ECHOES OF THE LAST NIGHT

WHO AM I
WHISPERS OF THE VANISHED
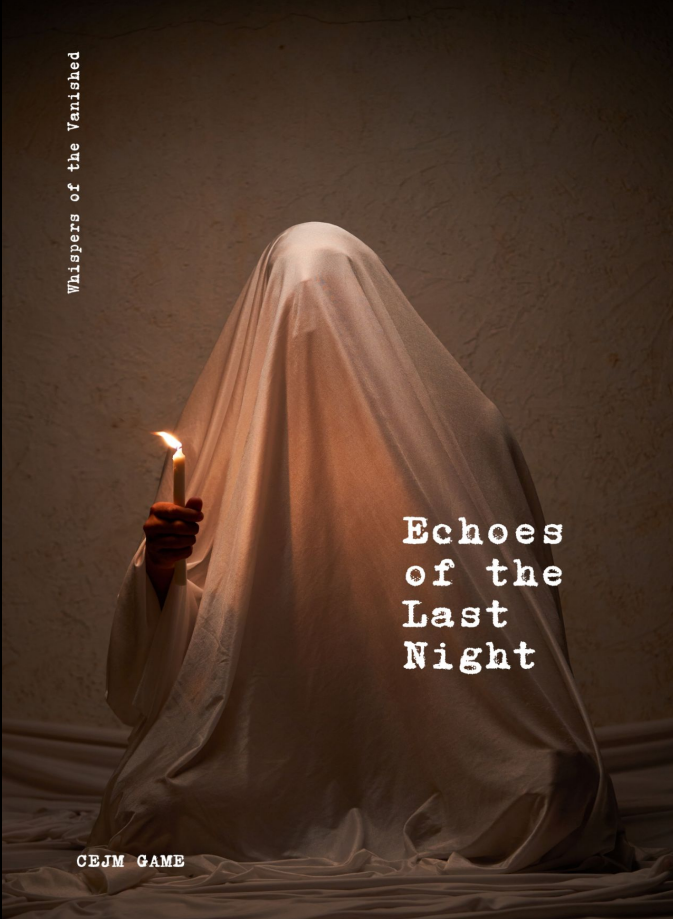
Content

Whispers of the Vanished

Echoes
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Night

CEJM GAME

In a city where stories of the night whisper through the winds, one name lingers long after the stars have faded—Echo. Her vibrant spirit, once a beacon of dreams and defiance, now drifts through the silent corridors of her past, seeking the lost threads of a life mysteriously cut short.

Synopsis

The game revolves around unraveling the mystery behind the murder of a young woman.

Our primary protagonist, Echo, is a vibrant 25-year-old woman whose life was cut tragically short in her own apartment. As a second-generation immigrant, Echo broke free from her suffocating Asian family through education and career success, only to find herself ensnared in a chilling predicament. Awakening to find herself trapped in a room, Echo grapples with the horrifying realization of her own demise, compounded by amnesia that shrouds her memories in darkness.

As the ghost Echo, the player embarks on a race against time to unravel the enigma surrounding her untimely death. With only fragmented recollections of her identity and appearance, Echo must navigate her surroundings, piecing together clues and identifying potential suspects from her past.

With the looming threat of eternal entrapment, Echo must uncover the full story before the first light of dawn.

The game is set against the backdrop of a single fateful night.

Characters

Molly
Echo's colleague. Was in competition with Echo in a manager role but lost.

Echo
Protagonist. 25-year-old Asian young woman murdered in her apartment.

Isaac
Echo's ex-boyfriend.

No. 137 Serial Killer
A serial murder case that has been going on for a few month. The investigation has not found any suspect.

Tone

This is a game about murder and mystery set in an enclosed apartment room.

We aim to envelop players in a sense of entrapment, leaving them grappling with the unknown and feeling the urgency of the situation. It's akin to being submerged in darkness with only a faint glimmer of guidance.

Mysterious. At its core, this game embodies the essence of a detective and puzzle-solving experience, shrouded in enigma. The visual landscape will be dimly lit, with the illumination serving as a metaphor for the gradual unraveling of truth.

Murky. Much like navigating through fog, vital information will remain obscured, prompting players to conjure their own interpretations of Echo's plight. While direct horror elements may be absent, the scene will feature eerie details such as blood stains and murder weapons, invoking a sense of foreboding.

Melancholy. As Echo retraces her steps, fragments of memories will resurface, delving into her familial bonds, friendships, and relationships. Through this emotional journey, players will empathize with Echo's narrative, gradually becoming invested in her story.

Moodboards

- https://mechanicsofmagic.com/2024/05/06/checkpoint-1-individual-charlotte/
- https://mechanicsofmagic.com/2024/05/06/mayshu-zhan-checkpoint-1-concept-doc/
- https://mechanicsofmagic.com/2024/05/05/checkpoint-1-individual-janelle/
- https://mechanicsofmagic.com/2024/05/05/individual-team-member-deliverables-ethan-foster/

Setting

This story takes place in the bedroom of a small apartment in an undetermined location in America, belonging to Echo, who lives alone. As a ghost in the location of her death, Echo is bound by the walls of the bedroom and cannot open the door to exit. However, she can interact with objects in the room, which include standard bedroom furniture, along with a desk, computer, phone, and diary. Her corpse is lying in the bed. The game begins with the clock reading 1 hour until sunrise, at which point her ghost will become trapped in the bedroom.
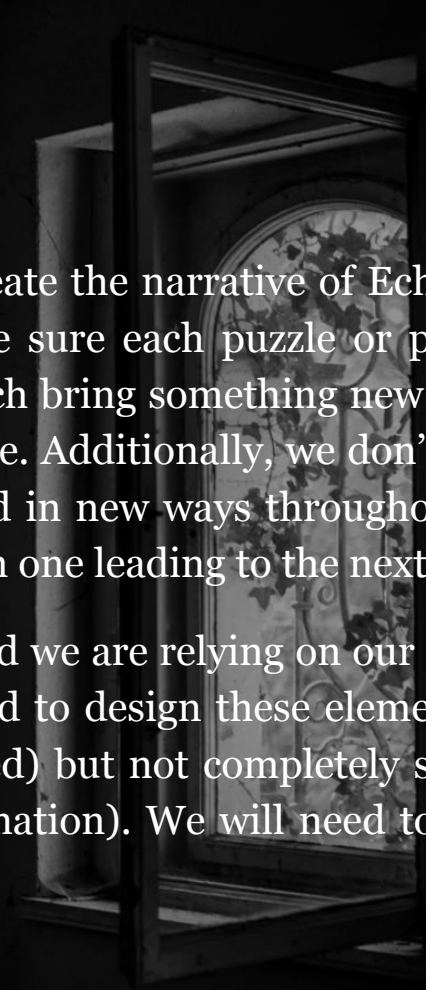
Gameplay

Our core gameplay is based on the mechanics of an escape box, while including digital elements. The game will have an hour time limit, as Echo has until sunrise to figure out her death and pass on. As Echo, you will physically be able to interact with the miniature props within the escape box. There will be instructions for how to set the props up correctly. The instructions will prompt you to complete the physical puzzles in the box to get passwords and keys to unlock her phone, computer, and diary. We are considering having her computer and phone be represented digitally, where players need to scan a QR code to access them. Each puzzle will reveal 1 suspect. There will be 3 suspects, but the final 4th puzzle will reveal the answer.

Key Challenges for Design

Make the puzzles connected and sequential. In order to create the narrative of Echo and allow players to discover details from her past, we need to make sure each puzzle or prop is connected. They may each be able to stand alone as a puzzle or each bring something new to the table, but they must be able to be combined to paint a fuller picture. Additionally, we don't want props to be used once and discarded. Ideally, props will be reused in new ways throughout the game. The puzzles must also be designed to be sequential, with each one leading to the next.

Make the narrative clear. Our game is very narrative heavy, and we are relying on our props, puzzle, and instructions to reveal the narrative over time. We need to design these elements so that the narrative is easy to understand (so players aren't confused) but not completely spelled out (so the players feel satisfaction from "discovering" new information). We will need to work hard to strike a balance between too vague and too explained.

Key Challenges for Tech

Combine the analog and digital elements. We are planning to use both analog and digital props throughout our game. Physical calendars, newspapers, and diaries will be used against phones and computers, and players will sometimes need to switch between the two mediums when solving a puzzle. We want to make sure that this switch is not disjointed and feels natural and intuitive for the player. We must design the tech elements in a way that fit the tone and flow of the rest of the game in order to keep the players immersed in Echo's story.

Create simulated email. One puzzle will rely on the player going through Echo's emails on her computer. To do this, we are planning to code a simulated set of emails that the player will be able to interact with, without affecting any real accounts or emails. To do this, we will either have to host this simulated email page on a server accessible to the player through a link, or allow the player to download the code and run it locally. We will have to consider the benefits and drawbacks of each when making this tech decision.

Key Challenges for Art

Consistency in style and aesthetic. We are planning to use numerous props to create our narrative and puzzles, which will include a calendar, newspapers, a diary, as well as a phone and computer. We would like to maintain a consistent style throughout all of these components that fit in with our desired tones of mysterious, murky, and melancholy. Creating a similar (but not monotonous) style between these different items between mediums will challenge us to work together to create an aesthetically cohesive array.

Focus on atmosphere rather than small details. We are creating a multi-puzzle escape room in just a few weeks. We won't be able to make every little detail perfect, especially as we are choosing the minimal viable product approach. As such, we will not be able to, or attempt to, perfectly recreate Echo's bedroom for our game. Instead, we will rely on creating the atmosphere of her bedroom.

Who is this for?

This game is meant for young adults comfortable with content depicting and referring to death, and who identify with Echo's identity. This game also targets people who enjoy critical thinking and puzzle solving, as well as people who like both physical puzzle games and digital games. The escape box genre is accessible for a wider range of people than traditional escape rooms as well, as you are not required to have full mobility or exert yourself physically.