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

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

Take back your ancestral home! Pans, books, and bug bombs are your best friends as you use whatever’s at hand to fight the infestation of bugs, reptiles, and other creatures that laid claim while you were away. Solve puzzles and explore to root out the source of the growing plague before it overwhelms you!

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, swampy ruins, moats, armories, galleries, museums, crystalline walls, soaring bridges and sky-walks in the clouds, cavernous basements and wine-cellars, exotic menageries, glass/mirror mazes, ballrooms, throne rooms, icy crevices, magma vents, 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

* Multiple “zones” of increasing difficulty, each capped w/ a boss fight / special challenge, which can be played one at a time or sequentially
  + generally around 10-20 rooms/areas per zone dependent on difficulty
    - procedurally created from distinct types: bedroom, bathroom, dining room, kitchen, pantry, closet, game room, courtyard, fenced/gated yard, etc.
  + special reward/route only available when playing sequentially through all zones w/o death
  + stretch feature: interconnected zones & backtracking
* Objectives: find/unlock route to exit and defeat boss
  + sub-objectives:
    - unlock new paths/rooms
    - upgrade weapons/armor/abilities/inventory
  + stretch feature: multiple simultaneous exits of varying difficulty/hiddenness
* Single playable character, upgraded by slotting items into inventory slots and by gaining new slots
  + stretch feature: randomized/customized appearance
* Distinct enemy types with small per-enemy tweaks
  + swarm enemy (slime?)ü
  + speedy enemy (snake)ü
  + unpredictable enemy (spider)ü
  + durable enemy
  + jumping enemy (spider? mouse?)
  + flying enemy (bat)ü
  + ranged enemy (shadow)ü
  + multi-part enemy (skeleton)ü
  + explosive enemy
  + stealthy/evasive enemy
  + etc.
  + tweaks: health, speed, aggression, color, etc.
* Modes: single-player, co-op (2 player? 4 player?)

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 (shadows?)
  + dismemberment (skeletons?)
  + crushing/bludgeoning (slimes?)
  + 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 one by one with slight delays, distributed across current room’s spawn points
  + distinct types of waves, telegraphed from start of previous inter-wave time to allow specialized preparation
  + locked within the current room(s) for the duration of the wave to prevent simply avoiding enemies
* 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
* 2.5D element via passages between different depths?

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 4-6ü
  + hub areaü, differentiated areas/enemies/puzzlesü, abilities/upgradesü, polished visuals/audio, basic NPCsü
* Alpha – months 7-9
  + area/enemy/item/ability/puzzle variety, difficulty curveü, boss fight variety, progressionü, polished NPCs, coherent storyline/goal
* Beta – months 10-11
  + feedback/playtesting updates, polished storyline/dialogue
* Release – month 12
  + final balance, bug-fixing

Miscellaneous:

* NPCs/merchants (after being fought as {mini-}bosses?) based on aspects of the self
  + Will/Desire/Appetite – “Will”; starts weak, ends incredibly buff; training/practice area
    - Goal: self-mastery
    - Motivation: self-gift
    - Conflict: the others keep overriding me; Ida and Martha sometimes help, but Alex almost always opposes
  + Mind/Thought/Intellect/Understanding – “Ida”? “Mina”?; starts emo & ignorant, ends bright & knowledgeable; enemy/lore reference
    - Goal: self-knowledge
    - Motivation: to support Will’s self-mastery
    - Conflict: Alex keeps weighing me down, Will keeps ignoring me, Martha is so disorganized and keeps losing things
  + Affect/Passions – “Alex”?; starts listless & numb, ends peppy & sensitive; character/entryway customization/decoration
    - Goal: to keep things lively
    - Motivation: to motivate and direct the others and keep them from stagnation
    - Conflict: the others are all so stuffy and need to lighten up
  + Memory – “Martha”?; starts myopic, ends clear-eyed & far-seeing; replays/sharing? merchant
    - Goal: to save and be able to reproduce everything
    - Motivation: to ensure that the others never go without anything they need
    - Conflict: Alex keeps messing with my things, Ida keeps “organizing” them into boxes even when they don’t really fit, Will never knows what he wants/needs and often just goes rummaging aimlessly
  + Vegetative (Nutritive, Augmentative, Generative)? Sense(s)? Heart/Spirit? Locomotion? Imagination? Common sense / Perception? Estimated/Cogitative sense? Abstraction?
* “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 / Gregorian chant?
* enemies/bosses based on common/well-known vices/sins?
  + lust – grabs you and pulls you in; octopus/kraken-inspired?
    - minibosses: pornography, masturbation, fornication, etc?
  + sloth – slows your movement; sludge-inspired?
  + envy – damages you as you try to damage them/others
  + pride – messes w/ health meter / HUD, sneaks up on you (invisibility?), 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; bear-inspired?
  + 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
  + draw correct symbol(s)/shape(s)
* “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?
* optional per-death difficulty decrease?
* ‘Infinite’ area that continually expands as it is explored?
* Multi-part door gradually opened larger and larger?
* Grappling hook?
* ‘outdoor’/‘courtyard’ rooms
* legendary weapons? – e.g. Ax of the Sent, etc.
* zoom-out exterior view at start & end of each run? Blueprint items?
* Themed areas: “The Cellars”, “The Gardens”, “The Rooftops”, etc?
* sloppy sign of the cross symbol?
* stronger intra- and inter-run progression/momentum? upgrade tree?