>My project was started in my free time, based on a personal interest in utilizing every aspect of the internet and digital media possible for storytelling.

In other words, not just taking advantage of the combination of sight, sound, and interactivity that digital media provide, but also leveraging the interconnectivity of the net to help tell a story.

My inspiration comes from too many different sources to count, although I’ll mention a few key ones.

MSPaint Adventures (homestuck), ARGs, creepypastas, long form podcast stories, etc.

The biggest two influences were Homestuck and creepypasta.

Homestuck had a massive influence on me while it was still going, and regardless of how I felt about the story itself, the way in which it was told was revolutionary. It reminded me of one of my favorite multimedia series, the .Hack Conglomerate, which was one of the first large scale attempts I know of to create a truly multimedia franchise. (specify what exactly I mean by this: not just different stuff like the franchise had a game/movie/comic etc, but a franchise designed around using all these mediums in conjunction to tell a single interconnected story that takes advantage of it’s meta nature). Homestuck took this to 11, telling it’s story through comics, forum posts, videos, games, albums, music videos, audience interaction, and even the website layout.

The other source, creepypastas, are a much more direct reference. The similarities between my project and plenty of famous video game creepypastas is apparent. However, although a lot of these stories make great use of a huge amount of the potential web based storytelling has to offer, up to and including web domains and forum integration, a lot of them share the same shocking issue that I feel really prevents them from living up to their full potential. Godzilla, Petscop, Sad Satan, Sonic.EXE, POLYBIUS, and many other “I found a haunted video game!” stories both good and bad all suffer from one fatal flaw.

No one can actually play the game.

Now early on this made sense. These stories started as just that, stories. Someone would post a creepy message on a forum and continue to update it as spooky things “happened”. However as time has gone on and these stories have become more elaborate, this seems like a wasted opportunity. For the past few years, basically all the ongoing stories of this nature involved games that were actually playable on some level, it’s just that said games are never released and instead only played by the person who created them for use in youtube videos.

It’s not like this is entirely without cause. By making it so readers can only access the game through video provided by the author, the author does get more direct control over the information that they drip feed to their audience. They also gain access to editing tricks to make impossible actions happen in the game (Petscop does a very impressive version of this where the author records footage of their character moving then splice it with earlier footage to make it look the like game is predicting what the player will do in the future). Droughts of content can make readers go insane with speculation, giving your work depth you didn’t even consider at first. Finally, if you give people direct access to a “haunted” game they might figure out that, well, it isn’t actually haunted at all. They might even be able to break into the files and uncover everything in the game without even having to play it! Besides, releasing a scary game would be just that, a scary game.

However, I believe it is entirely possible to create a creepypasta story without running into these issues. The problems of content release and data miners are both solved in the same easy manner (using a trick I’ll take from .Hack). Episodic release. Data miners can’t break into your game to find the end if the end isn’t in the game yet. In fact, the ASSURANCE that someone will eventually hack their way into your files provides you with another avenue for story telling, one that fits perfectly with the idea of episodic release of the game. Cryptic messages can be hidden in files, impossible areas can be cleared by cheating, and more importantly readers would be subtly directed to seek out one of the core components of this kind of storytelling, the audience community, as they ran into barriers that they were unable to pass without a level of dedication and technical expertise they likely didn’t have. At this point the story starts becoming their story too as they help decipher the clues, go to weird websites to download what may or may not be a fake level, and maybe produce supplemental content to help other audience members play the game or follow along with events.