Georgi Tsvetanski
GAME 370.HSG1 Fa25
Dr. Cahn
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Design Project One: The Abyssal Gala

Game: Payday 2 (PC Version)
Version: Latest Steam Release

Description of Existing Game

Payday 2 is a dynamic cooperative first-person shooter. Players take on the role of career criminals executing complex heists, ranging from small-time convenience store robberies to major cyber-attacks on FBI facilities. The game is defined by its "Risk vs. Reward" systems and its two distinct playstyles: **Stealth** (completing the heist undetected) and **Loud** (fighting off infinite waves of police assaults).

Existing Level 1: Jewelry Store (Classic)
This is the quintessential "starter" heist. Set in a small urban storefront, the team must control a showroom full of civilians while drilling a titanium safe in the back office.

- **Why it works:** It teaches spatial awareness. The front is entirely glass, meaning players are exposed to the street. To succeed in stealth, players must "rush" the building, shouting down civilians and answering guard pagers within seconds. It is a perfect example of a "fatal funnel"—if the police arrive, the team is cornered in a small store with very little hard cover.

Existing Level 2: Car Shop

Car Shop breaks the standard FPS dynamics by introducing driving mechanics. The team infiltrates a luxury car dealership to steal falconry sports cars.

- **Why it works:** It introduces a unique "Point of No Return" mechanic. Unlike other heists where you can fight forever, this level has a strict C4 timer. If the alarm trips, the building explodes in 4 minutes. This forces players to change their thinking from "survival" to "speed," ending with a high-speed driving sequence through narrow tunnels that tests reflexes rather than aim.

Description of My Level: "The Abyssal Gala"

The Contract (Lore):

> *"Heisters, listen up. The Dentist has a new request. The Azure Horizon Aquarium is hosting a private gala tonight to unveil a new deep-sea species: the 'Neon Leviathan.' This isn't just a fish; it's a biological marvel worth millions to the right collector. The Dentist wants it alive. But be warned—the aquarium is owned by the murky Garnet Group, and their security is tighter than a submarine hatch. Don't break the glass, or you might find yourselves swimming with the sharks."* — **Bain**

The Concept:
My level, The Abyssal Gala, is a highly paying heist set in a multi-story city aquarium during an official black-tie event. The level uses dynamic environment destruction and light/shadow mechanics to create a tense atmosphere that changes drastically if the alarm goes off.

Why is this level interesting/different?
Most Payday 2 maps use static cover like concrete walls or bank counters. In this level, the primary cover on the ground floor consists of water-filled glass pillars and walls. (Aquariums)

- **Dynamic Cover:** In a firefight, these pillars can be shattered. When shot, the glass breaks, water floods the floor, and the fish spill out. This removes the player's cover instantly and triggers all alarms. Security starts spawning in waves getting exponentially harder.
- **The "Dark Zone":** The second floor is a "Deep Sea Exhibit" designed to be pitch black. It forces players to use gentle weapon-mounted flashlights. This creates a risk: turning on your light lets you see the guards, but it also lets the guards see *you* from across the room.

Integration into the Game

This level fits the "High Society" theme seen in heists like *The Diamond* or *The Yacht Heist*. It uses existing game assets (guards, cameras, drills, loot bags) but remixes them into a new setting. The concept of stealing a living creature adds a "Fragile Loot" dynamic that forces the team to play protectively, rather than just running and gunning.

List of Game Objects and Mechanics

I will use strictly existing *Payday 2* assets to build this level:

1. **Destructible Glass Assets:** Borrowed from the "Mallcrasher" heist to create the breakable tank walls.
2. **The "Artifact" Bag Physics:** The fish tank is heavy. When bagged, it restricts the player to walking speed and prevents sprinting (identical to the Samurai Armor in *Shadow Raid*).

3. **Thermite Paste:** Used to burn through the maintenance hatch floor (mechanic from *The Big Bank*).

4. **Flashlights:** Standard weapon attachments used for navigation in the dark zone.

5. **Service Elevator:** An interactable escape route asset.

6. **The Escape Vehicle:** A Garbage Truck (borrowed from the *Election Day* heist) to smuggle the tank out unnoticed.

Step-by-Step Level Walkthrough

Phase 1: The Azure Lobby (Ground Floor)
The crew starts in "Casing Mode" outside the aquarium entrance. They walk into the gala, blending in with the guests. The lobby is beautiful—lit by blue water tanks and ambient music.

- **The Setup:** Players must identify the **Security Chief** among the crowd and pickpocket a keycard.
- **The Danger:** The room is wide open. If players plan to go "Loud," they notice the lack of hard cover. The glass pillars look sturdy, but they won't hold up against SWAT turret fire.

Phase 2: The Midnight Zone (Second Floor) The team sneaks past the velvet ropes to the second floor. Here, the music stops, replaced by the hum of water pumps. The area is almost pitch black, illuminated only by the faint bioluminescence of neon fish in the walls.

- **Stealth Choice:** Players face a risk-vs-reward decision. They can navigate slowly using only **audio cues** (listening for footsteps), which is safe but difficult. Alternatively, they can toggle **weapon flashlights** to spot guards easily, but this risks revealing their position if a guard sees the beam.
- **The Objective:** The team locates the "Leviathan Tank" in the center of the room. It is locked behind a reinforced maintenance door.

Phase 3: Bagging the Catch Inside the maintenance room, they find the prize. They must place a Thermal Drill on the reinforced tank casing.

- **The Defense:** If the alarm is triggered, the team must defend the drill for 180 seconds.
- **The Constraint:** Unlike a normal bank vault, players **cannot** take cover near the

objective. They must set up their defensive line *away* from the aquarium. If a stray bullet (from police or players) hits the tank during the firefight, the rare fish will die, and the contract will fail.

Phase 4: The Service Route (Escape)
The team cannot go back the way they came—the lobby is now a kill zone filled with snipers, and the glass cover is shattered.

- **The Route:** They move to the back of the facility to the **Service Elevator**. They must defend the elevator for 60 seconds while it arrives.
- **Final Extraction:** The elevator opens into the humid, dirty **Loading Dock**. The team throws the heavy fish bag into the back of a waiting Garbage Truck to hide it from the police blockade, jumping in after it to escape.

Flow Diagram

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1z56BdbTE6FxCPnr968CHa4SrEdYRYG_W/view?usp=sharing

Level Map

Floor 1

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pEd8U18eu_zEoVpozdl1bcnx_3iuAXRA/view?usp=sharing

Floor 2

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IMdMW2oQERS_V3e73LGlIKQNO7BYM0lJ/view?usp=sharing