



Permafrost

A queer horror experience

What is Permafrost?

Permafrost is a concept for a horror game about trauma and LGBTQIA+ identity. The player follows Clarice, a lesbian character who has run away from home after her parents made her break up with her girlfriend, as she attempts to navigate a cold, dark mansion. Clarice must solve puzzles and confront parts of her past while being stalked by a monster known only as The Frost.

Permafrost marries horror, mental health, and the LGBTQIA+ experience to create a unique gameplay experience to which young queer people can connect. The Frost is a literal representation of the symptoms of PTSD haunting the protagonist. *Permafrost* aims to explore how LGBTQIA+ identity and the unique traumas that queer people can experience can turn into PTSD. The game itself would play like a classic point-and-click computer game, combined with survival horror elements and puzzle solving.

Why is it important?

Around 5% of the population of the United States identifies as LGBTQIA+, but LGBTQIA+ people are more than twice as likely to have a mental health issue than their heterosexual and cisgender peers. On top of that, LGBTQIA+ people are 3.9x more likely to have PTSD. Mental health is a major issue faced by the queer community, and the ways that mental health conditions impact LGBTQIA+ people are unique.

A video game is the perfect medium to communicate a message like this to the intended audience. It's estimated that about 10% of people who play video games are LGBTQIA+. Video games have a large queer audience, one that is larger than most other forms of entertainment. Video games are inherently a very interactive experience, immersing the player into the narrative as if they themselves are the protagonists.

Games, especially horror games, are a relatively untapped well for discussing the intricacies of LGBTQIA+ mental health issues as well. There are no somewhat mainstream games starring a LGBTQIA+ protagonist that confront PTSD specifically.



Main Characters

Clarice

- Protagonist
- 19 years old
- Lesbian



The Frost

- Antagonist
- Figment of Clarice's imagination
- Shapeshifting cloud of cold



Side Characters

Sam

- Clarice's girlfriend
- 19 years old
- Supporting character in the background
- She and her family are a force of good for Clarice

Mom & Dad

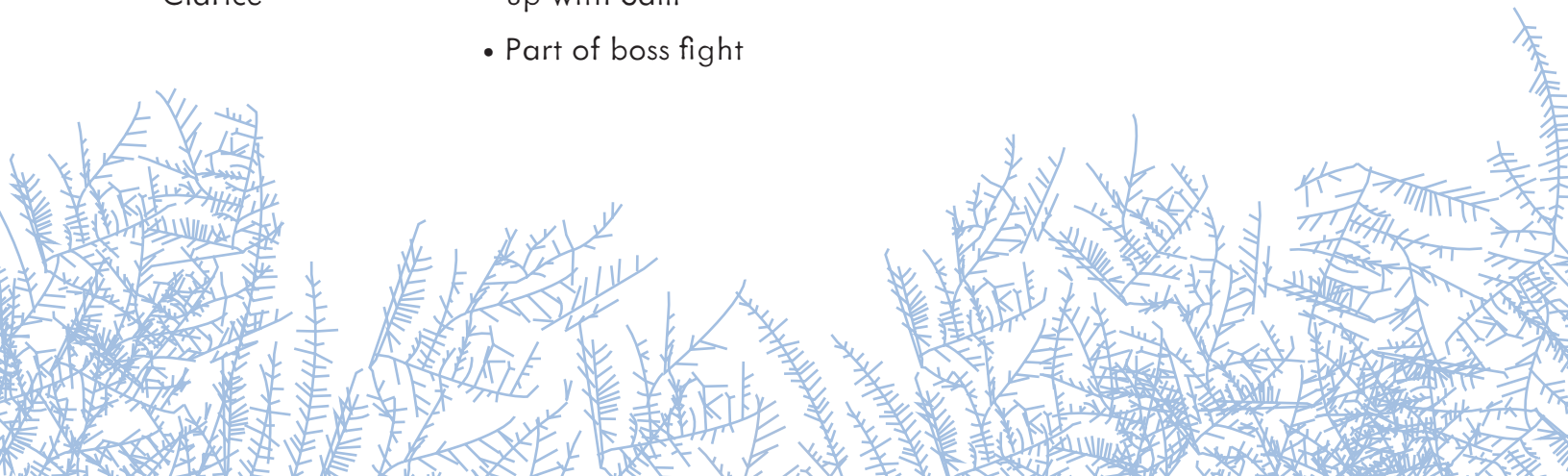
- Unaccepting, very religious
- Threatened to send Clarice away to "cure" her
- Forced Clarice back into the closet
- Made her break up with Sam
- Part of boss fight

Uncle Joe

- Sexual abuser
- Abuse not shown in game, but implied
- Currently in jail
- Part of boss fight

Pastor James

- Priest presiding over Baptist church
- Preaches that homosexuality is a sin
- Told Clarice she would go to hell
- Part of boss fight



The Story

The game centers on Clarice, a girl who has run away from home after her parents made her break up with her girlfriend. She passes out on a park bench, and she awakens in a vast, cold mansion, unsure of where she is or how she got there. The mansion is her own brain made into a physical space. She realizes that she is being stalked by a force that she calls The Frost.

As Clarice moves through the mansion and tries to find a way out, she finds various items, like diary entries, memos, text message conversations, voicemails, etc. These items remind her of her past and will trigger flashback sequences.

After a flashback, Clarice is much more vulnerable and will be attacked by The Frost. She can't actually fight back (at least not at first), so she has to run or try to outsmart it.

The player will have to solve puzzles to navigate through the mansion and find a way out.

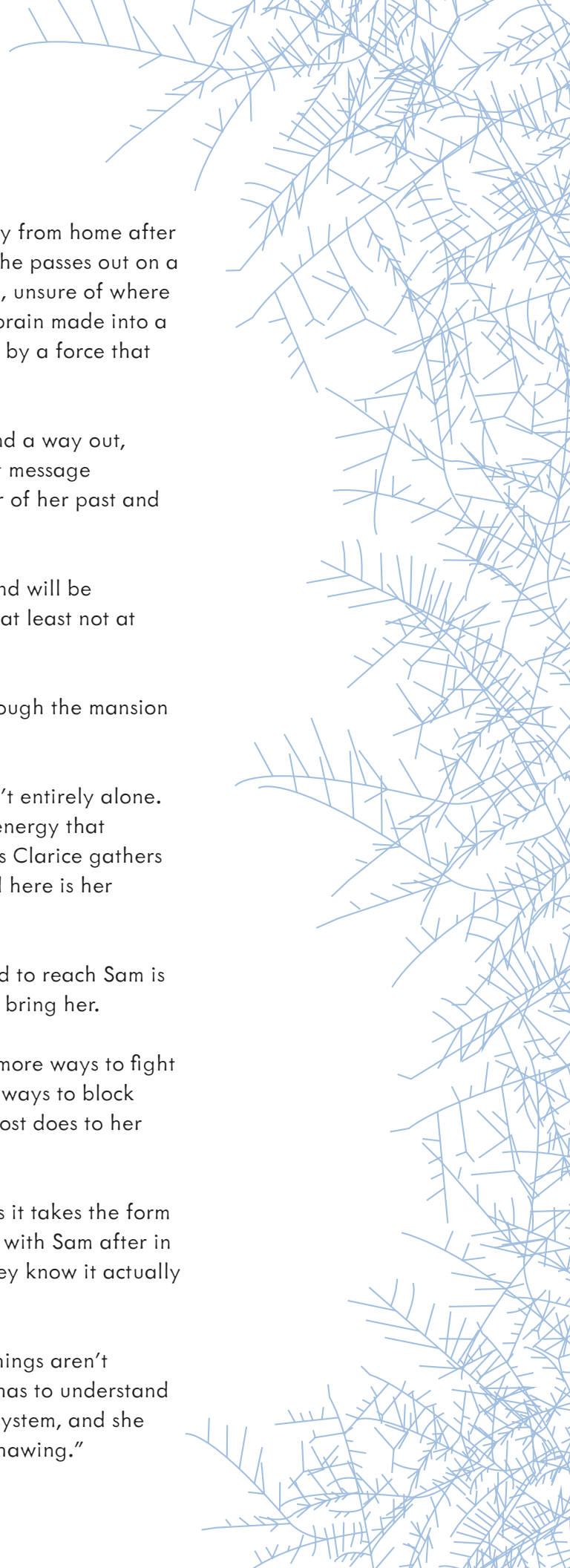
As she explores the mansion, she realizes that she isn't entirely alone. Someone else that is here, and they have a positive energy that contrasts the fear and dullness of the environment. As Clarice gathers clues, she realizes that the person that's also trapped here is her girlfriend, Sam.

She begins to realize that the only way to escape and to reach Sam is to harness her positive memories and the power they bring her.

As Clarice discovers positive memories, she acquires more ways to fight off The Frost. Things like increased health, weapons, ways to block damage, and items that decrease the damage The Frost does to her sanity meter.

The final boss fight is Clarice confronting The Frost as it takes the form of people that have made her life hell. She awakens with Sam after in Sam's bedroom. They both remember it clearly, so they know it actually happened.

Clarice is not "better," but she does know now that things aren't hopeless. She can't keep running from her past, she has to understand it. She knows that she isn't alone, she has a support system, and she can get better. The game ends with her saying "I'm thawing."



Game Systems

Health Meter

- Attacks from The Frost will deplete health bar
- As the player loses health, the hearts in the bottom left break and grey out
- When the health bar reaches 0, the player dies and is reset back to their most recent checkpoint

Sanity Meter

- Being around The Frost for too long will lower the player's sanity, making its attacks more powerful
- As the player loses sanity, the candles in the bottom left are blown out

Flashbacks

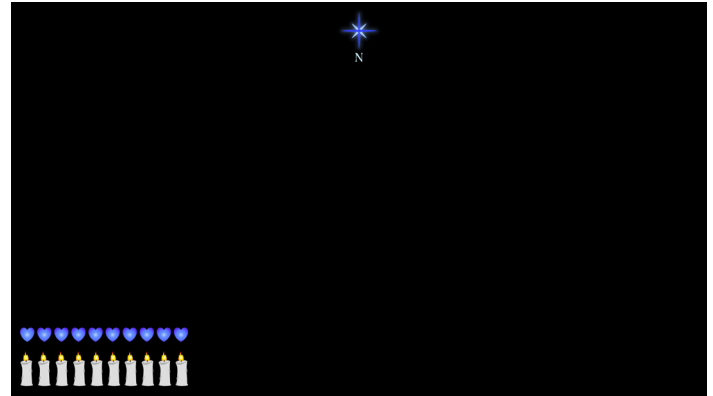
- When the player finds something that reminds Clarice of her past, the screen will fade to black, then come back in black and white and mostly blurred
- The player then gets to watch an event from Clarice's past
- When the flashback is over and she comes back to reality, The Frost will approach and try to attack
- She is at her most vulnerable when fresh out of a flashback, because she is literally running from her past

Movement

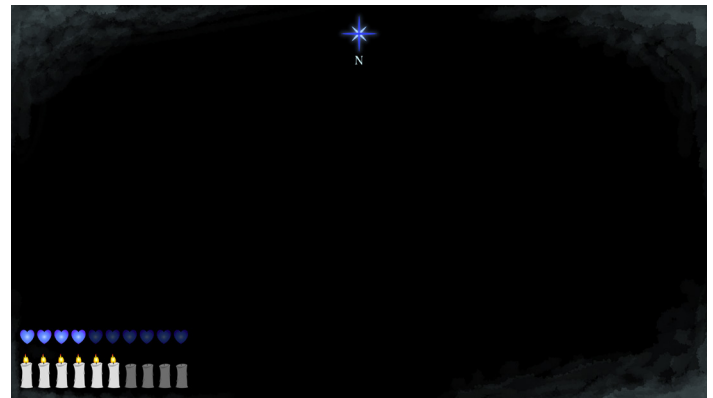
- Like a point and click game; hover on edges of screen and arrows will pop up to go that way or to turn the camera
- The direction the player is facing will always be shown on a compass on the top of the screen

Inventory

- Press Tab to open Clarice's inventory
- Tabs in inventory: items, map, files
- Map fills out as player explores



Health and Sanity bars at full



Health and Sanity bars after taking damage



Inventory screen open on Items

Style Guide & Main Menu



Heading

Subheading

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Font colors



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G: 239
B: 247



R: 255
G: 255
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R: 151
G: 193
B: 255



R: 54
G: 58
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Heading

Subheading

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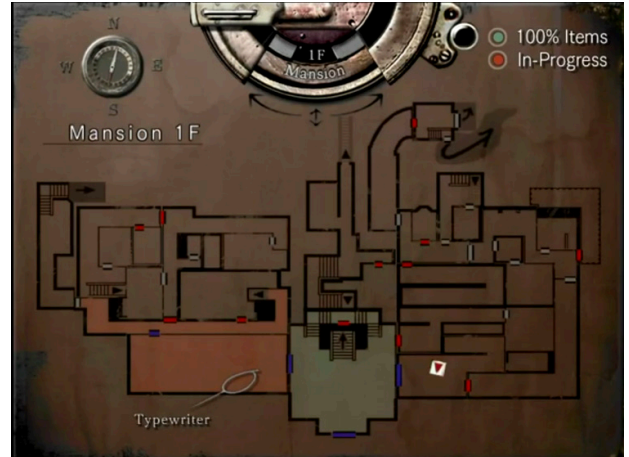
Mini Graphics



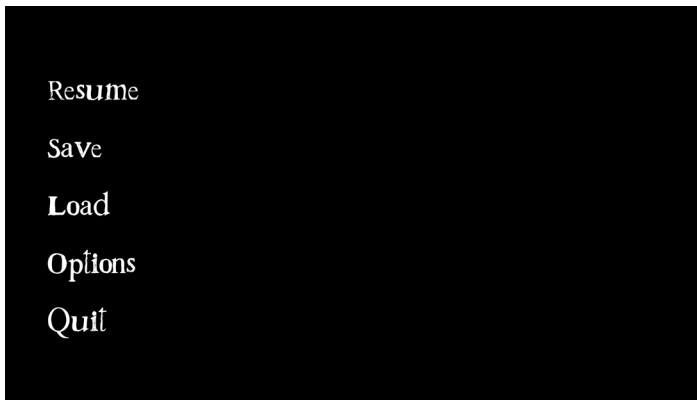
Location

The story takes place inside a large mansion with several stories. Scattered throughout are objects that remind Clarice of the things she is trying to run from. Remembering them causes The Frost to chase her. As she explores the mansion, a map is filled out that the player can access to keep track of where they are. Some rooms will loop, and in order to escape she needs to solve a puzzle or confront a feeling head-on.

The location was strongly influenced by the map and mechanics of the first Resident Evil game; that game also takes place in a mansion, and involves solving puzzles to unlock more areas and progress in the story.



Pause Screens



Resume +
Save
Load
Options
Quit

Resume
Save
Load
Options
Quit

Resume
Save *
Load
Options
Quit