The Indie Itch: Four free horror games to get into the spooky spirit

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Gameplay capture of game "Site Burial" by Night Asobu and Zho. This visual novel was made in only 3 weeks.
PHOTO COURTESY OF @NIGHTASOBU ON X

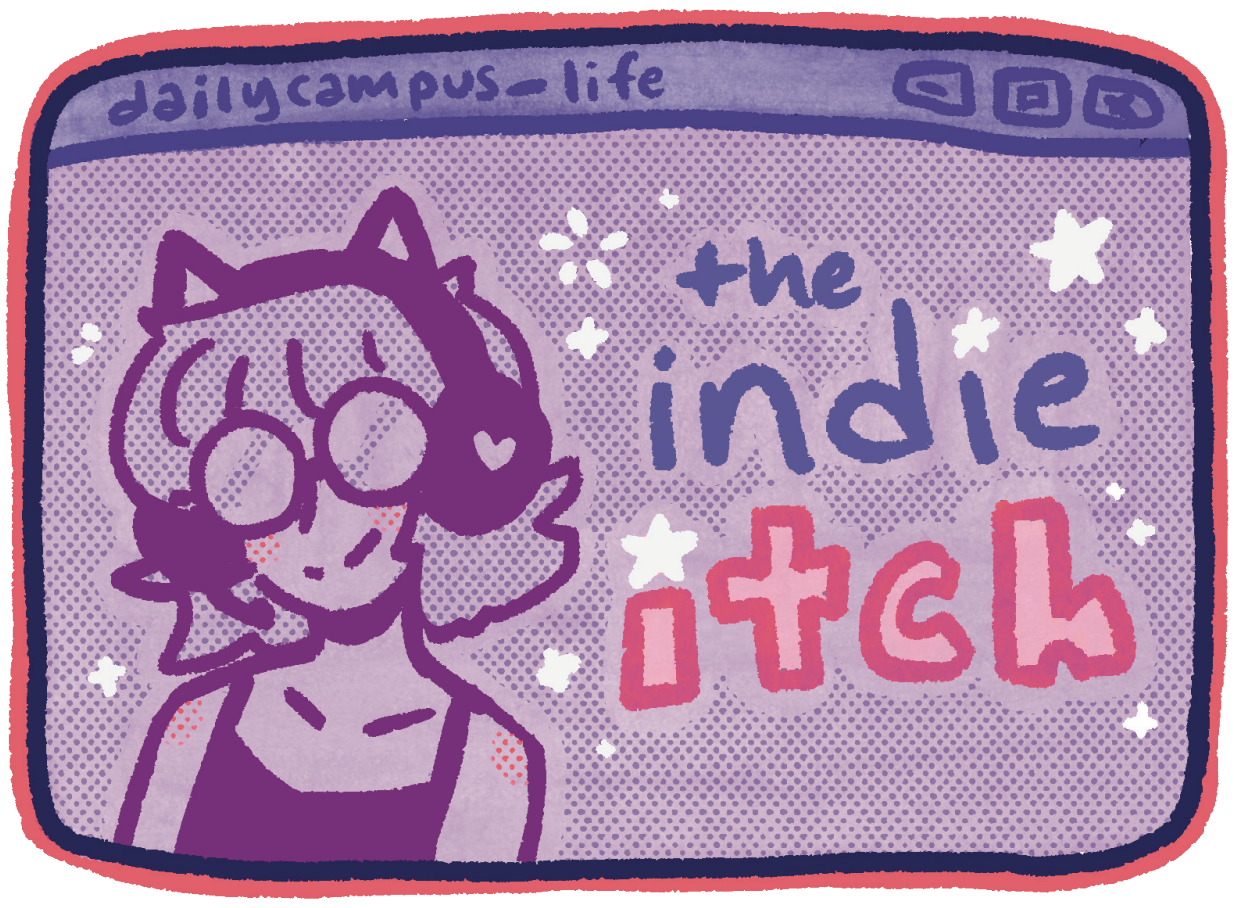
Looking for some new horror games to play? Whether you're in the mood for a dark atmosphere, cheap jumpscares or something disguised as a cute game, itch.io has it all. Welcome back to The Indie Itch, the bi-weekly column where I give readers my suggestions for free games on itch.io, ranging anywhere from cozy games to roguelikes, puzzles, RPGs and anything else you can think of.

For this week, I've chosen some free horror games that you can play in your browser right now to get yourself into a Halloween mood. If you're not into things like dark themes or secret internet cults in your games, you can find the other less scary recommendations in the Indie Itch collection here: https://itch.io/c/8241825/the-indie-itch.

First up, we have the short visual novel "SITE BURIAL" by Night Asobu and Zho, which was made in just three weeks for the Spooktober 8th Annual Visual Novel Jam. You play as an employee at the Institute, a research facility that contains hostile anomalous creatures deep underground. After anomalies begin to escape, the Institute is forced to completely destroy the massive complex with a "site burial," and you're trapped inside. But you aren't alone; you quickly discover there's another person trapped. As someone who doesn't play a lot of visual novels because I find the gameplay to be quite boring, this game was the perfect length. The art style is sketchy, extremely expressive and pleasing to look at, which works well for the plot. The game has three different endings depending on the choices you make, and I know I'll be playing more to see the two I haven't gotten yet.

Next there's the survival game "COBB CAN MOVE" by abho and , which won first place in Major Game Jam 7. This game is truly terrifying for how simple it is. You play as a little guy that needs to deliver pieces of coal to a furnace, which sounds easy enough. Unfortunately, Cobb, the giant red horrifying creature, exists. As you progress through seven levels, Cobb gains new skills that he will use to try to attack you, and the difficulty ramps quickly. Soon enough he can do much more than move; he can see, smell, hear, reach and duplicate. It can get pretty stressful and, due to not actually being that good at games, I couldn't beat it. But I haven't forgotten about Cobb.

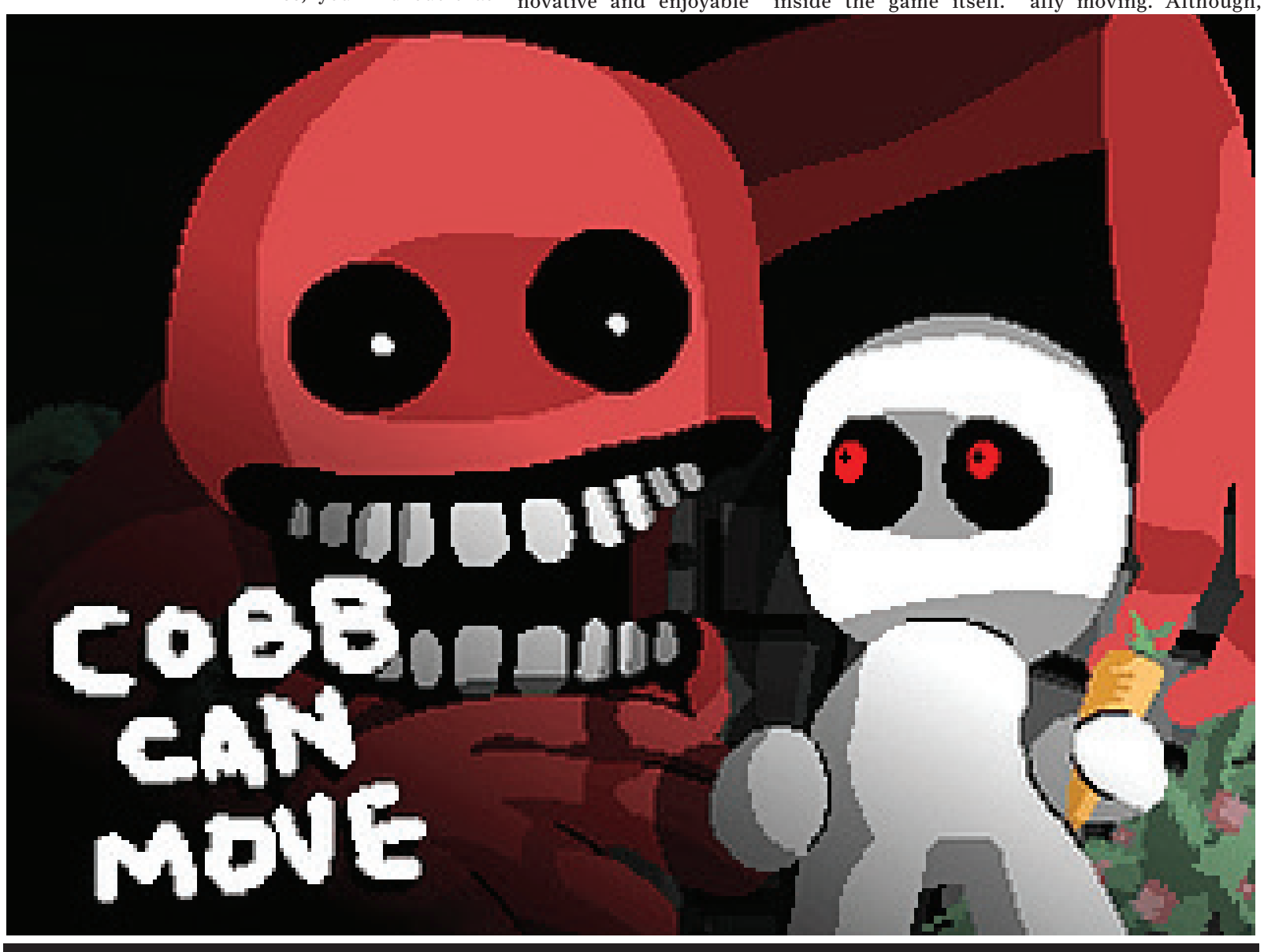
If you're a fan of "Emily is Away," you're going to like "last seen online" by qwook and sochinstudio. This short puzzle game takes place inside a missing girl's computer. As you explore the old chatlogs and files, you find out that something very strange happened to this girl, Liz. The puzzles in this game aren't super complicated, but they are innovative and enjoyable to figure out. You have to do things like read chats, find numbers in music playlists and explore a video game cult inside the game itself. The atmosphere of "last seen online" is definitely creepy and there are a few jumpscares, but the story is also emotionally moving. Although, if you get too curious about what happened to Liz. . . it might just happen to you.



LOGO BY COLBI LORANGER, ASSOCIATE ARTIST EDITOR/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Lastly, we've got a real horror game. "Overnight Interview" by piripiripiri is a simulation game where you go to a terrifying job interview at a grocery store deep into the night. It's a very short game with a full release being worked on, but this game is truly scary. Kind of. All jokes aside, this game has some really good humor in it alongside the horror. There are some jumpscares here and there, but the floating skull characters that manage this store are all quite funny. I enjoyed the visual style of the game a lot and look forward to a full release. All you have to do is regular interview stuff, but remember to watch your back.

There are, of course, many more horror games on itch.io if these aren't enough for your Halloween season needs (especially if you're into visual novels; there are tons of scary ones). And while these recommendations are ones that you can play in your browser, there are plenty of other completely free games if you feel like downloading them, too.



Promotional art of game "Cobb Can Move" by abho and Vystel. This survival game won first place in Major Game Jam 7.
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