

>WHAT WE DO IN THE DARK.

|Game Design Document (r/inat release)

Document Status	Version	Date
DRAFT	v0.1	18 Mar 2026
DRAFT - Extended to 4.3	v0.2	20 Mar 2026

0. Scope

Project scope is completely open for discussion, this is a first pass to garner interest in the idea of the project. When an initial team is formed the aim will be to sit down and define a scope together.

Section 0 is a preamble section which focuses on team members, rights to own your work, what revenue share actually means. If you want to hear about the game jump to the Overview.

0.1 Team Requirements

The scope is very open for the team, if individuals want to blend between multiple roles that is completely fine, if individuals want to focus on specific aspects of the project and hone it to be their own that is also fine. Although I've specified on the project. At a high level, you can tell the project ahead is quite large even for a demo. The scope of this is completely open for discussion, this project although pitched by myself is revenue-shared and shared ownership/responsibility, people will come and go throughout the project this is expected.

Level Artist:

Looking for an artist comfortable with realism, although environmentally this project is small due to the limited scope of the changing environments of the game, the aim is to really pour the detail into the player's room, focusing on a key amount of story telling through the environment itself, the aim is to rapidly iterate via prototyping techniques. The discussions are very open to techniques you as a level artist want to use, if there is interest for more than one level artist to jump on board then we'll standardise. The aim for the level artist is to work closely around the player's profile to build this young adult styled room for the demo expanding into separate environments as the story demands.

Story Writer:

I'm looking for a sharp writer(s) who can handle a complex, interconnected game narrative, planning to utilise tools such as Obsidian to manage the narrative, the general idea is it's about managing a layered structure where a lot of context is discovered by the player and through the environment responding to player's actions or inactions.

Because of this there is a need to be able to plot and track many distinct narrative pathways and decision points. There is a lot of content generated through conversations that aim to exist in the game so need to be comfortable generating a huge amount of subsidiary content (profiles, lore, item descriptions, clues). Crucially, they need to be able to write convincingly in many different styles and voices—from formal documents and news reports to casual text messages, cryptic notes, and unique character dialogue. Authenticity across these mediums is key to helping the player feel like they are truly uncovering the hidden context.

The Writers aim will be high level story points drafting down into details from there with a focus on curating the demo's story first.

General Roles that want to get involved:

If you're into any aspect of game development I'm completely open for discussion as part of this initial round of finding members. Once we go through this initial round, any expansions will be team led, people will be skilled in their areas and will know what to look out for better than myself.

A key aim is to pick up some generalist developers who are happy jumping on all aspects, e.g. sound design and 3D modelling/animation, level designer and gameplay developers, the project will benefit from a complete blend of individuals. The above are explicit call outs for individuals required but no role is dismissed.

0.2 Revenue Share

The following is not a fixed agreement, but an idea/agreement in principle, discussion and signing something is a very key part of this process

The way we share the project's income is super important, and we need to nail down exactly how it works and make sure everyone agrees. The Money-Split Plan

The basic idea is that everyone gets a share based on what they put in, whether it's actual cash, brainpower (like the main design or programming), or just hours of work.

- **Original members Cut:** The original team members, the "founders" who got the project started and built the first version and core ideas, will get a bigger initial slice of the revenue. This is a nod to the fact that they took the biggest risk and built the foundations.
- **The "Watering Down" Rule:** Just so we're clear: if we bring on anyone (company/individuals/etc) new to this project in particular, we'll need to talk about and agree to "water down" (dilute) the original members' share. We'll handle any dilution through open talks and negotiation to keep things fair and the project healthy. Any new person's share will be decided based on their agreed-upon contribution and investment.

Getting Our Costs Back

Developing, marketing, and releasing the project will cost money (for things like software licenses, hardware, ads, outsourced work, legal help). We need to keep a super detailed list of everything we spend and talk about it regularly as a team.

- **First Priority: Pay Back Costs:** The first thing we do with the money we make is quickly and fully pay back all those development costs.
- **Paying Back the Contributors First:** Not everyone will pay for things out of their own pocket. If a member does personally cover an approved project expense, a higher percentage is split off of the revenue to recover that member's investment before we start splitting the general revenue.
- **Minimum Payback Amount:** To make sure these initial debts are paid back fast, at least 20% of all the net profit we make will go straight to reimbursing those documented project costs until everyone who paid is fully reimbursed.
- **Keeping Track:** The core team will manage the whole process of tracking and paying back costs transparently. We'll need to discuss and agree on all big expenses and the subsequent reimbursement payments.

What Counts as "Revenue"

For this specification, "Revenue" pretty much means all the money we make, directly or indirectly, from selling the project and using its related ideas and assets. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. **Direct Sales:** Money from selling the main project (e.g., game sales on platforms like Steam, consoles, or phones).
2. **Merch and Licensing:** Income from selling project stuff (like clothes, toys, physical copies) or letting other companies use the project's ideas for their products.
3. **Extra Stuff:** Revenue from selling, licensing, or using project assets, art, or music (e.g., soundtrack sales *(a key clause of this, is there is a potential that the music*

used in the project is sourced from existing artists, in this case the music revenue belongs to that artist), art books, or selling unused/non-core assets).

4. In-Game Money: Money from any micro-transactions, DLC (downloadable content), expansions, or subscription fees after the project launches.

0.3 Rights to your work

The following is not a fixed agreement, but an idea/agreement in principle, discussion and signing something is a very key part of this process

Since you are **(potentially)** committing time and creative efforts the highest level of detail is you own your work, but the project at hand will hold a license to use your work for commercial purposes, the work you've committed will stay a part of the project and can be used in the project but we're not going to take this work and sell it individually (with a few future to be discussed exceptions, always on agreement, never implicit consent for the exceptions). You in the same aspect can't take your work generated and immediately use it for commercial gain during the development period of the game without first asking the team; if you build a super-cool pathing engine and think it's generic enough to sell as an asset, as long as you get agreement from the team to isolate that work and distribute it, you can.

Post development and release, your work is your work, the project is licensed to it without cost to the project or the team but you own the rights to sell/distribute it how you deem fit (e.g you 3D Modelled an awesome looking TV and want to sell it as a creative asset on an asset marketplace, you're 100% entitled to!)

1. Overview

The following game design document deals with a high-level concept of what the game is open to be, with the game at hand, there is plenty of freedom to adapt this idea especially to shape it to a demo-able concept. Ideas listed here are not final but simply drive the device of the game. Avoiding scope creep is a key aim for the Demo of this game and concepts.

1.1. Concept

WWDITD is a narrative game about the **Friction of Obedience**, where the player isn't just a witness to a story, but a physical participant in their own manipulation and blackmail, simulating an immersive experience by giving the player wider freedom of choice (e.g the game features a mobile phone and a pc, the player can step between the two at any point)

1.2. Genre

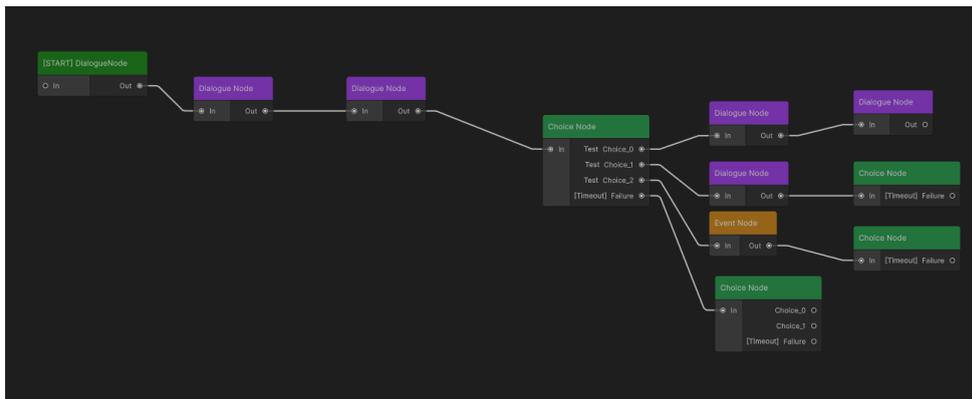
Psychological Horror

1.3. Target Audience

Single-player, adult, was around 2014 forums, Skype, Kik or 2020 of Discord having been around what toxicities some communities can reach or have relevant reference to.

1.4. Unique Selling Points

- **The Narrative Engine:** A multi-track orchestrator that runs the "Physical," "Digital," and "World" stories in parallel. It uses a **Priority Mediator** to handle collisions, such as the manipulating group demands, arriving exactly when your _____ knocks on your door.



The above is a screenshot of an early version of the Narrative Engine in development. A multi-tracked narrative manager maintains multiple streams and event narratives

- **Contextual World Disruptors:** Environmental events—like power flickers, signal issues, passing sirens, or the house settling—act as "interrupts" that can glitch your digital UI or force you to recalibrate your focus between the screen and the dark room.
- **Player choice:** The game story is driven on player choice, although a fixed number of outcomes can be determined the feeling will be with the player to be an active part how they reached their ending

2. Gameplay

Player: The "Accidental Archivist"

The player isn't a hero, a soldier, or a survivor; they are a **Lurker**.

- **Profile:** A tech-savvy teenager or young adult who spends too much time in "Internet Mystery" subcultures.
- **Initial Mindset:** They believe they are the smartest person in the room. They view online cults and digital mysteries as a game to be "solved" or "documented" from a safe distance.

- **The Shift:** They transition from an **Observer** (someone watching the screen) to an **Asset** (someone the screen is watching). To the group the player joins they are another victim they can bend until they break; they push and push and constantly desensitize the player; we resensitize by having the player so involved with the action making these moments feel extremely real.

The Setting: The House

The game takes place entirely within a single, realistic bedroom at night.

- **The Main-Setting:** The dual-monitor glow, the cluttered desk, and the unmade bed. It is a "Safe Space" that slowly becomes a cage.
- **The Minor-Settings:** The muffled house beyond the door. You hear the domestic life of downstairs—dishes clinking, the TV humming.
- **The Atmosphere:** High-contrast "Blue Light" horror. The room is dark, but the screen is blinding. The boundary between your physical room and the digital chat server blurs as the game progresses.

Player Fantasy

The game grants the player the fantasy of **Infiltration**.

- **The Hook:** You are given access to a "secret world" that regular users can't see. You get to feel like a digital detective "cracking" the mystery, tracing down details, playing a role above you.
- **The Twist:** The fantasy of power is a lie. As you get "deeper" into the server, the game flips the script. You aren't infiltrating them; they are onboarding you. The fantasy shifts from "**I am finding the truth**" to "**I am being chosen by the truth.**"

Player emotional journey

We want the player to move through a specific sequence of feelings:

- **Curiosity & Superiority:** "I'm going to expose these weirdos."
- **Exposure:** The first time the Admin mentions your real name or share info you haven't shared with them, this can be through environmental story telling e.g poster on the wall, letter on the desk etc to build the story with the player without explicit interaction
- **Friction:** The physical annoyance and growing dread of having to "obey" a digital command to progress.
- **Paralysis:** The final realization that you cannot speak to your own family because you are terrified of a voice in a headset. **The Sinking Feeling** is the weight of realizing you've traded your real-world safety for digital "validation."

Player persistence:

- **The Curiosity Gap:** Every "Compliance Task" unlocks a new piece of forbidden data. You want to see the next file, the next photo, or the next "level" of the server.
- **The Social Trap:** The "Mutual Friends" and the "Admin's" praise make you feel like you are part of something. You want to prove you aren't just a "Lurker."
- **Escalating Stakes:** The "Performance Typing" and "Stereo-Split" audio create a constant, low-level physical adrenaline. You are constantly "managing" the room and the screen, which creates a high-engagement flow state of paranoia.
- **The Moral Sunk Cost:** Once you've lied to your family or performed their tasks, you're already "in." You keep playing to see if there is a way to fix what you've done, only to find yourself digging the hole deeper.

2.1. Core Loop

Macro Loop:

The core of the game is a **Spiral of Compliance**. It's designed to start with the low-friction comfort of a phone screen/computer screen and tighten into high-friction physical demands that take over your physical environment (in-game).

The loop is built to strip away your **Agency**. It starts with you choosing what to read and ends with you being unable to even speak to your own family because a voice in your ear told you not to.

The main drive of the game is to discover information, leaning into access for information, the story driver for researching this information is still to be determined, but creating satisfaction for completing information about this manipulating party. To seek further information you explore text conversations, discover information within (audio, videos, coded references to items) which helps solve plot device, often leaving open pathways wanting for you to escalate by reaching out to the leaders of this group and performing worse and worse actions to gain more intimate access to information you need.

Micro Loops:

Always driven by a one-sided "video-call" a micro-loop is the method to which you gain deeper access to this group briefly described above. The player joins a simulated video call of which they are requested to perform a linear-scripted action (e.g write on paper a specific group name utilising the mouse, place the in-game phone and manipulate the characters position based on the demands of the person on the other end of the call, go outside the house and steal neighbours mail, etc) within/around house-hold space, each with major player control, feedback is not given by UI but instead provided over the video call (player in-game device camera pointed at the player) from the voice on the opposite end. Each is a sequence unique to the next but

it has one defined goal the player must perform in order to gain access to further information.

3. Technical Considerations

3.1. Engine & Platform

Category	Primary Engine	Platform
Development	Unity (URP, (can adjust based on development needs)	PC (Windows)
Deployment	N/A	PC (Windows, Steam as primary distribution)

3.2. Core Technology Focus

The Immersive Interface Layer

This game is heavily reliant on simulating a realistic desktop and mobile environment. The interface must be fully interactive, with the ability to drag windows, resize, manage notifications, and switch focus between the PC and the in-game mobile phone seamlessly.

- **Dual-Screen Reality:** Implementation of an in-game operating system capable of running multiple applications (Simulated chat client, web browser, file explorer, etc.) and handling multiple narrative inputs simultaneously.
- **Camera & Movement:** First-person view designed to facilitate natural movement between the desk (PC focus) and the room (Physical focus). The character's physical actions (e.g., reaching for the phone, looking around the room, typing) must be mapped to be highly responsive to player input.

Narrative Management System (The 'Narrative Engine')

The central technical challenge is the smooth execution and management of the multi-tracked narrative described in Section 1.4.

- **Priority Mediator Logic:** A system is required to track the state of the 'Physical' story (e.g., family activity, time of night) and the 'Digital' story (e.g., conversation progress, current task demands). When these narratives overlap, the Mediator must determine which event takes priority or how they collide (e.g., reducing the time available to complete a digital task because a real-world event requires attention).

- Environmental Triggers: The system must be able to trigger ambient world disruptors (e.g., a power flicker) based on plot points or a simple timer, ensuring these events can interrupt the player's interaction with the digital interface, achieving the desired 'glitch horror' effect, forcing the player to fail at certain aspects in the world. Simple details that can really bring a player out of it such as while the player is focused on the screen having the bedroom door open and it's the family member turning off the light to stop you wasting electricity, this can be a case if you leave a lamp on. It happens in the background, to the player the light suddenly goes out but it is backed by a normal reason. Each environmental disrupted it designed to dysregulate the player, avoiding them from jumping into just clicking through info and solving too fast, we want the player emotionally on edge throughout this entire process

3.3. Asset Pipeline & Workflow

Visuals & Art Style

The aesthetic is based on hyper-realism with a focus on high-contrast lighting.

- Asset Sourcing: A mix of custom 3D models preferred to utilise photogrammetry assets from fronts such as PolyHaven or custom scans performed for the room environment and high-quality, pre-existing digital assets (e.g., desktop backgrounds, simulated websites, stock photos) to achieve rapid prototyping of the digital world.
- Lighting: Use of dynamic lighting heavily skewed towards "blue light" sources (PC screens, phone screens) contrasted with the dark ambient room and occasional weak 'yellow light' spills from under the door.

Audio Design

Audio is a critical component for building tension and driving psychological horror.

- Stereo-Split Paranoia: A technical requirement for the audio system is the ability to spatially separate the "Digital" audio (voice chat, typing sounds) within the headset from the "Physical" audio (house sounds, knocks, sirens) coming from the game's world speakers. This is essential for the "Performance Typing" and "Escalating Stakes" mechanisms, for times when the player has headphones/earphones on in game we want them to be immersed using spatial curated audio to really immerse the player.
- Music is open for consideration but should be used at very choice times; having an app on the phone/on the pc for music and allowing the player to have control (potentially source music for outside bands across various genres)
- Ambience is key, from an exterior world e.g trees, rain on the window, etc; we want the world to be loud, constantly breaking the players focus

- Voice Acting: Need for professional voice actors for the manipulative group's 'Admin' and any family members, focusing on subtle performance to maintain the unsettling tone.
 - For the voice of the Admin/Admins of the server we want it to sound like this is a normal day and what they're doing is disassociated with reality, they're having fun without considering real-world consequence, any pleas of the player/player family feeds this narrative

4. Minimum Viable Demo

With the above early specification we need to strip this down into a deliverable piece to have as a first goal of which the game could be brought in a distributable state, whether the game will be chaptered or whether the game will be delivered in full post this launch is open for decision, the following deals with an ideal specification for the wider world to play against.

4.1 Story

We want to create a subsection of the story, from a creative aspect the game drives on the concept of freedom of choice. At a minimum we need to be able to message 2-3 people individually at any point of the game allowing a conversation to be driven with them separate to the story

State of where the player is in the game, the player at this point will either A) be right at the point of joining the group or would have joined the group of which this entire story kickoff, we want at least three tiers of information available for the player to peruse consisting of conversations, audio logs and potentially videos, the player should be able to save/document this information.

We should have two "admin" calls where the player does highly involved actions (as scope reduced as possible) during these calls, of which we will need voice acting (temporary is fine) as feedback to the player during these actions (narrative interactions to be determined, e.g if the player is taking too long, needs to move to the left or right, etc)

We want atleast 3 environmental interactions that disrupt the player during these at random, e.g the light being turned off, a call from downstairs asking about dinner, WiFi becomes slow.

4.2 Visual Style

We will lean on Polyhaven assets and assets in public domain/custom modelled where required, an aim is still for this realistic environment just reducing down the amount of 3D work is required

4.3 Core Game Mechanics for Demo

Feature Category	Feature Description	Rationale for Demo Inclusion
Digital Interface	Interactive in-game PC desktop environment (Window management, basic file navigation)	Essential for delivering the core "Lurker" fantasy and "Digital" narrative stream.
Digital Interface	Functional in-game chat client with message history and the ability to send/receive texts/messages from 2-3 unique contacts.	Required for the "Basic interaction with the chat community" and driving the narrative friction.
Digital Interface	Implement the auto-sorting file system for "downloaded" information (audio, images, transcripts).	Enables the "Curiosity Gap" and the player's role as the "Accidental Archivist."
Physical Interaction	First-person movement within the single bedroom environment.	Necessary for the "Walk around the environment" mechanic and transitioning focus from screen to room.
Physical Interaction	Core interaction points for the "Admin Call" mechanic (e.g., picking up/placing the in-game phone, basic physical object manipulation required by the task).	Crucial for demonstrating the "Spiral of Compliance" and the shift from digital to physical demands.
Narrative & System	Implementation of a simplified Priority Mediator to handle the collision of one "Digital" demand and one "Physical" event.	Proof-of-concept for the Unique Selling Point (Narrative Engine) and creating tension.
Narrative & System	Implementation of the 3 key Environmental Disruptors (e.g., light switch, dinner call, slow WiFi) triggered randomly during key plot points.	Establishes the "Contextual World Disruptors" and the psychological horror tone.

Feature Category	Feature Description	Rationale for Demo Inclusion
Audio	Basic Stereo-Split audio setup for the two "Admin Calls" (separating voice from ambience).	Essential for the "Escalating Stakes" and "Performance Typing" emotional journey.

All of this is a draft, the ideas laid out here are open to discussion; having freedom to modify any of this is what will drive this project to succeed. Discussion is key, defining an MVP is key. All of the above is likely to change, but I didn't want to walk in with an empty idea of what the project is as well as avoiding strictly defining what this project is as this will in itself cause friction/lack of interest for people forming concepts of their own on the project.