

THE CONCEPT

Look, I love board games to bits, but let's face it, lots of them function on a very basic principle: set up the scenario or map or whatever, do the thing you're supposed to do, clean up and do it all over again with the next scenario.

What this translates to, in terms of player experience, is a very "small" kind of thing. Things feel small because they ARE small. Sure, you may be in a village somewhere, but it's just a small number of tiles set up in a certain way.

The goal is always the same. The baddies are always the same. And have I mentioned it all feels small?

Consider Descent for example, a game I dearly love, but all you're really doing is you set up the scenario (which sometimes takes even as much as 30 minutes), and then you play it. Great! And it's fun!

BUT IT'S SMALL!!!

There's this claustrophobic feel to it that is inescapable. And then once you finish the first scenario, you clean up and do it all over again.

Diablo 2, another one I love, had a similar issue. It tries to feel big, but it hides this illusion by having you go through "mini games" they call dungeons or caves or whatever. You don't really explore the world, you just go from one small scenario to another and that's it.

And we don't want that. We don't want you to go from "episode to episode".

We want you to set up the entire world and then dig in. Be there. Live there. Breathe it. Feel it. Navigate it. And eventually, if you can, beat it.

You never have to clean up and go to the next scenario because there isn't any.

This is a world that is alive and has been and will continue to be here once you're gone.

What we want is BIG. OPEN. WORLD.

World of Warcraft.

Gothic.

Elder Scrolls.

THAT'S WHAT WE WANT!

This is what we're going for and as such here are the operative words behind our game:

A big open world ready to be explored — this is a world that has existed and will continue to exist long before or after you're done playing it. It is a world that is alive with history and lore. You just so happen to stumble upon it and discover it at your will.

Non repetitiveness — this is crucial for us — no game should ever feel the same and this is where some of the other things come into play. How do you make this experience non feel the same?

Player choice — and by this we really mean consequences. Players need to be very careful what they choose to do because everything here has consequences and repercussions. Basic example? Careful what you do with that stick because if you use it to make a fire you might not be able to use it somewhere else. Choices cannot be undone. So be very, very careful what you do, who you talk to, what chain quest you do and especially who you kill. Yes, you can kill good guys as well!

Interconnected-ness — things are linked very tightly in this world. Some NPCs don't like each other, some quests connect things and people, you have to travel between world and so on. Everything is connected by a very well thought out thread. And speaking of threads...

Story and character driven — everything is informed by this and NPCs matter.

The explore mechanic — this is at the core of our non repetitiveness idea because whenever you explore you draw a card and given there will be a LOT of cards, you never get the same thing and as such your experience of the game is never the same.

Exclusivity — this is hand made so only a few people will have it.

Experience — well the whole thing is just that, an experience. It's a movie wrapped in an open world game.

So with that in mind, let's take a closer look at everything else :D

What is Oneiros?

Oneiros is a horror survival board game that emphasises discovery, exploration and of course survival. It's a very story-driven game that never feels the same when you play it and that's because at its core it has a mechanic we like to call "explore" (more later).

Key words that best describe Oneiros

Occult

Mystery

Exploration

Horror

Survival

Coop

Exclusivity

Experience

Open world

Player choice / consequences

Interconnected-ness

Story and character driven

THE STORY

The story takes place in 1918 Europe, London.

The world is in shambles after the war and everyone is picking up the pieces, some more successfully than others.

One such person is Gabriel Meinhart (29), a WWI veteran with a busted knee, PTSD and a sleep disorder that has essentially turned him into a zombie.

On his return home he comes back to find that the war has taken everything from him, his career, his friends and his beloved wife and child.

In just a few years he has gone from someone with a perfectly normal life, to now being practically homeless.

No company will go near him as the combination of his broken knee and insomnia make him a liability to say the least.

Wandering the country aimlessly he does odd jobs here and there, surviving on scraps from one day to the next, and decides one day to try and find a way to contact his wife, if nothing else to have someone to talk to.

He tries all kinds of drugs but nothing works, before he comes across Edward "Tall Oak" Something, a Lakota Native Indian that was brought to Europe for labour.

He is a shaman, a real one, and tells him he can help but they're going to need to more people.

Gabriel finds Clarice and Ian (more later) and they do the seance.

Before the seance however Edward tells them to NOT touch anything.

Gabriel of course does, because he secretly wants to bring her back from the dead, and fucks the whole seance up.

They are now stuck in The Nightmare Realm.

THE NIGHTMARE REALM

The Nightmare Realm is defined by two things:

1. It always shifts
2. It can manifest fears

The Realm is of course represented by our board and is one of the main features / attractions of the game.

The Nightmare Realm is represented by a number of tiles each divided into squares. The player will have to navigate each square and pass from tile to tile while trying to escape this realm.

Why is our board such a big deal? — because just like any good nightmare, the board will not let you escape.

In an attempt to combine difficulty with new-ness every time, we've come up with a way to do that in having our board shift and change every fixed number of turns.

What does that mean? — that means that every other number of turns the entire board will move (a la Forbidden Desert) and will form a new landscape every time. As such things will never be where you found or left them and the player will have to use his wits (and a bit of luck) to effectively navigate and escape the realm.

And if that wasn't enough, there is one more feature about the Nightmare Realm that players will have to deal with...

...the fact that this realm can manifest their fears. These fears are basically the bad NPCs that will hunt (and haunt) the player for the duration of the game. They are very hard to kill and each have unique abilities depending on what kind of fear they are.

So let's look at that for a second.

IDEA — the map also moves vertically, not just left, right, up and down. This allows for certain places to be very hard to be reached.

THE FEARS

There are 10 fears to choose from (fear of fire, fear of the dark, etc.) and each players either choose one or gets one random at the start of the game.

Here are some examples:

Fear of fire — manifests fire demon (can't go near it, if so, you take 1 damage)

Fear of dark — manifests shadow demon (can pass through objects)

Fear of snakes —

Fear of spiders —

Fear or noise — acusticophobia — demon can push and pull you

Fear of dogs —

Fear of blood — demon regens, cannot be killed (only a certain specific way)

Fear of closed spaces —

Fear of choking —

Fear of storms —

Fear of being alone —

Fear of time —

Fear of daylight —

Fear of going blind — demon can't see you, but it goes by sound

Fear of speed — fast demon

Fears are important because they affect sanity and they are basically the bad guys of the game.

IDEA — you can conquer your fear by destroying the same demon three times? And if you do what happens once you have no fear to manifest anymore?

THE MANIFESTATION

So how do you bring about a demon into this world? Well it's simple: one of the actions the player can perform is explore. When you explore you draw a card and depending on what the card says, well, that thing happens.

So for example if you decide to explore and you draw a card that says "manifest fear", you know what fear your character has chosen and you manifest it.

What does that mean? — that means you take the demon figurine assigned to the fear and place it in the nearest adjacent square to you.

You have just manifested your fear. Good luck :)

Why is this not something you want? — because as stated, fears are incredibly hard to beat and most of the time you will be running or hiding from them.

Hiding from them? How the hell do you hide in a board game?

I'm glad you asked. Let's look at the actions a player can perform.

THE ACTIONS

On any given turn the player will be able to do 2 things:

1. Move
2. Perform an action

All of the actions a player can perform, including moving, are managed by stamina. So let's look at each of those individually:

1. **Explore** — this is one of the base mechanic of the game and enables the player to explore what is on the square they are currently on. When the player decides to

explore he draws from a pile of cards and follows the instructions on it. The card decides what he has found or not. For instance, it can say “manifest fear”, in which case you do that. But it could also say “you found nothing”, “you have found item” and even “you have come across a location”. That location can be an old mine, a house, a cabin, a well, or anything we want. How does the location appear on the board? Simple: you take the piece (which our dear friend Chelu has pre-sculpted) and you place it on the nearest free and available square next to the character. And voila, you have come across a house.

2. **Attack** — pretty self explanatory :)
3. **Drop / pick up** — see above :)
4. **Open / close** — ok this is complicated, but basically you can open or close doors :D
5. **Hide** — this is another new and appealing mechanic and this is how it goes. Hide uses ALL the stamina and makes the player “invisible” for the mobs. You do however have to be at least two squares away from the mob you’re trying to hide from (and not move of course). As stated, fears are really hard to defeat, so a lot of the times you will be running or hiding from them. However while the player is indeed hidden, the mob will move to your last known location and you will have to roll a dice to see if the mob sees you or not. If the mob does...good luck :D
6. **Distract** — another new action, not sure how it works yet, but going with the idea that mobs are hard to beat, you will be able to use items or sound to distract mobs to different squares so that you can go around them. Again you have to be a certain distance away from them, so you can’t distract a mob that is on the same square as you.
7. **Dash** — characters can dash across two squares for the price of 3 stamina. Example: normally you would pay 2 stamina to walk across 2 squares (1 stamina per square). However players can choose to dash across 2 squares for the price of 3 stamina. This ability will go on cool down for a number of turns and is useful when avoiding combat.
8. **Interact** — at this point this is mainly for characters interacting with each other to trade items and such, but ideally we want them to be able to interact with NPCs and perhaps even the world itself. Just not sure HOW a player / character would interact with the world.

Cooldown — certain abilities, like Dash, Hide and Distract go on cool down for a certain number of turns, which means the player has to be very careful how and when to use them.

How to visually represent them being on cool down? — just get a dice and put it on top of the ability and each turn reduce the number on the dice.

Now let’s go back to character for a second :)

THE CHARACTERS

Gabriel Meinhart

Before the war Gabriel was what they called a “curio writer” for a local paper, meaning he was responsible for writing articles and short stories about lesser known things and all sorts of other weird curiosities.

The man is essentially a human almanac.

He gets drafted and fights in the war. The result? PTSD, insomnia and a busted knee.

He also finds his entire world in ruin when he gets back and all he wants to do is find a way to bring his wife and child back.

Weakness / disadvantage — can't dash (due to busted knee).

Strength / advantages — something to do with his knowledge.

Clarice Invin

The female of the group, not sure how she is connected to them but she is an actress.

Weakness — starts with only 1 damage (everyone has 2) and 1 less HP than everyone else.

Strength — she can Distract one square farther than anyone else (because she's an actress).

Edward “Tall Oak” Something

Genuine Lakota shaman. Mentally and physically strong.

Weakness —

Strength — 1 extra resist to insanity.

Ian Something — detective? Still loading...

THE ITEMS

This is NOT Diablo hack and slash or Dark Souls boss fights!

The items you find in the game are unique, very hard to come by and they offer what might appear to be slight advantages, but in truth they matter a lot.

And also, the items can be used for multiple purses, which makes the game more replayable. For instance if you use this key here, it's gone, but you could've used it somewhere else. Next time!

Player choice in item usage is very important and makes a huge difference.

THE WORLDS

One final note before we get into gameplay.

The Nightmare Realm is essentially **two worlds** in one. On the surface players can move around and do things, quests or whatever.

However when they decide to explore everything changes and a different world is revealed.

Short example: if the player doesn't explore, at the end of his turn he draws a card from the "end of turn" deck and something happens, let's say he finds a basic item.

BUT

If he decides to explore, he doesn't draw a card at the end of his turn and instead draws one from the "explore deck". This of course doesn't give him the item in the regular world but something much more exotic and occult.

This basically means that we are designing two games in a way, one that is on the surface, and one that is revealed only upon exploring each square.

Alright, now on to the sexy stuff :D

THE GAMEPLAY

The idea behind what you are about to read came from the fact the game was too simple and boring at the start: move, explore, move, explore.

So in an attempt to spice things up and give the player focus and a goal, instead of this being an aimless game, we've decided to take away the explore ability at the start of the game.

Bear with me and read on :)

So you start the game — each character with all their basic stats and abilities EXCEPT EXPLORE. The player cannot explore at this point.

Each players spawns in a pre-determined location.

After they spawn, they each draw a card from the “calling deck” — this is basically a “get to this point of the map” card.

This “calling” is a light or something that represents his wife “calling him”.

So you spawn, you draw from the calling deck, and now you have a destination.

Get to location — which is on the other side of the map.

That's why they spawned in pre-determined locations, because their spawn location is on one side of the map and the calling deck (which they all have individually) leads them to the other side of the map.

So now you have a goal — get to the location.

You move and end your turn.

At the end of your turn you draw a card from the “end of turn” deck.

This makes something happen — spawn NPC, item or whatever. It basically fills the map with things from the regular world.

So move, draw end step, move, draw end step.

Then you get to location and get a quest.

You do the quest and reach the end and complete the quest.

The reward for the quest? — YOU CAN NOW EXPLORE.

You either get an item that let's you do that or it's a power, doesn't matter.

Also the reward is either at the end of the quest OR you have to go back and get the reward from the quest giver.

THE POINT OF ALL OF THE ABOVE IS SIMPLE:

1. It gives the player focus and aim
2. It fills the world with things and places

The idea is that by the end of this first quest the world is a bit discovered and with the explore ability now things get real spicy.

Now the world of the game basically shifts and the player has two choices:

1. Either keep moving and drawing cards at the end of each step — this generates “regular stuff” and “regular quests”. This is the “regular world” and it’s all nice and all, but what you really want is to you the power to explore.
2. EXPLORE — this is what you really want to do in the game, using the power or the item that allows you to do so. You want to explore what’s “behind” this world. Imagine a scene from a horror movie: a character looks at an empty closet and that’s all he sees. But if he could explore, he would see a demon inside the closet smiling at him. That’s basically the idea here. The player can go around the “normal world” and do things, which is fine. But the real sexiness is in the “other side” of the world, which you access by exploring.

Exploring also gives you access to unique items and quests and NPCs you don’t normally find in the “regular world”.

From this point on the story continues and the player can do whatever he wants.

Ok, but after he gets the explore thing, don’t we go back to the game being repetitive, move, explore, move, explore?

Well no, not really, because at that point the world will have been revealed in part by drawing cards at the end of each turn.

Also there are quests they need to complete and so on.

NOTE — we need to make sure the player is always engaged and doing something, aka quests or some kind of goals. If we leave the game open and they’re just randomly exploring things we risk boring the players by making the game aimless.

Remember, there are two worlds at your disposal, and the sexy things happen in the explore world aka the nightmare realm.

THE DECKS

The game will have several decks of cards, each for its own purpose. Here's what we have so far.

The calling deck — each character has his own calling deck and draws from it when they spawn first. It's a small deck, 5-6 cards, that take the player to a specific location on the map. Why separate decks? Because each player starts from a pre-selected location, and each of their decks is designed to take them to the other side of the map. If there was only one deck, one of the players might risk having to travel only a few squares away.

End of turn deck — for regular stuff — you draw a card at the end of your turn and this spawns regular stuff, items, NPCs and such. These exist in the "real world", as opposed to the explored world which is "just under the surface".

Explore deck — for explore stuff, exotic sexy stuff — you draw this when you decide to use an action to explore. This reveals what lies beneath the things we can see with our eyes. This spawns / manifests exotic locations, items, quests and NPCs that are normally not accessible otherwise.

REMEMBER — once the player unlocks the explore mechanic he can only do one of these things, either draw at end of turn or explore. Why? Because being able to do both removes player choice and also over crowds the map too soon.

Clue deck — at certain points of the game you will get a clue. These clues are basically pieces of a puzzle you need to solve to get a Solution (more later). You DO NOT need to solve the actual puzzle, just acquire a certain number of clues and then you are eligible to get the Solution / reward. Some quests / puzzles will need 2 clues to get the solution, others might need 3 or even more, depending on the reward. Gabriel can somehow interact with this or has a power to do with the fact he knows a lot of stuff.

As stated, once you get all the clues you are instructed to draw a certain card from the Solutions deck (which is basically the reward or perhaps another quest?).

Each combo of clues leads to a certain solution in the deck and players will have to find them all and **exchange** them depending on who finds what.

This of course means that in a coop game you might need to interact with other players and exchange clues to get a certain solution.

When you grab your solution 3 things can happen:

1. Go to location to collect reward

2. Reward instantly as you get solution
3. Combine something (items) to get solution — this is super important because **player choice** is God in this game. Say you have an item and you think it's useless. You use it and later on when you get your Solution you realise you could've kept it and gotten a reward to doing something with it. Sucks for the player, but again, this feeds into the idea that **player choice** is everything in this game and YOU MATTER and YOUR CHOICES MATTER. So be very careful!!!

Solution deck — these are the end of the line for clue decks. They are numbered and the player is told which number to grab based on the clues they have. Once a chain of clues has been gathered, the player draws the designated solution and follows the instructions on it.

So what does an actual turn look like?

THE TURN

So what does a turn look like?

Once you acquire the explore action, the world is yours to explore (no pun intended).

You can either explore the regular world just by travelling through it and drawing a card at the end of your turn.

OR

You can explore the other side using the explore mechanic.

At this point in the game you will have acquired NPCs and quests and all kinds of stuff anyway, so go have fun :)

NOTE — you can only do one however, you CANNOT DO BOTH (as this will probably overcrowd the map and also we want the player to be able to choose).

So basically this is the turn **BEFORE** you get the explore ability:

Move to where the location is calling you

End turn

Draw a card from “end of turn” deck

The card tells you what happens and you act accordingly

Then you move, end turn and draw again, and of course in between you can attack, pick up, hide or whatever is happening on the map.

AFTER you get the explore ability, now you have a choice. Now you are free to do ONE of them only. You can either move, end the turn and draw a card.

OR

You can move and do whatever, then choose to **explore** and see what happens. If you do this, you no longer draw a card at the end of your turn from the “end of turn” deck.

RANDOM STUFF

How do we keep track of which square has been explored? — we need this, otherwise a player can just sit still and just explore indefinitely.

Quests and NPCs come into conflict with each other. They don’t like each other.

Anyone and everyone can die. You can kill any NPCs, good or bad, and this has an effect because sometimes you might have a quest to kill one, but another player needs him to not die.

Some locations are in the real world, others are in the explore world.

How do you win / lose?

You lose by getting to 0 HP or going insane.

You win by...???

IDEA — there have to be at least 10 ways to beat the game which makes playing it over and over again new and exciting.

Game impact — everything you do in the game matters and has a huge impact or repercussions.

Theme(s)???

NPCs

While exploring the Nightmare Realm you will come across various NPCs you can interact with. They will give you quests or missions to go on and if you complete them you get stuff.

These NPCs are others like you, “lost dreamers”, some who got here by accident, some that want to stay, some that are stuck, etc.

Unique abilities

These are unique abilities you acquire only once and they are hard to come by. A lot of times you won't even get them as they are so hard to acquire. Some ideas include:

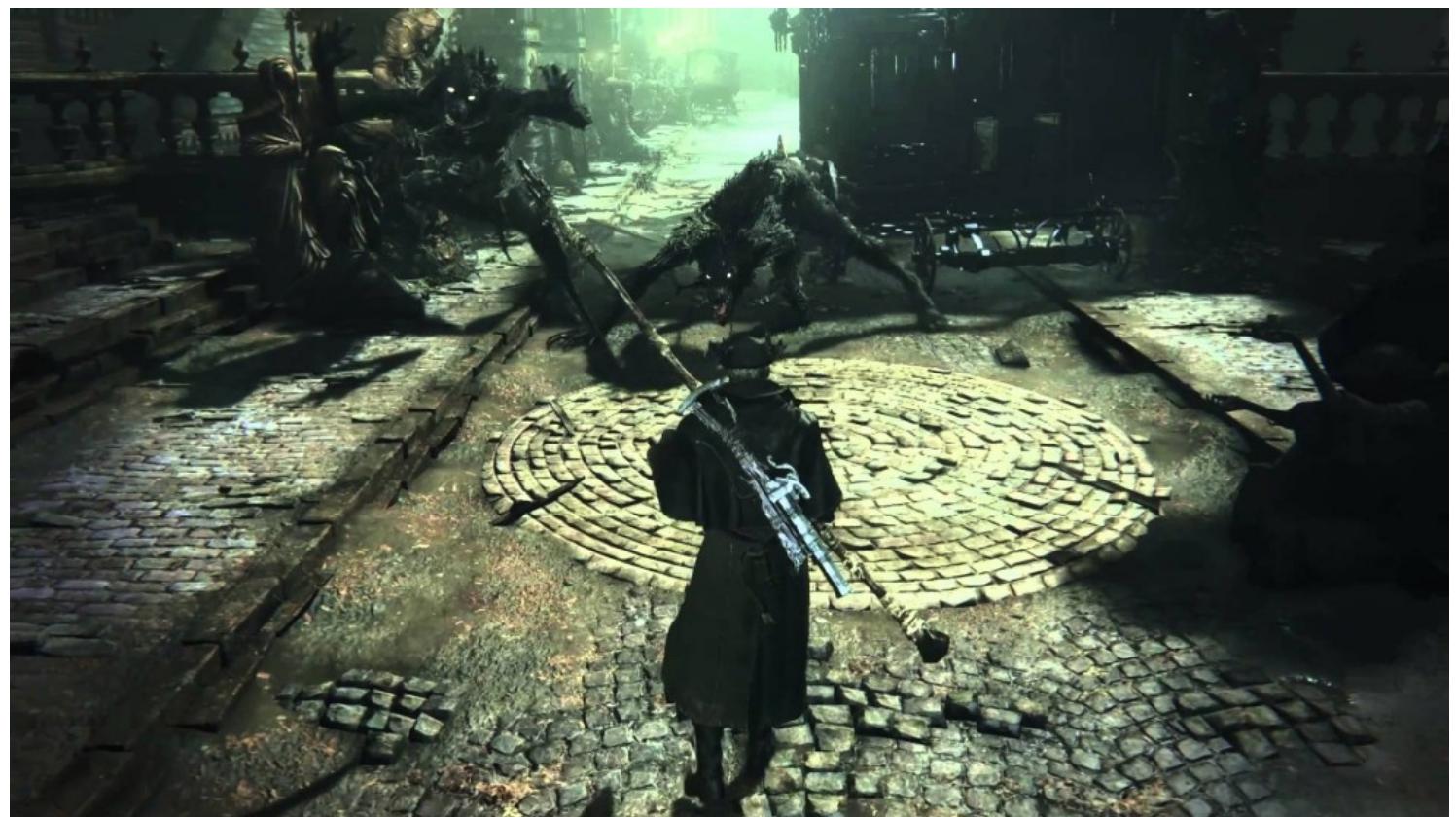
Phasing — going through object — perhaps after killing the shadow demon?

Mirror walk — ability to travel between mirrors (which are waypoints basically)

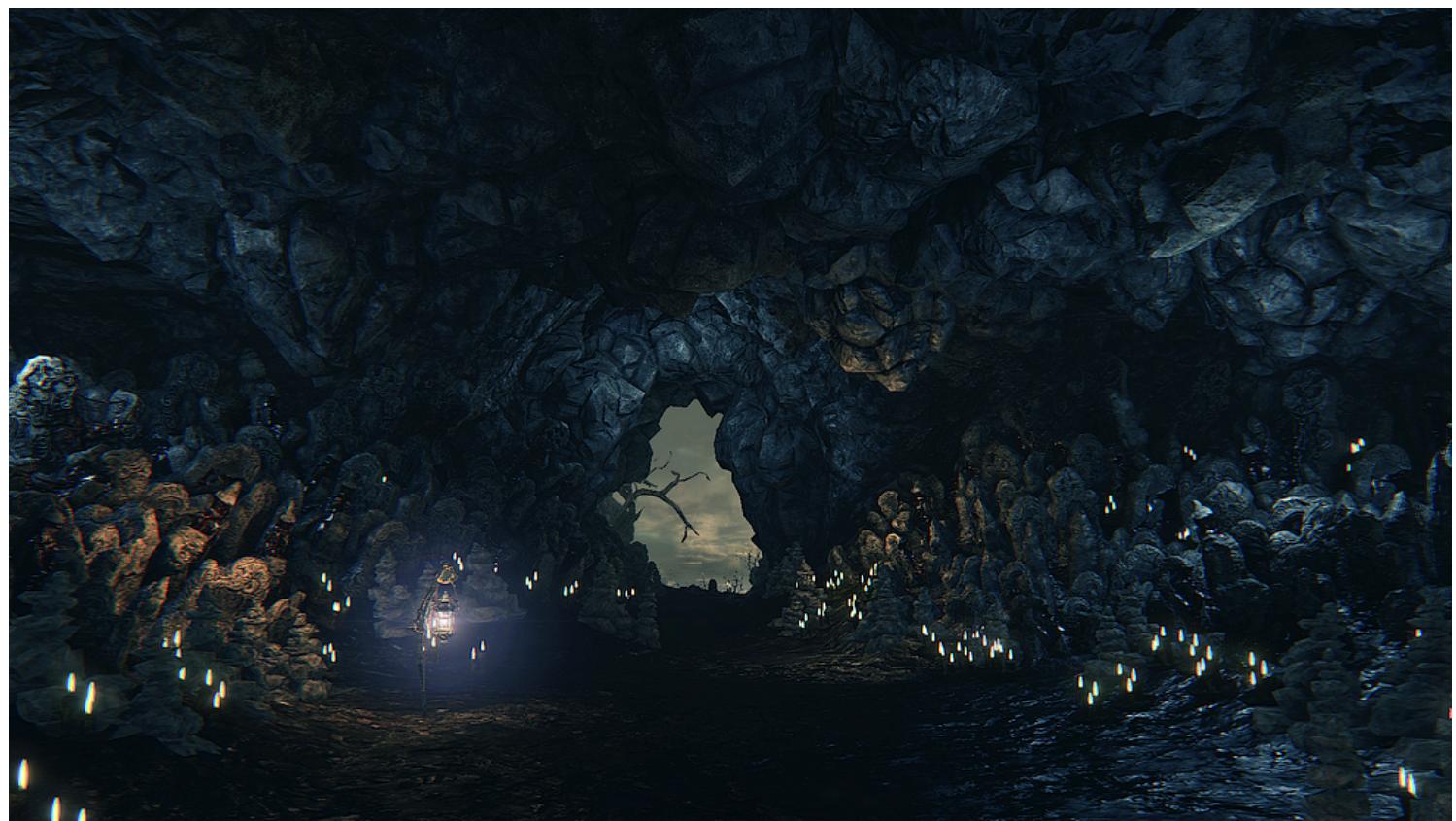
Block tiles — ability to block certain tiles when they move?

Possible issue — is the game just an endless loop of move, explore, move, explore?

MOOD BOARD / THE NIGHTMARE REALM









THE BOARD

