

My capstone project for the Udacity Virtual Reality Developer Nanodegree is ~~basically~~ ~~essentially~~ a personal project, so I made the game about some~~thing~~ personal: ~~things, like~~ persevering through depression. I wanted to make it a “non-depressing” game while still capturing some of the frustration in the face of positivity that living with this mental illness causes.

~~But Since~~ I didn't want it to be a depressing game, ~~so~~ I made the depression manifest in the game mechanics (analogous to [spoon theory](#)) and made the story of the game an uplifting love story.

Commented [J1]: Fyi, really cool idea

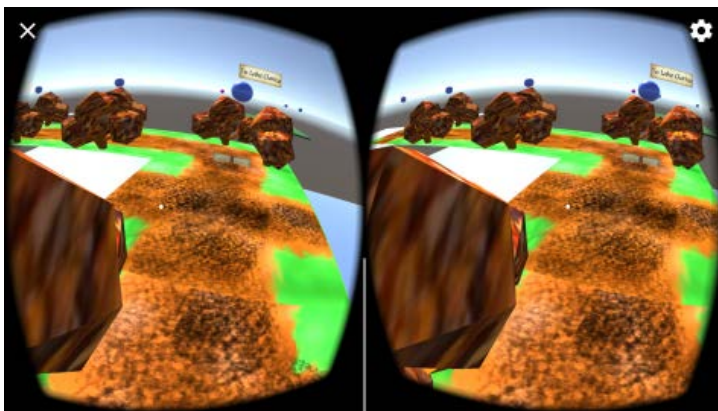
The Path of Love

The Path of Love is a mobile game aimed at VR beginners. It is primarily a love story between the main character Prydzylia, a sorceress with a curse, and the princess Celeste. The princess has invited the sorceress to visit her at the lake, and the sorceress has to deal with her curse as she makes her way there. The base game is a tile path game like Tsuro, where the player lays down a semi-random path toward two destinations.

Planning

You can read more about my planning [here on my blog](#). The biggest cut I made from planning to execution was making immersive scenes for each path destination, such as an apothecary shop interior and a lakeside night scene. I would have had to do a lot of the 3D modelling myself ~~to do so to complete this, thereby~~ adding at least another week. It is my biggest regret, since immersiveness is part of the point of VR.

User Testing

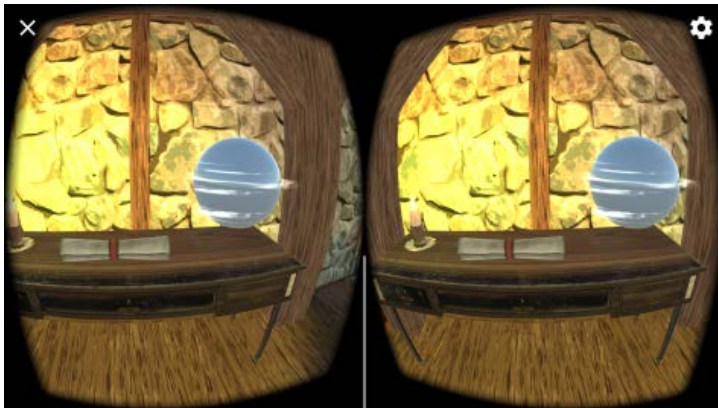


The first user test focused on the setting tiles part of the game. The scale and atmosphere came across right (a sunny garden). The tester figured out the controls with a little bit of confusion (they were new to VR). I had originally called the energy it takes to put down tiles ‘spoons’ without explanation, so I had to change that.

The second user test encompassed the start scene as well as the destinations of the game. There was some confusion over what the destinations were so I added text labels, lacking time to make appropriate visual models. Also, the destinations still initialized on top of each other sometimes despite my provisions against that, so I increased the minimum distance separating them. In the end, the start scene came across well as an interior “beginning” scene, and the emotions of frustration mixing with hopeful positivity were clear.

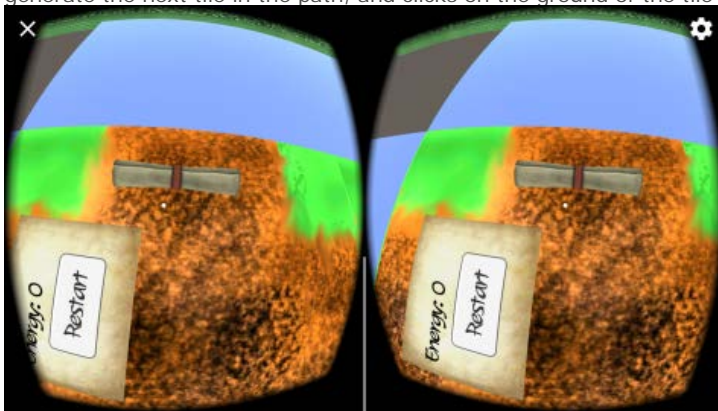
Final Game Walkthrough

The player starts in a magical study, where there is a scroll on a desk. Tinkly mysterious music plays. Clicking on the scroll plays a tinkly sound and reveals a message from Princess Celeste, inviting Prydzylia to meet her at the lake. She says to “conserve your energy” and “go to the doctor”, which are hints to the rest of the game. Clicking on the door transports the player to the main game.

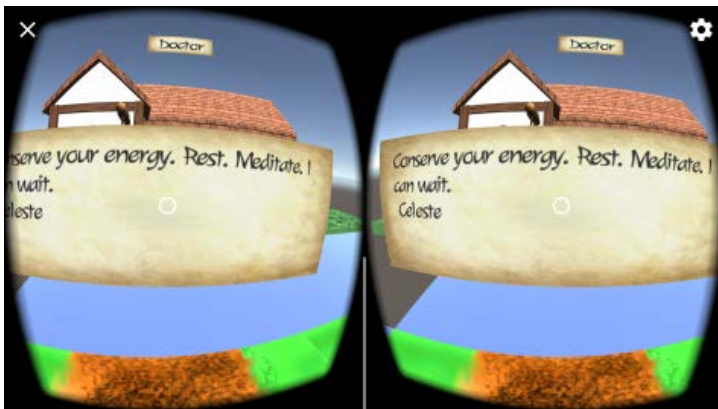


The player starts on a crossroads tile. A vaguely medieval musical theme plays. Looking around, the player locates the two destinations, the doctor and the end (“To Lake Clarica”), which initialize in random locations every game. The player clicks on the blue tiles to

generate the next tile in the path, and clicks on the ground of the tile to rotate it.



Also on the ground is a note displaying how much 'energy' the player has left, to a maximum of 6. A tile takes 2 energy to place. This is Prydzylia's curse; the number of actions in a given time are severely limited. Energy regenerates a random amount every 5 seconds. If the player tries to place a tile without enough energy to do so, a scroll drops. Inside the scroll is a random encouraging message from Celeste.

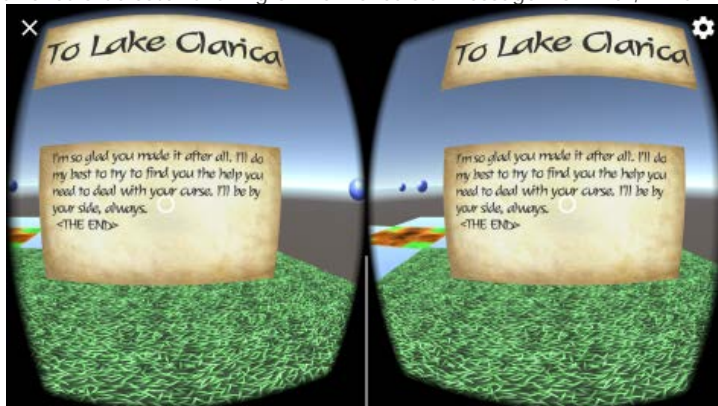


Clicking on the Doctor destination plays a shop bell, and a door opening and closing. The maximum energy is increased to 18, but no energy is added. I chose to do this because taking antidepressants takes a while to see any effects, and going to the doctor takes a lot of effort.

Commented [J2]: Soo cool

Commented [J3R2]: Perhaps here you could remind the reader that this is the manifestation of depression

Clicking on the purple ball in the end destination ("To Lake Clarica") plays a victorious tinkly sound and reveals Celeste. Clicking on her reveals a message from her, which is the end of



the story.

There are two possible endings. The obvious one is to visit the Doctor first and then go to the end. Then when the player sees Celeste, she proposes. The other ending is if the player goes directly to the end. Then, Celeste doesn't propose but continues to support Prydzylia and dealing with her curse.

Conclusion

It's bittersweet to realize that despite all the sweat I poured into my final project, I'll have surpassed my best work even a month from now. This is in many ways My First Game; I can't expect a prototype to be AAA quality in the (less than) two weeks I had to work on it. I'm still learning to *let* myself learn.

This project also leaves me with the primary problem of virtual reality content: what makes content effective in virtual reality, and more valuable than in the familiar 3D game on a 2D screen? I think this is a more difficult question for mobile/Cardboard which, while being the most accessible VR, only has one input. I don't think this particular experiment was successful in answering this question, but not every exploration gives positive results, and not every important result is positive.

Here's to more experiments in virtual and augmented reality.