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.”

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 1ü
  + basic movementü, climbingü, basic enemiesü, healthü, items/weaponsü, basic combatü, basic UIü
* First-Playable – months 2-3ü
  + procedural generationü, start/exit pointsü, locks/keysü, guaranteed soft-lock avoidanceü, critical VFX/SFX/messagingü, boss fightü, local co-op basic supportü
* Vertical Slice – months 4-6
  + hub area, differentiated areas/enemies/puzzles, abilities/upgrades, polished visuals/audio
* Alpha – months 7-9
  + area/enemy/item/ability/puzzle variety, difficulty curve, boss fight variety, progression
* Beta – months 10-11
  + feedback/playtesting updates
* Release – month 12
  + final balance, bug-fixing

Miscellaneous:

* “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 (after being fought as {mini-}bosses?) based on aspects of the self (Will, Intellect, Affect, Passions, etc.)
* “A \_\_\_\_? Who let *that* in? Oh, wait, that was me. Though in my defense, you didn’t stop it either.”
* music inspired by great hymns?
* enemies/bosses based on common/well-known vices/sins?
  + lust – grabs you and pulls you in
    - minibosses: pornography, masturbation, fornication, etc?
  + sloth – slows your movement
  + envy – damages you as you try to damage them/others
  + pride – messes w/ health meter / HUD, sneaks up on you, easy at first but hard to kill
    - swarms of easy minions at first, a few elite ones later?
  + greed – steals your equipment and uses it against you
  + wrath – hits hard and unrelentingly, invulnerable until particular times
  + gluttony – consumes your equipment in order to heal
* clothing/armor/abilities based on virtues?
* lock/key types:
  + (within each type: single-piece, multi-piece, puzzle)
  + key / matching object
    - battery
  + combination / key word
    - numbers
    - letters
    - switches
    - arrows/symbols
      * directions indicated via painting(s) w/ eyes/hands/etc. pointing the way
    - trick passageways
  + height/drop and ladder/rope
  + breakable barrier (w/ specific breaker)
    - glass
    - overgrown plants
    - crumbling wall
  + hazard & neutralization/protection
    - electricity
    - water
    - fire/lava
    - gas
  + (hidden) switch(es)
    - specific combination/sequence
    - rope to cut
  + pressure plate & weight
  + guard?
    - costume
    - gift
    - sneak/smuggle
  + rescue NPC
* “home” area / mechanic? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DTvBgmNL-p0
* secondary/secret objectives based on the Three Ways?
  + Purgative – kill enough enemies?
  + Illuminative – gather enough lore?
  + Unitive – befriend all NPCs?
* “Well, well, well… Look who decided to actually show up! Finally! Do you even know how long you neglected this place? … But while you were gone, I realized something. All of this? It isn’t yours anymore. It’s mine. You gave it up, and you can’t just waltz in here and expect us to even refrain from giving you the pummeling you deserve, much less let you run things.”