Strung Along

# Elevator pitch:

Two puppets who know nothing beyond the walls of their play, long for something more. Follow them as they work to cut loose by subverting the scenes of their evil director.

# Overall Narrative:

The narrative revolves around the players (puppets) wanting to escape their evil stage director and to do this they have to obey the directions of each stage, but slowly understand their overall situation and gather a few upgrades to eventually break through the stage and escape.

Like a stage play there will be 3 acts. During the first act the players won’t have too many abilities and will basically be concentrated on working through the objectives of each scene. At the end of act 1 they will have to perform a battle against a creepy string enemy and after they kill it they will gain an upgrade to their strings which makes them stretchy. This allows for new mechanics in act 2. Act 2 will involve more creative (difficult) problem solving. There will be some red-herring escape options for the puppets but if the players try to use them the director will thwart their attempts and get angry, perhaps sending enemies to attack them. At the end of act 2 the puppets will defeat another “boss” and get a match (fire upgrade) which will allow them to start destroying the stage for act 3. In act 3 the director will be directly fighting the puppets by trying to flatten them on stage as well as throw objects and enemies at them. After causing enough chaos the puppets will eventually destroy the stage roof and break the rigging meaning their string-anchors will fall down. At this point the players can use their string-anchors as “grappling hook” projectiles, thus giving their players a full suite of mechanics to try and escape. They will work up vertically to eventually escape through the roof and complete the game (maybe chuck in a final battle against the director’s actual, human hand - picture master hand from smash).

# Setting:

Draws inspiration from classic marionette shows. The game camera remains in a fixed position overlooking a stage in isometric 3D. The stage is basically divided into three sections being the background, middle and foreground. When the players start they are positioned inside a scene with fixed string-anchors to where they are attached (hung in the rigging at the top of the scene). Each scene plays out with the (evil) director giving the puppets directions that they have to complete in a certain time. Think of the directions for each scene as the objective for each level. If the players do not complete the objectives within a certain time or they get killed by scene hazards then they will have to redo that scene from the start.

## Objectives:

Sample directions for each scene could include:

* Move both players to certain positions (which involves a mechanica challenge to get there)
* Perform a certain task for the audience (like both jumping into a pool or something)
* Defeat some puppet enemies (providing some basic combat play)

Upon completing the direction for the scene, the players will transition to the next scene. Like a real stage, the background will slide sideways and transition to a different area. The set pieces on the stage will also lift up (knocking the players off) and new set pieces will be dropped in. The player string-anchors may also move to a new position (dragging the corresponding player with them).

## Scene Transition:

The stage transitions could be considered “semi-levels”. A lot of motion is happening and the players may die, meaning they have to redo the transition. During the scene transition there will be shadows indicating where the new objects are falling in. If the players get hit by these they may die. “Stage hands” may also bring new set pieces in.

# Mechanics:

The game mechanics will really lean into the marionette vibe.

## Basic functionality:

* Move
* Jump
* Grab and hold objects
* Climb (by holding the “hold” button and moving up)
* Tangle around each other to shorten their string
* Swing on the strings (by using their tangle effect to anchor one player to the other)

## Environmental Functionality:

* Pick up weapons
* Attack with weapons to fight of creepy enemies
* Pull levers which shift their string-anchors allowing them to access other parts of the stage
* Climbable obstacles
* Falling set pieces which can crush the puppets (indicated by shadow)
* Audience/director who can throw objects at the puppets that kill on contact (indicated by shadow and usually only happens when they stand still or take too long)
* Throwable objects to hit buttons

## Act 1 Functionality:

* Climb up their own string
* Climb up (and jump off) their costar’s string
* Combined pushing/pulling to move objects that are too heavy for 1 player

## Act 2 Functionality:

* Stretchy strings enable players to pull each other to the limit of their string and release them to slingshot to higher vantages
* Can use slingshot ability with weapon in hand to beat tough enemies

## Act 3 Functionality:

* Firestarter ability to burn obstacles on stage
* Can break through areas to shortcut objectives and launch with the slingshot to light rigging on fire
* Freely throw string-anchor to attach it to high platforms and climb higher (after rigging is destroyed)
* All mechanics enabled for final escape

# Enemies/NPC’s:

## Standard:

### Stage Hands:

Shadowy dismembered hands which move set pieces. Can only be killed by the puppets with weapons or fire. Can kill the puppets on contact (maybe by strangling them cause that’s edgy).

## Bosses:

### Ball-of-String Octopus Thing:

Final boss of act one. Is made up of rigging strings which can tangle and bind players. Can only be killed with weapons. After defeat gives the players the string upgrade which gives them stretchy strings.

### Creepy Fire Monster:

Final boss of act two. Made from burning stage lights. Periodically lights on fire which kills puppets on contact. Has thick metal armour. When not on fire puppets have to use slingshot ability while holding a weapon to super-hit it and break its armour.

### Director’s Hand:

The final boss which basically tries to kill the puppets. Requires grappling around to get into better position, burn it and slingshot super-hits. Picture the master hand boss from smash.