassing storm that marks the last chance for extraction before the region becomes uninhabitable.

- Completely engulfs the area, cutting off all exits and reducing survival chances to near zero.
- Players must reach extraction points before it hits or risk perishing in the storm.

- **Wildlife:**

- The region is home to a variety of animals, both natural and supernatural, each playing a role in the ecosystem and survival mechanics.
- **Wolves:** Highly intelligent predators that hunt in packs, making them a persistent threat to the player.
- **Elk:** Generally passive but can become aggressive if startled or provoked. A valuable source of food and materials.
- **Mutated Creatures:** Due to the supernatural forces at play, some animals have undergone terrifying mutations, exhibiting unnatural behaviors and abilities.
- **Other Mountain Animals:** Includes smaller creatures like foxes, rabbits, and birds, which can serve as food sources or indicators of nearby danger.
- **Predatory Threats:** Some wildlife, corrupted by the anomalies, display erratic and violent tendencies, making encounters unpredictable and deadly.

- **Basic Needs:**

- **Hunger:** Players must find and consume food regularly to maintain stamina and avoid starvation.
- **Thirst:** Dehydration affects stamina regeneration and overall endurance, requiring players to find clean water sources.
- **Body Temperature Management:** Keeping warm is crucial to survival—players must dress appropriately, seek shelter, and use fire to combat freezing temperatures.

- **Health & Injuries:**

- **Wounds:** Injuries from wildlife attacks, falls, or combat that require bandages or medical treatment.
- **Frostbite:** Prolonged exposure to extreme cold can lead to permanent damage, requiring immediate warming.
- **Infections:** Open wounds can become infected if not treated, worsening over time and impacting stamina.

- **Stamina Management:** Physical exertion, hunger, and injuries affect stamina, requiring rest and proper resource management.
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## 13. Summary & Conclusion

A survival horror extraction game where players navigate an uncanny, low-poly nightmare, balancing resource management, combat, and supernatural mysteries. Think PS1-era horror—chunky models, weird animations, and just enough jank to make your brain fill in the gaps with something way worse.

Originally planned as a cel-shaded Borderlands-style survival game, it took a hard left turn after revisiting old PS1 horror games—you know, the ones that make you feel like you shouldn't be playing them at 2 AM. There's something deeply unsettling about low-res textures, stiff animations, and those creepy NPCs who stare just a little too long. So, the snowy Canadian forest? Gone. Now it's a twisted dark-fantasy forest with biomes that feel like they were pulled from a forgotten dream.

By embracing low-poly weirdness, the game taps into the fear of the unknown—because when things look just wrong enough, your brain makes them terrifying. The world is both haunting and absurd, where you're never sure if you're about to find loot... or regret.

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