

A Passing Friend

Level Design Document
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The background is a dark green forest with stylized evergreen trees. A large, white crescent moon is in the sky. In the foreground, a large, yellow, tattered scroll is unrolled, with its edges frayed and its surface showing some texture. The scroll is the main focus, containing text.

Story

When animals grow old there is a place they'll go. A place where one last adventure with your friend is possible until you meet each other again in the afterlife. Somewhere deep in your dreams there is a small magical village, filled with witches and wonders. This is where your pet goes to find their way to the afterlife and you are able to go on one last adventure with them.

In "**A Passing Friend**" you are able to play a recently deceased pet that has to find their way to the afterlife by collecting their lost memories and items from their past life. You wake up in the Shimmer Woods and here you notice a magical tune being played on a flute. Following this sound you meet Asha, the main NPC that will guide you through your adventures. Here you learn that spirits can only travel through the shade and the dark. This makes everything more challenging now that you have to avoid the scorching sun during the day and the swinging lantern lights in the night.

Now that you know what lies ahead you set out on the quests with your pet to find the first lost item of the past.

World Immersive Experience

In “**A Passing Friend**” you find yourself in a magical dream-like experience. Wind blowing through the high standing trees with the last rays of light protruding through the leaves and branches of the forest as night is slowly arriving. In the distance a flowing river with what seems to be a rushing waterfall.

Walking through the forest you are met with the sounds of nature and calm magical music to welcome you to this new realm. Upon hearing the tune of the magical witch named Asha you are led to the crooked witch village in the middle of the Shimmer woods. Small and some tall standing structures, seemingly made from the materials found in the surrounding woods. Giant boulders lying scattered through the village. Some are even used in structures and buildings. Wooden boards and beams are attached with large nails to create the walls and fences of the local houses. On a first glance you are met with, in its own way, a beautiful crooked friendly village.

Most of the game you will be traversing the village during the day and night to achieve your quests. You are able to walk through the narrow roads as a dog, jump over rooftops like a cat and climb trees like a monkey. Playing different kinds of animals you are able to look at the Shimmer Wood village from a different point of view. Creating new opportunities and challenges throughout the game.

Game Mode

This game is designed to appeal to the Achievers and the Explorers. Through a third person narrative and exploration experience, the player is able to find new NPCs and characters to play with. Each time they finish a level with one pet they unlock a new character that they can play through a different point of view.

Player's Journey

Throughout the game the player is able to track their progress on the town board. This is the location where the player is able to learn about the game mechanics, find tips and track their game progress. This board also holds a map of the town so the player can plan out their next route to the objective.

The most important milestones within the game are:

1. Story and game introduction

This is the starting point of the player's adventure. Through narrative and tutorials they will learn about "where they are", "why they are here" and "how the game mechanics work". Next to this the player gets to customize their first character/pet, who they will play throughout the game.

2. Day missions

Half of the quests the player has to fulfil are during the day. Here they need to travel from shadow to shadow in order to reach their destination. Because they are a spirit they cannot stay in the light for very long. If they do, they dissipate into the air and respawn. Having to restart their quest. This challenges them to think creatively and outside of the box or so to say the "light".

3. Night missions

The other half of the missions will take place during the night. The sun has set, but the village lights start burning bright. Now the player needs to reach their destinations by traversing the night and dodging the moving lantern lights dancing in the wind and lit night fires in the midst of the town roads and squares.

4. NPC interactions

To progress in the game, the players have to interact with their surroundings and the NPCs living in the village. This ranges from other animals, witches, spirits roaming the night and clues spread through the town. Here they learn about the different sides of death and how to grief.

5. Traveling to the afterlife

Once the player has collected all the past items and memories, they now have to assist their pet to traverse to the afterlife. They enter through a portal revealing an obstacle course which challenges them to use what they learned throughout their quests together.

6. Repeat the cycle

The player has successfully managed to help their friend cross over to the afterlife. This leaves them grieving over the loss of their friend. This is where the main NPC Asha comes in to ask the player to help other deceased animals, who do not have a person to help them out, to cross over to the afterlife. Here they are challenged to find the lost memories and items through the perspective of a different animal. Seeing the same world through a different lens.

Pacing & Flow

Through the game there are different missions that need to be achieved in order to reach the afterlife. In the first level of the game, where everything is introduced, the player gets to discover the village at a low pace with a few moments of small challenges. Due to the player just starting out, most of this level will be at a very low pace so they feel comfortable learning about the new mechanics and narrative. Some of these mechanics are:

- Walking/Running -> To get from A to B
- Jumping/Climbing -> Follow the assigned path, while holding the climb button?
- Falling -> Does not get hurt, but needs to find the route again.
- Sun touching -> Dissipates into the air creating a small explosion
- Interacting/Investigating -> Clicking on the assigned button to find out more about their surroundings.

World

At the same time the player learns more about the world. In Between learning the different mechanics, there is a moment where the player gets to take it all in through cut scenes or animations of their surroundings. Being able to take a deep breath while showing how truly magical this place is. This has the players:

- Discover new areas
- Find new routes with different characters
- Learn more about death and the surrounding narrative

Rewards

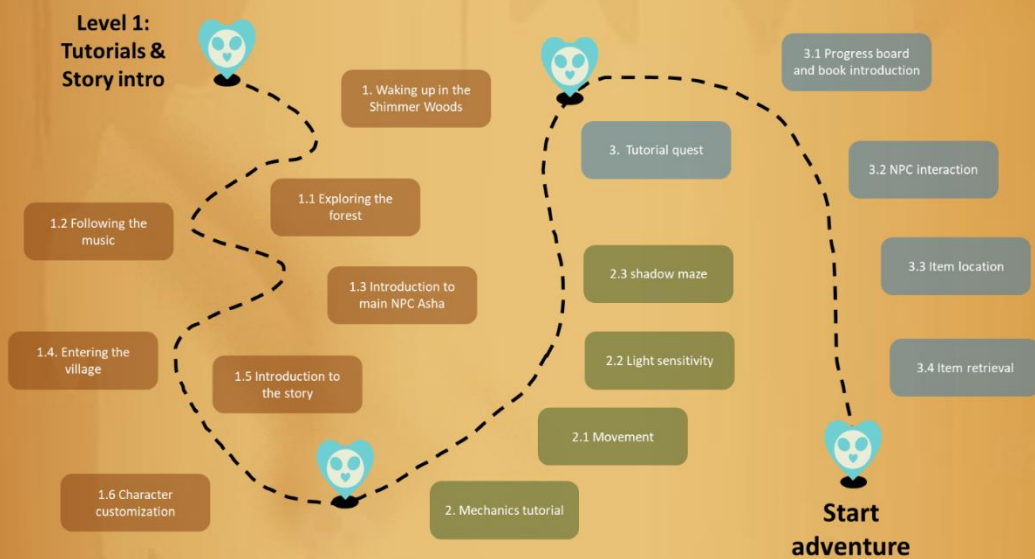
Throughout the game the player is confronted with many challenges and magical moments, but to truly give the player the feeling they have accomplished something, they will receive different kinds of rewards to show the value of what they are doing. Here they will:

- Collect items and memories.
- Unlock new characters to play.
- Learn about the different kinds of grief and process it.

Flowchart



Abstract Map

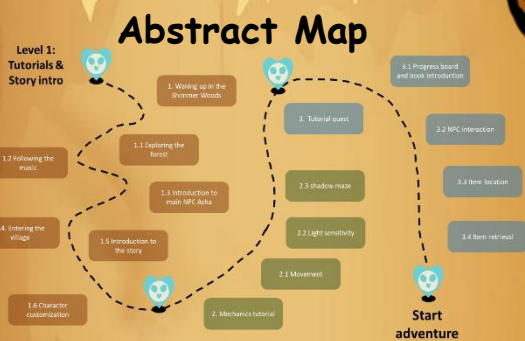


Abstract Map

Together with the flow chart, the abstract map shows the flow of the first level and how the player progresses based on the narrative. Through small tutorials the player gets to know the mechanics and surroundings.

The player wakes up in the Shimmer Woods like they just entered a dream. Here they meet Asha, one of the main NPCs who will explain the situation to them. Together they walk to the village and this is where the player has its first interaction with the game environment.

They go to the shop/house of Asha where she introduces her to the ways of the village. Together they wait for the player's pet to arrive. This is the moment where the player gets to customize their pet, like naming, animal and colour. Once this is achieved the player gets a list of items and memories that need to be found and a starting location to begin with their quest.



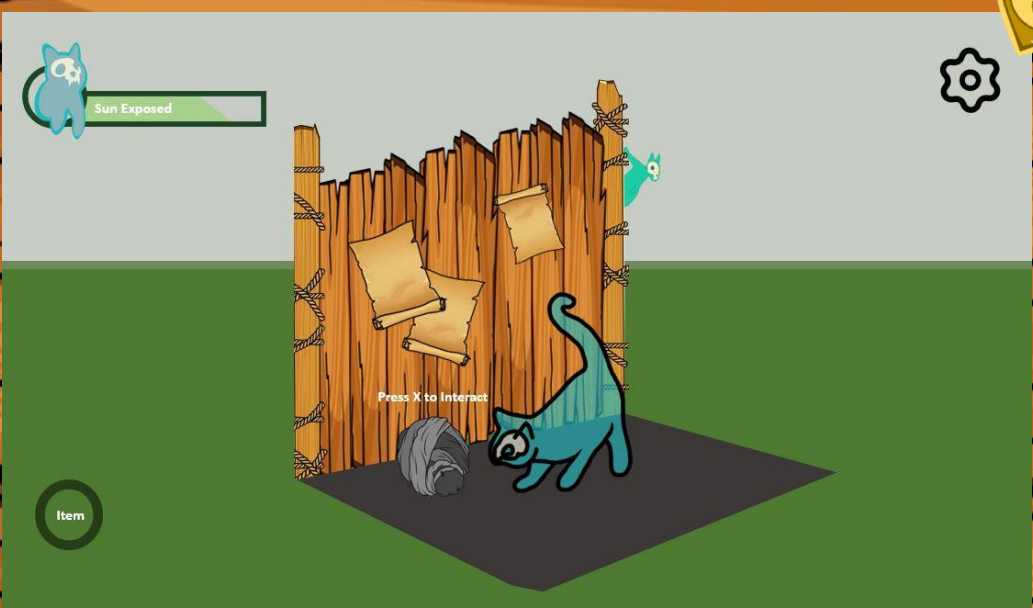
Rough Level Map

This rough level map shows the major buildings and location that are located within the village. The buildings shown on the map include things like:

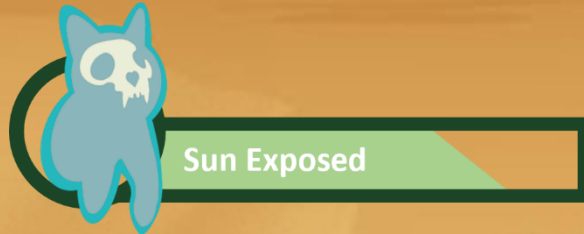
- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| ♣ Stables | ♣ cemetery |
| ♣ Shop | ♣ Farm |
| ♣ Bakery | ♣ Houses |
| ♣ Fountain | ♣ Hat Shop |
| ♣ Waterfall | ♣ Town House |
| ♣ Bridge | ♣ Potion Shop |
| ♣ Treeline | ♣ Herb shop |
| ♣ watermill | |



Interface



Interface



Sun Exposure

The sun exposure met shows you that you have been in the light for too long a period of time. Let it recharge before you jump from shadow to shadow.

Interact with Object/NPC

When walking up to an object of relevance within the game, A small pop up message show itself. This lets you know you are able to interact with this object or NPC.



Settings Button

The settings button in the top right of the interface directs the person towards the settings and game progress. It is subtle but located in a familiar place, so the player can find it without trouble.



Item Slot

When going on adventures the player has to collect items in order to progress. Once this Item is collected, it will show in the bottom left corner. This helps the player remind them what quest they are currently fulfilling.

GARF

Jump/Climb



Space bar

Walk/Run



Interact/
Investigate



Left click



Shadow to Shadow



Lost
items/memories

Mechanic	Goal(s)	Action(s)	Rule(s)	Feedback
Shadow Jumping	Traverse the village without touching the light.	Click the 'Jump' button to jump from shadow to shadow.	The player must use the jump function to	In the tutorial a small notification pops up so the player knows they can jump.
Sun/Light Touching	Don't touch the light.	Stay in the shadows.	The player is not allowed to touch the light for longer than 2 seconds.	The character/light meter starts reacting when touching light. Dissipates into the air. small explosion
Interaction NPCs	Interact with the NPCs to find progress in the narrative and collect clues to find items and memories.	Click the button to interact with NPC.	Walk close enough to NPC to interact.	The Interact button that needs to be pushed pops up.
Objects/memories	Investigating the items and finding out the purpose of its use.	Click the button to interact with the object/memory.	Walk close enough to Object/memory to interact.	The Investigate button that needs to be pushed pops up.
Environment	Finding out how to use the environment to your advantage.	Click the button to interact with the environment.	Walk close enough to obstacles to interact.	In the tutorial a small notification pops up so the player knows they can interact with the object.
Falling	Does not get hurt, but needs to find the route again.	Does not stay on a raised platform or structure.	Player does not walk over the edge of a platform or structure.	Player falls off of the platform or structure.
Climbing	Follow the assigned path, while holding the climb button?	Click the button to climb on the obstacle.	Walk close enough to obstacles to interact.	A small notification pops up so the player knows they can climb.
Walking/running	Walk/run around the area.	Hold the movement button to start walking/running.	-	Character starts moving.

The 4 G's

Goods

The “**Goods**” in a video game are any kind of objects that the player can win. Within a “**A Passing friend**” this would be the different items and memories you would have to look for. These items give the players the ability to dive deeper into the narrative of the game and motivates them to find more. In addition to this, the player is able to obtain and buy items to customize their character. This gives the player the ability to personalize the game to their own interests.

Glory

The “**Glory**” celebrates the player’s achievements throughout the game. The player will return from their quest and is welcomed by NPCs showing their appreciation for their achievement. During the entire adventure the player is able to follow their progression in a journal and on an achievement board, located somewhere in the village. Not only does this show what they have been able to collect in a hoard of items and medals. It also shows what they yet have to achieve. Making the player eager to find out more about the videogame.

The background is a dark green forest with silhouettes of evergreen trees. A white crescent moon is visible in the upper center. Two unrolled scrolls, resembling parchment with torn edges, are positioned horizontally. The top scroll contains the title 'Glee' and a paragraph of text. The bottom scroll contains the title 'Gods' and a paragraph of text.

Glee

“**Glee**” is the joy the players will feel while playing the game. The main focus of the game goes out to the people who are focussed on the narrative and the discovery of new locations, items and characters. To ensure these players find enjoyment in their progression, they are challenged with puzzles, obstacles, mazes and the promise of further narrative development. The player's curiosity gets triggered, leaving them wanting to play on, even after not playing for a while.

Gods

Players like to be in control of their decisions when they are playing a video game. It is up to the game designers to make them feel like they are in control of their own destiny. Feeling like they are the “**Gods**” of their own story. In the game the player is able to traverse the area in many different ways, all the while they remain in the designated playing area. By playing in a small town surrounded by a forest, the player unknowingly wants to find out more about this magical village, they can choose what character they play, where to go, unlocking new areas, etc. This creates many different options and ways to get to the end result of the game. Helping their recently deceased pet to the afterlife.

Challenges

The challenges the player will face at the beginning of the game are used as an introduction to all the others further in the game. It is simplified so the player gets to learn about the mechanics and how to use them to their advantage. The first challenge is to find an object for Asha while she introduces you to the game mechanics. This will be in the shape of a tutorial.

Shadow maze

Before setting out on the mission, Asha has mentioned that the character(your pet) is only able to traverse the village through the night and shadow. Starting out on your mission you begin during the day. This means the player is immediately confronted with the challenge of sticking to the shadow. Through this mission this will gradually become more challenging, showing different ways you have to overcome gaps between the shadows. When the player touches the light for too long a period of time, the pet will dissipate, dropping the skull to the ground. This results in the player having to start over the route.

Blocked routes

During the day and night the player will find some routes blocked. Some roads lead to dead ends for the current character they are playing. If they are not able to climb over or find any other way to pass the obstacle, they will have to find another route.

Falling off buildings

When traversing the rooftops of the building, climbing in trees and balancing over ropes, the player is challenged to move carefully through this environment. If they make a mistake of walking too close to the edge of the obstacle, they will fall to the ground. This does not result in any damage, but in having to find a new route or not being able to go to the shadow and restarting the entire route.

Looking for clues through puzzles and narrative

In order to find the lost items and memories, the player has to find clues of the item's whereabouts. This means they have to either interact with NPCs who will guide their way or looking for clues hidden in the village. These challenges are vague enough to leave the player somewhat guessing. Resulting in them having to actively put clue A and B together in order to find the lost item/memories.

Reflection

The last period of design I learned many new things that I previously had no experience in. I started out with an education in Industrial Product Design and no further game development skills other than making concept art/illustrations and playing TTRPG. So starting out I had no idea what would be expected of me.

During the design lessons in period 1 we got lessons on what game design is and what to take into account when designing and were quickly thrown in the deep with working on Unity. This at first caught me off guard due to my lack of experience, but thanks to the mixed groups that were formed with art and programming students, we were able to help each other out a lot. Within this team I often took on the role of creating the general idea of the game and creating prefabs in Maya to then transfer them to Git and Unity. This often went without a problem, but the main problem I encountered was the size and material difference of the object once it was transported to Unity. After trial and error we found out the ways to implement the prefabs into Unity with the assigned materials.

Now that I have worked on the HCD and LDD, I have a clearer view on what might be expected of me when I am entering the game design industry. Although there is still much to improve, I am very satisfied with the result. In the upcoming future I am planning to learn more about the use of Unity and designing interesting games that align with the target audience's needs.