

Hello, friends!

There are a lot of you!

As of this writing, with about a week left in the sign-up period, 59 people have volunteered to contribute rooms to Cragne Manor. We are thrilled and terrified by that number. While your imaginations are boiling over with concepts you want to include in your rooms, we thought we should give you all a stronger idea of how we see this playing out.

At the bottom of this document is a link to a questionnaire. **If you responded to a shorter questionnaire earlier, please respond to this one too.** This new one is better. (If you didn't respond to an earlier questionnaire, please respond to this one instead.)

Background

Here's the premise we've come up with for this game:

It is the nineties. The PC is Naomi Cragne. Her husband Peter Cragne went up to his family's mansion in Backwater, Vermont a while back, and she hasn't heard from him since. Naomi arrives in Backwater and pokes around, uncovering secrets, unlocking doors with keys, until she figures out where Peter is. Cragne Manor oozes with the history of the Cragne family, which is full of weirdos, sorcerers, and monstrosities—and associations with an otherworldly entity named "Vaadignephod."

You can use this background information, or you can ignore it, or you can add to it, or you can contradict it. Whatever you want. (That being said, if you submit a room where the PC is Monica and her goal is to buy a present for Chandler, the players may wonder whether you knew what project you were contributing to.) If you need more details—if you ask us "Is there anyone else in the mansion?" or "Does Naomi have a hook for a hand?" or "Is the mansion totally deserted?" the answer will always be "Sure!"

I feel I should add that **the game doesn't take place solely inside Cragne Manor**. I'm sorry if I misled anybody with the original description. The map of Backwater (its form still tentative, as we await more volunteers), is kind of a shuffled-up mirror of Anchorhead, so you've got a creepy house but you've also got a church, a library, and so on. **You can request an assignment to the Backwater version of your favorite Anchorhead location if you wish** but we can't make any promises!

Design Philosophy

We want this game to be a fitting tribute to Anchorhead, meaning we want to play around with the original game, celebrating and maybe deconstructing it, hopefully referencing it without heinously ripping it off—But I'm not here to tell you how you should write your room. You can use

whatever tone or style you want; you can be very winky and referency or you can concentrate on doing your own thing. **But if you haven't played Anchorhead in a while, we recommend that you give it a look and refresh your memory**, so that you can keep in mind what our game is pointing at, so to speak.

Anchorhead is part of a tradition of Lovecraftian cosmic horror, and I find it interesting to ask: Is it appropriate for someone to contribute to this project with a more Lovecraftian rather than Anchorheadesque approach? What separates Anchorhead's style from cosmic horror in general? Is it in fact the case that we, acting as collective Derleth to Gentry's Lovecraft, are in the process of *defining Anchorheadesque cosmic horror once and for all at this very moment*? But these aren't really important questions. The answers are: **Do whatever you want**; Whatever you say; and Yes.

One stylistic choice that we do want to dictate for you is the fairness/cruelty. In Anchorhead, there are a bunch of ways to die, and a bunch of ways to put the game in an unwinnable state. But if this is Anchorhead's 20th anniversary, that means it's 2018, and that means that the same ideas of fairness don't apply.

Your room can definitely contain ways to kill Naomi Cragne or otherwise lose the game. If you want, they can be as gross and scary as the game over scenarios from Anchorhead. But the player should be able to Undo out of the bad ending and progress as normal. It should *never* be possible to put the game in an unwinnable state. *Do not put a bottomless pit in your room where players can toss critical items and lose them forever*. In other words, we need Cragne Manor to register as Polite on the Zarfian forgiveness scale, even though Anchorhead is a Cruel.

Best Practices

Along with room assignments we'll be distributing guidelines/specs/compliance sheets for your submission. If you're writing in I7, we'll want you to follow certain guidelines that will ensure nothing in your code affects other people's rooms. If you're not writing in I7, we'll have a format for your design document we'll want you to follow to make it easier for us to translate your ideas into I7. (*Spoiler Klaxon: The format for design documents is in many respects identical to Inform 7 code because Inform 7 is perfect for this kind of thing.*)

OpSec

That's a really highfalutin' term for what I'd like to address, but I may never get another chance to use it.

We're really excited about the "exquisite corpse" nature of this project, with each room a distinct world, creatively isolated from its neighbors. The result will be exciting and baffling and probably somewhat frustrating, but totally unique and memorable. Unfortunately, that

uniqueness only holds up as long as you don't know what your fellow contributors are doing. The more you share with each other, the less exquisite the corpse becomes.

Fortunately, there are enough rooms in this game for you to learn about the contents of a few without really being spoiled for the big picture. So feel free to communicate with a few of your fellow contributors, maybe get them to test your room for you, but please try to keep your room a secret to *almost* everybody.

A Taxonomy of Rooms

A LOT of you want to include puzzles in your rooms! (This section still applies to you if you don't want to include puzzles in your room.) But how can you let an arbitrary number of people write whatever puzzles they want, and then string together those puzzles into a solvable game? The obvious (but still disappointing) answer is, you have to put some constraints on what kinds of puzzles people can include.

We've designed a progression system that should make the game fun for the player and make things *possible to be organized* for us organizers—modular, and resistant to unforeseen complications. The tradeoff is that these puzzles have to be fairly simple, at least on a broad structural scale. Within the confines of your room, your puzzle can be as complex as you wish.

(We can define “puzzles” very broadly—So broadly that a more rigorous theorist would maybe prefer to use the term “activities.” If you're assigned a room that needs a puzzle, you don't have to come up with something that melts the player's brain. It can be as simple as putting the missing gear into the elevator machinery, or as dumb as pushing the elevator button and then waiting a few turns for the doors to open. It can be whatever you want!)

Below are the types of rooms, classified by their inputs and outputs, that this paradigm supports. If you have a puzzle in mind already, see if it fits into one of these classes. If it doesn't, you can probably make it fit by “abridging” the puzzle somehow.

For example: Maybe you envisioned a puzzle for your room that requires bringing the epoxy and the resin from two other rooms. And now I'm telling you that you can only require one outside item in your puzzle. Sorry! You can still write “the same puzzle” if you include the epoxy in your room and only expect the player to bring the resin. And if you want, you can put the epoxy behind a *different puzzle, also in your room*. Why would I try to stop you?

Anyway, please review this taxonomy and proceed to the questionnaire link below.

Class A “Goldenrod” - Puzzleless (Nonergodic/Nonprogressing)

This class includes rooms with no goals. Many Class A rooms are hubs, providing access to multiple other rooms. Some are “antechambers,” providing access to only one room (often for

dramatic effect). In either case, the player doesn't need to expend any energy accessing those other rooms.

Unlocking a locked door, for purposes of this taxonomy, doesn't qualify as "expending energy." The puzzly part of unlocking a door is finding the key. If you're assigned a Class A room, it might include locked doors, but you won't be asked to invent a way to open them.

Class B "Fern" - Blocked Path (Ergodic/Progressing)

A Class B room has an exit through which the player cannot initially pass. It must be opened, or discovered.

Subclass B-1 "Mint" - Inventory-independent Blocked Path

In a Class B-1 room, the blocked path can be unblocked without the use of items or effects found in other rooms.

- Pulling on a candlestick makes a bookcase turn to reveal a secret passage.
- The brick wall is too tall to climb, until inspection reveals a series of handholds.
- Turning a big crank makes a bridge emerge from a river.

Subclass B-2 "Tea" - Inventory-dependent Blocked Path

In Class B-2, you need something (but not more than one thing) from another room to open the way. Sometimes, the necessary object is consumed or otherwise lost.

- The angry dog blocking the exit can be calmed down if you give it a steak.
- Crossing the desert is impossible without a GPS device.
- If you don't present your membership pin, the guard won't let you into the club.

Class C "Lavender" - Item Acquisition (Ergodic/Progressing)

In a Class C room, the player acquires an important item to be used somewhere else. Sometimes this is a key.

Subclass C-1 "Periwinkle" - Inventory-independent Prize Acquisition

The prize in a Class C-1 room can be acquired without any outside help.

- Successfully play a crane game to grab the doll inside.
- Listen to the captain's boring story, and he'll give you a model ship.
- If you touch enough flat surfaces, you'll eventually find the one where you left your glasses.

Subclass C-2 "Lilac" - Inventory-dependent Prize Acquisition

In Class C-2 rooms, the player needs a different item (exactly one item) in order to get this new item. Sometimes, the necessary object exits the player's inventory.

- Find the maestro's baton and he'll hook you up with tickets.
- It's easy to open the safe and get the diamonds if you have an industrial drill.
- You're good enough at skee-ball to win that teddy bear, but you need some tokens first.

Designation C† - Literary Prize

Part of the progression in this game involves collecting a bunch of books. If you want your room to include a puzzle that leads to a book, we can let you do that. All these rooms will be Class C†-1 rooms; that is, we won't be doing puzzles that yield books but require other inventory items.

If you're not writing a Class C†-1 room, you can still include books in your room, but they might not be critical path books.

Class D "Peach" - Easter Egg (Ergodic/Nonprogressing)

Class D rooms have puzzles that don't help the player through the game. Solving the puzzle yield a joke, or story information, or a fun item or interaction that doesn't really get you anywhere.

- If you flatter the stylist, he'll tell you what it was like to cut Madonna's hair.
- The groundskeeper sees you picked up all the litter and gives you a commemorative hat.
- After you compare the photos, you realize Hal was lying about getting his teeth whitened.

Class E "Cornflower" - Free Stuff (Nonergodic/Progressing)

In a class E room, an item that the player needs somewhere else is just lying there for the player to pick it up. Sometimes the item is a reward for figuring out a different puzzle in a Class B room. If you don't want to write any puzzles, you might get a Class E room instead of a Class A room; from an individual author's perspective, there's not much difference.

Okay here's the questionnaire.

Thank you for reading all that! *You did read all of that, didn't you? Yes, you did.* Now you can [fill out this questionnaire](#) and help us help you help us make this ridiculous game.

