

Preamble

Thank you for downloading and playing my second doujin game, *Ephemeral Quest: Sabre Shuffling Scramble*, a single-player arcade Shmup-RPG written in C using the Raylib library. I hope you enjoy this game and continue to enjoy any future games and projects I indulge in. Before playing this game, keep in mind that this is a free fan game uploaded to GitHub and hosted via Itch.io; if you purchased this software, you were likely scammed... lol.

Installation Guide

1. Download the game's ZIP file from your source of choice. Preferably itch.io/github.
2. Extract the ZIP file to your desired location.
3. Double-click EphQuestBackup.exe to start playing.

How to Play

In this game, you follow the adventures of a mercenary named Gersemy. She's quite skilled in sword fighting, but not much else; luckily, not much else is needed in this game.

As Gersemy treks to her destination, her movement is restricted to four horizontal lanes. You can **press up or down to switch lanes**, and **left or right to move horizontally**. To fight, you can **press the Z button to launch an attack** from your sword to defeat your foes. The amount of shots you can fire is dictated by your AP, and when you run out of AP, you can't shoot anymore. Luckily, your AP refreshes every second, so watch the stat screen!

As you defeat enemies, you will obtain currency, also known as Taler, as well as EXP. If your EXP reaches 100, Gersemy can level up and has a chance at leveling up HP, AP, Strength, and/or Defense, with varying growth rates in each stat. Your objective is to reach the end of the stage without running out of HP, so keep a good head on your shoulders, or else you may lose it altogether.



In between stages, you'll have access to various shops and vendors. This is where the Taler you've accumulated comes in. In the armory, you can purchase stronger swords to help you deal more damage to enemies. You can also buy shields to increase your defenses so you take less damage from enemies.

In the vendors, you can buy healing items, stat boosters, or other powerful remedies from the shopkeeper, Daniella. Each town also has a tavern, where you can visit and learn new information about the world or your adventure from the patrons. Lastly, "Bounce" just allows you to leave town and head to the next area. I like the idea of using modern slang to juxtapose the fantasyish setting.



Setting and Waypoints

The game takes place in the region of West Verdance, one of the four kingdoms making up Laberon, along with North, South, and East Verdance. West Verdance is undoubtedly the smallest of the four nations, with a small military, but it has mostly remained peaceful. That was until one of the King's advisors, Thalavin the Magician, went behind the royal family's back, stole the Prince's magical scepter, and started taking over the kingdom.

With no one else to turn to, Prince Adolpate looks towards Gersemy, a wandering mercenary, and her trusted companion, Yamcules the Dragonfly, and sends the two on their way to defeat the wicked wizard once and for all.

West Verdance is a semi-fantasy, semi-modern setting kinda based on similar settings such as the Mushroom Kingdom or the Land of Ooo. While many people work as mercenaries, peddlers, and gladiators, and go through life using swords and sorcery, there also exist modern themes like metropolitan cities, computers, and cars.



Rom Forest Zone is a tropical forest crawlin' with bugs and grifters. It's best known for its bars, small vendors, and mercenaries trying to make a living. Rom's bars, vendors, and mercs aren't exactly the best in West Verdance or anything—they're just known for existing.



The seagulls! The sunshine! The fresh fish! Looking for a vacation? Then come on down to **Summer Whisper Zone!** When you're tired from all the rays and waves, you could visit the hotel and resorts, which may or may not run various timeshares.



Do you like sand? Well, jackpot! **Wayst Hazard Zone** is a wasteland deep within West Verdance, which has a post-apocalyptic vibe to it and deadly monsters. Anyone would be lucky to leave the area with the same number of limbs they came in with.



Scarer than a deadly forest! Deeper than the bottom of the sea! More dangerous than a deadly wasteland! It's **Red Khali Zone!** Don't get lost in the depths of these towering skyscrapers—they say tourists are never seen leaving...



Sleigh Ride Zone is a dangerous mountain that few people have climbed and even fewer people have survived. It's a popular tourist attraction for people who love to ski and snowboard, its bar is also home to the continent's world-famous lemon snow cones.



One of the worst ways to end your vacation: Thalavin's secret military base, **Royal Heap Zone**, guarded by some of the strongest security and weaponry known to man. Do Gersemy and Yamcules even stand a chance?

Characters



Gersemy, our story's main heroine, is a rather calm, free-spirited, and reckless young lady. She gained her sword arm from her days as a gladiator, but escaped those days during a revolt and fled to live on the outskirts of Rom Forest with her close friend, Yamcules. Despite her confident and easy-going nature, though, she's a bit of a loner. Her primary goal is to chase her idea of freedom by making enough money to be set for life and travel the continent.

Yamcules the Dragonfly is your everyday garden-variety companion character, like Navi from Zelda, Starlow from the Mario & Luigi series, or Nall from the Lunar series. Yamcules is a lot less impulsive and reckless than Gersemy, and much more responsible and compassionate. He looks over Gersemy like an older brother and can be a bit overprotective. Generally, he would much rather stay indoors with a nice book or movie than run out and go adventuring. He's also a man of many hidden talents.



Prince Adolpate the Third is the crowned prince of West Verdance. With his status, he's commonly disliked by many of the people of the nation. While his heart is in the right place most of the time, he's been noted to be a rather incompetent ruler, and people worry for the kingdom after the current king passes.

Thalavin the Sorcerer of Storms is a former advisor to the king and, by extension, to the prince. He had spent a considerable time planning his attack on the kingdom, building a fortress in the west, and colluding with an army of monsters. He wishes to take over West Verdance and rename it to Civitas Thalavinorum. Thalavin was based on several evil king-type characters like Bowser, King Dedede, the Ice King, etc.—the type of Saturday morning cartoon villain who is more entertaining than he is threatening.



Yamcules' Beastiary

One of Yamcules' hobbies is to document information regarding the various enemies and wildlife encountered on Gersemy's quests. Here are his findings.



The **Locka** is a land monster that strolls idly by, minding its own business. They don't do much damage and usually die in a single attack.



The **Chunca** is a monster race that is commonly seen in grassy areas. Many of them are in league with Thalavin, but many also just live casual lives amongst humans, elves, and dwarves. Some Chuncas even go off adventuring themselves.



Crabs are hardened crabapple soldiers who patrol the leas, jungles, and forests. They are the strongest enemies that roam Rom Forest.



The **Dungeon Master** is a powerful aquatic vertebrate who, despite being better in the water, can still pack a punch against landlubbers.



The **Skyrat** is a mischievous seagull who patrols the shore of Summer Whisper. While its power is as low as the Locka, this knave also steals 200 Taler from passersby, and can even cause adventurers to go into debt.



The **Dream of the Fisherman's Wife** is a squid-like spectacle tentacle monster that hovers between lanes and can pose a threat to ill-equipped adventurers.



The **Flamewheel** is a wheel of fire that spins across the field at notable speeds. Be careful not to get your hair burned.



A giant yeti monster: **Dabadee**. This mysterious monster takes a lot of hits and dishes a lot of damage, but is notably slow. Plan your trek accordingly and don't get caught by him.



They say that every rose has thorns, but this flower, the **Soupor Salad**, has numerous thorns and is not afraid of using them. This angry blossom grows in many environments and absorbs blood rather than water to perform photosynthesis.



Manic Mages are students who study at Twilight Arcana Academy, an exclusive school somewhere in East Verdance. Thalavin was a former student of this school, and when he attacked the royal family of West Verdance, so did many mages. Be careful when fighting them, though, as they ignore the player's defense.



The **Evil Elf** is a foot soldier who strolls the streets of Red Khali. While weak on their own, they wield strong equipment and gear, which allows them to stand toe-to-toe with seasoned fighters.



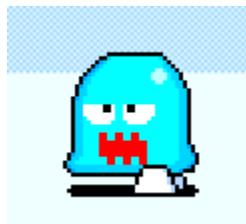
An **F-21 Papier Flieger** is a simple monster that soars through the skies at various angles, attacking passersby and travelers from the air. They're hard to hit and harder to dodge.



The **Octoganarynx** is a snow monster that moves around sporadically across Sleigh Ride Zone. It's a very dangerous monster that is said to have the ability to freeze adventurers upon a single touch.



Dabodie is an upgraded form of the yeti monster, Dabadee. It's more durable and, unfortunately, more powerful. They also move slightly faster. It's even been reported that they eat travelers.



The **Opa Locka** is the upgraded form of the Locka monster. They're stronger, quicker, and will attempt to hone in on the player.



The **Kockenbawl** is a powerful spikeball enemy with notable defense and HP. While slow, it will surely take you many shots to kill, but don't let your guard down after killing one, as when

broken, it will unleash a final, certain-kill attack, the dreaded **Firebawl**, which cannot be defeated.



The **Psycho Sage** is a teacher from Twilight Arcana Academy. Like their students, they also bypass the player's armor and defenses. However, also like their students, they're lightly armored.



The title of **Forester Chunca** is one designated only to some of the strongest Chuncas in the area. These are Thalavin's personal bodyguards and pride themselves on honor, chivalry, and duty. With a Silver Sword and Epithet Shield equipped, they make even grown men cower in fear.

Dev Notes

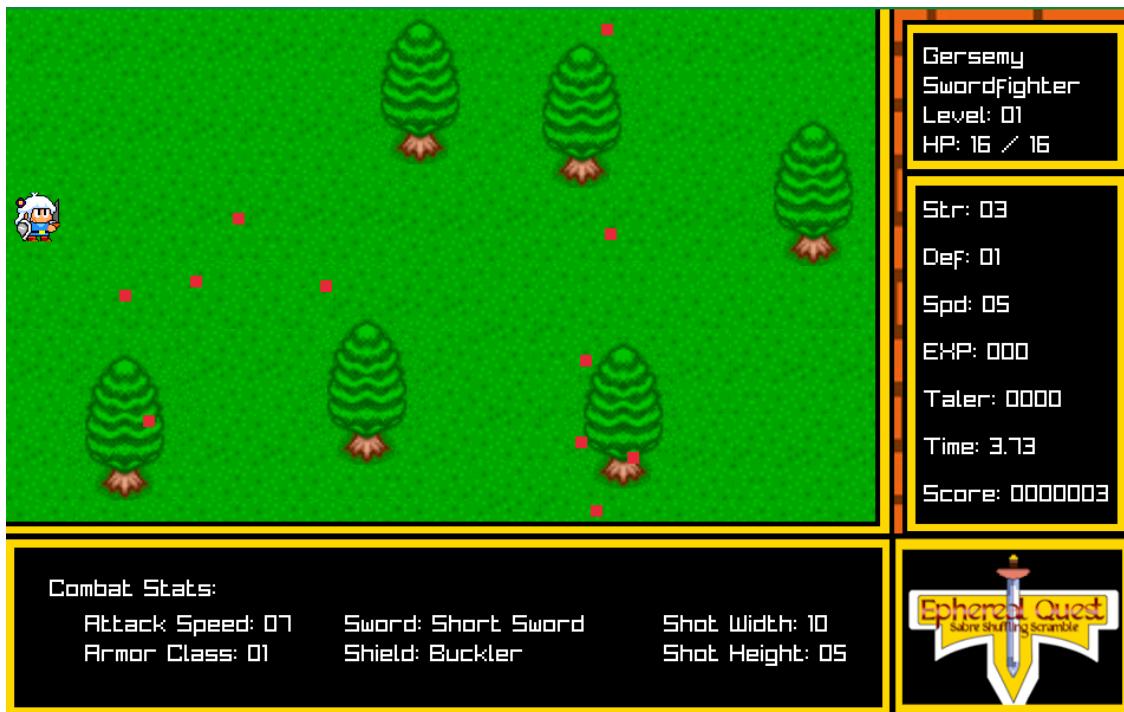
Howdy! Mega here! I hope you enjoyed the game. In this section, I want to talk briefly about the game's development and how my ideas came to be. When I first discovered Raylib, I always wanted to make a simple arcade game and looked through the templates to see what I could do. I found the template for a horizontal space shooter and decided to build a game using that as a base. I'm a big fan of the Touhou series and wanted to use it as inspiration for my own game.

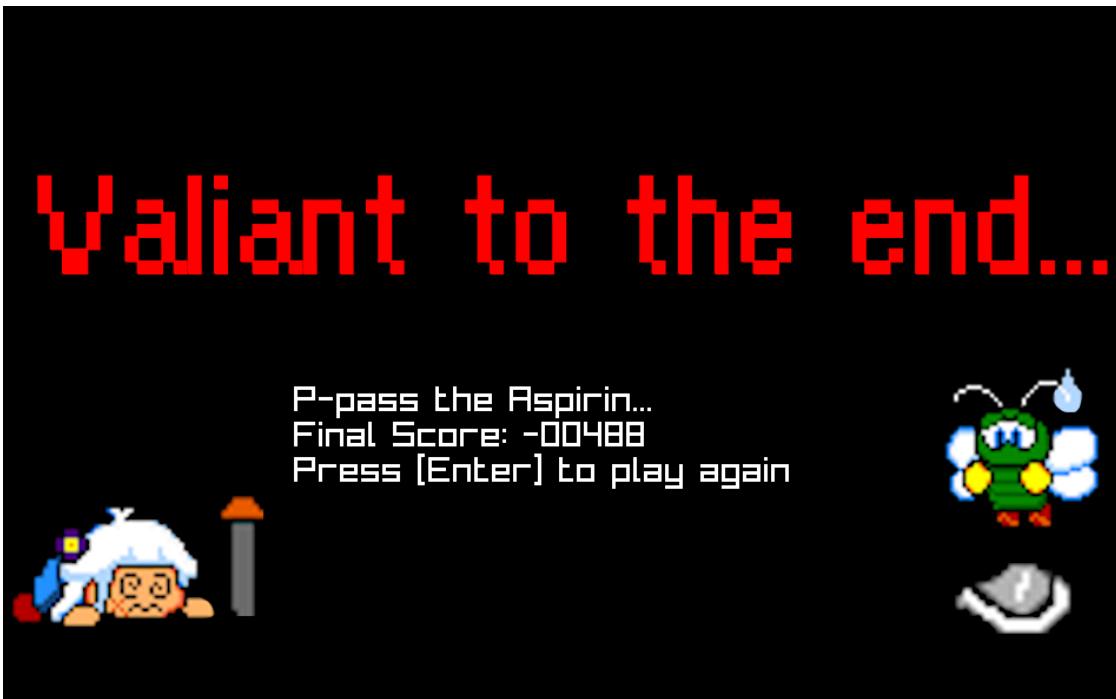
That's when I decided to try creating something with RPG elements. Anyone who knows me knows I love RPGs—especially ones that put a unique twist on the standard formula. You'll often hear me praising SRPGs, Action-RPGs, Monster Collecting games, or other genre mashups that mix RPG mechanics with different styles of gameplay.

I tried adding features like currency, experience points, a leveling system, and upgradable stats. Around this point, I wanted to coin a name for this type of Shmup-RPG hybrid:

Kenmaku (剣幕)—"Ken" being the Japanese word for sword, reflecting the swords-and-sorcery vibe of RPGs, and "maku" meaning curtain or screen, commonly seen in danmaku (弾幕), "bullet curtain," also known as bullet hell shooters, the subgenre that Touhou belongs to.

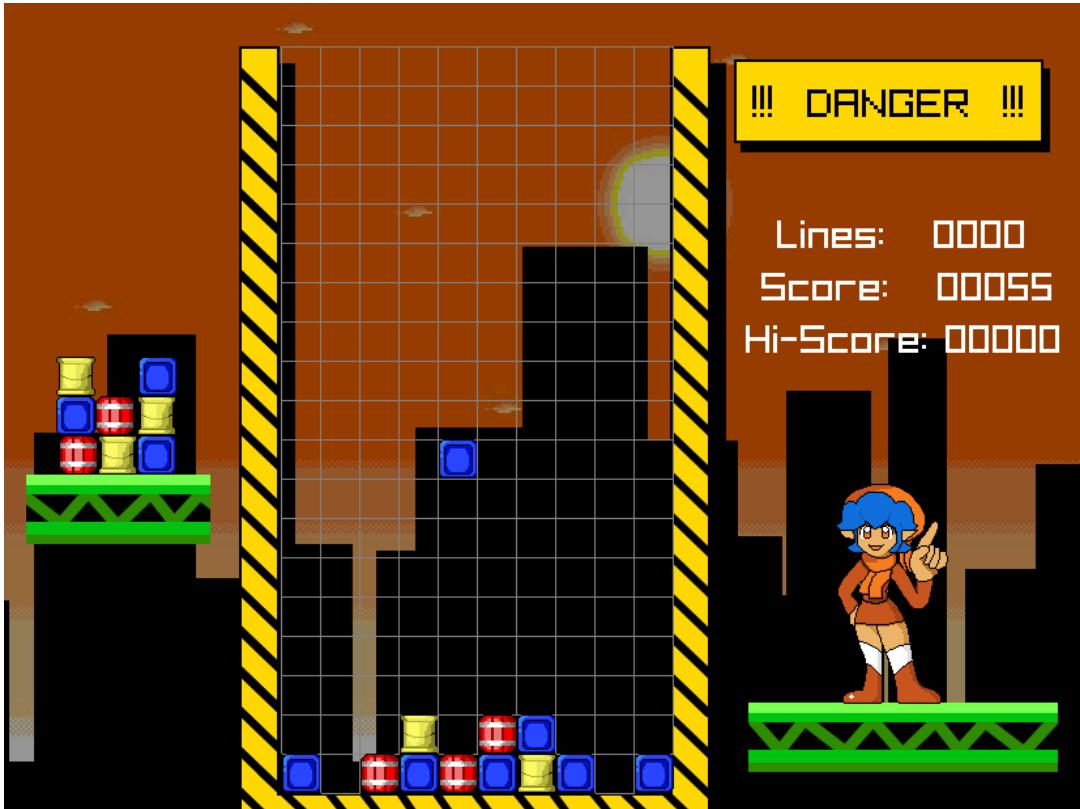
I programmed the game and developed it as far as the second area. However, I eventually stopped development due to a growing number of errors. To be frank, by that point my code was starting to resemble Yandev code—spaghetti logic everywhere, too many if-else statements, and overall very inefficient to the point where the game would crash. I also wasn't happy with the art style.





Yuck...

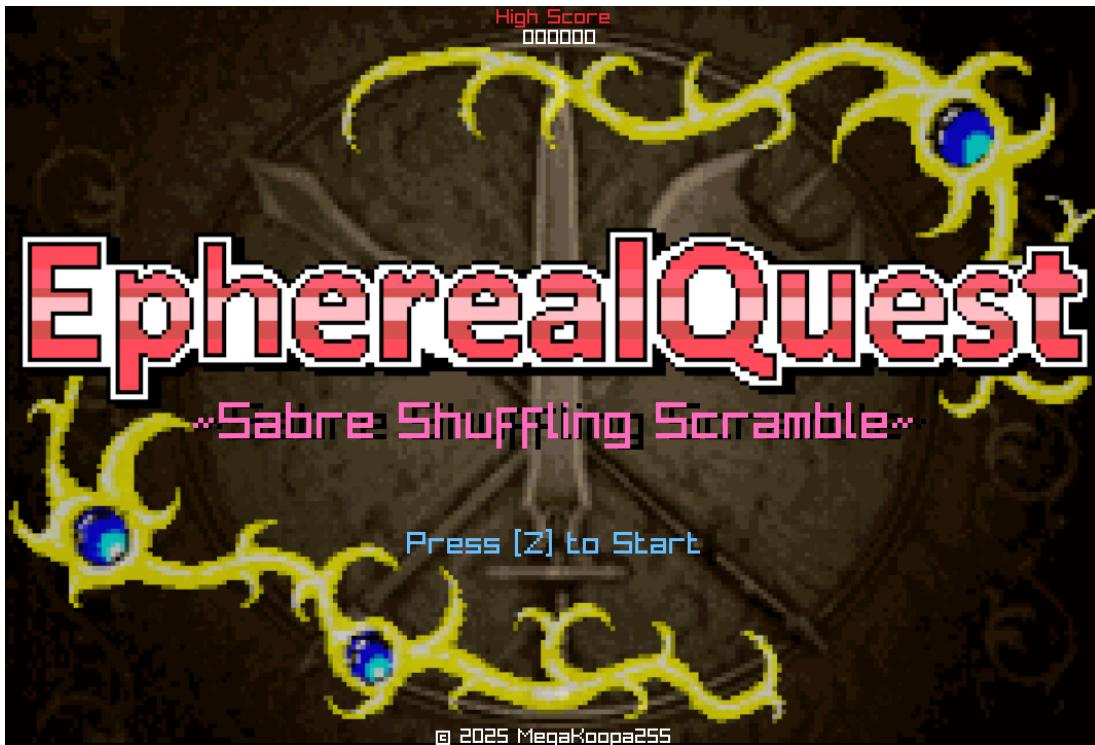
I took a step back and cancelled that original project. I then gained the motivation to write Mega's Nuclear Waste Dump based on Uncle Henry's Nuclear Waste Dump. It was a fun, low-level project for me to get back into the groove of things, and I used a lot of what I had learned in that project to restart Ephereal Quest. So, I started the project and conceded to make it bigger AND better than the previous canned attempt.



First, let's talk about the name, "Ephemeral Quest." The term Ephemer comes from the term Ethereal; it's simply stylized to use a "ph" instead of a "th." This in itself is a reference to Phantasy Star using the spelling "Phantasy" rather than the standard "Fantasy."

The subtitle "Sabre Shuffling Scramble" is a silly name with no real meaning aside from the fact that the main character fights using swords. The idea for this subtitle was loosely based on Danganronpa. The first game, in Japan, is called "Danganronpa: The Academy of Hope and the Students of Despair," but the subtitle was localized to a much sillier name, "Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc."

The game's title screen comes from two sources, Fire Emblem: Shadow Dragon, with the golden ornament things coming from History of Elthlead. The title screen was originally made for a canceled Fire Emblem ROM Hack that I was working on ages ago, but I wanted to repurpose the title for this project, as it has some sentimental value, despite the colors not fitting too well with the general PC-98 aesthetic of the rest of the game.



The character, Gersemy, got her design from an old OC I made back in middle or high school. I had the design floating around in my head for the longest time and finally decided to use it here. She was originally a mage when I originally made art of her back in school, but I changed that to her being a swordfighter. The name Gersemy comes from Gersemi, the daughter of the fertility-goddess Freyja in Norse mythology. For her, I wanted a type of chill and laidback character that exudes silent confidence, similar to a character like Sonic the Hedgehog.

Yamcules' species of Dragonfly in universe has draconic origins, which I plan to expand upon in a potential sequel. His name comes from combining the Japanese surname "Yamada" with the Greek Hero "Hercules."

Adolpate's name is a play on the word "addlebate," which just means stupid or confused. The name is stylized by altering the addle part into Adol, a reference to Adol Christin from the Ys series. His overall design is based on three major sources: Marth from Fire Emblem, the design of the main protagonist of my aforementioned cancelled Fire Emblem ROM hack (whose name was Leneren), and Princess Bubblegum from Adventure Time.



Both the continent's name "Laberon" as well as the world map are also reused from this cancelled Fire Emblem ROM hack.

Thalavin's name is lifted directly from a thunder spell that appears in Vestaria Saga, the Thalavin tome, which was simply called Lightning in Japanese. Thalavin's design draws a lot of inspiration from Wendell and Boah from the Fire Emblem series, as well as Mario from Super Mario.

The name "Chunca," as well as the enemy's design, was based on a design my sister made back when we were really young. It was a design I liked a lot, and wanted to share by putting it in my game, having them be the standard common enemy type that works directly under the evil ruler, similar to how Koopa Troopas are used in Mario games.

The Locka and Crabs enemies were based on designs I have made in the past. Crabs were mostly redesigned, but the Locka remained the same.

The Dungeon Master enemy is inspired by the Fish boss that appears in Magicant in Mother 1. In the English version of that game, the enemy is simply called "The Fish," but in Japanese, its name is "Chika Taiga no Nushi," which roughly translates to Master of the Underground Stream. When I first played Mother 1 using Tomato's fan translation—where the name is shortened to Cave Master—the name was just so funny to me. The overly grandiose name for what is essentially just a fish struck me as so absurd and memorable that it had a profound impact on my life. That moment was the inspiration behind creating an enemy in its honor.



Image taken from Mother 1+2 (GBA)

The Skyrat and Dream of the Fisherman's Wife are both very clearly based on enemies from the Super Mario series. The Dabadee and Dabadie enemies come from Eiffel 65's Blue (Da Ba Dee), and the general design comes from Fuzz Power from Action 52. The name, Dream of the Fisherman's Wife, comes from the name of a famous Japanese painting of the same name.

The Manic Mage gets its design from the Black Mage from Final Fantasy and the Mage class from Fire Emblem. I kinda combined the two designs a bit and added a little puff to the end of the hat, ala the Happy Happyism Cult members from EarthBound. The enemy named Soupor Salad comes from the joke on how if you say the name "Soup or Salad" too fast, it sounds like "Super Salad."

The Evil Elf is very obviously based on Link from The Legend of Zelda. Gersemy's design already kinda resembled Link, so the Elves are just that concept but gone all the way. I originally wanted them to fire swords back at the player, but that would have been too difficult to implement.

The name Forester Chunca comes from the Forest class in Fire Emblem Genealogy of the Holy War, which is that game's stand-in for the Hero class. I didn't just want to just call the enemy "Hero Chunca," so I went with a more interesting-sounding name.

The name Rom Forest comes from Fire Emblem Gaiden's Ram Forest, with the added computer joke of Rom and Ram. The name Summer Whisper comes from the song Last

Summer Whisper by Anri. The name Wayst Hazard comes from Punk Hazard from One Piece. But “Waste” is stylized and spelled as “Wayst” instead to sound cool and edgy.

Red Khali comes from the song Californication from Red Hot Chili Peppers. It was originally called Khalifornication Zone, then changed to Red Cali, then finally Red Khali. Sleigh Ride is an obvious reference to Santa Claus, and Royal Heap is just a funny saying I’ve heard before.

For the gameplay, the AP system is an idea I got from Popful Mail. While some may find it annoying to have a cooldown for a game like this, I think it’s a good method of having the player properly time their shots, and knowing simply dodging an enemy is a viable option rather than just spamming the shoot button.

Likewise, the lane-switching system is one I got from those endless runner-type games like Subway Surfers. The leveling system is probability-based. Gersemy has various growth rates, which will determine which stats she’ll get, so two players are unlikely to beat the game with the same stat spreads. I got this mechanic from Fire Emblem.

The game over screen’s design is inspired by EarthBound: Beginnings’ game over screen. The Angry Video Game Nerd video game inspires the random death quotes that appear at the bottom. The text “Valiant to the end...” comes from Cosmic Fantasy 2, specifically the Working Designs localization of CF2, which changes the traditional “Your party has been defeated” text with “Valiant to the end...”



Image taken from Cosmic Fantasy 2 (TurboGrafx CD)



[Gersemy] ~Please, pass the Aspirin...~
Final Score: -00994
Previous High Score: 000000
Press [Enter] to play again

For the in-between stage intermission, I wanted a top-down traditional RPG-like mode where Gersemy could walk across towns and manually go to shops and stuff, but programming all that in Raylib is a bit beyond my skill level. The compromise I came up with is having it be a menu instead, inspired by games like the castle in FE4 or Berwick Saga.



I also wanted NPCs that Gersemy could interact with, which is a bit harder for me to do in the menu style. What I decided to do was add the taverns where Gersemy could enter and interact with various people, similar to a visual novel.

While I draw in my free time, drawing sprite art for a game is a bit difficult for me, so the character art like the CGs or shopkeepers, may look off or rushed. I didn't want to just not include CGs, because having a PC-98-inspired game without CGs is like having a Mortal Kombat game without blood, so I rushed things a bit so I could have a game out. That said, I also wanted the slightly campy and simplistic art style from a lot of early AliceSoft games, and wanted to emulate that art style in this game.

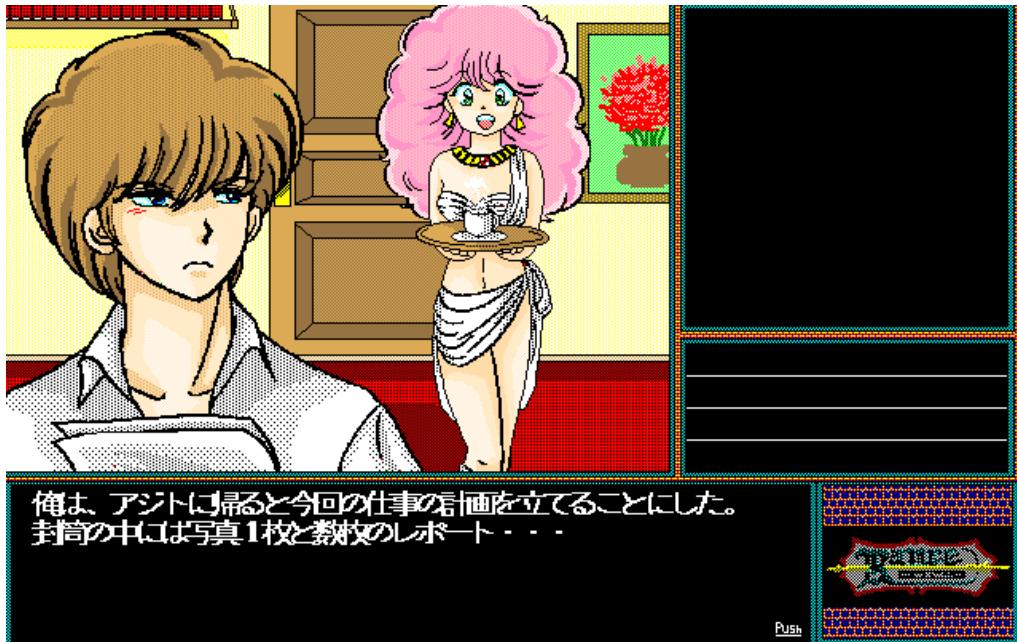


Image taken from Rance I: Quest for Hikari (PC-9801)

Many of the backgrounds are lifted from free-to-use resources like SRPG Studio, RPG Maker, and Visual Novel templates, but pixelated to work in the game. They may clash a bit with the character art, but I think they also have a nice abstract art type feel to them.

Every Fire Emblem game features a shopkeeper named Larabel and an unnamed armorer. Because I thought the fact that the armory man was unnamed was funny, I wanted to design my shopkeepers in a similar fashion. I made the vendor a green-haired elf woman named Daniella and the armorer an unnamed dude with a mustache.

The design of the Armorer is loosely based on Morshu from the CD-I Zelda games. Daniella's design isn't based on any character in particular, I just wanted a cute elf girl in the game. The currency, "Taler," is a historical term referring to large silver coins used in Europe during the early modern period; it's also sometimes spelled as "thaler." The English word "dollar" is actually an anglicized version of the term taler.



Most of the weapons are standard weapons found in JRPG games, like Shortsword and Longsword. The Miphril Sword is named after Mithril, but stylized to fit the title of the game. The name “Iron Maiden” comes from a heavy metal band of the same name.

Limit Shield comes from Berwick Saga, while Mirror Shield comes from Lunar: The Silver Star. The Omikami Shield was originally called the Amaterasu Shield, which comes from Berwick Saga, specifically the English patch. However, that name exceeded the space limit, and I didn’t want to shorten it to Amaterasu Shd or anything like that, so I went with Omikami, the other half of the name Amaterasu Ōmikami.

The names of all the healing items and stat boosters come from Vestaria Saga; the one exception is the Dynamo Syltra, which I made up for this game.

Credits

Title Theme

Fort – Xak: The Art of Visual Stage (X68000)

Composers: Tadahiro Nitta & Ryuji Sasai

Rom Forest Zone Theme

Battle Theme – Lunar: The Silver Star (Sega CD)

Composer: Noriyuki Iwadare

Summer Whisper Zone Theme
Koopa Troopa Beach – Mario Kart 64
Composer: Kenta Nagata

Wayst Hazard Zone Theme
For Muscle – Exile (Turbografx-CD)
Composers: Shinobu Ogawa, Hiroto Otsubo, Michiko Naruke, Takahiro Umezu, Minoru Yuasa

Red Khali Zone Theme
Stage 9 – Panic Bomber (Neo Geo)
Composers: Jun Chikuma & Kenichi Koyano

Sleigh Ride Zone Theme
Way to the Fort – Xak: The Art of Visual Stage (X68000)
Composers: Tadahiro Nitta & Ryuji Sasai

Royal Heap Zone Theme
Launch Base Zone Act 1 – Sonic the Hedgehog 3 (Sega Genesis)
Composer: Brad Buxer, Michael Jackson(?)

Pre-Battle Dialogue
Kanami – Rance I: Quest for Hikari (PC-9801)
Composer: Ichitarou (Dragon Attack!)

Final Boss Theme
Holders of Power – Ys I (PC-8801/9801)
Composer: Sound Team JDK

Town Theme
Pleasant Town – Rance I: Quest for Hikari (PC-9801)
Composer: Ichitarou (Dragon Attack!)

Debug Mode Theme
The Syonin – Ys I (PC-8801/9801)
Composer: Sound Team JDK

Ending Theme
Little Princess Miki – Rance I: Quest for Hikari (PC-9801)
Composer: Ichitarou (Dragon Attack!)

Game Over Theme
Game Over – Xak: The Art of Visual Stage (X68000)
Composers: Tadahiro Nitta & Ryuji Sasai

Stage Clear Theme

Winners – Lunar: The Silver Star Story Complete (PS1)

Composer: Noriyuki Iwadare

The various backgrounds are all free-to-use stock backgrounds from SRPG Maker and Photobucket. A few enemy sprites were modified from sprites from various Mario games.