# At the Maze of Madness
# **Game Concept Document**



Written by: Michael Shahen
Version : 0.1
Date: 2/4/2014

# Columbia
### C O L L E G E   C H I C A G O

# TABLE OF CONTENTS
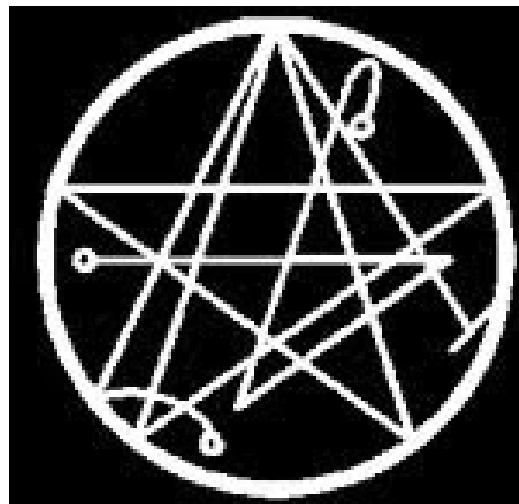
# PREMISE

*At the Maze of Madness* is a Lovecraftian horror puzzle and exploration game, in which the player must escape from a shifting, changing maze by finding occult keys to open the way out. Equipped with relics containing dark powers, the player must navigate the grueling maze, find the hidden keys, and escape the Maze of Madness.

# DESCRIPTION

In this game, the player is playing at a detective investigating a string of mysteries. All of the clues so far point to manor to the east of the Miskatonic river and a few miles from the city of Arkham. When the game begins the player has gone to this manor to investigate the disappearances and found an immense hedge maze between the detective and the front door. The game starts with the player at the beginning of the maze. As the player enters the maze, a central path with no turns or openings takes the player to a Manor gate that is locked with 3 locks. Once the player reaches this door, the hall behind him changes and becomes part of the maze (the player becomes trapped in the maze in this way). From this point on, the player must explore the hedge maze and find 3 keys, and bring them back to the gate to win and escape. As the player moves through the maze, different walls will shift around randomly, and the maze will be in constant flux. The keys themselves are hidden in special plaza areas with small platforming puzzles that the player will need to solve There are also 3 Relics hidden in the maze that give the player some powers over the maze. Each relic can be found randomly throughout the maze and each one effects the maze in a different way. One relic can be used to dissipate single walls around the maze. Another allows the player to raise or lower special platforms, and the third lets the player charge it so see through two wall sections for several sections. On the ground throughout the maze will be occult symbols. These symbols will connect to other areas of the maze in a pattern, a pattern that the player can discover and use to understand how the maze is shifting around them. Controls and interface are very simple. The only HUD elements will be a Key Counter, an Insanity bar (which functions as health) and a mana bar which will allow the player to use powers of Relics they pick up (and also function as a resource based cooldown for using powers). The player moves using WASD and space bar to jump, can pick up objects with E, and can use a Relic Power with the right mouse click. The whole maze will be controlled by a randomizing script to dictate how it changes, but it will be scripted in a way that it always leaves a path to get to the 3 Keys and the final gate. The player wins the game when they find all 3 keys and open the gate to the manor, only to find the gate leads back to the front gate, allowing the player to escape, but never find out what exactly is in the mansion. What will drive the player is the difficulty of the maze and the desire to overcome the challenge of the maze. Initially the player will simply want to explore, but once they come to the realization that the maze is shifting, the maze becomes an enemy in itself, an enemy that the player will want to overcome as a challenge. The mood of this game is dark and should only become more twisted and frightening as the game goes on. The Insanity meter for the player acts as health, but also as a timer. As the player is trapped longer in the maze, the meter begins to fall. The maze will be full of visual scares and surprises that will also detract from the player's insanity meter. To replenish the meter, the player must find a relic or key. This timer and the haunting nature of the game create a dark atmosphere filled with a slowly mounting tension as the player races to escape before they go mad. The game starts during the day, but quickly and unnaturally fades to

dusk and then night during the first few minutes of the maze. As the night goes on the maze becomes stranger and begins to shift and change more and more. Ultimately the player should be determined to survive and escape, but while still feel a crushing sense of tension, confusion, and fear as they are stuck longer in the maze.

## FEATURES

*At the Maze of Madness* has several unique gameplay elements and design points that distinguish it from other horror games, and provide a new experience for the player.

- Lore of the game is based on Lovecraftian mythos and stories. Relics and Keys have symbols on them based on Lovecraft's book of the Occult, the Necronomicon.

- Use three unique powers, balanced to help navigate the maze and to solve platforming puzzles while keeping the game challenging and confusing.

- Explore a living Maze that changes as the game plays. Walls appear out of nowhere, shift around areas, and try to drive the player to madness. In this game, the only enemy is the maze itself.
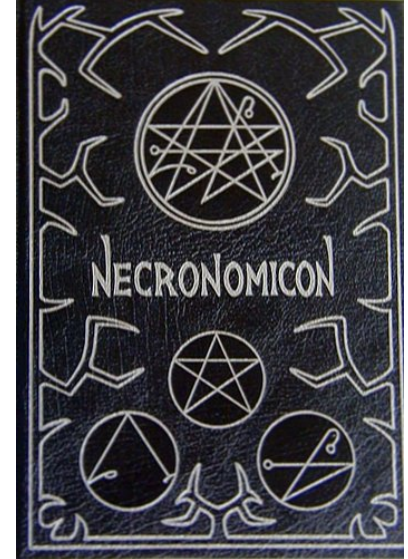
## GENRE

The game is a survival horror exploartion-based puzzle game. The game is a horror game with a tense and strange atmosphere, but it still encourages exploration of the maze. It also uses special player powers and platforming mechanics to create puzzles that can only be solved with the right application of powers and movement. Figuring out how the powers work and how the maze changes is also part of the puzzles, as the better understanding the player has of the game, the better they will be able to win the game.

## PLATFORM

The primary platform will be PC and Mac. The computer platform fits the size and genre of the game better than consoles would. Many short-form horror games have garnered popularity on this platform, thus with *Maze of Madness* being this type of game, it seems only natural that *Maze* also be available on this platform. The basic controls lend themselves to simple control configuration with mouse and keyboard.

## ESRB RATING

The ESRB rating that the game is shooting for is a T for Teen. The game covers some darker more

macabre topics, but it can create the same tension and atmosphere without the need for a Mature rating. Ultimately Teen should be open enough to include all of the targeted audiences for the game, while still allowing the game to be as dark and scary as it needs to be.

# TARGET MARKET

The target market of this game are consumers between the ages of 16- 35. Of this age range, the groups being targeted are horror media enthusiasts and fans of Lovecraftian horror. The game should also appeal in some ways to fans of exploration-puzzle games, especially with the unique mechanic of the changing maze.

# MARKETING POSITION

What makes this game unique is the Maze mechanic and lore of the world. The Maze in *At the Maze of Madness* is the playable world as well as the enemy of the game. This environment is the antagonist, providing a unique spin on typical horror game enemies. This helps the game stand out amongst the indie horror games already on the market. The lore of the game is also based off of popular Lovecraftian mythos, attracting fans of the genre or people who are interested in the mythos.

# COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

Amnesia: The Dark Descent - One of the more prolific survival horror games of the genre, this a larger game with a detailed story and enemies that you can't attack or defeat. What makes *Maze* unique to this game is that instead of enemies, the environment itself is the antagonist. No where feels safe inside the maze, and this creates a much different tension than in amnesia where you can see the enemies.

Slender - Another popular survival horror game, this game has a focus on exploration as the means for getting through the game. Again, the antagonist is a physical entity that chases the player rather then the Maze itself in *At the Maze of Madness*, but also the player has more options in how they deal with the antagonist (the powers).

SCP Stairway Game - This game is purely tension based, with the player descending down an endless staircase till they reach an enemy hiding on one of the floors. This game creates wonderful tension, but without much gameplay. *At the Maze of Madness* will provide a similar sense of tension, but with more for the player to do to keep the gameplay more refreshing.

# BACKSTORY

Before the game begins, the player is introduced to the main character, Connie Thullu, a detective on a missing person's case. Connie has discovered that the shared point between all of her missing person's investigations is an old manor outside of town. Connie goes there to investigate and ends up trapped in the manor's front hedge maze.

# RISK ANALYSIS
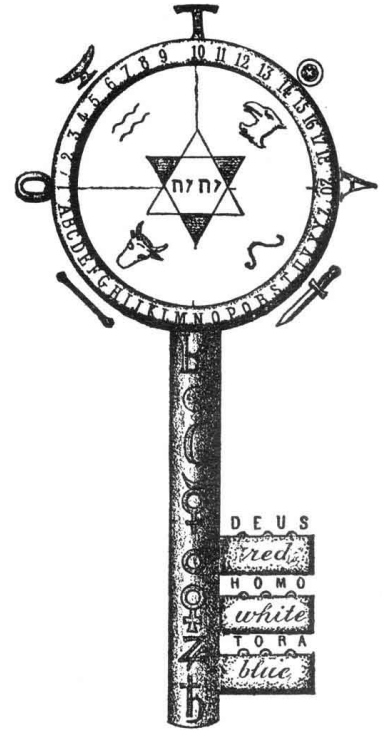
The maze itself is the most important part of the game, as well as it's biggest risk. The maze will need to have multiple ways in which it can change it's shape and paths, but it will be difficult to let the maze do this while still making sure there are clear paths between keys and without the game being too difficult.

The maze will need a lot of testing and balancing. It will also be difficult to design the hints into the maze, while keeping the pattern of the hints visible and obvious enough for the player's to pick up on.

## SUMMARY

*At the Maze of Madness* is short-form horror game with a unique twist on the environment and antagonistic elements of the game. A changing map makes each play through of the game unique and creates a new experience for the player each time. *Maze* will be a challenging game, that will require the player to use the scarce resources given to them to escape from the dark labyrinth around them before it swallows their mind forever.