GAME 370 - Initial Design: Ashen Vale

Project: Ashen Vale
Team Members: Georgi Tsvetanski, Xavier M., Jason, Miguel Santiesteban

Part 1: Overall Project Design

a. An outline describing your building/area which should include:

i. The name of your building/area and what function it serves for the world and level

- **Name:** Ashen Vale
- **World Function:** A lost, cursed temple of Aztec/Inca-like origin, hidden deep in a jungle. It is a place of legend, rumored to hold a great treasure but guarded by a malevolent curse that consumes those who disturb its sanctum.
- **Level Function:** It serves as a self-contained, single-player puzzle-adventure experience. Its function is to test the player's intellect and nerve through a series of interconnected environmental puzzles, traps, and a final, high-tension escape sequence, with a focus on good level design over other game mechanics.

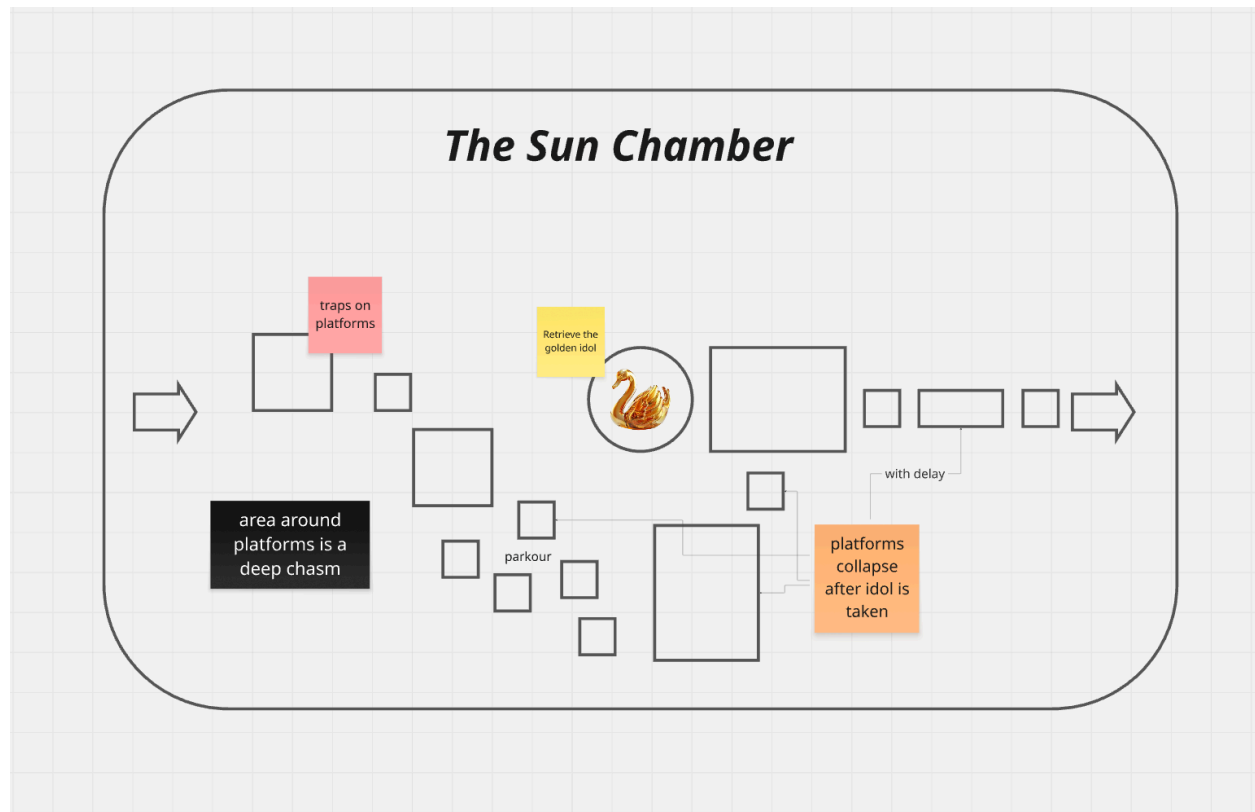**ii. What path a player would take when entering the building/area**
The player follows a linear path through six distinct zones, each designed to be a separate area of responsibility:
1. **Jungle Exterior Entrance:** The player navigates an overgrown path, getting their first glimpse of the temple facade.
2. **Hall of Idols:** The first major puzzle chamber, featuring rotating statues.
3. **Trap Corridor:** A gauntlet of timed environmental hazards.
4. **Sun Chamber:** A grand, central puzzle room that serves as the level's climax.
5. **Burial Crypts:** A claustrophobic, maze-like section focused on atmosphere.
6. **Final Escape Bridge:** A dramatic, collapsing bridge sequence.

iii. What game objectives are accomplished here

- **Primary Objective:** Retrieve the golden idol from the Sun Chamber's central altar.
- **Main Objective:** Escape the Ashen Vale after the curse awakens.
- **Supporting Objectives:** Solve the puzzles in the Hall of Idols and Sun Chamber; survive the Trap Corridor and Final Escape.
- *Flavor* Keep your cool as you read the leftover notes from previous researchers (now deceased)*

b. Detailed level maps and diagrams

The Sun Chamber

traps on platforms

Retrieve the golden idol

with delay

area around platforms is a deep chasm

parkour

platforms collapse after idol is taken

- **MORE TBD: need to find proper temple assets to import first. And need to figure out what types of puzzle logic we can recycle from Fallout.**
- Will update with a master top-down floor plan showing the layout and connection of all six zones will be created.
- Each team member will produce detailed diagrams for their individual area, showing player flow, puzzle mechanics, and trap placements.

c. A list of all the objects which belong in your building/level
This level will utilize both custom assets which will be ported as **.nif files** using Blender, NifSkope, Photoshop, Creation Kit Material Editor, and assets from the base game and DLCs in innovative ways. The object list includes:
- **Architectural:** Carved stone walls (*Nuka-World*), blocky concrete bunker pieces (*Base Game*).
- **Custom temple/runes** assets which are free
- **Foliage:** Dense trees, hanging vines, moss decals (*Far Harbor*).
- **Interactive:** Activators for statues, pressure plates, levers, collapsing platforms, swinging axe traps.
- **Narrative & Clutter:** Placeable notes, skeletons, rubble piles, ancient pottery.
- **Coins and other lost artifacts/treasures**

d. Inspirational images

- Our design is influenced by several titles:
  - ***Tomb Raider (2013):*** For its cinematic, overgrown temple environments.

  - ***Prince of Persia: Warrior Within:* For the feeling of an adrenaline rushing, non-combatant pursuer (the Dahaka / our "creeping curse").**

- ○ ***Indiana Jones:*** For the classic adventure tone and environmental trap design.

- ○ ***The Talos Principle:*** For its spatial puzzle logic.

○ *Amnesia: The Dark Descent:* For the slow-building dread during the escape.

- Our project will go beyond these influences by creating a non-combat experience where the environment itself, consumed by the curse, is the primary antagonist.

Part 2: Individual Area Designs

(Note: The project will be built by dividing the team into pairs for each major area. While each pair is responsible for the overall design and asset placement of their assigned area, they will collaborate with the team's specialists to implement specific mechanics. All team members will contribute to the overall level design and asset placement.)

Area 1: The Approach & The Test (Jungle Exterior & Hall of Idols)

- **Primary Designers:** Xavier & Miguel
- **Function:** This area serves as the introduction to the Ashen Vale's atmosphere and its core puzzle mechanics. It sets the tone and teaches the player the "rules" of the temple.
- **Player Path:** The player navigates the dense **Jungle Exterior**, discovering the temple facade. Inside, they enter the **Hall of Idols**, a large chamber where they must solve a

rotating statue puzzle to proceed.
- **Objectives:**
  - Navigate the entrance and discover the temple.
  - Solve the rotating statue puzzle to open the path forward.
- **How it works with the group:**
  - **Xavier and Miguel** will lead the blockout, level design, and asset placement for these two zones.
  - As the **Puzzle Master**, **Xavier** will take the lead on designing and implementing the puzzle logic.
  - As the **Lore Keeper**, **Miguel** will write and place the introductory narrative notes and build suspense.
  - They will consult with **Jason (Action Coordinator)** if any minor trap elements are needed and with **Georgi (Custom Mesh Porting + Technical Assist)** for any mesh related questions or master file/.esp implementation.

Area 2: The Gauntlet & The Climax (Trap Corridor & Sun Chamber)

- **Primary Designers:** Georgi & Jason
- **Function:** This section forms the heart of the gameplay, testing the player's reflexes and intellect in quick succession. It contains the main "action" set-piece and the climactic final puzzle.
- **Player Path:** After the Hall of Idols, the player must survive the linear **Trap Corridor**, a gauntlet of timed hazards. This leads them to the grand, multi-level **Sun Chamber**, where they must solve a complex puzzle to retrieve the main objective.
- **Objectives:**
  - Survive the Trap Corridor.
  - Solve the Sun Chamber's grand puzzle to access the central altar.
  - Retrieve the golden idol, triggering the temple's curse.
- **How it works with the group:**
  - **Georgi and Jason** will lead the blockout, level design, and asset placement for these zones.
  - As the **Action Coordinator**, **Jason** will take the lead on designing and implementing the traps and timed events in the corridor.
  - As the **Custom Mesh Porting + Technical Assist**, **Georgi** will help the implementation of the more complex meshes and their collisions, as well as aid with the multi-stage puzzle in the Sun Chamber.
  - They will work directly with **Xavier (Puzzle Master)** to refine the Sun Chamber's puzzle logic and with **Miguel (Lore Keeper)** to integrate key narrative notes.

Area 3: The Escape (Burial Crypts & Final Escape Bridge)

- **Primary Designers:** This area will be a collaborative effort led by the specialists. (everyone)
- **Function:** This is the final act, focusing on a tense escape rather than complex puzzles. It serves as the thrilling conclusion to the player's journey.
- **Player Path:** After grabbing the idol, the player flees into the dark, maze-like **Burial Crypts**, navigating a confusing path while the curse closes in. They emerge onto the **Final Escape Bridge**, which collapses dramatically behind them as they run for the exit.
- **Objectives:**
    - Navigate the Burial Crypts before the curse consumes the path.
    - Cross the collapsing bridge to escape the Ashen Vale.
- **How it works with the group:**
    - The blockout will be a group effort.
    - **Jason (Action Coordinator)** will lead the design of the collapsing bridge sequence, environmental events, traps, and the "creeping curse" mechanic.
    - **Miguel (Lore Keeper)** will lead the narrative design of the crypt's confusing layout and the placement of final, panicked notes from the lost adventurer.
    - **Xavier (Puzzle Master)** will lead with path-opening mechanisms required in the crypts, puzzle logics, heavier script related needs.
    - **Georgi (Custom Mesh Porting + Technical Assist)** will oversee the porting of custom meshes, manage the master esp file, and assist with technical matters when needed