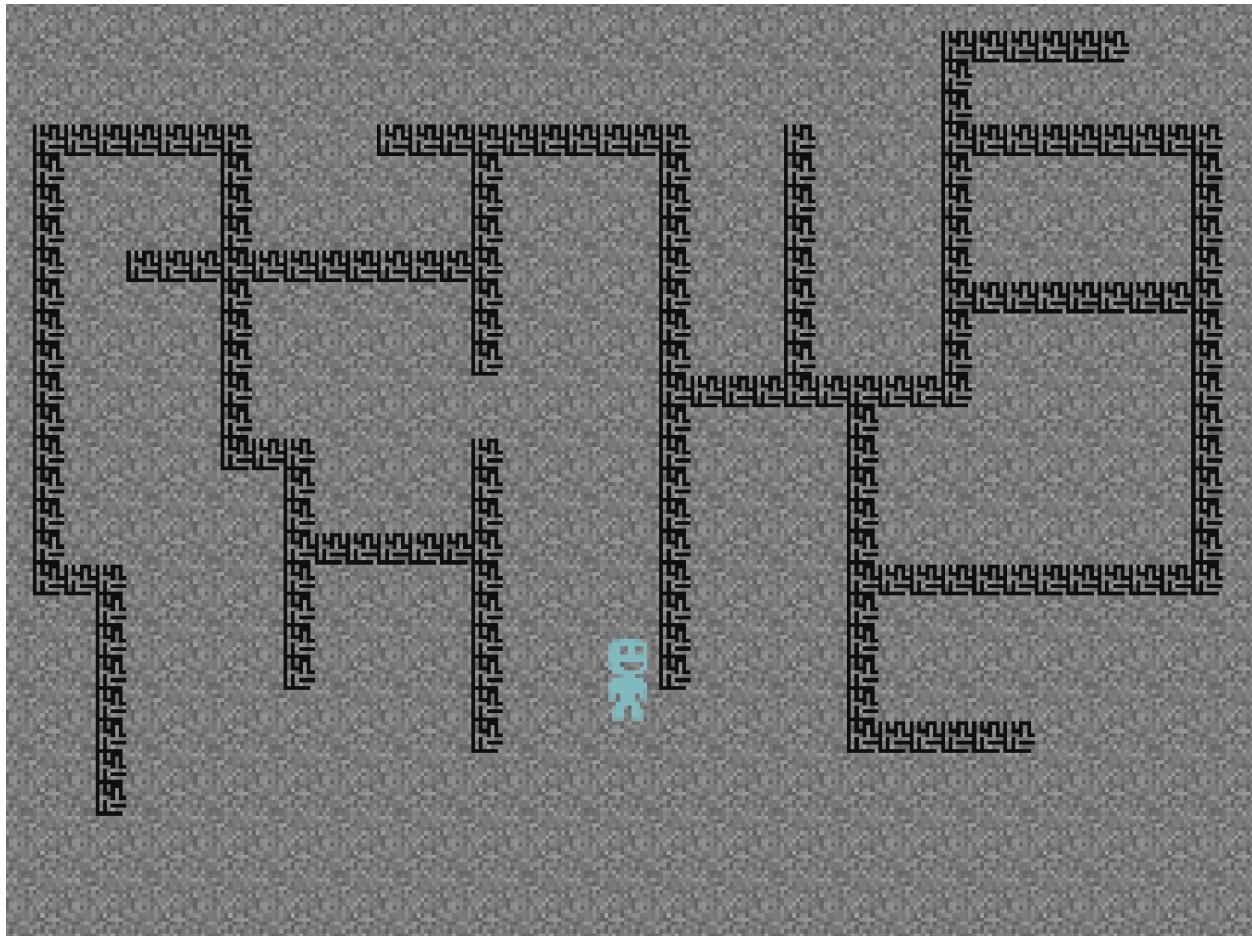


Spelunking Antithesis



Antithesis, released by Wequer in July 2023 as part of the Spring Levelmaking Contest, is one of the largest, most challenging, most confusing, and just plain *weirdest* levels ever created for VVVVVV. Packed with obscure mechanics, deliberate glitches, and bizarre word-salad text, it throws the player into a world of confusion and madness that seems impossible to disentangle. It's almost impossible to find everything in one run, and that's assuming you don't get lost, softlocked, or blocked by any number of difficult and frustrating challenges.

The following document, created over the course of 2025, is my attempt to describe, in as much detail as possible, the real structure of Antithesis, and what it's trying to get at. It includes a glossary, labeled maps, a written walkthrough, a thematic/literary exegesis, and several appendices. I've also produced a full annotated transcript of the level,

produced to help with the exegesis; since this is very long and not as interesting, I've put it in a separate file.

The reader is strongly encouraged to try playing the level for yourself at least once before looking at the maps or reading the walkthrough. It should be useful if you get lost or stuck, but part of the fun of the level is getting lost and trying to map it out in your head. If you've already played the level to completion, my hope is that this document can point you towards things you'd missed, suggest a lens through which to make sense of the bizarre story, and maybe make the overall structure of the thing a bit clearer. Though it initially seems semi-random, I think this level was produced with a great amount of intention and care, and makes a lot more sense when examined carefully.

I don't claim to know everything about this level, and it's possible I've missed something. If you know anything here that I don't, please tell me! I'll probably include it in an updated document.

CONTENTS

Glossary	p. 3
Walkthrough	p. 14
Exegesis	p. 30
Appendix A: On two-tile gaps	p. 36
Appendix B: Shortest path through Ash Cookie	p. 37
Appendix C: Accessing Dream Sequence in Ash Cookie	p. 38
Appendix D: Solution to Trinket 11 Puzzle	p. 40
Appendix E: Why do the checkpoints in Some Math act weird?	p. 42

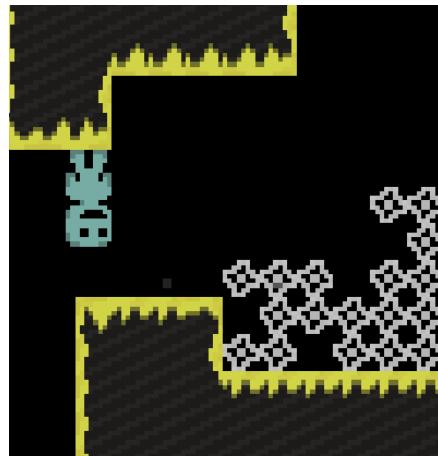
GLOSSARY

“Bone Ocean”



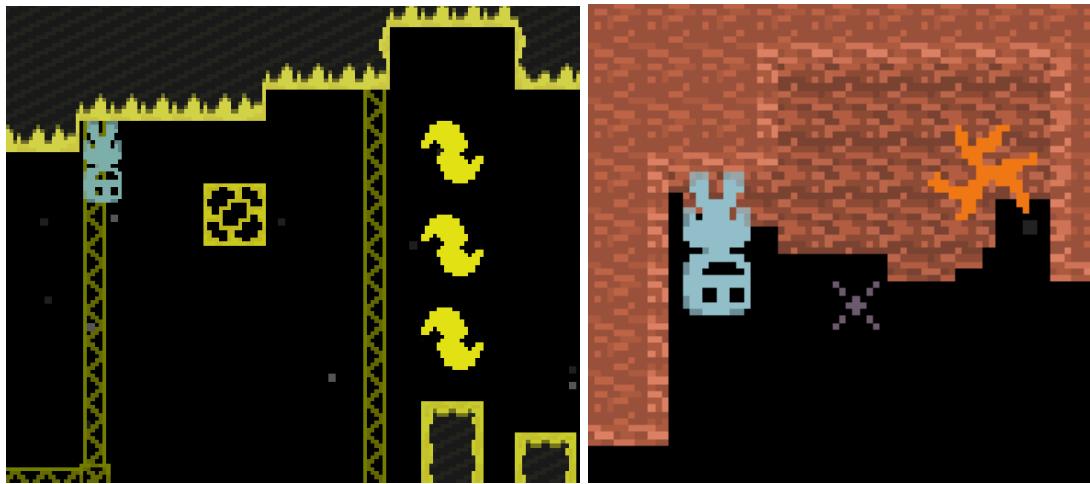
Surrounds the map on both left and right edges. Kills on approach. The hitbox is one tile bigger than the bone plasma itself. Falling in twice makes the player more vulnerable to Brain Damage.

“Vibrating Flower”



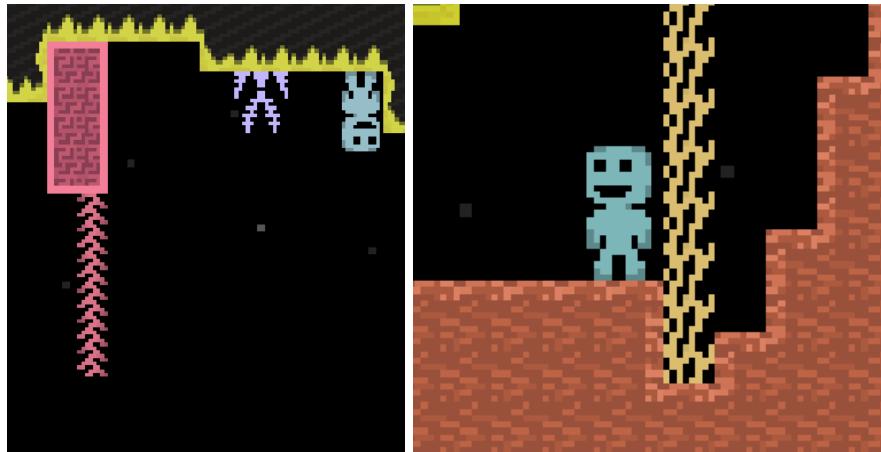
Instantly ends the level, booting the player to menu. Only appears in Lemon Mash.

“Button”



Multiple kinds with varying effects. The first activates static entities. The second moves enemies all to one side and stops them there. Often used to create one-way passages.

“Joints Eater”



Multiple kinds with varying effects, based on one-way tiles. The more common (pictured left) has two sub-types which are visibly identical. One prevents all horizontal movement in either direction when entered vertically (effectively trapping you). The other prevents falling when entered, allowing the player to slide through it like you’re on solid ground. Both prevent flipping when inside.

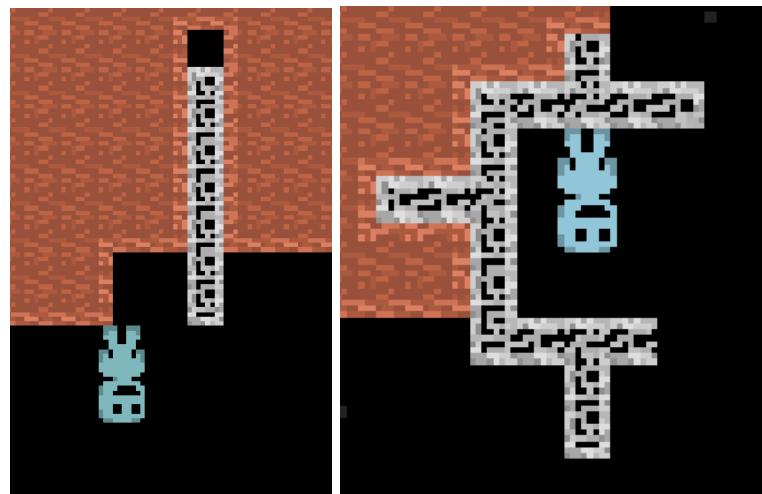
There is a less common variant of the pause-falling type (pictured right) which functions as more of a ladder. The one-way tiles are one pixel off from the solid tile, so you ‘stick’ to the edge without being able to pass through.

“Panels”



Has two pieces - panels and activators. When an activator (lighter yellow) is touched, the panels (darker yellow) will kill the player until they leave the room and return.

“Moonshaped”



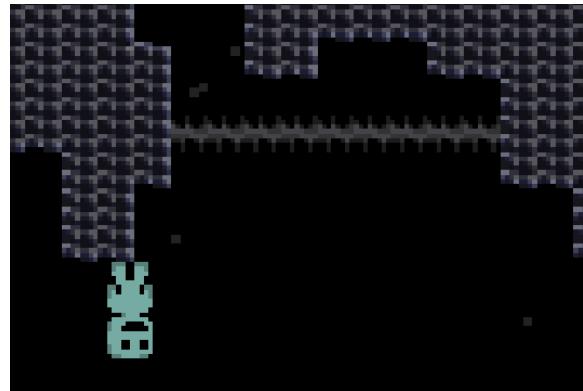
Has two pieces - teleporters and receivers. The 3-4 square pattern (on the right) designates a receiver, all other shapes are teleporters. Teleporters instantly move the player to the nearest receiver.

“V-Activator”



Pressing ENTER near the V-shaped object will have one of several effects. These include activating a nearby checkpoint, teleporting the player somewhere nearby, or destroying a disappearing platform.

“Shell Spines”



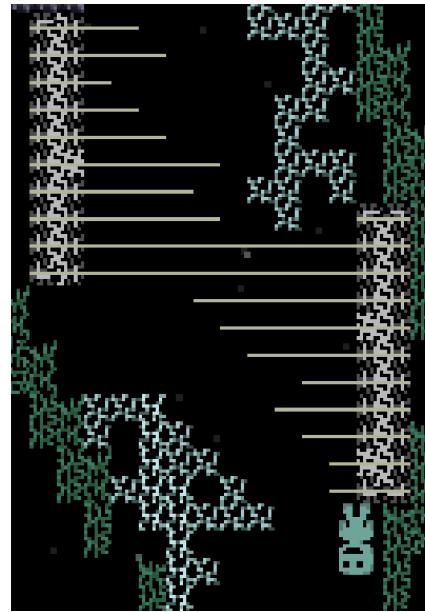
Turns the player invisible on touch. Visibility will not be restored until you die and respawn.

“Resist Squares”



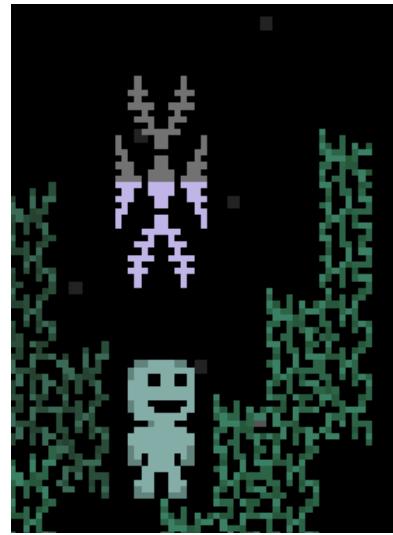
On touch, the text “Resist.” appears on screen three times, effectively delaying the player for a brief period - as long as it takes them to skip through the text.

“Metal Nets”



Densely stacked vertical gravity lines - each visible line is actually two gravity lines stacked on top of each other. The general effect is not to flip You, but only to slow You's fall. However, they'll sometimes flip you unpredictably.

“Double Checkpoint”



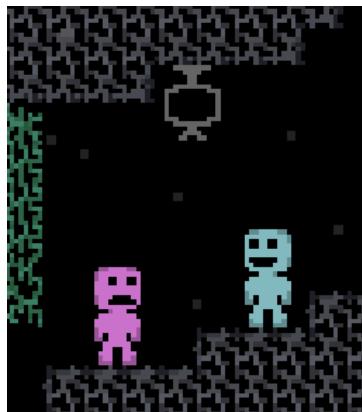
Two checkpoints on top of each other, pointing in opposite directions. Each time You respawns, the activated checkpoint will switch. Common to most checkpoints in Salad and Some Math.

There are additional weird behaviors with the variant of this checkpoint found in Some Math; see Appendix E for details.

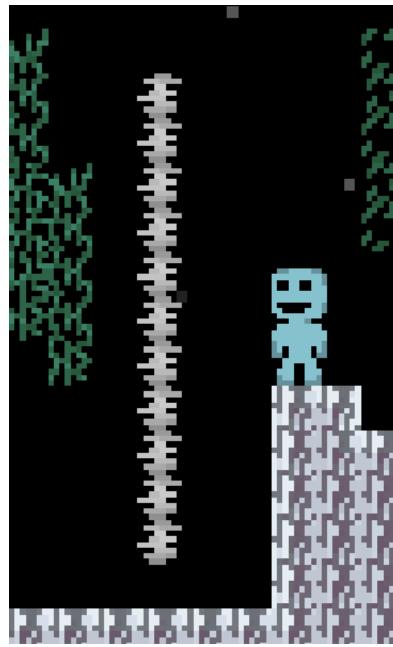
“Salad Blocks”



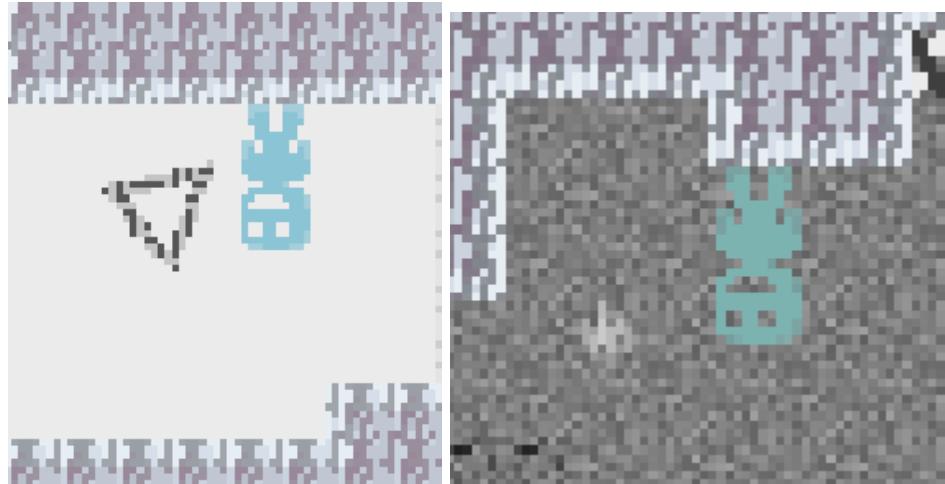
Has two pieces - blocks and activators. The blocks (green) will fill in with solid tiles when the activator nearby (light blue) is touched.

“Alien”

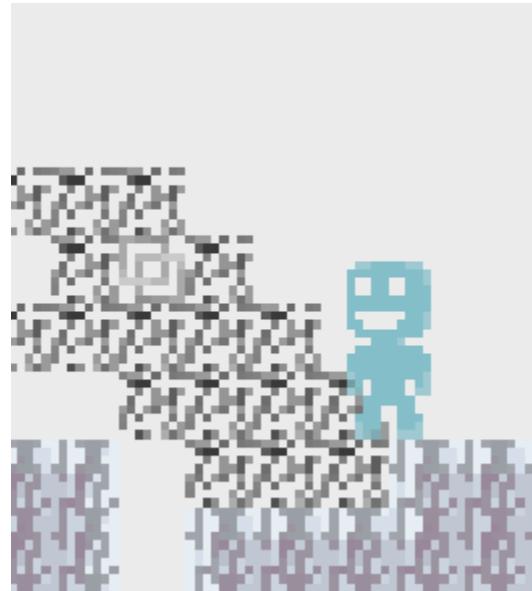
Set of six collectible crewmates, found in Salad. Collecting one stops the music until you leave the area or reload the level. Normally collecting all six would end the level, but only five are actually accessible, so there is no gameplay impact to crewmates being collected.

“Freeze Blocks”

Fills the room with static platforms on touch, effectively trapping the player and forcing them to press R.

“Delay Token”

Two types, large and small. Briefly stuns the player. Like a Resist Square, but lasts a static number of frames (32 large/4 small) rather than until three textboxes are moved through.

“Flip Token”

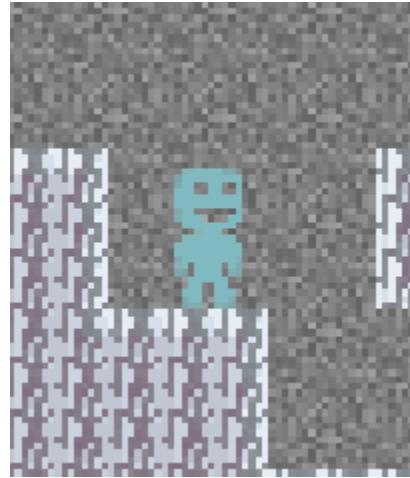
Flips the player instantly, even in midair. One use per room.

“Color Token”

Swaps the background color of the room - black to white, and vice versa. This makes some spikes visible while making others invisible. One use per room.

“Math Token”

Spawns an upward-moving enemy on touch.

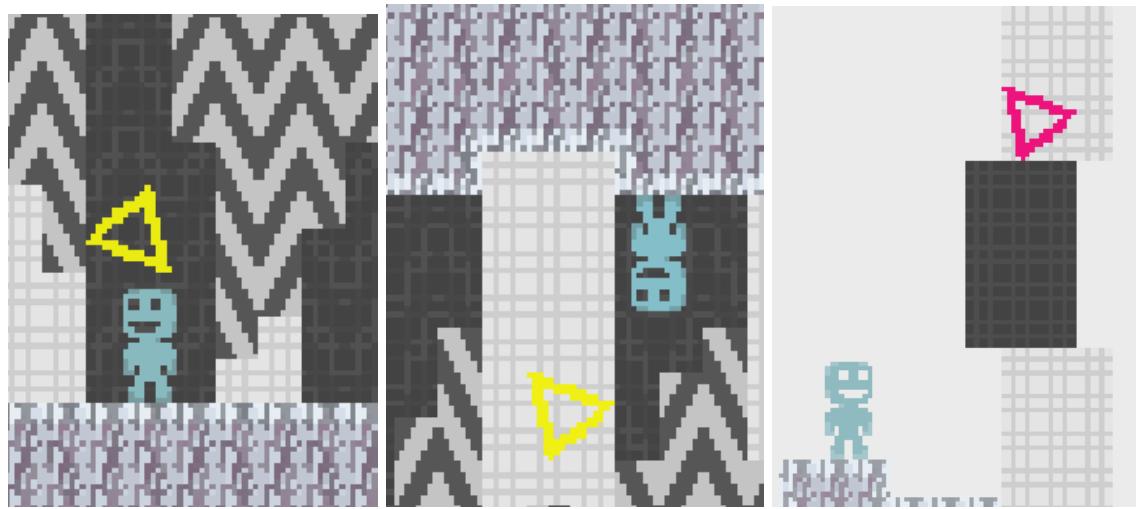
“Brain Damage”

Background effect, signaled by gray static. While active, the game lags severely; lag effect is more significant if the player died to Bone Ocean at least twice. Blocked by Crystal Shield upgrade. Broken in 2.4.

“Math Teleporter”

Like the Checkpoint Activator, but activating it teleports the player and reloads the room, freeing You from Freeze Blocks.

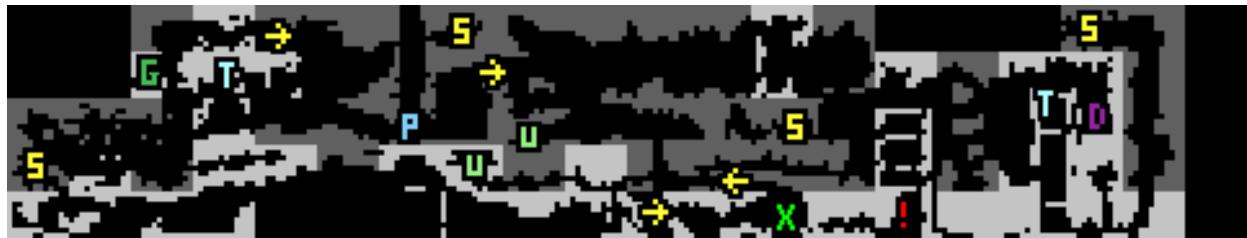
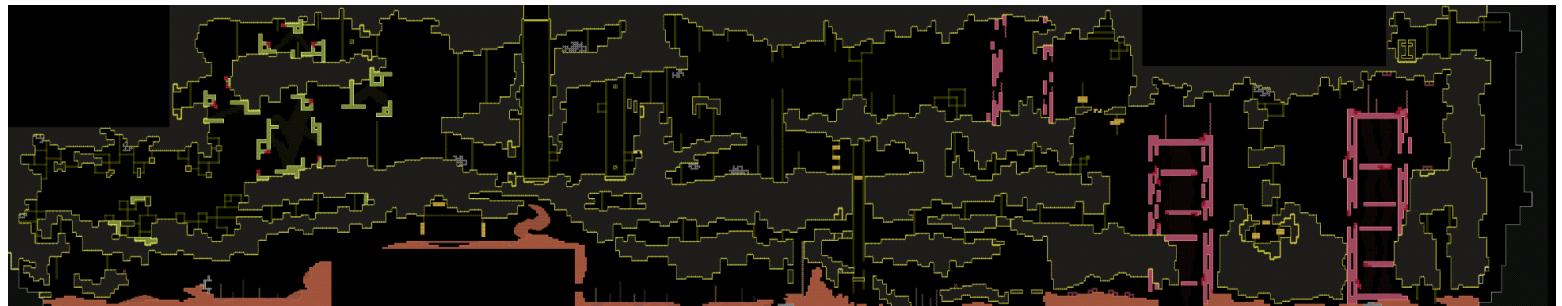
“Cogs”



Three are found in Some Math. Enable by touching. Activating all three unlocks the Post-Ending sequence. Activating Cog 1 without also activating the other two will trap You in the final dream sequence at the end of Some Math.

Walkthrough

– Area 1: Lemon Mush –



–Zones of Interest–

- [P] at (7,4): Start Point
- [X] at (13,6): Map Exit (one-way)
- [T] at (4,3) and (17,4): Two-way teleport
- [S] at (8,2), (13,4), and (18,2): Trinkets
- [D] at (18,4): Dream sequence
- [U] at (9,4) and (8,5): Eye-Preventer upgrade and teleport
- [G] at (3,3): Secret ending gate (requires 15 trinkets)
- [!] at (15,6): **Softlock trap**

Yellow arrows represent **one-way paths**

—

The main unique gimmick of this area is the *Vibrating Flower*, which instantly quits to menu when you touch it. These are very annoying, but luckily they're fairly easy to avoid and you won't lose much progress if you save regularly. They can be first found going straight up from the starting position. To the right from there is **Trinket 1**. Note that you'll need to press R to get out of the trinket area without touching the flowers.

Lemon Mush is one long open-ended loop with two-way teleporters on either side. There are one-way gates preventing travel to the left, though, so it's better to go right if you want to explore. The first one-way gate is directly to the right of the start point and utilizes a *Button* which activates enemies.

One room to the right and two rooms down from the first one-way gate you'll see a V-shaped teleporter; this will take you to an enclosed area with the **Eye-Preventer** upgrade. This unlocks a small mini-area on the leftmost end of the map, but isn't necessary for plot progression or trinkets.

The right side of the map holds three partially-destroyed buildings. The first of the three is pretty easy; directly below it is a tunnel with **Trinket 2**, which can be accessed from the right. You'll also see the *Joints Eater* in this area. There are actually two types of Joints Eater, though they look the same. One type stops vertical movement, letting you pass through without falling, so it can be used like a rope or a vine. The other type stops horizontal movement, so you get stuck if you fall into it.

The second of the three buildings is highly dangerous. The upper checkpoint is a trick - there's nothing up there, and you need to manage some tricky jumps to get out once you're in there. The checkpoint on the bottom, though, is worse: a **softlock trap**. If you die in another room while this checkpoint is active, you'll get stuck in the platform, unable to move. If you save there and reload, you **will need to start the level from the beginning**. It's better to go above this building, not through it.

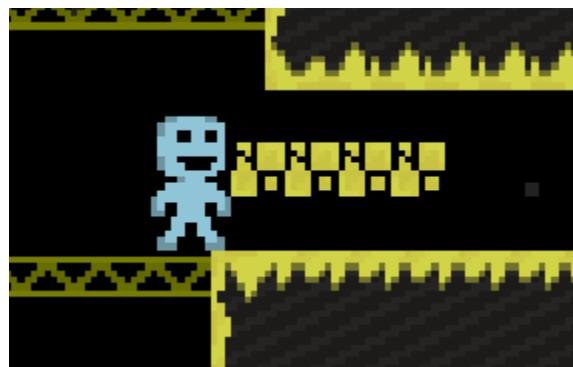
Between buildings two and three is a demonstration of the *Panels* mechanic. The third building holds one of the two-way teleporters; next to it is a slab of rock which activates a **Dream Sequence**. Below that slab is a path out to the ocean of bone plasma surrounding the edges of the map, along which is a tunnel to **Trinket 3**.

To get to the next area, look for a tunnel below Trinket 2 (this can be accessed from either direction). Follow it as far right as you can, then down, then left to reach the exit to Clay Pudin. There's a tricky room with three enemies and a button gating the exit; this is much easier if you try to activate the button by edge-flipping, rather than trying to fall all the way in and back out. Also note that this path is one-way; **once you leave, you cannot return to Lemon Mush**.

On the left end of Lemon Mush is an optional, hidden area. It initially appears inaccessible, since the only clear path is one-way in the wrong direction. It can only be entered by fiddling with the moving platforms on the far end of the two-way teleporter room. If you keep flipping downward against the platforms, you can eventually clip

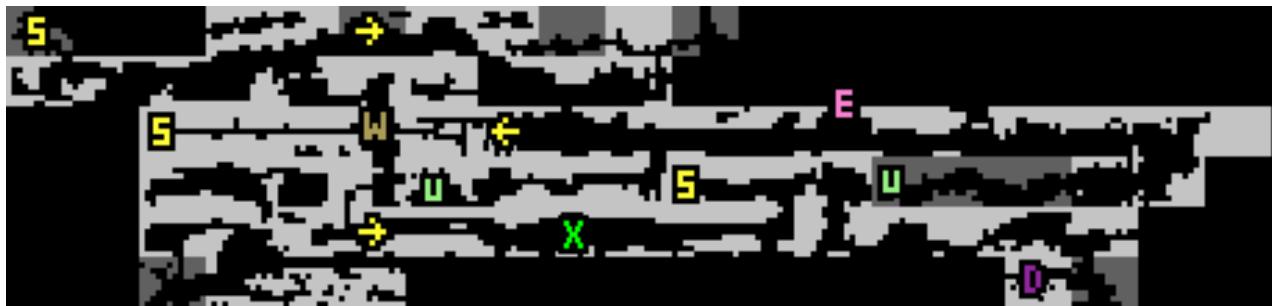
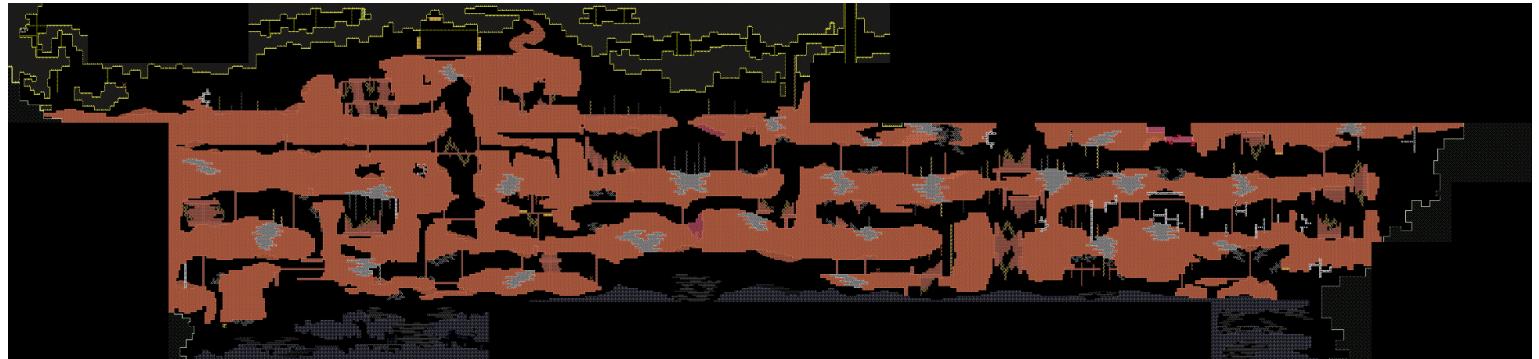
inside, which will push you out on the other end. There are a few objects of interest in this area:

- A terminal which says a gate will only open when “it’s clean”. This gate would open if accessed with all 15 trinkets, but since you can’t return to Lemon Mash after leaving, it remains inert for now.
- A glimpse at **Trinket 4**, though it can’t be collected until Clay Pudin.
- A small tunnel which is normally blocked by a special “NO” platform:



This platform won’t appear if you have the Eye-Preventer. There is something interesting in the tunnel.

– Area 2: Clay Pudin –



–Zones of Interest–

- [E] at (13,7): Entrance Point
- [X] at (9,9): Map Exit (one-way teleport)
- [W] at (6,7): Wrapping room
- [S] at (1,5), (3,7) and (11,8): Trinkets
- [D] at (16,10): Dream sequence
- [U] at (14,8) and (7,8): Shiny Stone upgrade

Yellow arrows represent **one-way paths**

Clay Pudin is a relatively straightforward area. Some of the movement is fairly precise, but there are plenty of checkpoints around and no softlocks. The nastiest challenges here are a few two-tile gaps, including one which is mandatory. See Appendix A on how to cross these consistently.

From the initial branching crossroads, you can head left to progress, or head right if you want an optional upgrade. This upgrade opens some interesting places later, so it is worth going for. The first two rooms to the right are straightforward. But the third has a hidden button: there's a set of four stacked disappearing platforms with enemies in

them, and the button is hidden between the upper two. Activating it will spawn a platform which pushes the enemies out of the way, allowing progress.

The next set of rooms involves the Moonshaped teleporter. Like Bone Ocean, the hitbox for these is one tile bigger than the object itself. Most of them will teleport you to the nearest Moonshaped receiver. However, a ways along this side path, you'll encounter a trick Moonshaped which looks like this:



Unlike the others, this one will teleport you directly beneath it - so it's not a real obstacle. The next room has a two-tile gap (womp), and the room after that has a Checkpoint Activator; press R after touching it to enter an enclosed area. Inside is the first half of the **Shiny Stone**.

Now heading from the entrance are two easy rooms, then a path down which is blocked by enemies. The button to move them out of the way is in plain sight this time. Head down again for a path with the other half of the **Shiny Stone** upgrade at the end. I think this is intended to be a Prize-for-the-Reckless type checkpoint avoidance puzzle, where the only way to leave after collecting the upgrade is to die without hitting a checkpoint. However, you can trivially bypass the enemies on the way back up by hugging the right wall, so there's no risk of softlock and you don't need to avoid the checkpoints.

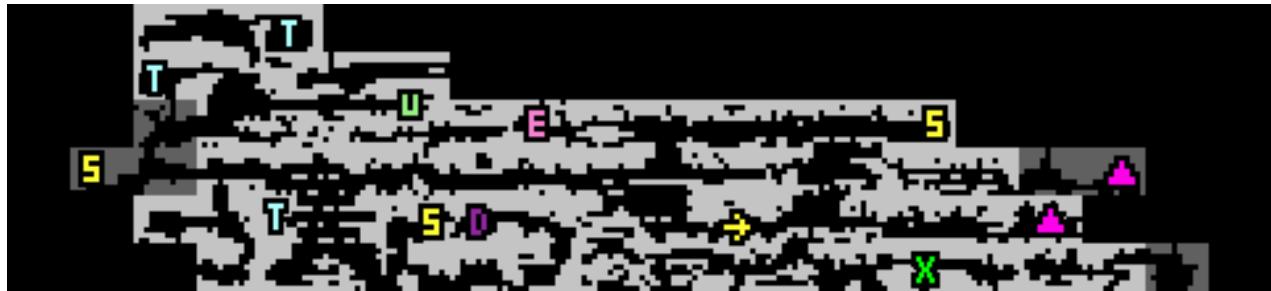
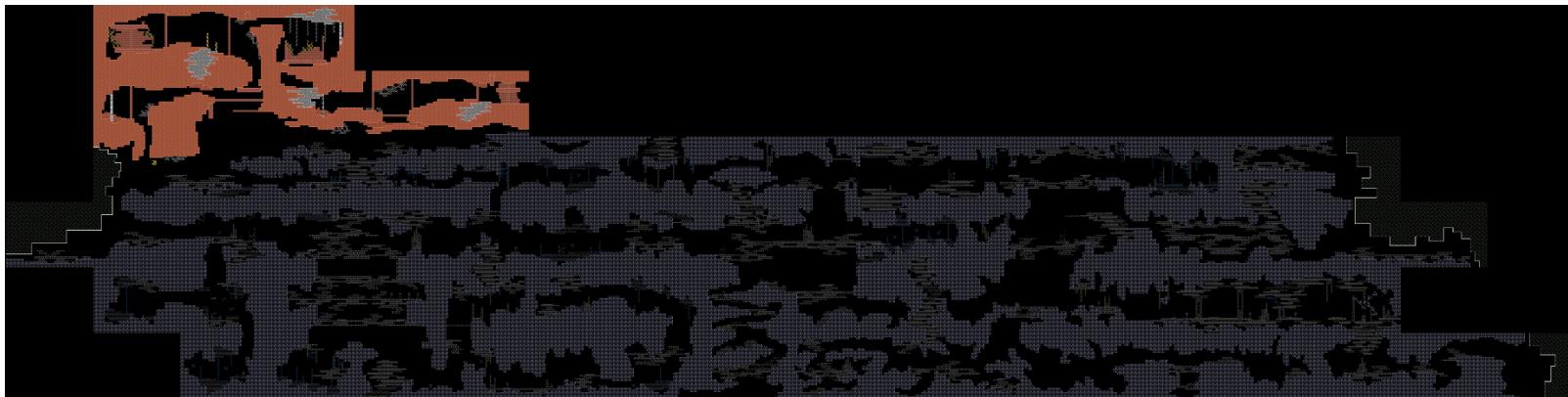
Heading left and then up will take you to a sub-area of Lemon Mash; there are a couple interesting dialogues here, and a room with panels which can only be crossed from the other side. Keep going left instead to find another checkpoint activator, followed by a passage which looks like it should be too small to pass. Luckily, You is capable of many things.

After this is the **Wrapping Room**. Walking out of this room in any direction has a 50% chance to bring you back in the other side. The timing on this is set up using goto room, so if you're stuck in an infinite fall, just pause on any ledge for a moment and sometimes it'll break the loop. There are four paths from here:

- Heading up takes you back into Lemon Mash; left from here is **Trinket 4**, and to the right is the one-way panel room which you can cross to return to where you were
- Heading left takes you to **Trinket 5** in a small tunnel
- Heading down-left takes you to a Moonshaped; it teleports you back to the receiver in the Lemon Mash mini-area
- Heading down-right takes you to Ash Cookie

The last few rooms on the path to Ash Cookie are especially precise, but with no special gimmicks. Once you reach a room full of gray bricks, head to the sparkle in the bottom-right corner and you can teleport to Ash Cookie. This is another one-way exit, but you'll be able to return to Clay Pudin later *IF* you collected both halves of the Shiny Stone. Ignore the exit and head right, up, and then left for **Trinket 6** - the last flip to grab the trinket is super finicky. Keep heading to the right after collecting the trinket and the path will lead you to another **Dream Sequence**.

– Area 3: Ash Cookie –



[E] at (9,10): Entrance Point

[X] at (15,13): Map Exit

[T] at (3,9), (5,8): Return teleporters (one-way)

[S] at (15,10), (2,11) and (7,12): Trinkets

[D] at (8,12): Dream sequence

[U] at (7,10): Curved Key upgrade

[Δ] at (17,12), (18,11): Temple and Mysterious Triangle

Yellow arrows represent **one-way paths**

Ash Cookie is perhaps the most confusing area. The dark gray color scheme makes it hard to tell what's solid ground and what's just backing, and there are hidden disappearing platforms indistinguishable from the floor. Worse, the Shell Spines here will turn You invisible; the only way to cure this is to die. All this on top of an especially labyrinthine layout peppered with dead ends.

Luckily, most of it is skippable. The direct path from entrance to exit is a little hard to find, but you can effectively ignore the entire left side of the area once you know it - see

Appendix B if you want the quick way through. This guide will assume you want to be thorough and get the trinkets/upgrades, though.

Directly right from the start is a little trap: You will be surprised by the shells, pausing you right in the path of an enemy! You need to mash through the dialogue before it reaches you. The Resist Tokens, later in the area, work similarly. From here, you can head down to progress, or keep going to the right to find a Shell Spine tunnel. At the end of this tunnel is a dead end with three vases. This room contains **Trinket 7**, but it will **only appear if you are invisible**. You don't have to be invisible for the whole challenge; it's easiest to just touch the rightmost Shell Spine and avoid the others.

Below this is a room with a navigational sign (dangerous down, left people, right culture, no up). To the right is a demonstration of the Resist Token, and to the left is a very, very long tunnel with several points splitting off above and below. From right to left:

- The Shell Spines on the first bridge are avoidable the first time through, but not on the way back. Head beneath the bridge and to the right here and you'll find a one-way teleporter, leading to the area exit.
- Keep heading left to find a checkpoint. Above this room are two dead ends.
- The Shell Spines on the second bridge are skippable, but it's tricky - one of the walls is actually a disappearing platform, which you can utilize to skip the Spines. You have to turn invisible if you want to go down, though. The area below this bridge has to be navigated by feel; you can use the "Press ENTER to activate terminal" text in one room to help locate yourself, but everywhere else you just have to guess. One trick is, if you know roughly where you are, and there's a straight shot to a safe wall in a given direction, you can keep running for a while and assume you've pushed up against it.

Head right from the checkpoint and then up for **Trinket 8**. There's also an unavoidable Shell Spine here, but it's not too hard to navigate this room by feel since there's only one hazard. Continuing to the right instead will take you to the third **Dream Sequence**, but the passage to get there is *very* hard - one of the hardest sections in the entire level. What's worse, the game auto-checkpoints you after the dream sequence, and the way back is *even worse*. I have dedicated Appendix C to this terrible sub-area.

You can't go back to the bridge the same way you got in here, but there's an invisible teleporter in a conspicuous-looking side tunnel directly below it. It's much easier to reach the teleporter when you're not invisible.

- Beyond the second bridge is a tunnel downward with another set of dead ends. Ignore these and keep heading left for another checkpoint. To the left of this

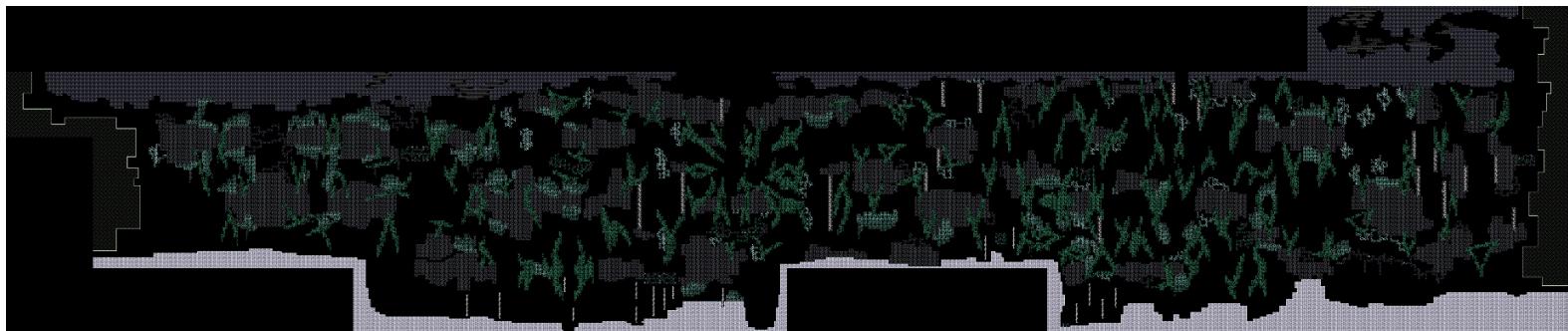
checkpoint is **Trinket 9**, past a two-tile gap. Check Appendix A if you don't remember how to deal with these. Past this point, you hit bone ocean.

- Head up from the checkpoint instead for a Clay Pudin mini-area. The button here will only work if you have the Shiny Stone upgrade from earlier. The obvious tunnel leads you to a "strange ball", but this is a red herring - the actual upgrade here is the **Curved Key**, which is hidden in a very narrow crevice to the far right of this mini-area. You'll also find a couple Moonshaped around here which will take you all the way back to the Lemon Mush part of Clay Pudin, if you want to backtrack for some reason.

Once you've done all that, return to the very first bridge. Fall through the Shell Spine into the lower area, then use the teleporter on the right. This is one-way, but you can return to the entrance by taking this path from the checkpoint: up, up, right, down, use the sparkle to teleport, then head right. There is a mysterious triangle which plays unique music when you get near it, which will teleport you to the other side of Ash Cookie. There's another tunnel directly beneath this one, with an interesting temple at the end.

Head down from the checkpoint; the left side of this tunnel is a dead end, so head right. The button here will put you "inside the smile" if you get close to it, trapping you until you press R. Directly to the right here and then down is the exit to Salad. This one is two-way, so you can return to Ash Cookie later if you missed anything.

– Area 4: Salad –



–Zones of Interest–

- [E] at (15,14): Entrance Point
- [X] at (8,17): Map Exit
- [V] at (18,16), (17,13), (12,16), (9,14), (6,16), and (3,14): Crewmates
- [S] at (19,16), (9,14) and (5,16): Trinkets
- [T] at (18,13): Return teleporter (one-way)
- [D] at (16,16): Dream sequence
- [U] at (14,17): Crystal Shield upgrade
- [M] at (6,14): Music Station
- [!] at (8,14): **Softlock trap**

Green arrows represent **Curved Key gates**

Unlike previous areas, the level of precision demanded in Salad is not very high. It instead makes navigation difficult with its incredibly dense and tangled layout, full of dead ends and false pathways. It's sometimes hard to tell what's a wall and what's backing, and disappearing platforms are again indistinguishable from backing tiles. The layout is extremely vertical and single challenges often require flipping up and down between rooms several times in sequence. Even with a map on hand, each room has so many entrances and exits that it's almost impossible to actually *describe* the layout of Salad. I'll do my best to map the way to points of interest here anyway.

The most interesting thing about Salad are the crewmates, or “aliens”. They are scattered around the area and “collect” on touch (this also stops the music until you leave or reload the level). Normally collecting (killing?) all six would end the level, but one alien - Vermilion - is impossible to reach through normal means. As a result, there is no benefit to collecting them save completionism. I’ve included their locations anyway. There are a number of other hazards around; to read their descriptions, see the Glossary.

You can access this area’s Dream Sequence almost immediately if you head right and then down the first available opening. To the left of the dream sequence is a rather nasty challenge with Freeze Blocks; if you touch one, you need to press R and try again. In the junk pile in the bottom-left corner of this room is the **Crystal Shield** upgrade. To the right of the Dream Sequence area the path splits; above is a long vertical shaft with Metal Nets which takes you to Violet, and below is a wider pit of nets which leads to **Trinket 10**. The trinket challenge looks impossible at first, but there are two hidden disappearing platforms above the pit of nets, providing a space to land on.

There’s another set of Metal Nets to the right of the Violet path; this one is between two rooms, and you need to keep switching back and forth between them to reset the positions of an enemy wall. Beyond this, there’s a set of Salad Blocks right next to the bone ocean, which seems to block all progress. The only way to get past is with the Curved Key from Ash Cookie; it will temporarily block the spawn script with the word “Curve”, giving you enough time to fall past. Beyond the Curve gate is a teleporter which takes you back to Ash Cookie, and Vermilion - who, as mentioned, cannot be collected by any means - is in the room beyond that. There’s nothing else here, so you might as well take the teleporter.

Heading left from the entrance instead, the path is effectively linear until you reach a cutscene (“What the hell of this place?”). Past the cutscene the map seems to split into three - one leftward exit for each room. The bottom exit is blocked by Freeze Blocks, but the other two are both open. These exits actually form a *loop*: both paths lead to the same place, and they can be crossed in either direction. If you’re looking for all the aliens you’ll need to run the whole loop at least once, but the lower path is easier to start with, so I recommend starting from the bottom-right corner.

The **lower path**, starting from the room with the cutscene: Left, down, left, left, down the gravity net, then - **Viridian** is to the right - left again for a rather frustrating Salad Blocks challenge, then left. The room below the one you’re in now has more Salad Blocks; these are actually another Curve gate, but having the key to pass by them doesn’t lead

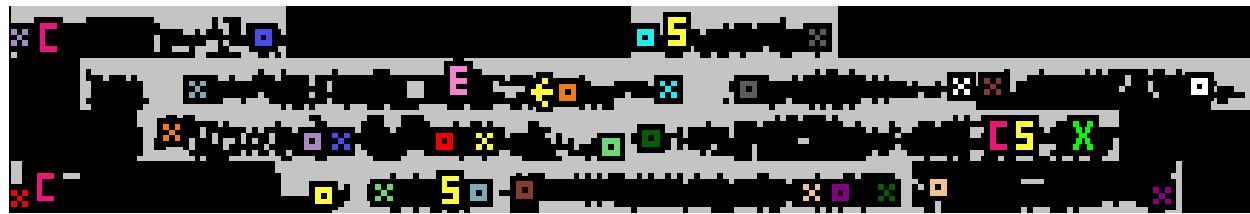
anywhere interesting. Just head left again for a checkpoint. The exit to Some Math is a straight shot down from here.

The **upper path**, starting from the room with the cutscene: Head four rooms straight left to a room with a checkpoint, then head left again to find **Verdigris**. Next to Verdigris is **Trinket 11**, which seems unreachable. There's a bit of a puzzle here, so I've put the solution in Appendix D if you can't figure it out. Go back to the checkpoint and head down through the gravity net, then left three more times (every side path around here is a dead end). Head down and to the right to close the loop; this is where the upper path intersects with the lower.

The required portion of Salad is over, but there are more interesting things if you keep exploring. Continue left from the area exit and you'll see two things: **Victoria** and a terminal. But Victoria is blocked by a dense thicket of enemies and the terminal is behind unavoidable Salad Blocks. This is yet another case where you need the Curved Key - it will let you pass the Salad Blocks and reach the terminal. It will take you to the **VibraTune Station**, where you can listen to any of the area themes to this point. To reach Victoria, flip back down from the terminal room but *don't* press Action immediately. If the "Activate." script is still running when you enter Victoria's room, it will override the enemy-spawning script, and you can reach Victoria safely!

After all that, the leftmost edge of Salad is very sparse. In this area you can find **Trinket 12** hidden in a gravity net. Above it and to the left, you'll see **Vitellary** out in the open, right at the edge where the map breaks into bone ocean. There's nothing else out there but another mysterious terminal, so the only thing to do is backtrack to the area exit.

– Area 5: Some Math –



–Zones of Interest–

[E] at (8,12): Entrance Point

[X] at (17,19): To Level End

[S] at (8,20), (11,17) and (16,19): Trinkets

[C] at (2,20), (2,17) and (16,19): Cogs

Yellow arrows represent **one-way paths**

Teleport entrance points are marked with an **x**

Teleport exit points are marked with an **o**

[Teleports are color-coded; the x-entrance corresponds on the map to the o-exit of the same color. There are 14 teleports in total. Teleport colors, in order: Playercolor, green, yellow, red, blue, pink, orange, bright cyan, dark gray, white, brown, tan, dark pink, dark green. Sorry if this is confusing, I ran out of good colors...]

Some Math is the last, and by far the most difficult, area in Antithesis. Unlike the others, it is strictly linear, traversed almost entirely via one-way teleporters. Trinkets are directly on the required path, and there are no upgrades or dream sequences. The level is a series of loud, noisy, confusing challenges, with invisible spikes and platforms galore, delay tiles, lag, and other gimmicks built to make you tear your hair out.

The only “side paths” in Some Math are a few “lake” challenges, accessible via teleporter. In each of these, flipping out of the linear path will cause You to “fall off the map”; you can continue moving between rooms, but won’t be able to interact with

anything, so you'll need to press R if this happens. At the end of some lakes is a cog, which activates on touch. Collecting all three cogs unlocks the Post-Ending, but note that **collecting Cog 1 without Cogs 2 AND 3 will softlock you at the last dream!**

The path appears to split at the entrance. You can proceed beyond the 3-tile-high gap to the right with a frame-perfect flip, but this will skip a trinket and two cogs (see below). It's better to head left instead for the introduction to flip tokens - you need to hit them in midair to flip back down, effectively "jumping". You'll notice that some of the spikes here are invisible - they're pure white, the same color as the background. You'll be able to see them in a bit. The first teleporter is beyond here, leading to a small sub-cave with **Trinket 13**.

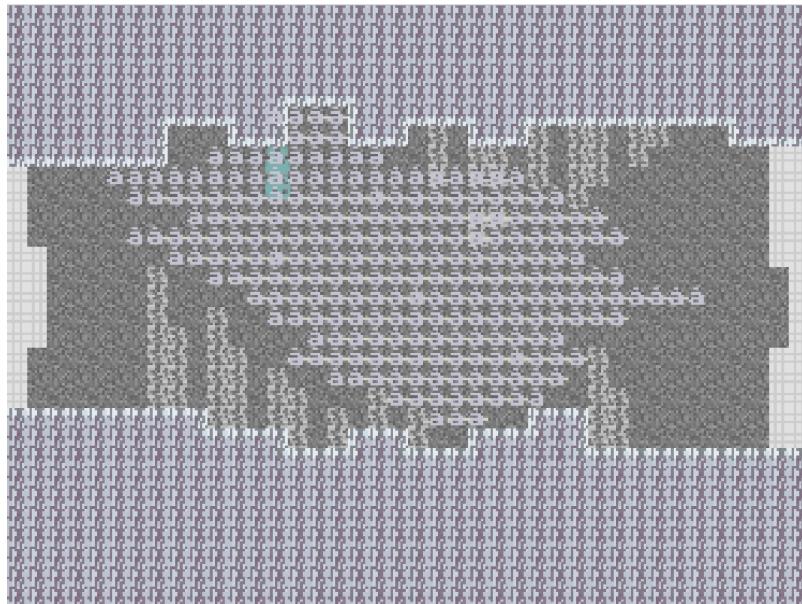
The next area brings in dissonant music and a "brain damage" background. The game will lag in all rooms with this gray, staticky background, making traversal much more annoying. The lag is worse if you died to Bone Ocean at least twice, but its effects can be ameliorated with the Crystal Shield upgrade. (It also seems not to work on version 2.4). This area also introduces delay tiles and tokens which swap the background color, changing which spikes and platforms are currently visible.

You'll see three 'side' teleporters in the tunnel with "brain damage". All of these lead to lakes; the first to **Cog 1** and the others to **Cog 2**. The first lake has a *really* cruel trick: in the third room, where enemies fall from the sky, the very last enemy will stop at the ground and not move back up again. Since there's no solid ground above you, and there's not enough time to run past it, what can you do? The solution is to take a leap of faith and flip straight into the next room: if you do this right, you'll land on a small platform at that room's entrance, staying within map bounds. There's no way to know this is there without falling out of the map at least once. Luckily, the second lake is much easier: just note that the platform in the first room doesn't come back, so the challenge is on a timer. From there, the rest is a straight shot.

After the cog lakes, the main tunnel moves into another brain-damage room. The first delay tile here needs to be activated with an edge-flip, otherwise you'll fall into spikes and die during the delay. The next room's teleporter takes you back to the rightward path from the entrance; you can backtrack here if either of the two cogs were missed. If you've got both, head right for another sub-cave with **Trinket 14**. This sub-cave is the level's **point of no return** - once you touch the next checkpoint, you cannot go back to previous areas!

The next few rooms are especially vicious, combining brain damage, metal nets, and freeze blocks. If you get stuck in a freeze block with a checkpoint in the same room, the

only way to get unstuck is to save and reload. The last room in this set is particularly nasty with the hidden spikes - note that the obvious “ground” above the teleporter has spikes, so you need a precise edge-flip to actually access it. From here is another lake, though it’s a simpler one.



The second room after the mandatory lake (pictured above) is, in my opinion, the hardest in the level. The metal net here is full of hidden delay tiles; you can just barely make them out if you look **VERY** closely. IME, the best way through here is *not* in a single sprint. Instead, starting from the position in the screenshot above, flip down and to the right, activating the lower-middle delay tile but **NOT** the one above it. Then, flip back up and to the left, activating the upper-middle delay tile. Clearing both of these will make it much easier to control your movements and reach a good position for the last flip.

The next two rooms are pitch-white: the floor and ceiling are covered with invisible spikes, but there are invisible platforms in a pattern like this: ... they’re evenly spaced, so it’s not too hard to follow the rhythm once you know where the first one is. The brain damage in the next room is especially severe (10x normal intensity), but the room itself is pretty easy. The V-shaped teleporter here takes you to another lake. This final lake is a little weird; you need to nudge between two moving platforms at the rooms’ edges, and if you don’t go fast you can get stuck in them and fall off the map. Completing the lake will take you back to where you were, and the next room has another teleporter.

This is the home stretch! There are only seven rooms left, and they're easier than what you've just been dealing with. The first three are normal spike challenges, and then the fourth is another case of delay tiles hidden in metal nets. This time, though, they're all in safe places. Once you hit the checkpoint activator here, you **need to save and reload** to get unstuck. The last three rooms use the color-switching gimmick again and aren't terribly difficult. The second of them contains both **Cog 3** and **Trinket 15**, right next to each other. In the third, you'll need to use the V-activator on the far end to break the disappearing platform, opening the way to the exit teleporter. Use it and you'll finally be done with Some Math!

– Ending –

(spoilers ahead)

After Disconnecting from Some Math, You returns to a dream sequence. There are three “endings” to Antithesis, though only one of them actually concludes the level:

- If you activated Cog 1 without activating both Cogs 2 and 3, checking the sparkle will reload the room you’re currently in. This will happen indefinitely and is a **permanent softlock**: since you necessarily saved at the end of Some Math to get here, it is impossible to go back and reach Cog 2, and you’ll need to restart Antithesis from the very beginning to reach the other endings.
- Otherwise, checking the sparkle will take you to another dream. This dream has two terminals and another sparkle; check the terminal on the right twice to end Antithesis. Note that you don’t get stars for completing the level.
- If you activated all three cogs, checking the sparkle in the second dream twice will take you to the Post-Ending dream. This sequence appears to be unfinished: check the sparkle here and you’ll be told to wait for “DLC”. This isn’t a softlock, though - you can just press R to get the normal ending.
 - If you *didn’t* activate all three cogs, checking this sparkle will pretend to loop you all the way back to Lemon Mash, but it’ll teleport you right back immediately after.

Note that this means, regardless of whether you activated the three cogs or not, it is currently **impossible to return to the secret gate in Lemon Mash with all 15 trinkets**. Trinket 15 is beyond the point of no return, and there’s no path to get back to Lemon Mash from Clay Pudin anyway (AFAIK). If you cheat your way there in the editor, opening the gate will teleport you to the same Post-Ending area as you’d find with the three cogs. It seems likely that no more can be done from here until the level is updated.

EXEGESIS

What is going on in this level? Between the broken English, abstract theming, frequent fourth-wall breaks, and inherent confusion of the structure, it's almost impossible to nail down the exact plot. The player character knows little more than we do. However, I think some things can be determined by the information provided.

A useful note on the theming: the level creator was provided three phrases at the start of the levelmaking contest. These phrases were "hot or cold", "three", and "archaeology". Each of these themes comes into play in the exegesis below: You (the protagonist) is an archaeologist, 'threeness' is relevant to the Societies of the Sandwich, and the hot/cold dichotomy is discussed in Dreams. These themes probably guided the contents of the level from the outset, and so are worth keeping in mind.

Societies of the Sandwich

The first three zones in the 'sandwich island' of Antithesis each represent a different society, but they're all dead. We have some notes from the people of Lemon Mash, and representative objects in Ash Cookie and Clay Pudin, but nothing living remains in any of these zones.

These zones are built 'on top of' the ones below (metaphorically and literally), and take expeditions down there. We see, for example, that the Clay Pudin society 'steals' raw materials from Some Math for their Moonshaped teleporters. But this is their downfall, each time; for the lowest zone of the sandwich contains a corruption, a mind virus or "obsessive hysteria" that drives the societies into ruin. In Lemon Mash we learn that the spread begins from a "random whisper of a random colonizer": that "Number [is] more important than any other of yours". Those who hear about the corruption become corrupted in turn, and they too become obsessed with the absolute importance of Number. In the extreme case, it literally melts the bodies of those infected. As a result, the places appear spookily abandoned, like ghost towns – the only organic remains found in Lemon Mash are a single, half-melted severed head.

We see more evidence of the numerical hysteria in how the societies arrange their structures. You notice the "strange order of three" that sets of objects are put together in. This is most prevalent in Ash Cookie: we find rooms containing a set of three statues, three pots, three bridges, etc. There is a temple arranged in a careful 3x3x3 ("cubic three") pattern, seemingly representing no shape in particular. There are some instances of this in other areas, such as the set of three buildings in Lemon Mash. We

even see it in the ‘natural’ structures of Salad, like the “points of three” in the Y-shaped enemies.

Salad, directly above the lowest zone, is a bit of an outlier. It seems old enough that most of the structures in it are natural, not constructed. More surprisingly, there are still living beings in it; ‘aliens’ who don’t speak or move. We also find ancient written records, a VibraTune station, and some small houses in the thicket. It’s possible that, in proximity to the underlying corruption, the aliens have learned to survive by remaining idle and refusing to speak.

Math and Insanity

But what is the corruption? The central driving force behind the world of Antithesis, and the reason it is a ‘cursed land’, emerges from the primordial quartz caverns of Some Math. This zone contains an active, violent, noisy force, that drives people to obsession and madness, a force capable of “tearing logic in history or reality” through sheer associative power.

The force itself is “cold”; the lakes in Some Math are frozen, and several sub-areas are permeated with a glitchy “low temperature” field that slows the game down. As You falls deeper into its depths, they succumb more and more to this force, until at the very end, right before disconnecting, the game literally ‘freezes’. It’s interesting that this ‘hot’ mental activity is represented by a force of ‘coldness’.

I believe this force is *literally* math: the process of putting numbers together, arranging them, studying and forming associations with them. It is the central cause of the solitude, destruction, and social decay in the surrounding societies. The power of it – and the reason You, too, is taken in at the end – is the temptation of the abstract world, the ‘state of flow’ that drives one to focus on the numerical system at expense of all else. The patterns are too beautiful, too pure, so they destroy the minds of any who get too close. It spreads so easily because it is not a material object, but a set of ideas, so just talking about it is enough to spread it.

In a way, this ending is almost bittersweet. Even though it is a destructive, cursed force, it is this way *because* it is so much more captivating than the surrounding desolation. You says it is “finally an noise, that my mind resonated with”.

Who is You?

I have been referring to the player character as ‘You’ because of a scene in *Salad*, where the player discovers an alien who looks identical to them. They declare their own name to be ‘You’ and the alien’s name to be ‘It’.

You appears to be a descendant of the inhabitants of *Ash Cookie*. We know this for two reasons. One, the statues which show a similar form to You’s, and two, that these forms were experimenting with gravity. You calls them “[the] descendants of those who flips”. Since the aliens in *Salad* also take the same form, it’s likely that all four societies share a common ancestry with You.

Thus there’s a certain repetitive, or looping, flavor to the story of the sandwich. Each society in turn finds it, abandoned and desolate, and descends to the bottom to find out why. Each then becomes corrupted, is consumed, and adds another layer for the next. If You is different, it is only because their exploration is entirely solitary – they bring no materials or friends, and leave no trace of having been there.

This same theme of looping is hinted at in the ending. The option to start over from the beginning is provided, though the dream-voice refuses to let you take it. And there’s a ‘gate’ terminal in *Lemon Mush* that only opens with all 15 trinkets (impossible in the current release), suggesting there were plans to return to the start from the end. One more hint at this theme is right in the intro cutscene, when You wakes up and says, relieved, that the dream was a “Welcoming end to the hell ride.” This happens *before* anything else in the level, yet what is *Antithesis*, if not a hell ride?

Dreams

There is another entity in *Antithesis*: a mysterious voice who appears in You’s dreams. It’s set up in contrast to the math-virus, which is destructive and paternal (it “crave[s] children and fatherhood”). We establish right at the beginning, by contrast, that the dreams hold a “form of what in motherhood”. A sign in *Ash Cookie* mentions two contrasting forces: a “cold [that] never let you know” and a “hot [that] never let you stay”. We know the math-force is ‘cold’, so it’s likely that the dream-state, which you can’t linger in for very long at a time, is the opposing ‘hot’ force (red = hot).

By the same backwards logic that makes the noisy and mentally active math-force ‘cold’, it should be no surprise that the ‘hot’ voice in You’s dreams is steady and passive. In fact, it’s entirely apathetic: it calls You a ‘parasite’, insists their questions are ‘useless’, and that everything You is doing is a waste of time. “Whatever of your abilities...

Then no interesting result.” It resists goals, interpretations, and plans. It’s disgusted by attempts to make existence ‘fulfilling’. Like an absent or uncaring mother, it gives nothing to those who visit.

Despite its rude soliloquizing, this voice may be the only reason You is able to resist the toxin coming from Some Math for so long. If the virus is an obsessive hysteria, apathy is its cure; You’s intermittent dreams are a kind of vaccine against falling too deeply under its spell. The dream voice says that “the sea cannot digest me fully”, it cannot be absorbed in the frozen lakes under the quartz city. The only way to avoid being melted by insanity is just to not care too much about the patterns filling your head.

More speculatively, it’s interesting that the VibraTune station in Salad uses the same tileset as You’s dreams. VibraTune, and by extension the level music, might be emerging from this same dream space, with listening to it providing You further protection against delirium. If so, proximity to the station could also be how the aliens in Salad survived for so long. Note that the noisy, chaotic music in Some Math is *not* accessible from the VibraTune station, and so You would be unprotected by it.

Overarching Themes and Ideas

The loudest theme in Antithesis is isolation. You exists in solitude, as does the dream-voice, as do the aliens. The corruption spreads via mental contact, so the only kind of survival that is possible in this world is through distance from others. When You touches the aliens, they use a “toxin pack” to instantly “recycle” them – the name of the script for this is “murder”. Except for the post-ending, there is never any *dialogue* between anyone: only monologues from You, the dream-voice, and recordings from terminals. The music is quiet and lonely. The land is, mostly, dead.

Another common idea is purposelessness. As the player is encouraged in the intro: “Have no goal. Avoid cages.” The dream-voice repeatedly emphasizes that there’s nothing to be done, and that trying to make existence “fulfilling” is disgusting; but You, rather than repudiating it, uses that as a motivating force. Many of the dead “give up their lives for mentality”; the corruption gives minds purpose by *infecting* them, as though that purpose itself is a kind of sickness. Only by *not* believing in anything, *not* having any purpose, is You able to survive.

Similar to the theme of purposelessness is one of non-interpretation. The process of trying to make sense of things is taken as a destructive one; the dream-voice says it “leaves [an] unrepairable mark”. After all, you can’t have a goal if you’re too confused to figure out what’s going on. Language itself, the process of forming words and

expressing them out loud, is inherently interpretive, but it's also a vector for the obsessive hysteria to spread. Because of this, even the strange, hard-to-parse English in the level is chosen with this in mind. You says: "Forever to speak in broken manner[. . .]my will to never reveal the half spoken here". All this makes the idea of exegeting the level a little bit awkward in retrospect... I hope Wequer will forgive me.

One subject to which these themes apply is the development of the level itself. Antithesis is consistently metafictional, with a number of fourth-wall breaks. One terminal in Lemon Mash can be read both in-universe as an architect venting about "building on command", and out-of-universe as the dev venting about the constraints of the levelmaking contest. A competition implies a purpose (winning the contest) and a surrounding culture (the others being competed with). To attain this purpose and fit into the culture, one needs to be easy to understand, and fit the conventional standards. This is entirely rejected by the level.

The solitude, purposelessness, difficulty of interpretation, and obsession with numerical structure form a different philosophy of creative design. It is, instead, focused purely on the immediate exploration of materials and ideas at hand, without planning for how those materials to cohere. If You finds a resonant 'noise' in the pattern of numbers in Some Math, so does the designer resonate with the pattern of numbers in a computer that forms a video game level, even if that pattern is loud and seemingly dissonant. You might even call it the Antithesis of conventional design (*loud booring, someone throws a tomato*)

Open Questions

There are still some aspects of Antithesis that seem open to further analysis.

The first are the terminals in Salad. In Lemon Mash, they're pretty clearly written from the perspective of the ones constructing buildings and exploring the sandwich. But Salad is ancient enough that its original inhabitants, the aliens, don't speak any language. And the style of the text is really weird – it seems more like the dream-voice than the other texts in the previous areas. They could have been placed down by a different society, later, or they could be from *another* group that used to live in Salad. The contents are even harder to follow than is usual for Antithesis; I've got no idea what they're getting at.

The second is the strange and compulsive use of some words or concepts that never seem to attach themselves to anything. One is 'plate'. In waking moments this word seems to be used to mean 'platform', as in the level's moving or disappearing platforms.

But the dream-voice seems to mean something else by it: it mentions “dreaming about being a plate”, and later says that “the plate to send is incomplete”. What is it talking about? Dreaming about being a moving platform? Why?

Another is ‘cast iron sap’. You mentions this twice, and seems concerned by it, but I have no idea what it is and it doesn’t neatly correspond to anything in gameplay.

The last, of course, in the ending. This is probably just unfinished: to know what’s intended to happen after the freeze in Some Math, we’d need to wait for future DLC content. Still, it leaves an unresolved question hanging, for as long as this is the most updated version of the level: what happens next?

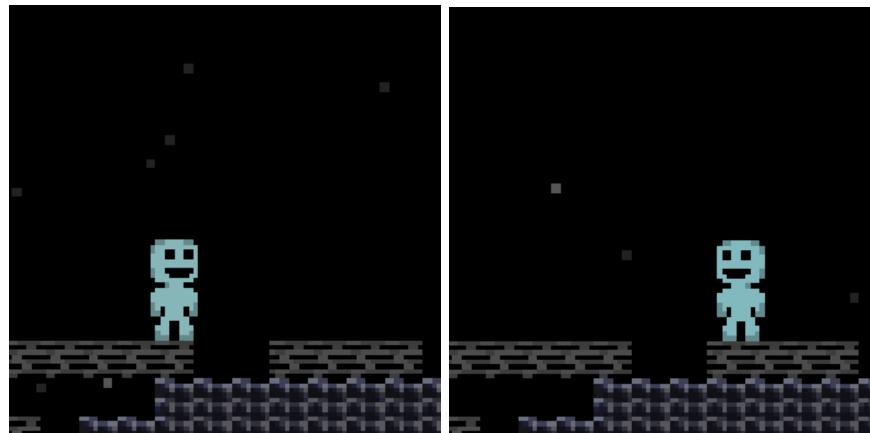
Appendix A: On two-tile gaps

(Credit to Elomavi for the explanation behind this section)

There are several two-tile gaps in Antithesis. One is mandatory, one gates half the Shiny Stone, and the last gates a trinket. These seem inconsistent at first; sometimes You will fall in, sometimes You won't. If you can line up your position correctly, these are very consistent. The trick is this:

- When moving to the **left**, stand exactly 3 pixels from the edge of the gap
- When moving to the **right**, stand exactly on the edge of the gap

Using the Ash Cookie gap as an example, these two positions will cross:



You can also cross from any position which is a multiple of 6 pixels away from one of these two. So, you can cross to the left from 9px away, 15px, 21px, etc; or to the right from 6px, 12px, 18px, etc. The two positions above are the easiest to line up, though. (This also means that if you run from a random position, your chance of success is 1 in 6.)

Appendix B: Shortest path through Ash Cookie

OK, so you (understandably) want to skip all the optional stuff and get out of Ash Cookie as soon as possible. The path looks like this:



In more detail: from the entrance, head right and down to the first checkpoint. At the bridge here, fall *through* the first Shell Spine into the area below. Below the bridge, move invisibly to the right until you reach a teleporter – just hold right and flip each time you think you've stopped moving. On the other side of the teleport, keep going right and try to fumble your way into the checkpoint, so you can press R and become visible again. There is a tunnel and a sign reading “Dangerous down. Avoid alien.” This tunnel is a straight shot to the area exit. This effectively avoids all the frustrating bits of Ash Cookie, though you won’t get any trinkets or the Curved Key.

Appendix C: Accessing Dream Sequence in Ash Cookie

To access the dream sequence in this area, you will first need to get through this terrible room:



The worst part is the bottom-left, where You begins. That 2x2 blue backing object directly above the bottom-left spikes is a Resist Square, which will temporarily stop movement when touched. The back-and-forth platform here will always push You either into the spikes, or out of the room entirely. The only “safe” ground is either **to the right** of the Resist Square while the platform is moving right, or **directly above** the Resist Square when the platform is moving left. In these positions, the platform will pass harmlessly through the player. However, you *will* need to switch to the other position after it passes, so there is no entirely safe space here.

From the entrance, run forward as fast as possible, spam ACTION to clear out the “Resist” text, then flip to the right immediately to get into position. Since there are spikes above you, the only way out of this little corner is to edge-flip from the “safe ground” directly above the Resist Square, to the small patch of earth on your right. **Only do this when the moving platform is to your left**, as otherwise, it will push you backwards into the spikes.

From here, you’ll need to flip onto the upper platform going back and forth across the spike pit. The zone to do this is only four tiles wide, but you have plenty of time to line

up your move. Then you need to move through this very narrow gap in the upper-right with two desynced platforms blocking it. Finding the right time to pass through is annoying, but there's no consequence for failure, since there are no spikes around. I find it easiest to flip up a bit to the left of the lower platform, and run towards it repeatedly until you fall through.

If you succeed, congrats! Now you have to do it again on the way back, only it's even worse this time. You need to flip back *into* the three-tile gap you originally entered from, but this isn't possible with You's natural momentum in such a limited space. You'll first need to activate the Resist Square again, disabling it. Then, the only way to pass through here is to flip from the lower-right 'safe space' as the platform is pushing you left - the extra leftward push from the platform will be just barely enough to get you to the other side. If you fail, of course, it'll push you into spikes instead, and need to push through the annoying upper-right passage all over again.

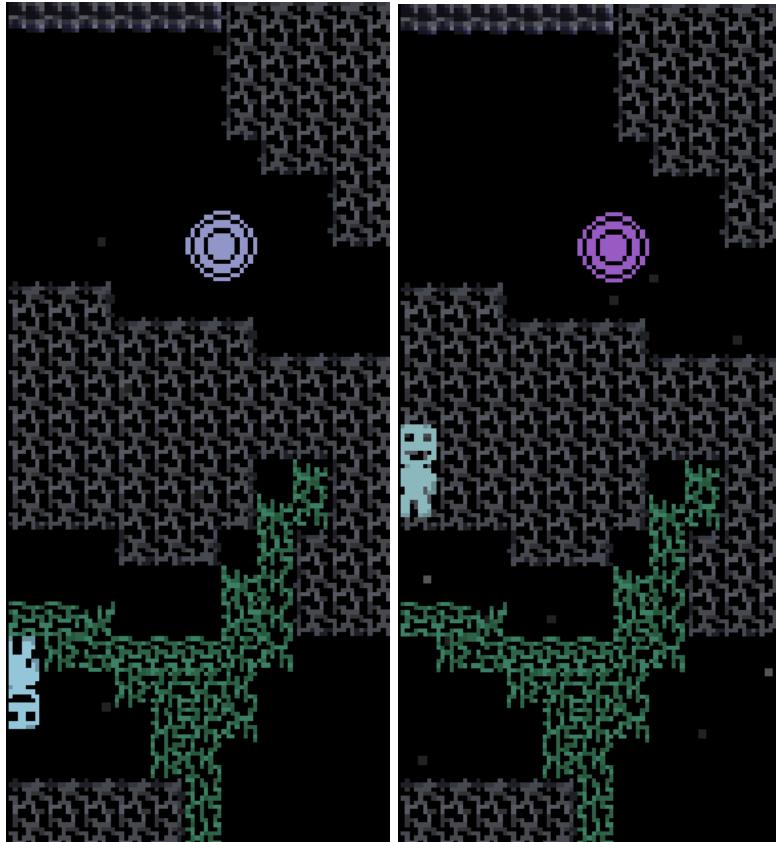
Appendix D: Solution to Trinket 11 puzzle

This trinket - to the right of Verdigris - can't be directly accessed. There's a path in the leftward room, but it's gummed up by crystals. The way through here makes use of a small wall-clipping bug.

Starting from the room to the left of the trinket, stand flipped on the small patch of grass on the end of the room. There are a few positions here that work, the position below is an example of one of them:



From here, run to the right, and flip **immediately** after transitioning to the room with the trinket. If you're in the right spot, You will briefly clip inside the small grass block one space away from the entrance to the room. Normally You would be pushed downward out of the block, but if you flip quickly enough, You will switch direction inside the wall, and be pushed upwards into the trinket chamber.



Note that the only way out of this chamber is to press R. Thus, the checkpoint in the room opposite the trinket is a **softlock trap**; if you activate it, you'll need to quit and reload to get out of the room. If you activate it and then save, your save file will no longer be able to make progress and you will need to start all over, so be careful!

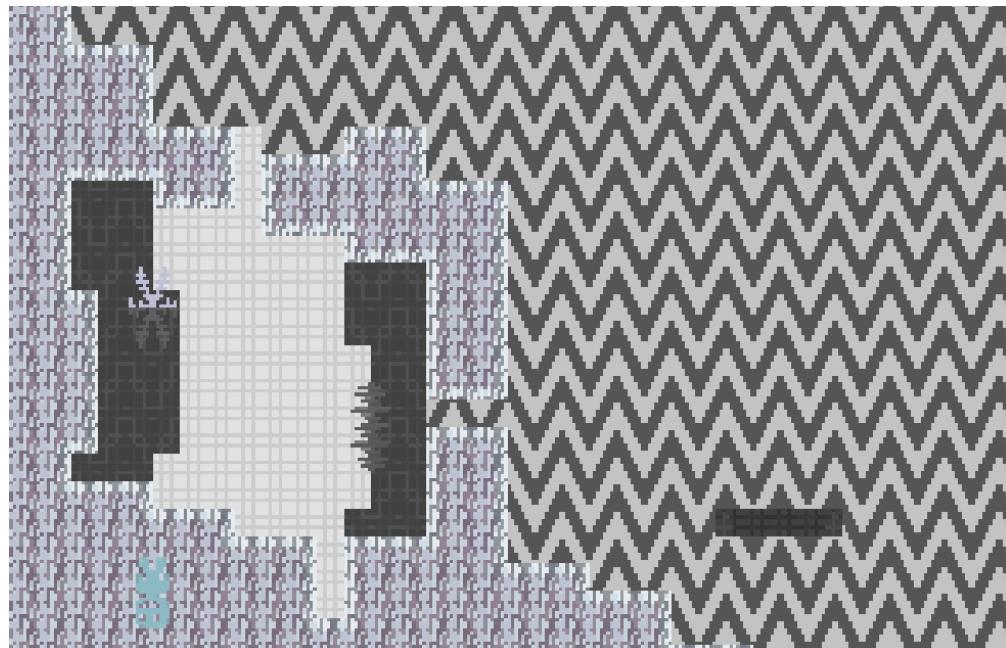
Appendix E: Why do the checkpoints in Some Math act weird?

(Credit to Ally for the explanation behind this section)

You might have noticed that, on dying in Some Math, You will sometimes respawn in unusual positions, sometimes above or below the active checkpoint, or even in a wall. This is intended behavior. It happens because parameter 1 on these checkpoints, which is usually set to 0 (for flipped) or 1 (for unflipped), is instead set to a number outside of normal bounds. As a result, the game doesn't know which Y position to respawn the player at, and instead uses whatever the previously-stored Y was. It also uses the previously-stored flip state, though the X position is updated normally.

By default, this will generally respawn You at Y=168, the value of the last checkpoint in Salad. However, by deliberately avoiding this checkpoint, it's possible to store an arbitrary Y value for the duration of the level. Since every checkpoint in Some Math has the same weird behavior, whatever position is stored will remain until the exit teleporter, which uses setcheckpoint. **Even saving and reloading will not reset the stored Y position.** This also means that, past the point of no return, it is **impossible** to update the stored Y position until the ending.

At its 'normal' value, this quirk doesn't affect gameplay much. The walls use either hidden wrapping or invisible warp tokens to keep the player in-bounds. The only problematic exception is at 15,20. The spawn location at Y=168 in this room looks like this:



Not only does You respawn inside a wall, the flipped position will push You down into the frozen lake. Luckily, it's not a softlock. Simply press R and flip as soon as You respawns, and You will instead be pushed in the opposite direction, back into the room with the checkpoint.

As far as I know, there aren't any useful exploits to be found by manipulating the stored Y position in this area. It's possible to clip out-of-bounds in a couple places by using the upper checkpoint in 10,14 (the room to the right of Verdigris) to set your stored Y to 80, but these all either softlock the player by clipping You into spikes, or they just push You back into previous areas. However, I have not tested this thoroughly, and more advanced tricks may be possible. For example, it's possible to set the stored Y to 0 using the checkpoint in 14,16; from here, a very talented speedrunner could theoretically skip several chunks of Some Math by pressing R at the right checkpoints. However, even if the player made it through all of Salad without touching a single other checkpoint, they'd then risk a number of softlocks by dying in the wrong spot later. I would not recommend attempting this.