Game Concept: Pale Pals

1. Summary

Pale Pals is a 2D action Metroidvania set in a fantasy world. Playing as a necromancer, you can revive dead enemies that support you in and out of combat. The game conveys dark themes like death and resurrection through cute visuals and lighthearted texts.

Combat, exploration, and companions are the three gameplay pillars of Pale Pals.

2. Gameplay

In order to traverse the level and gain new companions, the player has to fight enemies on a regular basis. The necromancer has a mid-range attack that can be used in three directions: left, right, and up. Further, the player can use the attack in-air to hit flying enemies.

The player slowly fills up a blood bar by damaging enemies. Killing enemies increases the blood resource by a significant amount. Once the blood resource reaches a certain threshold, the player may consume it to perform a special attack. However, these special attacks are **not** part of the current prototype.

The player sustains only a few attacks (3-5) before he dies.
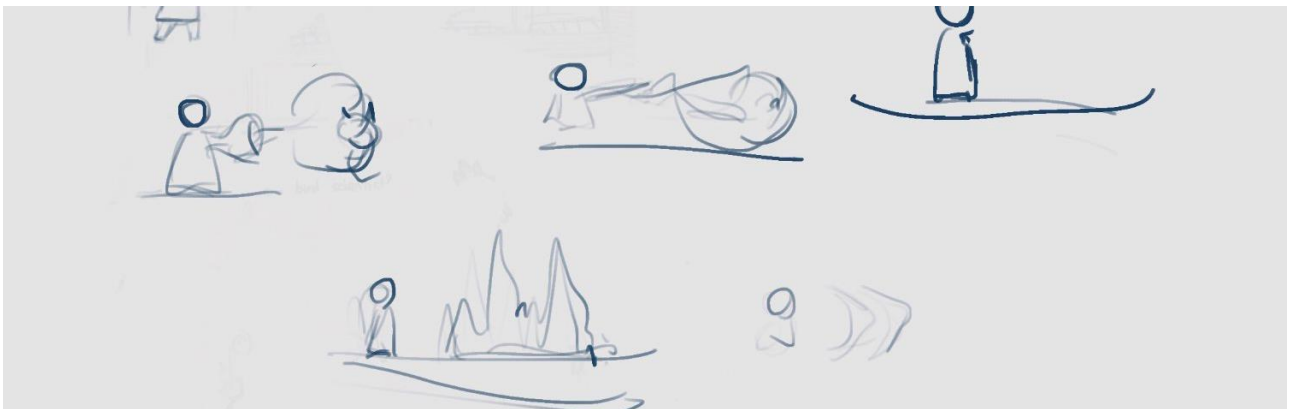
Enemies that have been killed leave behind a corpse. By approaching the corpse and pressing a button, the player can resurrect the enemy that now follows the players, acting as his companion. The companion possesses the same attacks it had as an enemy and automatically attacks creatures that are hostile to the player.

You can only have one companion at a time. If you summon a new companion, the old one dies and does **not** leave behind a corpse. The companion has its own health bar and may die from enemy attacks. In this case, the companion does **not** leave behind a corpse either. The player **cannot** damage his own companion.

Aside from assisting the player in battle, companions are also useful in traversing the game world. For instance, a raven companion allows the player to hop onto its back with the press of a button and fly to a previously inaccessible parts of the level.

3. Controls

Pale Pals is meant to be played with a gamepad. However, two additional control schemes will be provided: keyboard and keyboard & mouse. The player may freely switch between these three schemes at any point in the game. The button prompts update dynamically based on the previous inputs of the player.

Control scheme #01: gamepad

Input	Action
Left stick left/right	Move left/right
D-pad up	Enter room
D-pad down	Fall through platforms
X	Attack
Left stick up + X	Attack upwards
A	Jump
B	Creature ability
Y	Special attack
RT	Summon creature

Control scheme #02: keyboard

Input	Action
Arrow keys left/right	Move left/right
Arrow key up	Enter room
Arrow key down	Fall through platforms
E	Attack
Arrow key up + E	Attack upwards
Space bar	Jump
Q	Creature ability
R	Special attack
Shift	Summon creature

Control scheme #03: keyboard & mouse

Input	Action
A/D	Move left/right
W	Enter room
S	Fall through platforms
Left mouse button	Attack
W + Left mouse button	Attack upwards
Space bar	Jump
Q	Creature ability
Right mouse button	Special attack
Shift	Summon creature

4. Story

Pale Pals is set in a medieval fantasy world inhabited by humanoid animals. It was created by two mythical beings who were locked in an eternal battle: Nil, the spirit of decay, and Saballoa, the spirit of blossoming. Eventually, they died from the exhaustion of the fight. Over the decades, the earth slowly swallowed their remains.

Necromancers are the only sorcerers in this world. They live in villages where they support the local population by settling conflicts, summoning ancestors, and foretelling the future. Even though the necromancers are peaceful, some people are afraid of them because of their power over death and hesitate to call a necromancer for help.

The player controls a young axolotl, who has travelled to a remote village to become the apprentice of the local necromancer Henbane.

Having been thrown into the catacombs of the village graveyard by his new mentor, the player must learn the basics of necromancy to get back to the surface.

Soon thereafter, a herald comes to the village, delivering the message that all necromancers are to convene in Necropolis, the capital of the game world, to discuss the emergence of a new threat. By accident, the axolotl—not its mentor—receives the message and begins its journey to the capital.

Later, it turns out that Nil, the spirit of decay, has been resurrected from the dead and now wreaks havoc in the world. Since the necromancers are no match for a mythical being like Nil, they have concluded that their only chance is to revive Saballoa, the spirit of blossoming, who has fought Nil in the past.

Since the necromancers do not know where Saballoa died, they have to follow the trail of the Knucklebone Shamans. They lived hundreds of years ago and, according to the legends, they were the ones who discovered necromancy. It is said that they revered Nil and Saballoa equally and knew the locations of their remains. In the middle part of the game, the player has to find the crypts of three of those shamans to piece together a map to Saballoa's grave.

5. Prototype

The prototype is restricted to the first level in the game with actual gameplay: the catacombs below the village graveyard.

Our main character has been thrown into these uncanny caverns by his new mentor Henbane to learn the basics of necromancy. The player is introduced to moving and jumping, basic combat,

and certain level elements like hazards, save points, or levers. Upon reaching the lowest point in the catacombs, the player unlocks the ability to resurrect enemies and use their abilities in the level. Slowly learning and mastering this main mechanic, the player is able to find a way back to the surface.

This level features two different enemy types and a boss. Special attacks and the blood resource are **not** part of this prototype. Likewise, there are **no** friendly NPCs, dialogue texts, or cutscenes in this level.