

Midnight Cabin

Game Design Document

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Theme: Shadow Alchemy

Platform: WebGL

Game Page: [Midnight Cabin by JakeRovere \(itch.io\)](#)

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Game Overview

Midnight Cabin is a “survive the night” horror game about strategically managing candles to chase away the Shadows that come to get you at night. The day is spent using your Alchemical Cauldron to create candles and prepare for the night, when the cabin is attacked and must be protected from the looming threat in the shadows.

Pillars

Balancing Act

Players never have quite enough of any resources they need to be comfortable, and they must be adaptable. They will need to be maintaining and balancing multiple spinning plates at once in order to prevent failure.

Knowledge is Power

Tools and abilities that player's have should only be locked behind the player having knowledge of them. Gaining knowledge and learning how to do something and how something works is the power increase that will make the player more successful in the future.

Tactile Interaction

All interactions with the game should be tactile and feel like a motion the player must perform. Objects, movement, and gameplay is physical, manual, and in-world, with out-of-world UI being kept to an absolute minimum.

Mystery

Much of the game's setting and world is left mysterious. The threats are unknown, much is left unexplained, and the player is dropped without explanation into the shoes of a character that has already existed in and is part of this world. How alchemy functions in particular should be real and logically consistent, yet unexplained to players. Whatever alchemical tool is being used, the actions being performed by the player's character should appear to be manual, precise, knowledgeable and carefully prepared.

Setting

You play as an experienced, paranoid research alchemist living inside a cabin in the woods. The Alchemist never leaves their cabin. The nights are dangerous, and it has been long since the alchemist slept. They must complete their research, it is far too dangerous outside, and completing their research will allow them to banish the shadowy threats that come for them

each night and save both the forest and themselves. None of this is told directly to the player however, and they are dropped into this researcher's shoes without explanation.

The days are safe, and the player spends the time performing complex alchemical transmutations to create defensive tools. They spend the nights on vigilant watch for the shadows, using their created tools to defend themselves from the creatures trying to get inside and stop them.

Core Loop

The Core Loop of Midnight Cabin consists of first Gathering, then Creating, then Using, and is connected directly to the day/night cycle.

1. At the start of a new day, player's will first receive a random assortment of resources.
2. During the following daytime, player's will spend their collected resources by creating items with the Alchemy Cauldron.
3. When the player is ready they can start the next night. The night then begins and lasts for 2 minutes. During night the player must strategically use and conserve their created items to protect themselves from threats until dawn.
4. The new day starts, the player retains any leftover tools or resources from the previous day/night, the difficulty increases, and the loop repeats and continues until the player is unable to survive a night.

Systems and Mechanics

Your House

The game takes place entirely within a small single room cabin. The player is positioned in the center of the room. Player's are initially facing a set wall in the cabin, but can use buttons to rotate themselves 90 degrees in either direction, allowing them to spin and view each wall.

Each wall of the cabin has a different makeup of objects the player can interact with, as well as different threats that the player will need to deal with during the night. The layout of each wall is as follows:

Front Wall



Objects

Name	Info
Front Door	Used to collect resources at the start of each new day.
Window	Can be opened and closed.
2 Shelves	Moveable objects can be placed on the shelf.

Threats

Name	Info
Window Shadow	Close the window to deal with this shadow.
3 Shadow Creeps	One in the bottom left, one top right, and bottom middle (center)

Left Wall



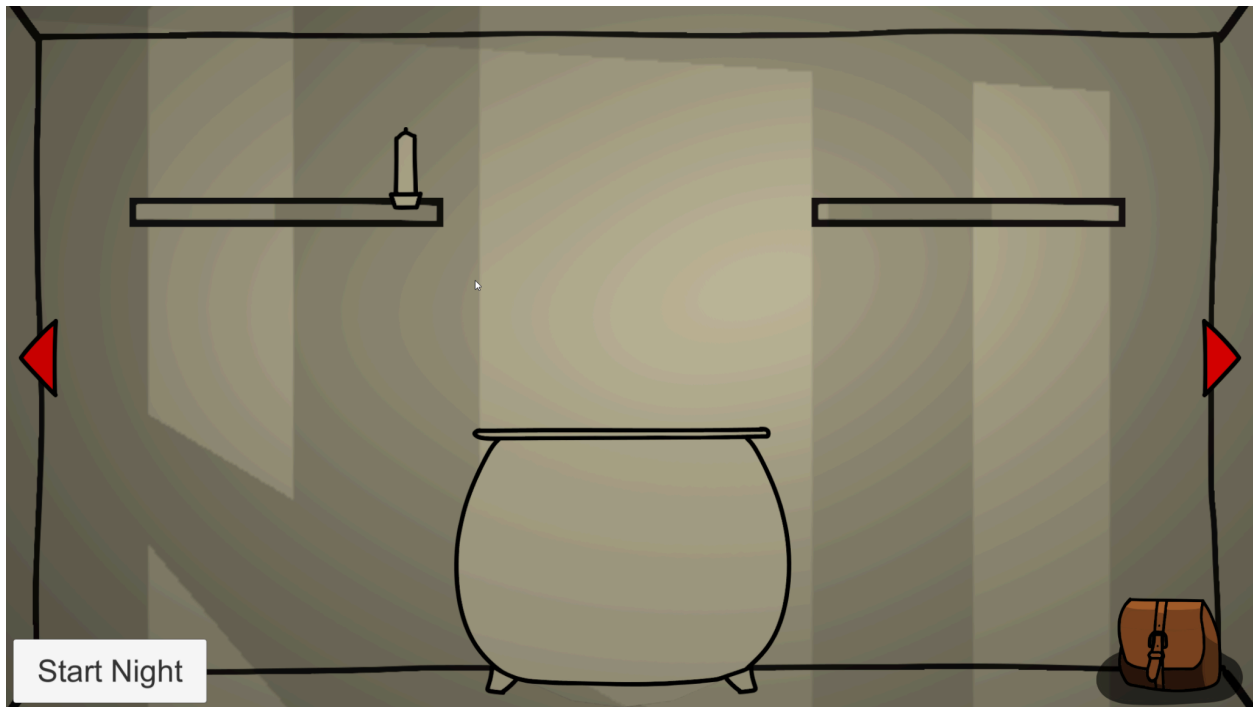
Objects

Name	Info
Window	Can be opened and closed.
3 Shelves	Moveable objects can be placed on the shelf.

Threats

Name	Info
Window Shadow	Close the window to deal with this shadow
3 Shadow Creeps	One in the top left, one in the top right and one in the bottom near the window

Right Wall



Objects

Name	Info
Alchemy Cauldron	Used for Alchemy to produce items like candles.
2 Shelves	Moveable objects can be placed on the shelf.

Threats

Name	Info
3 Shadow Creeps	One in the top left, one in the top right and one underneath the Cauldron.

Back Wall



Objects

Name	Info
Window	Can be opened and closed.
Bed	Used to start the next night.
2 Shelves	Moveable objects can be placed on the shelf.

Threats

Name	Info
Window Shadow	Close the window to deal with this shadow
3 Shadow Creeps	One in the top left, one in the bottom right below the window and one in the bottom left under the bed.

Object Interaction

Both during daytime without consuming time, and during nighttime, players can interact with their room. This involves panning around between different walls or rooms that contain interactable objects (e.g. Crafting structures, doors, shelves, candles, etc). The player will also

have an inventory of candles they can interact with. Some or all of these can be applied to specific parts or objects in these views.

Inventory System

The players inventory will need to store two different kinds of items - resources and tools.

Tools will be stored and accessed through a satchel inventory that the player can open and close during gameplay. The currently held quantity of each item type is shown here. Players can click on items that they own within the satchel, which will remove the item from the inventory and drop the interactable item object into the wall view currently being faced for the player to use.

Resource items are not actively used like objects by the player, and are only used when crafting. As such they are not shown in the satchel, and only shown on the cauldron crafting screen. The three resource items are represented stored on shelves, and the player can drag these items into the cauldron to craft using them.

Resources

There are three different resources in this version of the game; they are Sulfur, Mercury and Lead. Each has their own set of sprites, its default icon, the icon for when it is being held (click and drag) by the player and the icon for when it is placed in the Alchemy Cauldron.

Resources Acquisition

Currently at the beginning of each day cycle the player can click the door and a random number of each of the three resources (Sulfur, Mercury and Lead) are added to the total currently stored.

The amount is a random number generated between 1 and 5, this number independently calculated for each resource type.

Items

Items are objects / things that are usable during the night cycle of the game. In this version of the game there is one type of item, the candle. Candles can be dropped onto a side of the room and during night time will light up a portion of that wall; this light source can be used to chase away or kill the shadows that creep in from the edges of the wall.

Over time the candle will begin to burn out, there are three visual stages that indicate to the player that the candle is going out; at each stage the candle will get visually smaller and the light that it outputs will be less intense. Some specifics for the candle:

- When placed on the wall, deplete in 3 stages.

- First stage slows shadow spread by 50%. Light is at its brightest
- Second stage slows shadow spread by 35%. Light is dimmer
- Third stage slows shadow spread by 15%. Light is dimmest.
- Benefits from candles stack with how many are on the wall. E.g. 2 first stage candles completely halt shadow spread.
- Each candle stage lasts for a set duration. Each stage has its own sprite and light brightness.
- Candles are only lit during the night.
- After the third stage completes, the candle goes out and is lost.

Alchemy Cauldron

The Alchemy Cauldron is how the player is able to craft items to use during the Night Cycle. The player places a combination of the three resources and if the combination matches one of the recipes then it will show the item that will be crafted. The player can then click the craft button and it will craft that item and increment the stored amount of that item by 1.

Day and Night

Game is based on a day and night cycle. Each part of the cycle functions differently.

Daytime

During the day the player can interact with their candles; all of which are put out. They can use the Alchemy Cauldron to craft more candles. The player can open and close the windows and can click on the bed to start the next night cycle.

Nighttime

At night the sunlight fades away and the candles magically light themselves. During the night there are various shadows that creep into the room on every wall; in order to chase away these shadows the players must hold or place candles near the shadows until they waste away. At random points during the night any or all of the windows can open, allowing more darkness into the cabin. The player needs to keep the windows shut to prevent more shadows from intruding. Something moving closer that needs to be pushed away.

Controls

The controls are simple, there are arrows on either side of the playscreen that the player can click with their mouse; when they do this it will rotate the camera 90 degrees to the next wall.

The objects in the cabin can be interacted with by either clicking or clicking and holding with the mouse. For example clicking and holding a candle will allow the player to drag the mouse around and the candle will move with it. Windows can be opened and closed by clicking the window sill and dragging up or down to open or close it.

Clicking the cauldron will open the alchemy menu, clicking and dragging a resource with the mouse will allow the player to drag it into one of the crafting slots in the cauldron. Clicking on a crafting slot that is already filled will empty that slot. The player can either craft an item or exit the menu by clicking the corresponding button.

Clicking on the door with the mouse during the day will let the player gather resources; and clicking the bed during the day will start the next night cycle.

Art

In order to successfully complete the project within the time frame, we opted to go for a very minimalist, almost colorless paper storybook visual style.

To complement these basic visuals, we decided to do a blend of 2D and 3D. The game is made up of 2D images placed within 3D space, allowing the player to move and turn through a 3D environment while still interacting with mostly 2D point and click elements.

Shadows are a major part of the theme for this project, and having the game take place in a 3D environment allows us to easily utilize Unity's lighting and shadows to easily add depth and contrast to our environments and improve the visual quality of our shadows and threats.

Audio

When creating the music for this project the goal was to create an eerie feeling in the player at all times. There are two tracks in the game, the daytime track and the nighttime track.

The daytime track has a short intro where the instruments are introduced in series before changing to the main loop that plays in the background of the day cycle.

The music is primarily in A minor and consists of four main components. The synth component leads the main melody and adds background depth in the form of various reverb and delay effects. The guitar component complements the synth and is slightly quieter in the mix, it completes the main melody of the piece. The strings component consists of two sections, one section is playing a counter melody to the synth and guitar. The other section adds ambience to the piece by playing long drawn out chords that have heavy reverb and EQ on the track. Finally the bass component is a set of two droning notes that switch every two bars, this creates a feeling of the piece moving forward however quite slowly.

The nighttime track is significantly more intense to produce a feeling of urgency in the player while maintaining the eerie tone of the music. The piece is again in A minor; the urgent feeling is

produced primarily by the drum loop, which consists of rapid percussive clicks and repetitive staccato hi-hats, underpinned by a strong rhythmic kick. The ambience of the piece is created with a combination of the synth chord pads, the clicking FX and the wind sounds woven in the back of the mix. The main melody is produced by a fast paced electric piano sound that is complemented by the occasional vocal chop that repeats not quite often enough for it to feel comfortable to listen to.