Wave survival / puzzle mansion escape – “Shadow Chateau”? “The First Mansion”?

Solve the mysteries of an ever-changing mansion to escape, all the while surviving intensifying waves of invading monsters!

Genres: (2D,) roguelike, puzzle, survival.

Inspirations: Spelunky / Crypt of the Necrodancer (procedural areas), Left 4 Dead (monsters, intensifying waves), The Witness (puzzles), Metroid / Hollow Knight (area inter-connectivity, gating, & progression)

Basic Narrative:

* inspired by the first or first few mansions of *The Interior Castle*
  + (echoing from far away)“Welcome home. You’ve been out for quite a while, haven’t you? You’re not going to claim grounds for outrage if a few… *uninvited guests* have shown up in the mean time, are you?” “Who *are* you{, {sir/\*&%#}?” “An old friend. I’m not surprised you don’t remember me. Is there anything you *do* remember, after all? But don’t worry about me; you have more pressing concerns at the moment, I believe.”
* surroundings become progressively stranger and less castle-like with more progress, with extensive gardens, moats, armories, galleries, museums, crystalline walls, etc.
  + “I realize you may be wondering right now, ‘Am I even still inside anymore?’ If that’s the case, let me tell you not to worry about it. You should instead be wholly concerned with staying alive.”
* “What, were you expecting something to jump out and attack you? Come on now, that’s rather rude. What do you think this is, Barbaria? *Some* of us here are refined, you know.”
* NPCs/merchants based on aspects of the self (Will, Intellect, Affect, Passions, etc.)

Unique selling points:

* chess-boxing-like mastery of seemingly opposite play styles required for victory
* timed puzzle opportunities between waves naturally create alternating intervals of physical-intensity-mental-simplicity and mental-intensity-physical-simplicity without there ever being nothing to do
* since puzzle progression opens more space and allows finding weapons and upgrades, inter-wave time provides rising tension to avoid falling behind
* limited amount of time between waves has to be skillfully split between combat recovery/preparation and exploration for optimal chance of success
* play area expansion over time alleviates growing combat density while simultaneously spreading out puzzles and supplies

Game loop (can start at either main point):

* survive timed wave of enemies
  + attempt to kill all as quickly as possible for maximum time before next wave
* explore available areas for a given amount of time
  + gather items to recover/upgrade for next wave
    - find/craft weapons/armor/abilities/consumables
  + open new areas
    - match lock(s) and key(s)
    - activate object
      * lights
      * electricity
      * etc.
    - discover secret passage
    - etc.

Length: ~30 minutes single-try full playthrough, ~16 attempts to first completion, 8 hours average playtime

* Single procedural level
  + average 30 rooms/areas
    - procedurally created from distinct types: bedroom, bathroom, dining room, kitchen, pantry, closet, game room, courtyard, fenced/gated yard, etc.
* Objectives: find/unlock route to exit OR find/defeat hidden final boss
  + sub-objectives:
    - unlock new paths/rooms
    - upgrade weapons/armor/abilities/inventory
* Single playable character, upgraded by slotting items into specific inventory slots
  + optional feature: randomized/customized appearance
* Distinct enemy types with small per-enemy tweaks
  + swarm enemy
  + speedy enemy
  + durable enemy
  + jumping enemy
  + flying enemy
  + ranged enemy
  + etc.
  + tweaks: health, speed, aggression, color, etc.
* Modes: single-player
  + optional feature: co-op

Combat style:

* relatively durable enemies, difficult to approach without taking at least some damage
* weapons/ammo consumed quickly, requiring frequent swapping and skillfully making each attack count
* limited carry space, requiring resupply or repositioning during waves
* distinct weak points / vulnerabilities per enemy type, requiring different strategies for optimal engagement
  + head-shots
  + dismemberment
  + crushing/bludgeoning
  + piercing
  + fire
  + water
* environmental interactions (generally interacted via damage to allow long-distance activation) to be avoided/used by the player
  + falling chandeliers
  + tip-able furniture
  + fireplaces
  + sprinkler systems
  + destructible blockages
* enemy waves:
  + enemy types/count determined dynamically, based primarily on wave number, NOT available area count
  + spawn all at once, distributed through all available rooms
  + distinct types of waves, telegraphed from start of previous inter-wave time to allow specialized preparation
* difficulty greatly alleviated by finding ways to spread waves out
  + opening new areas
  + clever positioning / use of environment

Art Style: pixel art with dynamic lighting, stained-glass motif, starting dark and growing lighter with progression

* 2D side-view areas
  + passage(s) in the left/right walls
  + clime-able background elements (ladders, shelves, etc.) sometimes leading to vertical passages

Player types:

* combat-focused: uses inter-wave time primarily to gather resources, position, and plan for the upcoming wave; makes the most of less gear
* exploration-focused: uses inter-wave time primarily to explore and upgrade; has the best gear and most space but may get caught unprepared or in bad positions

Budget/timeline:

* solo developer @ $900/month
* art/music allowance: ?
* marketing allowance: ?
* maximum development time: ~27 months
* target development time: 12 months(?)

Milestones:

* Look-and-Feel – month 1
  + basic movement, climbing, basic enemies, health, items/weapons, basic combat, basic UI
* First-Playable – months 2-3
  + procedural generation, start/exit points, locks/keys, guaranteed soft-lock avoidance, critical VFX/messaging
* Vertical Slice – months 4-6
  + differentiated areas/enemies, abilities/upgrades, polished visuals/audio
* Alpha – months 7-9
  + area/enemy/item variety, difficulty curve, boss fight(s)
* Beta – months 10-11
  + feedback/playtesting updates
* Release – month 12
  + final balance, bug-fixing