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GLASS

by

Danielle Tonnessen

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Game Design
at
Lindenwood University

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GLASS

A Project Report Submitted to the Faculty of the Art and Design Department
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
at
Lindenwood University

By

Danielle Tonnessen

Saint Charles, Missouri

May 2023

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Glass

Danielle Tonnessen, Master of Arts/Game Design, 2023

Thesis Directed by: Professor Ben Fulcher, Game Design Department

This project is a full walking simulator video game and includes a demonstration of a variety of game design and development skills, including pre-development documentation, narration, game design audio, graphics, post-processing, UI elements and animation. Additionally, the project promotes the author's ability in creative writing, and involves mental health subject matter with a focus on trauma processing, hypnosis, and survivor's guilt.

Keywords: Student Video Game Development, Walking Simulator, Narration, Video Game Documentation, Mental Health Themes

Acknowledgements

I thank my Thesis Committee Chair and Game Design professor, Professor Ben Fulcher (Lindenwood University), for always being available to guide me and to provide resources, game references, and feedback during this endeavor; Additionally, I thank both of my Thesis Committee Members, Professor Jeremiah Ratican and Doctor Melissa Elmes (both of Lindenwood University), for their continued guidance and support throughout this project.

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Introduction/Background Information

Video games are an especially fascinating medium given their diversity and lightning-fast rise in popularity. Video games can teach students history and literature, can train army recruits, can allow a player to fly a spaceship and conquer alien worlds, and to meet and compete with other players from across the world. With so many genres and types of game designs, from action to horror, from first person shooters to 2D platformers, the possibilities for video game design are endless. It is common knowledge that there has been controversy surrounding video games and their effects on the population, but there have also been substantial advancements in the use of video games, including in their wide-spreading reach. Video game designers can now reach audiences on an unprecedented level and make a difference in society.

The game design created for this thesis directed project is a walking simulator game entitled *Glass*. A walking simulator game is a design that excludes some of the more conventional mechanics of gaming— such as action, combat, and win-loss conditions— and instead focuses on the game’s narrative and puzzle-solving. While walking simulator games had a slow start, they have taken off exponentially in the past several years. *Glass* is a psychological mystery game for PC, created in the Unity game engine. As with walking simulator games, it is viewed through the first-person perspective and the player must solve puzzles to progress through the game and complete the narrative. In *Glass*, the player finds themselves in a strange world with ethereal features and elements; players are given no indication of what brought them there or who they are. They encounter strange items, puzzles and shadowy scenes, as well as a mysterious author who communicates with the player through notes found throughout the game. The game progresses from airy and dream-like to fiery and

nightmarish. The player must solve puzzles to progress from level to level, to finally uncover the identity of the mysterious author, and to discover what brought them to the world of *Glass*. This game concept includes themes of trauma processing, hypnosis, dream-interpretation, and survivor's guilt.

Literature Review

A Game Design Document (GDD) is a document that serves as the pre-production/planning portion of a game's development. It helps to align anyone that may be working on the game to a single vision and serves as a "master checklist." It is comprised of several detailed sections, including game concept/overview, theme, environment style, gameplay/mechanics, storyline, characters, level plans, user interface information/plans and reference images, as well as a section for any development (post-planning) changes to the GDD. Another document that can be incredibly useful to the planning phase of the project is a Game Walkthrough document, which is similar to the GDD, but provides a much more detailed view of the narrative and mechanics in the game.

A "walking simulator" game is a first-person game that generally omits traditional aspects of a video game, such as win/loss conditions and combat. While once considered an almost slang term, walking simulator games have gained a foothold in the game design industry in the past several years and have paved the way for this type of game becoming more common. As a genre, walking simulator games have their own alluring qualities, such as an immersive narrative, engaging puzzles and problem solving, mesmerizing graphics, and emotion-provoking music. In the game concept for the *Glass* project, the first-person player finds themselves in a strange world where they encounter shadowy reflections, strange items, and

immersive puzzles. The player also encounters cryptic notes along their way through the world, written by a mysterious author. The game starts out light, airy and dreamlike and descends into dark and nightmarish. Unknown to the player until the end of the game, the “mysterious author” is the player’s unconscious trying to communicate with their consciousness relating to a traumatic event they are processing in their mind. At the end of the game, the player “wakes up” from hypnosis. The goal for this project is to use the popularity and far-reaching audience video games are capable of to further reduce the stigma around mental health in society. Each level of the game contains dream symbolism/manifestation related to mental health and representations of the five stages of grief. These stages of grief were purposely not placed in order throughout the game, as they help represent the chaotic state of the player’s mind.

Several sources were reviewed in preparation for, and in design of, this project. An article by Berland (2008) describes the experience of Oskar Kokoschka, who worked with Sigmund Freud. It discusses dreams Kokoschka had and the parallels between Freud’s ideas of dreamworlds and Kokoschka’s actual experiences and reactions. The article is full of metaphors and poetry, which give the reader vivid visual imagery—an element that supports the “dreamworld” setting of the *Glass* project’s environment, as well as its alignment to some of the psychological theories of Freud. Another article by psychoanalyst and associate college professor of psychopathology and psychoanalysis, Celine Masson, discusses the Freudian methods of interpreting dreams. Freud was known to have said that dreams were a way of the mind to process repressed experiences (2013). Strongman (2014) discusses analogies between dreaming and mental states, including waking and memory. The author also discusses how memories are referenced through dreams.

One source referenced for this project is a recorded 2013 interview between Marlo and psychoanalyst Kalsched. In this interview, Kalsched discusses trauma and approaches to the treatment of trauma. Because the game concept of *Glass* revolves around trauma and how humans process trauma, this source was very informational from a mental health professional's perspective. An additional related source that was referenced in this project was a poem by Kirkpatrick (2012) about survivor's guilt, which is yet another prominent theme in *Glass*. A poem that is directly used in this project as an "in-game clue" is the poem "Survivor's Guilt" by Robert J. Teiss (2020).

An article by a professor of fictional studies discusses narratives in contemporary storytelling and how video games can reveal the concepts found within literature (Case, 2018). Due to the walking simulator game design being highly narrative, having multiple perspectives to reference on the concept of narration in video games was very valuable in the creation of this Game Design Document and in the design of the Game Walkthrough Document. Another source written by college professor of design and technology, Dickey (2005), discusses strategies for game designers in keeping players engaged through the elements of narratives and interactive design.

There were a few sources that were referenced relating to music, including its ability to evoke emotions and the technical application of these two interrelating concepts. One source in particular that was referenced was written by a college music instructor and hypnotherapist, Cornett-Murtada (2009). In this article, Cornett-Murtada reviews altered states of consciousness, hypnotherapy, and music. One of the objectives for the game involves the inclusion of captivating, hypnotic, emotion-provoking music that enhances the game's thematic elements of hypnosis and mental states, so relating articles helped to craft the game's design

immensely. Another article, by authors Eerola and Vuoskoski (2013), as well as an article by Young (2013), specifically discusses how music relates to the evocation of emotions, by summoning certain responses in the brain. Beats at different frequencies cause different parts of the brain to respond. For example, delta waves, which have a frequency of between 1 and 3 Hz, can grant us access to our unconscious mind. Another source, written by an assistant professor of music technology, Walzer (2016), discusses various methods of music technology and sound design.

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One additional prominent element in the game's design was the use of puzzles and problem-solving. An article that was referenced to research this element was written by researchers Melero and Hernandez-Leo (2014) and discusses puzzle-based strategies in video games and how to utilize puzzles to work with a player's memory and problem-solving abilities.

Research Methodology

The sources researched in this project generally make use of qualitative methodology, describing data in terms of experiences, observations, and non-numerical data. These sources include case studies, interviews, and narrative studies. While Game Design does make use of quantitative methodology in some cases, through the use of comparative numerical data, charts, etc., this is not seen predominately in the sources obtained and used in this project. The sources for this project were obtained primarily through Lindenwood University's library databases—primarily the *JSTOR* database—although a few were obtained on the free web. The academic sources follow the criteria for credible sources, including the guidelines for recency, authority, relevance, accuracy, and purpose.

This project is focused on the themes and concepts of mental health, dream analysis, trauma processing, and survivor's guilt, which have been studied by professionals for several years. The most prominent goal for this project was to create a game that gives an accurate, honest, and unbiased look into mental health through a medium that does not always do so. While awareness of mental health and access to mental health services have expanded significantly over the past decade and the stigma of mental health disorders has declined with the rise of the current generation, there is still much work to be done to further reduce its stigmatization in society. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2022), there are currently almost 53 million American adults between the ages of 18 and 44 that suffer from mental illness, with less than half of those individuals actually receiving care for mental illness.

A walking simulator game is a relatively new genre of video game design, with its rise in popularity only gaining momentum in recent years. Due to this and to a lesser variety of popular walking simulator video games to reference (in relation to other video game genres),

other topics that were researched in design of this project were narration and storytelling, which are prominent features of the walking simulator design. Similarly, music theory and puzzle-solving were also researched. These sources, like those on mental health, have followed the criteria for credible sources by aligning with the CRAAP (Currency, Relevance, Authority, Accuracy and Purpose) criteria.

The tools used to create the *Glass* project have included Gantt charts, Game Design Documentation (GDD), Walkthrough Documentation (narration), the Unity game engine, level grey-boxing (outlining a level in-engine without the addition of detail), concept art drafting, and imagery referencing. The Game Design Document, which was created during the Graduate Seminar semester, allowed completion of the initial design and outline of the game, including details such as level outlines, art and music highlights, storyline, and reference imagery. In the Thesis I semester, Gantt charts helped to set a timeline of deadlines in which to complete the project. The Walkthrough Document was a useful tool in organizing and presenting the specific details of the project's design, including its comprehensive narration, item placement, and puzzle mechanics.

Production and Analysis

Game design classically follows a systematic timeline. There is the initial concept phase (where a designer mentally develops and brainstorms their design ideas, followed by the planning/pre-production phase. This leads to the production phase, followed by the post-production phase. Between the Graduate Seminar and Thesis I/ Directed Project semesters, the planning and pre-production phases were essentially completed. In this phase, a complete Game Design Document (GDD) was completed, which involved creation of a thorough outline

of the game design, including the story overview, reference imagery, character outlines, menu mockups, art, music and video highlights, and level outlines. Next, a Gantt chart was created to help keep deadlines and milestone due dates organized and met. Following the Gantt Chart, work on the game's walkthrough took place, which documented the complete narration and mechanics of the game. The Thesis Project Prospectus was also completed at this point. In the Thesis II semester, the production phase of the project was completed, including level grey-boxing, final details, music, texturing, UI elements and post processing.

Game Outline/ Walkthrough Document Attachment



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I. GAME START SCREEN

- a. Start Screen Music: *Hurt* in the style of Johnny Cash, cover
- b. Graphics: *GLASS* title image
- c. Main Menu: Options for Continue (Last Save), New Game, Load Game, Quit
- d. The game's levels involve representations of the stages of grief (Donald, 2016) (not ordered – bold text in level's atmosphere description).



II. LEVEL ONE: HOT AIR BALLOON LEVEL

- a. Player Selects New Game from Main Menu, launching opening cinematic.
- b. Opening Cinematic: black screen and the sound of glass shattering. The black screen flashes from black to red, to orange, to red, to black, in a "heartbeat" animation pattern.

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Next, while maintaining a black screen, there is a prolonged silence (The loading icon: “Queen Chess Piece Spinning” animation plays to show game activity). As *Level One* comes slowly into view, audio plays of a disembodied voice counting down from 5 to 1 (becoming more and more distant as the level focuses into view).

- c. Game is in first-person perspective.
- d. Key Bindings:

W: Move forward	A: Move to left
S: Move backwards	D: Move to right
Spacebar: Jump	E: Interact
Tab: Game Menu	Z: Zoom
Move Mouse: Turn/ Angle direction	I: Inventory/Journal
Left Mouse Button: Examine Item in Inventory	Esc: Close window/menu
- Ctrl + S:** Quick Save
- e. Level atmosphere: light, dreamy, and open. *This level contains representations of grief’s stage of loss acceptance.*
- f. Level description: An open field, centered between two spans of forest. Lots of rocks jutting from the field. In the distance, the field drops off to a cliff, with a higher cliff further away in the distance. The two cliffs are connected by a long wooden bridge. At the top of the further cliff is a hand-shaped rock face, with a post and a tethered, large **hot air balloon**. Other various hot air balloons can be seen floating in the distance and in the sky above. The bridge is blocked off by a wooden **gate** that will not open until all level items are found. The main **hot air balloon** is locked to the post by a **security puzzle lock**.
- g. Level items: Journal, Mysterious Author’s Note, pad of paper and charcoal, and poem etching.
- h. Points of interest:
 - I. **Journal:** found upon entering the level, in plain sight. Will automatically open an inventory menu that is now accessible to the player throughout the game and will store clue etchings and Mysterious Author’s Notes, and instructions on the key binding to access the journal throughout the game.

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- II. **Mysterious Author's Note:** interactable, will zoom in to content upon player interaction, found upon a jutting rock in the field, and will add to journal once read. Content:

"Hello friend.

Or perhaps, most hated foe...

*Do you know where you are? Do you know what happened?
You should.*

Find me.

*Signed,
J.N."*

- III. **Pad of paper and block of charcoal:** non-interactable as an item but is added to the player's journal screen, will be used to etch clues throughout the game and found near the Mysterious Author's Note.
- IV. **Player is able to look up at clouds near center point of field:** the clouds include shapes of common dream symbolism (but is not obvious), and the sky is purple and pink with fantastical birds flying around among the hot air balloons.
- V. **Large Oval Mirror:** found on the edge of the forest and interactable. Static does not get added to inventory. When interacted with, the screen will zoom into the mirror's reflection to show an unrecognizable, warped, shadowy figure.
- VI. **Large tree with a poem carved into its trunk:** Interactable. When interacted with, the player can etch the poem into their pad of paper with the charcoal and add the poem to their journal. This is the clue for the security puzzle lock to the air balloon.

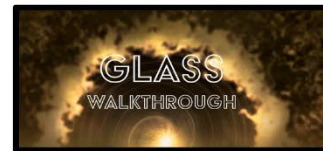
Poem (*Survivor's Guilt*, written by Robert J. Teiss (2020), will be sourced in the game credits):

*"That death did choose you over me
then left behind but memories of all you were*

*before the blur of nurses, needles, charts, and bills:
on certain days survival kills*

*entombing me in our old room where time will stop and grief
resumes
and days may pass before I pry
stuck windows open*

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*scan the **sky** and somewhere
in that **blinding light**
discern a purpose grand or slight*

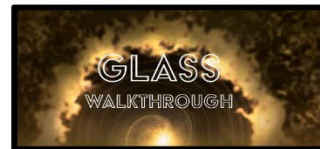
*to carry on
(as you would say) if just to rue
another **day**.*

(Key Words: death, nurses, needles, bills, windows, sky, blinding light, day (the starting order of puzzle tile movements: see Hot Air Balloon Security Puzzle Lock))

- VII. **Gate to bridge:** blocks the path to the hot air balloon; it remains closed until the previous items are discovered.
- VIII. **Hot Air Balloon Security Puzzle Lock** (JL Puzzles, 2018):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqDxkgIS3os> (PuzzleMaster, 2021).



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This puzzle follows the pattern for Siebenstein Spiele's security lock puzzle, solution shown at the above link. Each tile has a symbol on it which corresponds with the poem etching keywords. The order of the words gives direction (but not the entire solution) on which order to move the tiles.

If the player gets really stumped on the solution, there are hints to the puzzle type. (The engraved roman numerals mean 1883, and the engraved S.S. stands for Siebenstein Spiele, (JL Puzzles, 2018).) Once these two clues are found, the player can research the security lock solution on Google, but only if they are unable to solve the puzzle themselves.

- IX. Upon solving the puzzle, the level's closing cinematic plays. Cinematic is of a happy, young couple on a hot air balloon ride; the scene appears to be a happy one, but is very vague, and plays nostalgic music.



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III. LEVEL TWO: THE CARNIVAL MASQUERADE

- a. Level atmosphere: carnival atmosphere, brightly colored with shadowy surfaces, child-like and creepy. *This level contains representations of grief's stage of **bargaining with loss**.*
- b. Level description: The player begins in the basket of a docked hot air balloon and may open the door to exit the balloon. Before them is a carnival. The normal sounds of a carnival are present, but there are no people to be seen. Signs of people--such as moving lights, active games and rides, food stalls and trash on the ground--are also present. As the player walks from the hot air balloon to the carnival, day shifts to nighttime. The player makes their way through the carnival, playing **arcade games**, walking past rides with shadowy riders with no faces, and finally walking through a creepy fun house with stretching, shadowy faces lining the “fun mirrors” that exits to a grand ballroom. The door of the ballroom has a hanging **masque** that can be turned over to find the second **Mysterious Author's Note**. In the ballroom, there are shadowy, waltzing figures wearing masques. Discarded **masques**, representing various dream manifestations, are strewn about the floor. The pristine ballroom walls are made entirely of **mirrors** that can be interacted with. The player makes their way across the dance floor and at the far end of the ballroom is a door, which leads to a large room with a grassy floor, tinted glass ceiling, and an antique-looking **grand piano** centered in the middle. There is a closed **crystal door** through which the player can see a hallway but has no access to. Embossed on the crystal door is a large G-clef and a short, blank line of sheet music. The player must play four music **notes** on the piano in the correct order to illuminate notes on the blank line of sheet music and open the crystal door. Upon solving the piano puzzle, the closing cinematic for the level will play.
- c. Level items: Arcade Games; 1st Puzzle Music Note, 2nd Puzzle Music Note, 3rd Puzzle Music Note, 4th Puzzle Music Note; Hanging Masque; Mysterious Author's Note; Ballroom Mirrors; Discarded Masque; Grand Piano; Crystal Door.
- d. Points of interest:
 - I. **Arcade Games:** The player encounters two different arcade games in the carnival. Neither arcade games are puzzles, but each will create win situations at random when played/interacted with. When the player wins, they will receive a prize (which are trinkets that represent random dream manifestations). The first prizes won for each game will provide an embossed music note that the player can etch with their notepad to enter into their journal, providing the first and second music note clues respectively.

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- II. **Piano Notes 1-4:** The first piano note is found on a prize won from the first arcade game; the second piano note is found on a prize won from the second arcade game. The third is found on the Mysterious Author's Note, and the fourth is found on one of the discarded masques in the ballroom.
- III. **Masque:** On the door between the carnival fun house and the grand ball room hangs a masquerade masque. When the player interacts with it, the masque will turn over to reveal the second Mysterious Author's Note of the game (and the third piano note clue).
- IV. **Mysterious Author's Note/ 4th Piano Note clue:** Found on the back of the masque that hangs on the door between the carnival fun house and the grand ballroom. Content:

"Fello again. ♪

It's Me.

*Do you miss me?
What we were... before?
What we could have been?*

But why did it happen this way?

Why me? Why not her? Why? Why?

Why?

Signed,

J.N.

- V. **Ballroom Mirrors:** Interactable but static. When the player interacts, the screen will zoom in on their reflection, showing a shadowy, warped (but less so than before) image.
- VI. **Discarded Masque:** A masque on the ballroom floor contains an embossment of the final piano note clue.
- VII. **Grand Piano:** The antique grand piano sits in a room with a grassy floor and a ceiling resembling a green house, which filters light through its tinted glass. (The night has once again shifted to day). The player must play four notes correctly and in the correct order to advance forward.
Correct notes/ Puzzle Solution: G#, G, B, G

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- VIII. **Crystal Door:** Embossed on the door is a blank line of sheet music. Once the player plays the music correctly, the notes populate the sheet music and the level ending cinematic will play, advancing the player to the next level.
- e. **Level Ending Cinematic:** The cinematic shows a montage of the same couple as before, albeit a bit older, at a carnival, then dancing and then at a piano bar. The cinematic zooms into the couple holding hands, showing their wedding rings. It then flashes briefly to the image of a road with burning trees and broken glass and the same loud shattering sound of glass as the beginning of the game.



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IV. LEVEL THREE: THE CRYSTAL SPIRE

a. Level atmosphere: Still, desolate, lonely, bleak and gray. *This level contains representations of grief's stages of isolation, sadness, and bargaining with loss.*

b. Level description: The player begins at the start of a long hallway in an expansive mansion. The level is eerily quiet and still, with no movement besides the player. Although the walls, floors, ceilings, and décor are made up of pale, cream-colored marble and crystals, there is a gray tinge to the overall atmosphere, and the statues intermittently lining



the walls seem to be crying. Along this hallway are doors that either do not open or lead to empty rooms with crystal windows that are fogged over, providing zero visibility to the outside world. At the end of the hallway, the player arrives at an enormous main room, with two massive, curved staircases on either side leading to an upstairs, and the walls are lined entirely with numerous statuesque faces. The statues appear to each be sad, angry, or crying-- but have little other concise features. As the player moves through the room, they may notice that the statues' eyes appear to follow them. The player can then advance upstairs to a second hallway. In this hallway, there are several rooms on either side. In each room there are items on shelves and desks, including statuettes and books, where the player can obtain clues to this level and to the next level. In one of the rooms, the player views themselves in a desk **mirror**, seeing the clearest view of themselves thus far. In this reflection, they can see that they are a man, but their features are still warped and unclear.

In one of the books of the desk, the player will find the third **Mysterious Author's Note**. At the end of the hallway, the player comes to an unsettling, courtyard at dusk. On the far right-hand side of the courtyard stands a large angelic statue whose tears flow into a fountain that expands the entire floor of the courtyard, but these tears only leave a few inches of flooded water throughout. In the statue's hands, a flame flickers. Dark, bare trees reach towards the player from either side of the courtyard, and on the furthest side, stands a shadowy stone building with checkered marble steps leading to its landing. Chess-piece-like statues stand at either side of the building's entrance and water pours down either side of the landing. Between the player and the stone building, the **Spheres Puzzle** waits to be solved. Upon solving the Sphere's Puzzle, the level's ending cinematic will play and the player can advance to the next level.

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- c. Level Items: Queen Chess Piece statuette; Map to the Spheres Puzzle, Mysterious Author's Note; *Book of Chess*: chess notes.
- d. Points of Interest:
- I. **Queen Chess Piece Statuette:** In one of the upstairs room's the player can find a chess piece and make an etching to collect. If the player zooms in on the chess piece etching, they can read the name "REGINA".
 - II. **Map to Spheres Puzzle:** A book in one of the upstairs rooms contains a map to solving the Spheres Puzzle.
 - III. **Book of Chess: Chess Notes:** Another book in one of the upstairs rooms contains a book of chess, in which a section of notes for winning strategies can be pulled out. This is the key for the next level's puzzle/game.
 - IV. **Mirror in disheveled desk:** In one of the upstairs rooms, the player will find a disheveled desk, strewn with notes and crumbled papers, photographs (unfocused), and books. When the player interacts with the mirror, they can see a partially clear, yet blurry, reflection of themselves, revealing that they are a man, but little else.
 - V. **Mysterious Author's Note:** On top of the disheveled desk, the player will find the third Mysterious Author's Note. Contents:

I can't sleep. I can't eat.

It's all my fault.

Have you found me? No... no one can find me. I'm... alone.

But where am I? Why can't even I--myself-- find me?

*Send me back. I'll change it. I'll fix everything.
Or send me back to before it all changed--*

...

The whole world has CHANGED.

Now it shatters over and over... day after day.

*It's all my fault.
I miss my Regina.*

... It's all my fault.

J.N."

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- VI. **Spheres Puzzle:** In the courtyard at the end of the level, set upon the water from the fountain, are large crystal spheres embedded in the ground. In front of the spheres is a mechanism with levers (it remains inactive and inaccessible until all level items are found). When the player interacts with the mechanism, the screen takes on a top-down view of the spheres, with the levers at the bottom of the screen, and key bindings that will move the spheres into place. The player can review the spheres map by backing out of the puzzle, as needed. When the spheres are placed in the correct order, they shatter into dark shards in an outward, slow motion, launching the level's ending cinematic.
- e. **Level's Ending Cinematic:** A couple is driving in a car--a woman in the passenger seat and a man in the driver's seat. Music, (song TBD), is playing on the radio. The woman has apparently recently come from work and is wearing scrubs and a name tag that reads "Regina". She reaches for the man's hand and smiles at him, her wedding rings can be seen in the image. The screen flashes in a blinding light and the sound of glass shattering can be heard before the screen fades to black.



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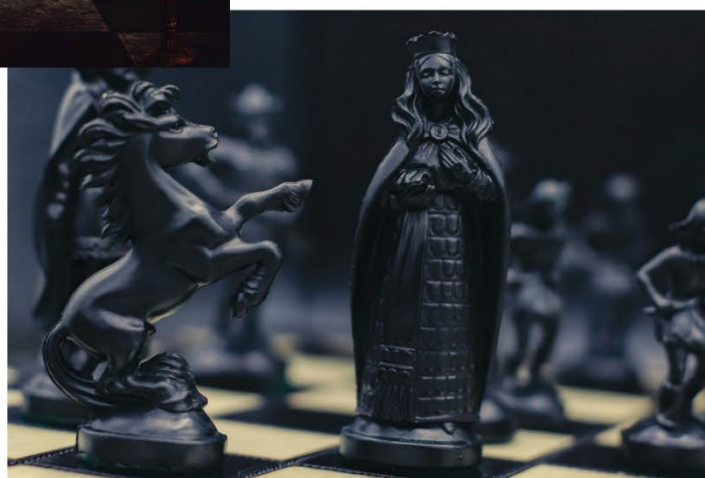
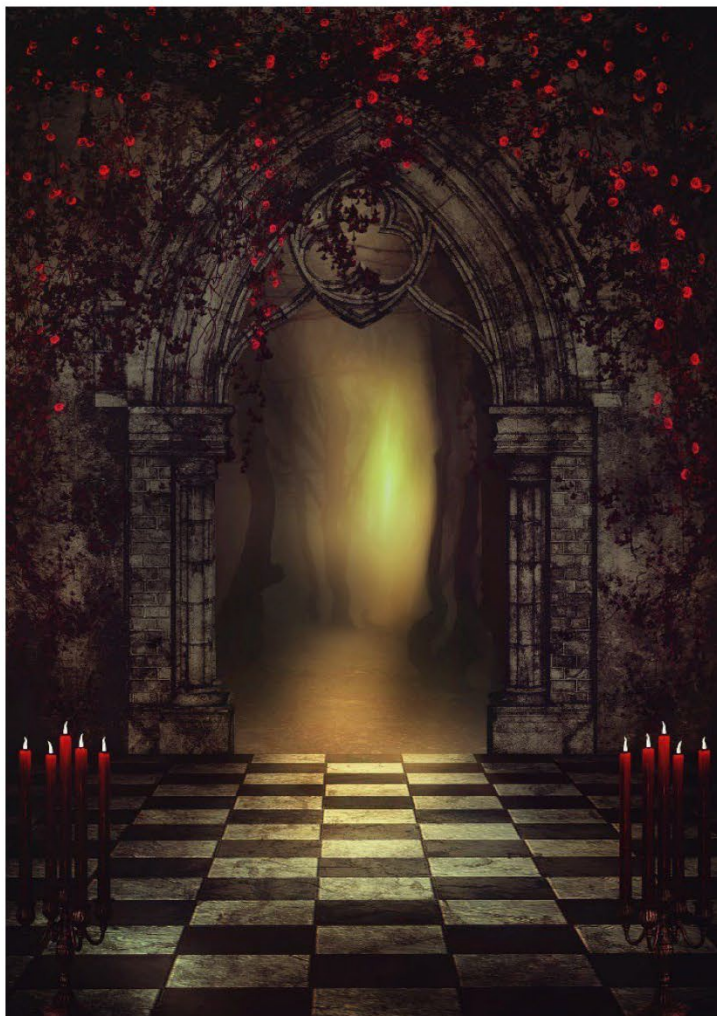
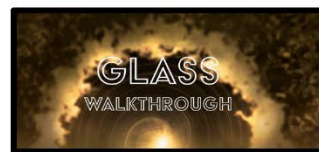


V. LEVEL FOUR: THE DARK CHESSBOARD

- a. Level atmosphere: confusing, dark, scary.
- b. Level description: The player starts the level on the marble checkered stairs that leads to the stone building. If they look behind them, they can see the shattered glass from the spheres puzzle. Upon entering the stone building, the door locks behind them and they are faced with dozens of staircases that go in every direction. The player must navigate the mazes of staircases to obtain chess pieces (these pieces do not go into an inventory but display a quick cinematic of the respective chess piece populating a chess board). At the end of the maze, the player discovers a life-sized chess board that they must “play”, in top-down view, to solve the puzzle (the winning strategy is in the player’s journal). This is a short level, without a mirror or a Mysterious Author Note.
- c. Level ending cinematic: Upon winning the chess match, a cinematic launches, which shows chess pieces rushing towards each other at high speed; the chess pieces morph into cars heading towards each other. The cinematic flashes to the scene of the couple in the car (with the woman in her scrubs in the passenger seat and the man gazing back at her lovingly). The woman shouts “Tom, look out!” and both look forward, the man swerving. The overview perspective resumes, showing the two vehicles narrowly avoiding one another and one of the cars flipping onto its passenger side and crashing (including the same sound of shattering glass) into a tree on the side of the road, igniting flames up the tree.



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VI. LEVEL FIVE: THE FIERY CITY

- a. Level atmosphere: Fiery, intense, and frightening. This level contains representations of the **anger associated with grief**.
- b. Level description: The player finds themselves in a city neighborhood, lined with burning buildings, burning cars, and ash floating upwards towards a red, stormy sky. Almost immediately the player finds a **Mysterious Author's Note**, directing them to find "symbols of fire". These fiery illegible symbols can be found throughout the buildings, on the cars and on the street. The player observes distant sirens, distant echoing shouting, the distant shattering of glass, which are triggered as the player navigates the fiery zone, almost as if they're experiencing ghostly memories. Once the player has discovered all of the fiery symbols, which will be added to the journal as they're discovered, the player can solve a life-size puzzle board made up of numerous mysterious symbols found at the top of a fiery, crumbling building. Pieces of the building fall away as the player climbs the building (access to the building is sealed off by a burning "Road Closed" sign until the player has found all symbols). When the player solves the puzzle board by lining up the symbols, the rest of the symbols of the board drop away and the remaining symbols illuminate brightly against the dark stormy sky, rearranging to spell out "*I am Tom Nolan*". "Twist ending"-like music (TBD) plays as the cinematic launches.
- c. Level Ending Cinematic: First, the cinematic plays through scenes of each of the mirrors the player has previously encountered through the game, now showing the player's reflection clearly; followed by a montage of the player, in first-person perspective, of all of the previous level's ending cinematics, with his wife Regina. (i.e. The player in first person perspective in the hot air balloon with Regina, then at a carnival, dancing and at a

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piano bar with her, etc.). Next, the cinematic shows Regina and the player (still in first person perspective) in the car, with the player driving. The cinematic follows the previous level's cinematic of the car crash, but slightly fogged over and warped, with Regina shouting "Tom, watch out!". Just before the crash itself is shown, the cinematic replays--but is vivid and clear as day, with the player in first person perspective in the *passenger seat*, in scrubs, coming from work. In the driver's seat, Regina is driving. Tom reaches for her hand, and Regina looks back lovingly at him. Tom yells, "Gina, watch out!" and the car flips and crashes onto its driver's side, into the tree. Sirens, glass



shattering, and distant shouting can be heard along with the sound of a car's open door alarm.

VII. CLOSING SCENE

- a. The car crash cinematic fades to black, and slowly illuminates into the scene of an office space, where a man is laying on a couch, and another man with a white beard and a clipboard is seated on a chair. The bearded man's voice begins as distant while the scene comes into view (it is the same disembodied voice from the opening scene) and gains clarity and volume with the brightening cinematic.

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Dialogue:

“Mr. Nolan, as I count to 5, you will awaken in my office, in the present, on Tuesday, September the 3rd 2023. “1...2...3...4...5...”. The man lying on the couch sits up and rubs his eyes. “Slowly, slowly now. How are you feeling, Tom?”

“I-I wasn’t driving...” Tom whispers to himself.

The psychiatrist leans forward, tensely, as if waiting for something incredibly important, and asks Tom to repeat himself.

Tom states clearly, “I wasn’t driving.”

The psychiatrist gives a sigh of relief and replies: “That’s right, Tom. Your wife, Regina, was. You’ve had yourself convinced for so long that you were to blame for the accident, that you’d lost yourself in that invented version of the memory.

Sometimes... when we survive something like what you did, especially if we lose someone we love so much, we falsely blame ourselves, and can warp our own memories. It’s known as *survivor’s guilt*.

Sigmund Freud believed that the unconscious mind expresses itself in dreams as a way of resolving repressed experiences,” (Berland, 2008). “When conventional forms of therapy do not work, in theory, the only way to overcome these warped memories is to re-witness the true memories ourselves—to communicate with our own psyche. It looks like our hypnosis therapy has been a success. Now you can truly begin to heal.”



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VIII. CLOSING SCREEN & ENDING CREDITS

- a. Fade out to black screen. Begin intro music to Glass by Thompson Square (no lyrics start until closing credits screen)
- b. Black Screen, wave-pattern animation-in of the following facts (with a pause between the first and second):

Almost 53 million adults in America under age forty-five are living with mental illness...

... Less than half of those are receiving treatment.

~ National Institute of Mental Health, 2022

- c. Go to closing credits, words of Glass by Thompson Square begin

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IX. INTEGRATED DREAM SYMBOLISM

Dream Symbolism/Manifestation	Meaning	Game Location
1. Seeing a Dead Loved One	Seeking Closure	Throughout
2. Searching for Someone/thing	Being Unhappy with current situation, seeking change	Throughout
3. Mountains/Cliffs	Internalizing a challenge/obstacle to face	Level One
4. Rides/Rollercoasters	The psyche reminding us that there are both good and bad times	Level Two
5. Books	Seeking Knowledge/Truth	Level Three
6. Empty Rooms	Feeling stuck/trapped	Level Three
7. Crying	Repressed emotions	Level Three
8. Water/Flooding	Feeling overwhelmed/unsupported	Level Three
9. Fire	Feeling uncontrollable anger	Level Five

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