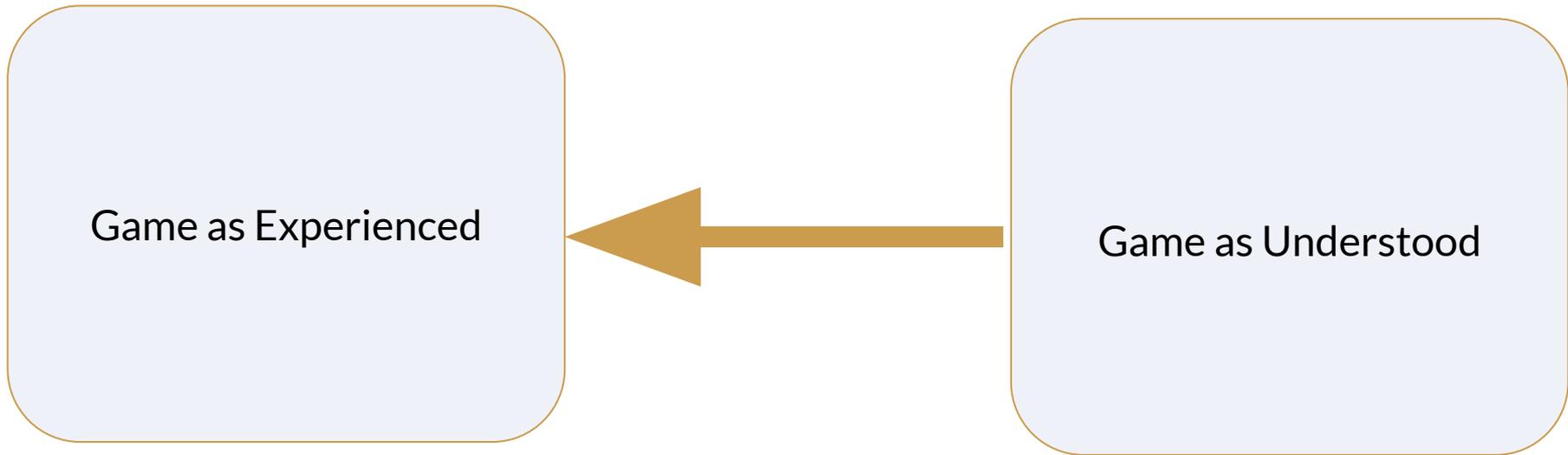


# Egregore

Thesis Pitch - Michael Wahba



(Upton, *Situational Game Design*)



Game as Experienced

Game as Understood

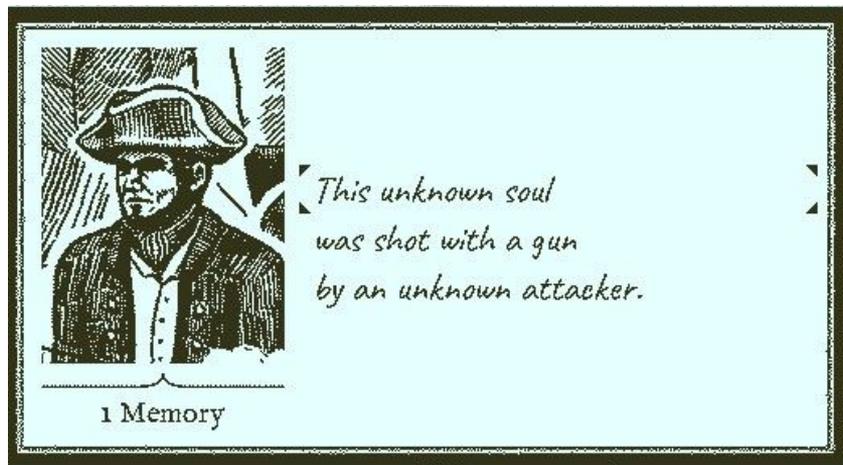
Situations

Player

(Upton, *Situational Game Design*)

# Player Knowledge Representation

# Player Knowledge Representation - Fill in the Blanks



Return of the Obra Dinn

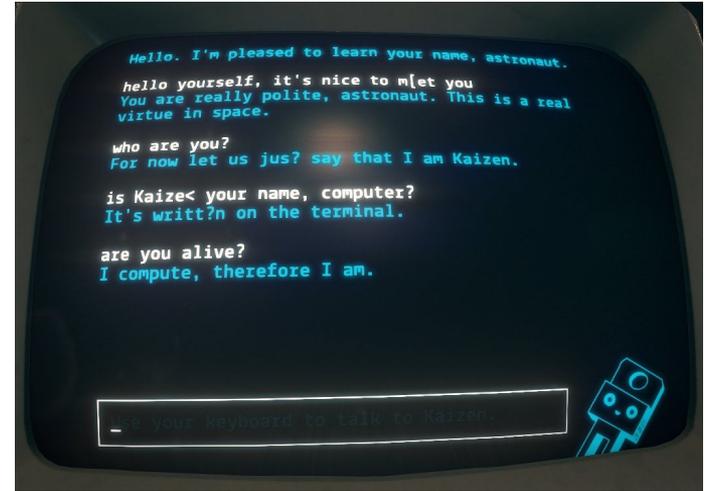


Case of the Golden Idol

# Player Knowledge Representation - Limited Natural Language



*Her Story*



*Event[0]*

# Player Knowledge Representation - Time and Space



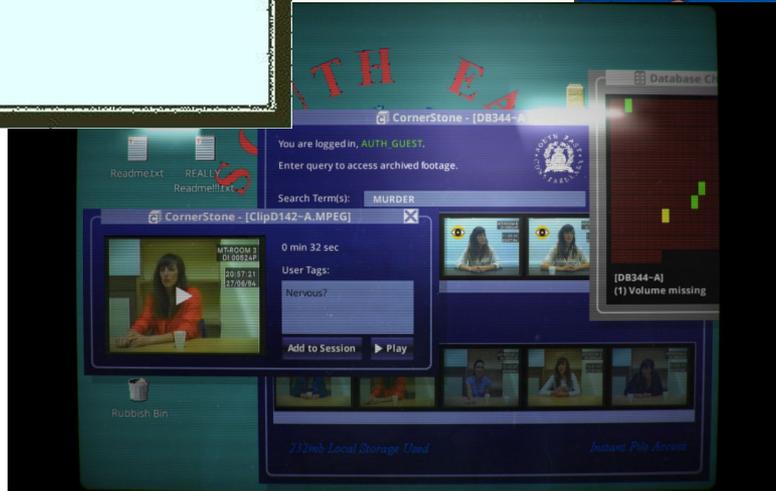
*Outer Wilds*

# Player Knowledge Grammars

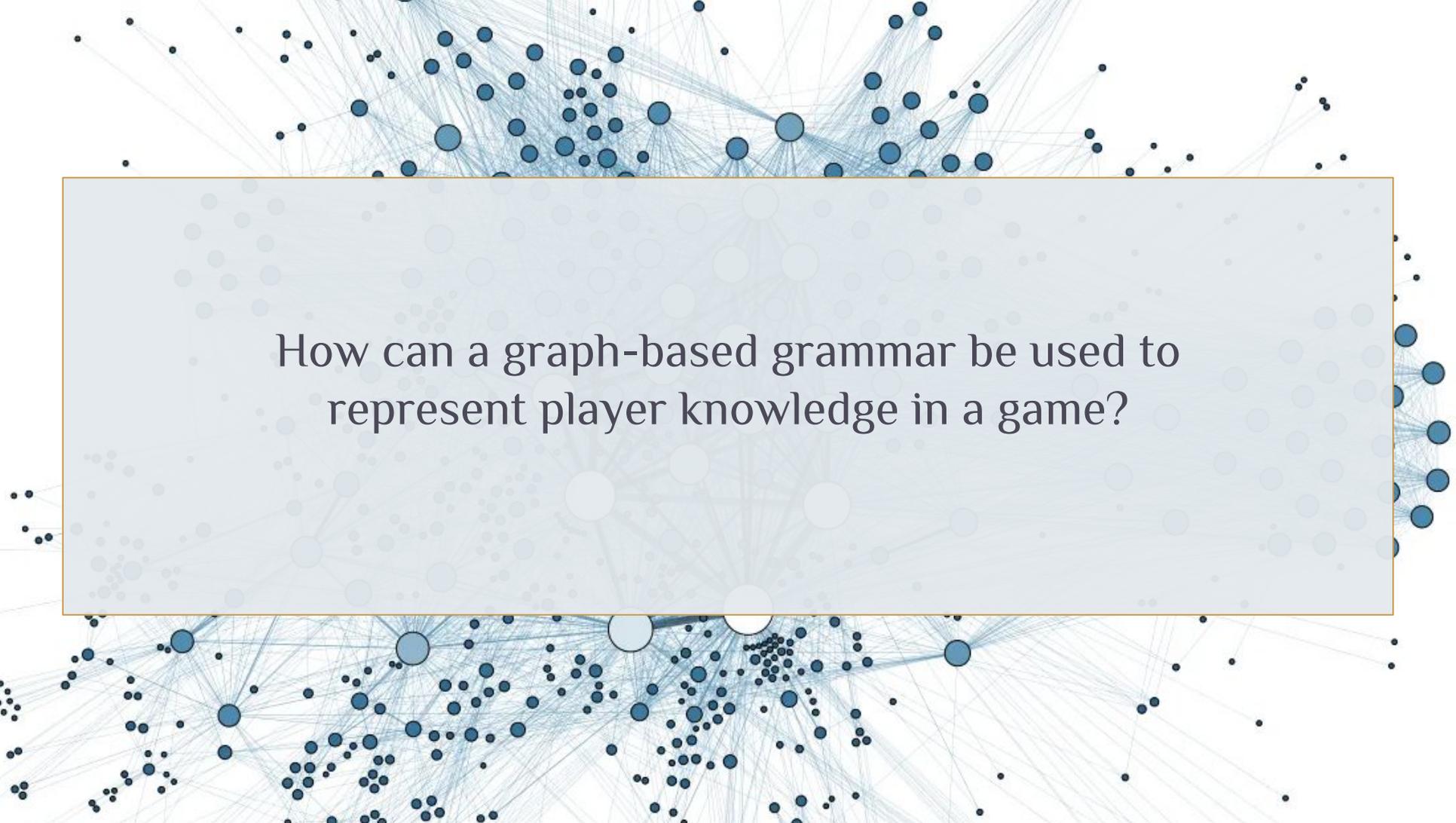


*This unknown soul  
was shot with a gun  
by an unknown attacker.*

1 Memory





The background of the slide is a dense network graph. It consists of numerous nodes of varying sizes, represented by blue circles, connected by a web of thin, light blue lines. The nodes are distributed across the frame, with some clusters and some isolated points. A semi-transparent, light blue rectangular box is centered horizontally and vertically, containing the text. The box has a thin orange border. The text is in a dark grey, sans-serif font.

How can a graph-based grammar be used to represent player knowledge in a game?

# Egregore

First-person adventure game, set in modern Egypt, where you uncover an occult conspiracy by manipulating nodes on a graph to shape your reality.

Platforms: PC and Mac

Audience: 18+

Tools: Unreal Engine 5



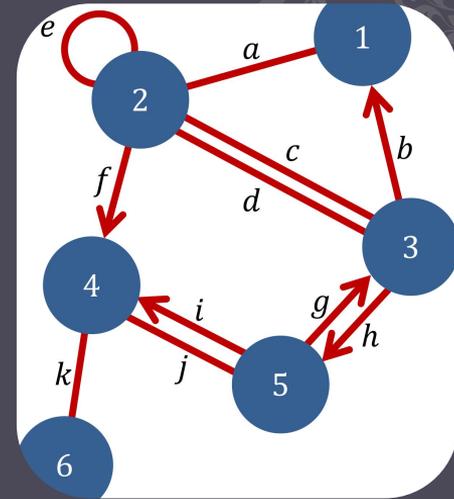
# Inspirations



Case of the  
Golden Idol



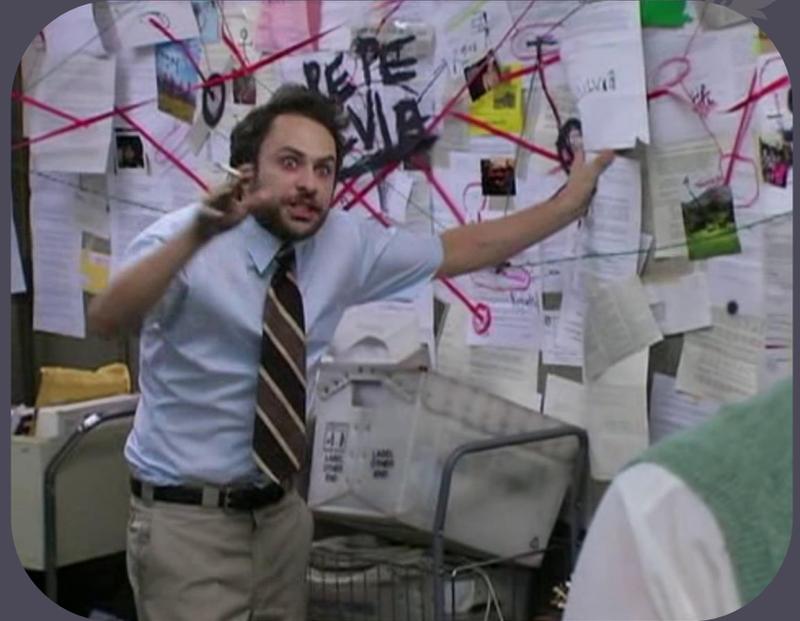
Myst



Graph Theory

# Narrative Hook

- You are involved in an esoteric cult using mass social engineering to manifest an Egregore - a non-physical entity which arises from the collective thoughts of a group of people.
  - You will decide to what extent you go along with their plans or try to disrupt them.
  - You will question whether the cult actually exists or whether you are reading too much into something that is not really there.



# Experience Goal

Players will feel surprised by discovering the affordances of a new interaction mechanic and experience the paranoia of uncovering a conspiracy while being fed misinformation.

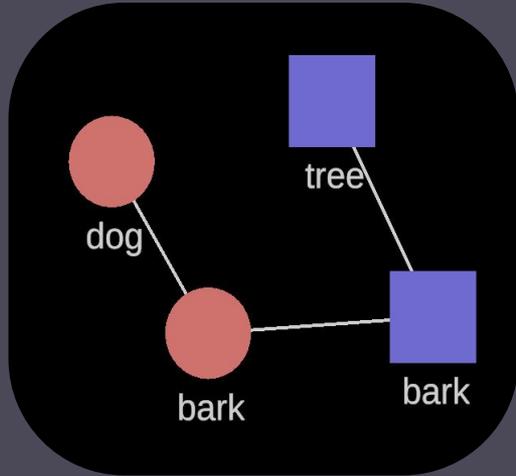
Swachh Madi



Salm

Too drafty? How is

# Further Design Plans



Constraints on  
Nodes/Graphs



Graphs Hidden in  
Plain Sight



Realtime  
Dynamic  
Environments

# Core Loop



Exploring



Talking



Graphing

# Design Pillars

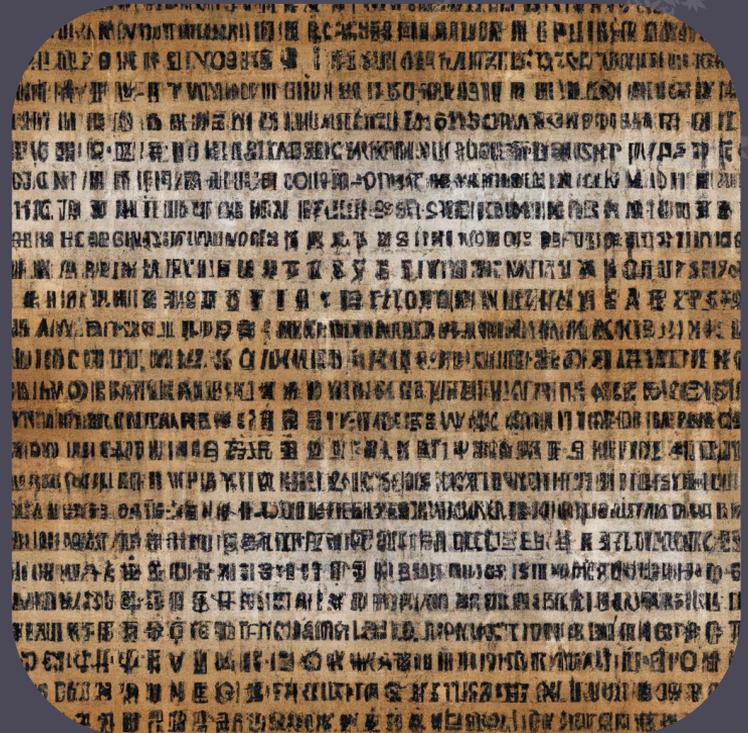
1. Graph-Based Player Knowledge Representation
2. Dynamic and Responsive Game World
3. Aesthetic Recontextualization of Middle East
4. Ambiguous Narrative and Unreliable Information





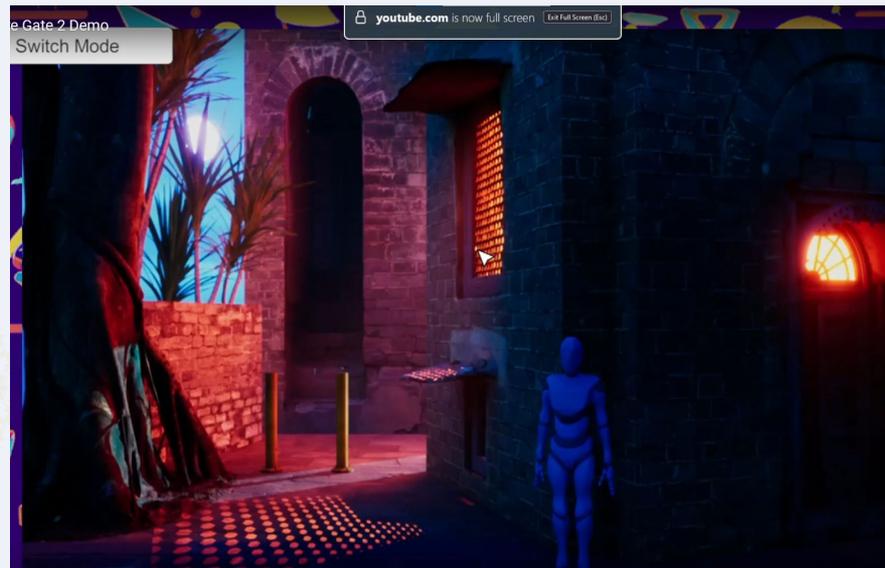
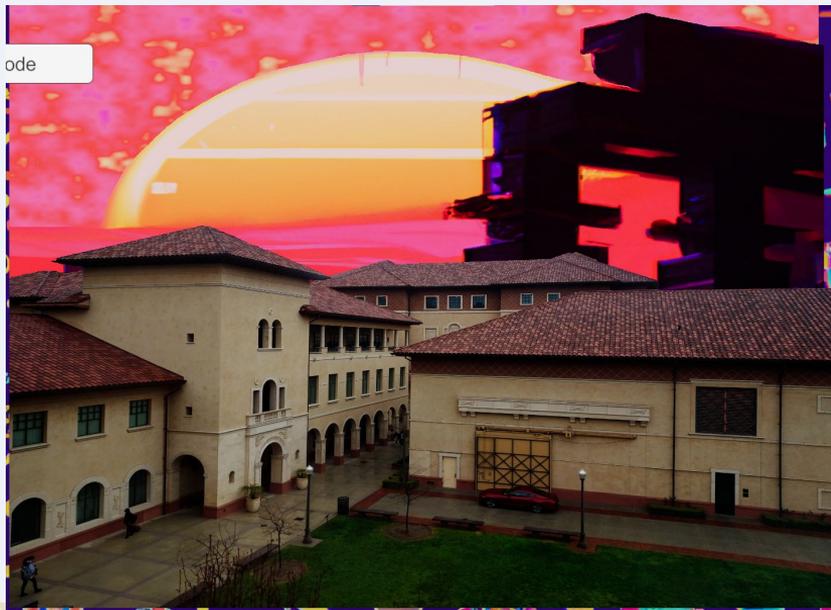
# Narrative Themes

- How does information shape our perception of reality?
- How can information spread like a virus?
- How do the networks of information that surround us manipulate us?
- Interrogating the usage of symbols in our modern society.
- Literary/Narrative influences
  - *The Crying of Lot 49*
  - *Foucault's Pendulum*
  - *Immortality*
  - *Pentiment*



# Technology Solutions

## Engine Prototypes



# Team and Schedule

- 1 - Director
- 2 - Producers
- 2 - Designers
- 3 - Engineers
- 6 - Artists
- 2 - UI/UX
- 1 - QA
- 1 - Narrative
- 2 - Audio
- 1 - Marketing
- 1 - Usability

## Spring/Summer 2023

- Pre-production
- Recruiting

## Fall 2023

- Sept
  - First Playable
- December
  - State of the Game

## Spring 2024

- February
  - Alpha
- April
  - Beta
- Gold Master
- USC Expo

# Risks

<u>Risks</u>	<u>Mitigation</u>
UI/UX and Usability Challenges	Usability testing early and often. Working closely with faculty
Teaching a new mechanic to players in short amount of time	Prioritizing tutorialization
Designing graph puzzles/obstacles that are not too esoteric	Rapid, low-fi prototyping of in-game puzzles/obstacles

# Thank You



Michael Wahba  
MFA IMGD  
wahbam@usc.edu

# Appendix



# Narrative Beats

## Act I

- Player is first exposed to cult in a short intro sequence that also acts as a tutorial.
- Player is motivated by discovering their connection to this mysterious cult.

## Act II

- Find more evidence and go down the occult rabbit hole.
- Uncover their plans and potentially start sabotaging them or aiding them.

## Act III

- All leading up to a final climactic moment.
- Right before the moment where it appears the truth will be revealed - cut to black.

## Act IV (Outside the Game - Inside the Mind)

- The player comes to their own conclusion whether the egregore has been manifested into the world.