

Game Pitch Document

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Title: The Symbiote

Genre: Zombie Survival RPG, Atmospheric Horror

Style: 3D Top-Down with Realistic but Stylized Graphics

Platform: PC, Consoles

Market: PC players interested in survival horror games, atmospheric experiences, and RPG elements. Mature audiences.

Elevator Pitch: A survival RPG set in a world beyond salvation, where the player adapts their own biology using enemy mutations to survive and redefine what it means to be human.

The Pitch

Introduction

The Symbiote is a 3D top-down survival RPG set in a quarantined region consumed by a biological catastrophe. Players take on the role of a lone scientist capable of extracting and integrating enemy adaptations to survive. Progression is driven by biological evolution rather than traditional leveling, with each mutation offering power at the cost of stability and identity.

Background

This game draws inspiration from various zombie games and some atmospheric ones. This game is supposed to be a blend of those zombie games and survival games many people enjoyed. My main inspirations were zombie games of similar genres, mainly Project zomboid, Dead Frontier and from a narrative and atmospheric experience, the main inspiration is Darkwood. Media generally doesn't explore the biological aspect and complexity of zombies enough and thus made them simple and easy to understand enemies. And I think the idea of having a common enemy to fight against, while exploiting their own weaknesses and abilities to survive and ultimately thrive in a hostile environment is intriguing.

Setting

Prior to the outbreak, the protagonist was part of a classified research initiative studying biological compatibility — the ability of the human body to integrate foreign genetic structures without rejection. The program's goal was to develop adaptive treatments for extreme environments and future pandemics. When the containment failed, the facility entered an automated preservation state, sedating and isolating select "compatible" subjects. The protagonist awakens long after the collapse, biologically primed to survive in a world that no longer recognizes baseline humanity.

The game plays out in an unknown region in which a biological apocalypse happened. It doesn't necessarily have a story line, but instead uses environmental storytelling and lore items to learn about the events of the fictional world. The game is supposed to feel very lonely and the main conflict is within the protagonist, who has to cope with the loneliness. The protagonist will use a journal to reflect on his experiences, scribble and will also comment dynamically on events that are happening during normal gameplay.

The main motive of the game is centered around the shift of identity - the protagonist is a capable scientist and he uses those abilities to survive. The genetic mutations he imposes upon himself inevitably change his identity, and depending on the chosen mutations, the protagonist will have different thoughts, dynamic comments and reflections in the journal, ultimately deciding the game's ending. It's a question

of evolving beyond something human, representing the struggle of life adapting to brutal circumstances. The mutations will have other effects on gameplay that are described in the next section.

Features

The hallmark feature of The Symbiote is the mutation system, which allows players to extract genetic material from defeated enemies and integrate it into their own biology. It is a system that gives an advantage with drawbacks. As an example, the protagonist could splice genes of hardened bone armor into himself, which would make him more resistant to normal melee attacks, but would also reduce his agility. So, the player has great variety in builds and playstyles and freedom in those choices, allowing better replayability. Additionally, the mutations will have other environmental and narrative effects (as mentioned in the previous section) - After mutating the body to some extent, some enemies may recognize the protagonist as their kin and thus not be hostile anymore. The system has such effects on the gameplay.

The game is focused on careful, semi-realistic combat and exploration of atmospheric derelict places to find better supplies, find new enemies to gather new genetic material and ultimately evolve and gain the capability to survive in harder areas of the region. The player will have to manage injuries, hunger and thirst using various mechanics, but they can entirely change the ways to manage these needs using the mutation system. It is planned for the game to contain a great variety of enemies and enemy types, so the combat remains engaging and so there are vast upgrade possibilities. All this will happen in an atmospheric world, with rather graphic depictions and violence, along with some horror imagery, making the world immersive to the fullest.

To sum it up, here is a non-exhaustive list of major features planned for the game:

- Mutation system allowing players to adapt their biology using enemy genetics
- Semi-realistic survival mechanics including injury, hunger, and thirst management
- Immersive exploration of an apocalyptic world
- Diverse enemy types requiring different combat strategies, complex engaging combat mechanics
- Dynamic narrative elements influenced by player choices and mutations

Genre

The game is primarily a zombie survival horror RPG. It blends these genres together with an atmospheric exploration experience. The survival aspect is emphasized through resource management, injury treatment, and the need to adapt to a hostile environment. Though perhaps the most defined genre in the game is RPG, mainly due to the mutation system. This makes it rather unique amongst other zombie survival games, as they usually don't focus on RPG elements as much. The game also contains horror elements, mainly in the atmosphere and imagery. The realized game would potentially also contain slight roguelike elements, as some data the player learns could be accessible in future playthroughs and the world could be procedurally generated to some extent.

Platform

The game is primarily targeted for PC. This platform is chosen mainly due to the flexibility it offers, and it's possible to implement complex control schemes that the game might require. Also, the PC gaming community is perhaps the largest and most diverse, making it an ideal platform for reaching a wide audience, especially for indie games. However, the game could also be ported to consoles later on, as it would still be suitable for a gamepad, and even more complex controls could be adjusted for gamepads.

Style

The game will feature a 3D top-down perspective with realistic but stylized graphics. Although realism is good for immersion, a fully realistic style might not suit the atmospheric and horror elements of the game. This atmosphere will mostly be achieved through lighting, color grading and environmental design. Basically, the 3D graphics should look realistic enough to keep plausible deniability, but also stylized enough to create a unique visual identity. This would keep the game immersive and visually appealing without looking like a generic copy of real life. Below I have provided some examples of the desired art style:



(a) Screenshot from Dead Frontier. Imagine similar graphics, but better lighting, color grading and more detailed and polished.



(b) These graphics match the lighting and atmosphere, though I intend to go for slightly more realism and a dark atmosphere.



(c) Darkwood is a great example of how I envision the atmosphere, though it would not be so dark - it would be a blend of all 3 pictures.