

At Midnight, the World Ended

#Game Plot

Storyline / Premise: The Protagonist wakes up to find the world around their apartment has changed. Everything outside the window is dark and something awful has happened inside the building. They need to escape down to the bottom floor, despite being unsure what they'll find. They encounter a few other survivors and are pursued by a malevolent force that hunts them down through the complex.

In the end, they either stay behind, allowing another survivor to escape, or flee into the darkness.

The game is designed with a small team in mind. It's set in a building built with standardised levels; what changes from floor to floor is the set dressing and environmental effects. The Core levels are the 23rd, the 22nd, the 18th, the 8th, the basement and finally the ground floor. There are also stairwells, vents and other interconnecting areas.

Theme and Topic: Fear of Oblivion and Death. How to retain your humanity despite such fears.

Genre: First Person Horror, RPG

Synopsis / Summary: The protagonist is working in an anonymous Chinese city and staying in a rented apartment. The apartment is located on the twenty-third floor of a high rise apartment block.

Returning home after working late at the office, they fall asleep. When they wake up, something's changed. The electricity is out and the air seems stale. Their electric clock has stopped at midnight and their phone and other devices are dead. Outside, everything is dark with nothing visible from their small balcony. Almost like a thick black fog is covering the city.

They explore their surroundings. The apartment is safe, but they're startled

when they hear screaming, followed by the sound of 'something' crashing down in the corridor. Peering through the keyhole, they see signs of a disaster. Flickering lights, blood, a few broken doors. And the shape of **The Creature** moving away into the shadows.

It becomes obvious that staying in place is too dangerous. The player needs to find a way to escape. Any attempt to go out directly into the corridor and get to the stairs or elevator leads to an attack by the Creature and the level being reset.

After some exploration they're able to rappel down to the twenty-second floor which is less dangerous and easier to explore. On that level, they encounter **The Dying Foreigner** and **The Child** who are hiding in a locked room. The Foreigner implores the player to take the Child with them to safety and offers them his key fob before expiring.

From this point, the pair move downwards to the eighteenth floor where wreckage blocks further progress. Exploring, they encounter creatures called **Shadowgore** who are attracted to sound and repelled by light and a woman **The Surviving Foreigner**. While she's friendly and helpful at first, she's treacherous and self serving. The trio manage to open the door to the opposite stairwell and head further down. This stairwell is dark and riddled with structural damage. The group pass several locked doors before one bursts open as they approach and more Shadowgore pore out.

The creatures chase the trio down to the eighth floor where the Surviving Foreigner betrays them, locking the door to the opposite stairwell behind her leaving the Protagonist and the Child trapped and surrounded.

Characters

Total: 7 characters

1. The Protagonist

Protagonist - #Survivor, Loner, Determinator, Average Person, Suspicious Illness

Age / Date of Birth: Late 20s or early 30s.

Outer Goal: *To escape the building*

Inner Goal: To come to terms with dying

Physical Description: A man or woman. Their only defining feature is they're American and thinner than a normal main character. They're not a silent protagonist so would have a voice actor. They have a unique piece of clothing such as an iconic t-shirt that's associated with the game in the manner of Gordon Freeman's suit and glasses from Half-life or Kaneda's red Jacket from Akira.

Psychological Description: The player is driven by survival.

Strengths: They're an ordinary person facing extra-ordinary odds. They're clever and tend to think outside the box, finding novel solutions to problems. And they're very determined to stay alive.

Weaknesses: They can be selfish and petty. There's a running theme through the story that they might be seriously ill and it's made them withdrawn and isolated.

Inner Conflict: The entire game is a representation of their inner conflict, notably their fear of death.

Character Arc: They begin the game alone, with no connections to friends, family or colleagues. The game ends with them deciding to carry on like this, or sacrifice themselves for the sake of someone else who has a real chance to escape.

Biography: An American working in an unnamed Chinese city. The player has no idea who they are and they never talk about their background. There are a few clues in their apartment such as a stack of cheap takeouts for one, a payslip from the entertainment company they work for (a Netease style

mega-company), a note indicating a recurring hospital appointment and nausea drugs in the bathroom.

Notes: *This character could either be a fixed person with a unique look or one created by the player at the beginning. My personal belief is that the story doesn't need the latter and it simply creates unnecessary work - this isn't an MMO.*

2. The Child

Sidekick, Goal - #Survivor, Average Person, Sickly child

Age / Date of Birth: 12

Outer Goal: *To stay alive.*

Inner Goal: To help people around her. She's very good natured and willing to do anything they ask of her.

Physical Description: A small, painfully thin, asian girl. Twelve but looks younger. She's dressed in jeans, a striped shirt (identical to Matilda's from Leon), sneakers and a pink hoodie with rabbit ears dangling down the back. Carries a small school-sized backpack with a few bits of flare dangling off it. She has short hair that's cut in bad pixie/bowl shape. She speaks in untranslated Mandarin when frustrated but generally communicates by shaking her head or nodding.

Psychological Description: Strengths: She represents hope. She's always trying to be upbeat and refusing to let the situation overwhelm her. If the Protagonist is frustrated or angry, she'll plead for them to relax and try to indicate solutions.

Weaknesses: She's way too trusting. Especially when it comes to the character known as the Surviving Foreigner.

Character Arc: She either survives or she's sacrificed for the player to escape.

Biography: She's encountered early on and stays with the protagonist for most of the story. The game ends as the Protagonist decides whether to abandon her or sacrifice themselves and let her escape. If asked about her parents shrugs and indicates they weren't present when the disaster occurred. She has an ominous cough from time to time which can trigger a Shadowgore attack unless kept at bay with medication.

Notes: *Her medication can heal the protagonist but taking it rather than*

giving it to her risks coughing fits and attacks. Player needs to choose.

3. The Creature

Antagonist, Obstacle, Foil - #Death, Shadowy Figure, Gigantic

Age / Date of Birth: Unknown

Outer Goal: *To prevent the protagonist and the child from escaping.*

Inner Goal: The Creature is, essentially, Death incarnate. Or, rather, the protagonist's fear of Death. It wants the surviving inhabitants of the Apartment complex to come to terms with their situation; for good or for ill.

Physical Description: The creature is a mass of darkness, full of writhing limbs that thrust out of what appears to be a shapeless, stained coat and a stained hood. From a distance it looks like a gigantic, hulking, homeless man. It smells of embalming fluids and rot so strong it makes the Protagonist gag. When it shambles forward it stumbles as if drunk, smashing from wall to wall with the force of a sledgehammer. Arms and hands claw at nearby surfaces, helping to drag the core of the thing towards its Victims. Up close, the coat is layers of what might be skin or wings, wrapped around a churning mass.

If the player chooses the good ending, the central mass parts, revealing a beautiful, kind face surrounded by swirling darkness. The sort of face that makes you think 'everything is going to be alright' in the end.

Psychological Description: Strengths/Weaknesses: The Creature isn't human so lacks these. It's driven by base instincts and reacts to th

The Creature is driven by a terrible hunger, hunting down anything living and devouring them. The more afraid they are of it, the hungrier it becomes.

Character Arc: The creature is a psychopomp - a guide whose role is to escort the dying to the afterlife. It first appears as a terrifying force of nature that pursues the protagonist through the building. Most of the time, it appears as a distant, threatening presence.

At the end it either engulfs the protagonist and the screen turns black (bad end) or reveals an angelic face and kisses them as everything turns white (good end)

Biography: Unknown. Several theories as to what it is are hinted at during the story: stray comments from the Radio and a few notes found in the basement about psychopomps and rituals for manifesting one.

Notes: *This thing is part model, part effect. Whenever it manifests, the lighting flickers and dims as if the Creature is eating anything warm as it approaches. Anything that adds to this, like frost spreading across the floor or characters' breath turning visible as the temperature drops helps sell this.*

4. Shadowgore

Sidekick, Antagonist's Helper, Obstacle - #Shadowy Figure, Cancerous, Possibly supernatural

Age / Date of Birth: Unknown

Outer Goal: *To eat the protagonist.*

Inner Goal: They're effectively cancer-cells in humanoid form. They really just want to eat the Protagonist and multiply. Despite their grotesque appearance, they're not particularly dangerous on their own. They're repelled by light and certain medicine causes them to temporarily avoid the Protagonist as 'they taste bad'.

Physical Description: They're a blend of humanoid features, with multiple limbs and distorted faces. They seem to be regrowing and shifting in real time. TDark skin that's flaking and peeling off into smoke.

Psychological Description: Hunger. They're not malicious, just deadly with a drive to consume. In a way they're akin to cancerous cells; endlessly growing and consuming. They're not malicious or 'evil'. Just hungry and very dangerous.

Character Arc: They're obstacles. As the player moves from floor to floor, their numbers increase until they're a swarm that's everywhere.

Biography: None. Although a few do make sounds based on the people they've devoured (akin to the Bear in Annihilation). Later in the game, the Surviving Foreigner is showed mutating into one and screaming in fear as her humanity crumbles away. This might indicate that all of the creatures encountered are the former neighbours of the Protagonist.

Notes: *From a game development point of view, they don't have a standard shape. I see them as having a core two or three forms, with various attachments such as flailing tendrils or extra eyes that add to the diversity.*

5. The Dying Foreigner

Mentor, Impact, Minor character - #Average Person, Dying, Kindly Stranger

Age / Date of Birth: 47

Outer Goal: *To convince the protagonist to look after the child.*

Inner Goal: To die peacefully.

Physical Description: A middle aged French man who's been damaged by the Shadowgore and is bleeding out. He's covered in sweat and has a pallid, sickly complexion. He was sleeping when the disaster occurred and is dressed in pyjamas or at least yoga pants and a t-shirt; both of which are slashed and torn. Has an old fashioned 'hipster' quality to him, with a high and tight haircut and a thick moustache, both peppered grey with age.

Psychological Description: He's almost dead when encountered so slumped against a wall. He's come to terms with dying and is focused on getting help for the child.

Character Arc: Not much. He dies soon after being encountered. His impact is being the 'angel' for the player; an example of how to earn a good ending.

Biography: A foreign aid worker. Compared to most of the other characters, the Dying Foreigner's life is easy to track due to the number of photos in his apartment. He grew up in France and spent his 20s travelling around the world working for various charities. Several of the later pictures show him with school-children in Africa and India on a sort of 'homes for humanity' project. He loves music and owns a fine collection of vinyl albums. In several pictures we see he's loved and lost, but is always surrounded by friends and family.

Notes: *When encountered he's already dying; though the player can try and save him. If they stay with him and help make him comfortable, he grows paler and paler taking on a bleached washed out appearance by the end. While this might be a waste of medicine or bandages, he appreciates the gesture and offers the Protagonist a reward in the shape of a rare item.*

6. The Surviving Foreigner

Mentor, Antagonist - #Survivor, Determinator, Treacherous

Age / Date of Birth: 27

Outer Goal: *To help the protagonist.*

Inner Goal: To survive at all costs

Physical Description: A younger Korean woman. Fashionable, wearing expensive clothing. She's been attacked so her outfit is torn and her skin covered in lacerations. She should appear to be pretty and sympathetic. The sort of person who looks like the female lead in a typical game. As the characters move through the levels, she begins to exhibit signs of succumbing to the darkness. She's unaffected by cold and exhibits signs of hunger that grow out of control.

After betraying the group, she's encountered in the basement where she devolves into a Shadowgore.

Psychological Description: Strengths: She's charismatic and very convincing at being willing to help out.

Weaknesses: She's a selfish, cruel individual with little concern for anyone besides herself.

She's succumbing to despair and darkness. She constantly indicates a 'bad' option for the player. E.g. abandon the child, hide, don't move forward, etc.

Character Arc: She is encountered defending herself from a Shadowgore and infected by the darkness. By the end of the floor she's turned into one.

Biography: Unknown. The apartment where she's encountered is the mirror image of the Dying Foreigners. While his was warm and full of life, her's is cold and luxurious. There are no personal items, just a focus on wealth.

Notes: *She needs to be introduced in a way that doesn't make the player go 'uh oh - she's trouble'. People can smell betrayal a mile off; instead you need someone who's helpful and appears to be a good friend or potential ally. She's introduced on the 18th floor and doesn't betray the player until the 8th floor.*

7. The Radio Announcer

Minor character - #Distant Voice, Might be Real, Might be Imaginary

Age / Date of Birth: Unknown

Outer Goal: *To report on the accident engulfing the city*

Inner Goal: Unknown

Physical Description: Unknown. Their voice is male and that of an upper-class Englishman.

Psychological Description: Strengths: He seems stable and professional
Weaknesses: This doesn't last. By the end the Protagonist is hearing weirder, stranger messages from radios indicating he's had a breakdown.

Character Arc: The character begins with a precise, unflappable voice but deteriorates as time goes on. They begin to break down then speak informally as if they're talking directly to the Protagonist.

Biography: Unknown. They refer to themselves as working for "BCB" (British Company Broadcasting - a riff on the BBC) and seem to have held the post in Asia for some time. Until the later stages, they're precise, informative and helpful.

Notes: *The Radio Announcer is included to give the Player a potential scientific explanation for the event. They focus on talking about a disaster at a nearby military base. Later, they remind listeners about weeks of fierce protests about something called Xiàngmù: Jiàn (Project: Arrow) due to concerns over its regional impact.*

By the 8th floor, the Radio Announcer refers to 'seeing things' and colleagues vanishing or acting strangely.

By the basement, he's lost his professional delivery and sounds drunk. And is speaking directly to his listeners telling them he thinks they're trapped in Diyu, the Chinese underworld.

Locations

Total: 10 locations

1. Protagonist's Apartment

Interior - #Small apartment, Ikea-style furniture

Description: A modern apartment. Soulless, with grey carpeting and generic furniture. There are few personal items anywhere, just some digital items like a computer, a tv and a phone (none of which are working). It's around six-hundred square feet and consists of a bedroom, a living-room/kitchen and a bathroom. There's a tiny balcony. The kitchen is almost empty - barely any food is in the cupboards and there's only beer in the fridge. There's a pile of takeout cartoons. All in all, it's just sad.

Notes: *The Apartment has several useful items inside which can be grabbed before the Protagonist heads out. These include a makeshift weapon (small kitchen knives), Medication, bottled water and sheets that can be torn up to create either bandages or make a makeshift rope to climb down to get to the lower floor.*

2. Neighbour's Apartment

Interior - #Ruined, Small apartment, Radio

Description: Almost identical to the Protagonist's Apartment but in worse shape. The Creature got into the room when the man inside opened the door. Notable personal touches are climbing equipment and several framed photos of the dead man with a local climbing club. A radio is playing in the room.

Notes: *A trail of blood goes from the room out into the corridor and down the hall. The inhabitant was killed then dragged outside by the Creature. Morale: Don't open your door when darkness engulfs your building.*

3. Twenty Second floor

Interior - #L shaped corridor, Emergency Lighting, Locked Doors

Description: A mirror of the 23rd floor with 6 apartments all similar in size

and shape. There's a stairwell and a non functioning elevator. The electricity is out and emergency lights are on, casting a grim red light out in the corridor. Four of the apartments are locked, two are open.

4. The Foreigner's Apartment

Interior - #Small apartment, Stronghold, Beautiful

Description: Again, similar to the usual layout, but far more human. There's a lot of personal effects, flowers, photographs, etc. The person who lived there obviously had a happy life with loads of friends and a loving family.

5. The Ruined Apartment

Interior - #Ruined, Malevolent, Small apartment

Description: Similar layout but the door is wide open and everything is torn up and destroyed. Light fixtures are broken, furniture is overturned and the windows are broken, with dark fog seeping in. Everything is cold inside and there's a layer of light frost near the balcony.

6. First Stairwell

Interior - #Ruined, Emergency Lighting, Stairwell

Description: A modern stairwell that is in good condition but begins to decay and rot the further down the player goes. There's more and more signs of structural damage: broken tiling, leaking stagnant water and exposed wiring. There's also odd graffiti on the walls which hints at some lovecraftian-style horror (e.g a tentacled octopus head painted over a doorway) or Chinese calligraphy with a worm writhing around it).

Notes: This shows the move from 'healthy' (ish) to 'unhealthy'.

7. The Eighteenth Floor

Interior - #Malevolent, Emergency Lighting, Radio, Flickering Lights

Description: A ruined, broken corridor with broken doors and signs of struggle. There is a single locked door which can be forced but more Shadowgore moving from place to place and mauling several bodies lying

around.

Notes: The 18th floor is more of a stealth level, with sound and light playing a vital role. It's also a staging post for the lower levels, allowing the player to gather vital equipment such as weapons and lights before descending. There's a radio in one of the rooms that's elaborating on the earlier report.

8. The Survivor's Apartment

Interior - #Malevolent, Small apartment, Locked Doors, Beautiful

Description: A fashionable variant of the standard design. Mirrors, expensive furniture and an extensive wardrobe. Most are selfies of the Survivor. These have her looking perfect while laughing in an exotic location. There's a single dusty picture of her and the dead man from the stairwell standing together (with her looking bored). In one of the waste-bins is a picture torn into pieces. Putting them together shows her looking gaunt, bundled up in a coat with a large wooly hat on. (Chemotherapy/hair-loss).

Notes: She has several bottles of anti-nausea medication in the bathroom as well as some recreational drugs and alcohol.

9. The Second Stairwell

Interior - #Ruined, Malevolent, Rotten, Stairwell, Pitch Black

Description: A much more damaged Stairwell variant. The lighting has completely collapsed here, bar a few dim purple lights at certain points

10. The Eighth Floor

Interior - #Ruined, Malevolent, Rotten

Description: A pitch black reflection of the upper floors, full of broken rubble, graffiti, wires and signs warning of 'construction underway'. The rooms have no doors and most look like they were being refurbished with missing sinks, exposed plumbing and hanging wires where electrical outlets and lamps would be. The only light on the floor comes from a few hand held, battery powered lamps in two of the rooms. These are safe zones if the player needs to retreat.

Plots

Total: 1 plots

1. Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Main Plot - #Core Plot, Survival, Exploration, Combat

Description: The core goal of the game is the protagonist reaching the exit to the Apartment Building. The game ends with them either helping the child go through the door or walking through it themselves leaving the Child behind.

Goal: The player must get from the 23rd floor to the ground floor of their Apartment Building.

Scenes

Total: 18 scenes; 3 acts

Act: Act One

1. Title Credits

Point of View: Title Credits

Type of Scene: Setup

Tension: Description

Description: As music starts, colours reminiscent of vibrant nightlife that give way to shadows. Shots of darkness moving through the building eventually ending up on an old fashioned clock counting up to 12:00. When it does, it pauses, flashing. Each time the minutes go up, it makes a hospital beeping noise. At 12:00 the noise flatlines.

2. Title Credits

Point of View: Title Credits

Type of Scene: Setup

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Description: As music starts, colours reminiscent of vibrant nightlife that give way to shadows. Shots of darkness moving through the building eventually ending up on an old fashioned clock counting up to 12:00. When it does, it pauses, flashing. Each time the minutes go up, it makes a hospital beeping noise. At 12:00 the noise flatlines.

Notes: The anti-nausea medicine is, effectively, a health potion. The dialogue indicates it's preventing a hangover but it's to combat chemotherapy. 3 doses, restores health (+1)

3. Player wakes in their Apartment. copy

INT.

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: The Protagonist

Appearing Locations: Protagonist's Apartment

Type of Scene: Setup

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Exposition, Description

Description: They wake and explore their environment. They're also introduced to the health mechanic that drives the game. The player will notice the air and water are 'off' somehow. They also find anti-nausea medication in the bathroom.

Notes: The anti-nausea medicine is, effectively, a health potion. The dialogue indicates it's preventing a hangover but it's to combat chemotherapy. 3 doses, restores health (+1)

4. Player is confronted by creature in the corridor. They need to discover a way to get past the thing.

INT.

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: The Creature, The Protagonist

Appearing Locations: Protagonist's Apartment

Type of Scene: Action

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Inciting Incident

Description: The protagonist hears screaming and crashing from outside in the corridor. They either run out towards it (and die) or observe the scene through the keyhole (and live).

5. The protagonist explores a way out of their apartment.

INT.

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: The Creature, The Protagonist

Appearing Locations: Neighbour's Apartment, Protagonist's Apartment

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Resolution

Description: They're forced to either run across the corridor to the open apartment or attempt to wait it out. Waiting it out leads to loss of health. In either case they're able to make a rope and swing to an apartment below them on the 22nd floor.

Notes: If they make a rope in their apartment, it's a crude one made out of sheets. During the descent it fails causing them to crash into the lower balcony and lose a health point (-1). If they risk running through to the next room the rope is high quality and suitable for climbing.

Act: Act Two

6. The player explores the 22nd floor.

INT.

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: The Protagonist

Appearing Locations: Twenty Second floor

Type of Scene: Setup

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Description

Description: Once they get to their feet, the protagonist is able to explore the 22nd floor. Most apartments are locked and the player lacks anything strong enough to break them open. A single door is open but contains a Shadowgore. The elevator is broken and there is a stairwell but it's locked with only keycard access.

Notes: Signs on the walls indicate emergency exit points making the locked door odd. There's a sign on it (very Chinese) indicating government isolation oversight (Covid).

7. Locked door with human voices behind it.

INT.

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: The Child, The Dying Foreigner, The Protagonist

Appearing Locations: Twenty Second floor

Type of Scene: Reaction

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Inciting Incident

Description: The player investigates each of the locked doors. One of them has voices behind it. They're muffled but appear to be in Mandarin and French. Fiddling with the door handle or knocking cause them to fall silent.

Notes: Any attempt to knock or break the door down fails. Excessive noise will attract the Shadowgore which moves from the unlocked room out into the corridor. If this occurs, the fight is much harder as the player isn't armed.

8. First encounter with Shadowgore

INT.

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: Shadowgore, The Protagonist

Appearing Locations: The Ruined Apartment, Twenty Second floor

Type of Scene: Action

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Conflict

Description: In the nearest unlocked apartment, the protagonist encounters a Shadowgore. It's chewing on the corpse of a young asian office worker and ignores the player until attacked. There is an object near the front door that can be used as a weapon (golf clubs) or alternatively knives in the kitchen.

Notes: This is a tutorial room, designed to showcase combat and illustrate how the Shadowgore and the Creature are attracted to noise. The Shadowgore is weak but can damage the player causing them to lose a health point (-1) if it latches hold and chews on them.

9. The protagonist gains access to the locked room.

INT.

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: The Child, The Dying Foreigner, The Protagonist

Appearing Locations: Twenty Second floor

Type of Scene: Reaction

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Resolution

Description: After defeating the Shadowgore, the player is able to hear the Child and the Dying foreigner through the wall. Knocking on the wall attracts their attention and can convince them to unlock their door.

Notes: The player can't speak French or Chinese (unless, hey, they can in which case the dialogue will make more sense). There is no translation, adding to the isolation the character (and player) should feel. The Child is able to offer the player some water or food which restores health (+1)

10. The player and the child unlock the door and descend into the stairwell.

INT.

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: The Child, The Protagonist

Appearing Locations: First Stairwell

Type of Scene: Action

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Description, Rising action

Description: The player is able to unlock the exit to the stairwell and head down. The emergency lighting is still working but beginning to flicker as the battery power dies. A portion of the stairwell has collapsed, forcing the player to jump down then catch the child. A few more floors further down, the ceiling has collapsed entirely, forcing them to retreat through a doorway.

Notes: There are three key points here:

The broken section, the collapsed wall and a dead resident who appears to have been trying to escape before being attacked by a Shadowgore.

The pair are both dead, but searching the corpse reveals an access key to the 18th floor (the one with graffiti scrawled on it). There's also a crowbar the victim was carrying which allows certain doors to be forced from this point onwards.

The man has a Korean passport and was the boyfriend of The Survivor who appears on floor 18. She betrayed him and locked him out in the Stairwell, without realising he had the keycard.

11. The Player explores the 18th floor

INT. #Damaged , Badly Lit

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: Shadowgore, The Child, The Protagonist

Appearing Locations: The Eighteenth Floor

Type of Scene: Action

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Description, Conflict, Rising action

Description: The Protagonist and Child explore the 18th floor. The place is ruined, with damaged walls and broken doors. The lights are barely working, and several Shadowgore move from room to room or sit devouring corpses.

Notes: Section is very free form. Shadowgore make a direct progress down the corridor impossible. The player is better off moving from room to room and avoiding patrolling monsters.

12. Desperate Woman

INT. #Damaged , Badly Lit

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: Shadowgore, The Child, The Protagonist, The Surviving Foreigner

Appearing Locations: The Survivor's Apartment

Type of Scene: Action

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Conflict, Revelation

Description: The Protagonist and the Child make their way onto the floor. In the nearest room, they encounter a woman fighting off several Shadowgore. After rescuing her, she thanks them and is able to tell the player what happened on the floor.

Notes: Her description is in broken English and she switches to Korean out of frustration from time to time. Her English is friendly, her Korean words are far more malicious and selfish. She says that she believes something supernatural or scientific happened. she saw unmarked vans throughout the city late last night and heard online chatter about something weird happening. This dialogue is designed to make the player question what exactly is going on. Are they dead? Is it supernatural like the graffiti indicated? Or is it a scientific event?

13. Combat with Shadowgore Patrol

INT. #Damaged , Badly Lit

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: Shadowgore, The Child, The Protagonist

Appearing Locations: The Eighteenth Floor

Type of Scene: Action

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Conflict

Description: Two Shadowgore patrol the L shaped hallway, avoiding the few patches of light. If the player wants to fight them, they need to lure one away from the other into a side room. Combat will create noise; to prevent the other from investigating mid-fight, the player needs to lure the monster in then shut the door behind it.

Notes: The child can be used as either a lure or to shut the door once it enters. The first is more evil and pushes towards a dark/selfish ending. The latter more altruistic.

14. Shadowgore emergence

INT. #Damaged , Badly Lit

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: Shadowgore, The Child, The Protagonist

Appearing Locations: The Eighteenth Floor

Type of Scene: Action

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Conflict

Description: In one of the middle rooms, the protagonist stumbles across a bloated Shadowgore that splits into two identical (smaller) variants.

Notes: An introduction to the Shadowgores' ability to divide and multiply when they eat enough. Because they're metaphors for cancer cells. Seeing the thing writhe and shake gives the player time to attack it before it separates - if they do the pair will be weaker, rewarding the protagonist for bravery.

15. The Second Stairwell.

INT. #Damaged , Pitch Black

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: The Child, The Protagonist, The Surviving Foreigner

Appearing Locations: The Second Stairwell

Type of Scene: Setup

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Rising action, Revelation

Description: The Protagonist is able to use the Keycard they used on the 18th floor to open the 2nd stairwell at the other end of the corridor. This one is pitch-black, forcing them to switch to hand-held lighting. The group descend down the stairs, past various blocked doors. Further down, the walls and exits seem to be buckling under stress and there's a sense that the building is beginning to crumble and decay. Blackness drifts through cracks and the air gets colder and colder.

Notes: The Survivor suggests leaving the Child behind 'for safety' as she indicates it would might be too dangerous for a little girl.

This scene is the first example we get of the Survivor being an antagonist. She's out for herself.

The Child stumbles in the darkness and shivers as the temperature drops.

The Survivor seems immune to the cold and is able to navigate just fine. She says she's fine but 'hungry' and talks about how she wants to drink Soju and eat barbecue when they escape. At around the 14th floor, shining a light directly at her will show her eyes reflecting light unnaturally and gleaming in the darkness.

16. Interactive Doors

INT. #Pitch Black, Ruined

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: The Child, The Protagonist, The Surviving Foreigner

Appearing Locations: The Second Stairwell

Type of Scene: Reaction

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Conflict, Plot Point

Description: While descending, the protagonist passes several doors which react as they approach. At each junction, the Child and the Survivor react in different ways. The 3rd door is particularly dangerous - it bursts open and a wave of Shadowgore pour out.

Notes: There are two moments:

1) Bulging door. As they approach, the metal fire-door buckles as if something heavy is pushing against it. It doesn't break, no matter what the player does, but gives the impression that it could at any moment. Any sound causes the door to creak as if something is throwing itself at the door.

2) Man's voice. Man cries out for help behind locked door. Speaks first in Chinese but switches to English when you talk. Survivor tugs at you saying to ignore it. Child tries to open the lock. Ignoring is selfish act. If player attempts to help, man pushes picture through and begs you to take it with you. Picture is of wife and children having a picnic.

17. Lower half of the 2nd Stairwell

INT. #Damaged , Pitch Black, Ruined

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: Shadowgore, The Child, The Protagonist, The Surviving Foreigner

Appearing Locations: The Eighth Floor, The Second Stairwell

Type of Scene: Action

Plot: Protagonist escapes to the ground floor

Tension: Inciting Incident, Conflict, Crisis

Description: Explosive Door. Another bulging door. This one bursts open as the group passes it. The survivor flees downwards while the Child attempts to shine light to help. At a single point during the combat, a figure in a white robe can be seen for a moment before the darkness swallows them. When combat ends, the protagonist sees more Shadowgore emerge from the darkness and is forced to flee to the bottom of the stairwell then onto the 8th floor.

Notes: The figure in white is a vision of the protagonist in hospital in their hospital gown. In this scene they're just an outline in white.

This point is a major ramp up of action. Until now, the player has been able to move cautiously through the Apartment Building. Now they're forced to race down as a swarm of monsters chase them. Light will slow them down but they're hungry and determined to catch up.

18. The 8th floor

INT. #Pitch Black, Ruined

Point of View: Witness

Appearing Characters: Shadowgore, The Child, The Creature, The Protagonist, The Surviving Foreigner

Appearing Locations: The Eighth Floor

Type of Scene: Action

Tension: Conflict, Rising action, Revelation

Description: The Protagonist flees through the 8th floor, pursued by Shadowgores. Before he and the Child can reach the next stairwell, the Survivor locks the door. They can pound on the door but she screams back for them to leave her alone then they hear the sound of her racing down the stairs. The protagonist is forced to survive on the floor using lights before escaping down a service elevator that takes them to the basement.

Notes: This entire area is less linear than the earlier floor layouts due to sizeable holes in the walls. Several areas contain ladders which can be used to move above the floor and avoid the Shadowgore who are swarming below.

Notes

Total: 3 notes

1. What Caused the Darkness

Throughout the game, three potential reasons for this occurring are suggested:

Cancer: At various points, the player encounters people or things which indicate they might be a dying patient with the entire setting being a last metaphorical gasp as they expire. Various cancer drugs are found throughout the Apartment Complex, other NPCs have pictures which show them affected by Chemotherapy and a heartbeat is heard at several key moments. Further, some of the monsters in the game resemble cancer cells; endlessly devouring things and growing.

Scientific Accident: During the course of the adventure, the player learns that the internet was ablaze with reports of an accident occurring late last night. A radio broadcast they tune into at several points reports about a government coverup, black aircraft seen landing at the nearby airport, and a complete lockdown around the city's perimeter. Lastly, a dead scientist in the building has files referring to her work at a laboratory in the heart of the city.

Occult: As the player moves deeper into the building, the building begins to warp and change, becoming more hellish. Occult symbols appear on the walls, odd whispering is heard in the shadows and a shrine is found in the depths of the basement, pulsing like a dark heart.

None of these are definitive. All of them are notes that add to the flavour of the setting. In the end, it's up to the player to decide which, if any, are true.

2. Colour Schemes

'At Midnight' has colour schemes that indicate to the player that something is happening:

White/Bright: Safe. Normal.

Black/Shadows: Dangerous, Death

Purple: Here be monsters. Any use of purple lighting or purple objects *such as an object in the middle of a corridor' should be reserved to alert the player that something dangerous is nearby.

Red: Supernatural. Anytime a potential occult incident occurs, red is a dominant theme. The basement, for example, is Blacks and Deep Reds.

Green: Hospital/Cancer. Bathrooms with medicine, drug bottles, anything indicating the protagonist is dying use a green light.

Blue: Blue appears when the explanation is potentially scientific. E.g. near any radios, or on the covers of any reference to the research centre nearby.

3. Core Game Mechanics

The game is driven by three game mechanics, health, light and sound. Further the Protagonist travels with a young child who they need to protect.

The game begins with the player having a set amount of health (10) and already missing two health bars. Certain things like falling damage, hunger, etc can reduce the bar (as can encounters with monsters). Reaching zero resets the game but with one further bar missing (e.g. they start with seven rather than eight). Exhausting the bar completely ends the game. As the bar permanently lowers, shadows gather round the protagonist indicating they're permanently close to death. They hear vague whispering from time to time and occasionally crying or the sound of a life support unit.

Light diminishes as the player moves down into the building. At the beginning, on the 23rd floor, the emergency lighting is functioning allowing them to explore freely. As the game progresses, this flickers and fades leaving them in darkness. Once the 18th floor is reached, the character needs to have a torch or lighter with them at all times (See 'the child' below).

Sound is used during exploration and combat. The Creature is alerted by loud sounds and begins to make their way down towards the player. The Creature is impossible to fight - any encounter ends with the player's death. So they need to be wary of environmental hazards such as broken glass, slamming doors, etc. Also while certain weapons are useful against lesser monsters, they risk alerting the Creature and causing that play through to end prematurely.

Lastly, the Child. The player encounters a twelve year old child on the 22nd floor who travels with them through the building. While a non-combatant, the character is able to act as an extra set of hands at times, most notably for carrying any light sources the player gathers. Further, there are certain areas that can only be accessed with their help - e.g. crawling through small spaces or vents and unlocking a door from the inside.

