N230 Midterm Design Document – Devon Richey

I. World History/Narrative

In the time before man treaded the rocky steppes of Elhokryn, the dark lord Malroketh ruled over this realm with an iron fist. Ruthless in his conquests, he spread his influence to the far reaches of the valley of Kyre, conscripting all foolish enough to resist him into his armies of twisted wraiths, turning the very ground he walked to barren slate. He constructed massive stone monoliths, twisted structures of blackened stone and obsidian to act as conduits for his destructive power, and a vast labyrinth to act as his bastion. Nigh unstoppable in his power, he sought to bring the world to its knees at his feet.

But alas, the foul king's hubris was his downfall, for a hero of light by the name of Xanthys turned Malroketh's own creations against him. Channeling the divine light of Lykalys through Malroketh's own obelisks, Xanthys gravely wounded the lich, sealing him within the bowels of the labyrinth, turning the impenetrable bastion into an inescapable prison. With the lich in confinement, Xanthys brought peace to Elhokryn, restoring much of the land brought to ruin by Malroketh's conquest, though the valley of Kyre remains a barren expanse of smoke and blackened stone.

It has been five thousand years since Malroketh was first imprisoned. The land of Elhokryn is one of peace and unity, of innovation and magic, and as we begin our story, we find ourselves following the steps of a young individual of reckless curiosity. Unimpressed by the marvels of modern technology, this youth searches for ancient knowledge in places better left untouched, and finds themselves unknowingly in the sanctum of the ancient lich, a locked vault which they are all too eager to open.

II. Current Situation/Game Objective

The player finds themselves in the shoes of an adventurer currently delving into a vast dungeon in the ruined valley of Kyre. As the demo begins, the player character has already successfully navigated the trap and monster infested labyrinth outside of the inner sanctum and is currently descending into The Lock, which is the main focus of the demo. The Lock consists of a central room with a single vault door barred with three rune covered pieces of stone. From the central room extend three hallways each leading to a puzzle that, if solved correctly, removes

one of the bars holding the vault door closed. The goal of the level is to solve the puzzles and open the vault door.

III. Game Flow

The intent of the level is to use the information given by the tablets in the center room in combination with a form of riddle in each of the side rooms to solve the different puzzles. Incorrect solutions to the puzzles will result in progression of a counter in the main room. This counter is made up of runes around the upper wall of the main room. Once the seven runes are lit – a full circle – the player will have failed to access the vault and will be killed by traps within The Lock, resetting the level.

The first puzzle is the Test of Tactics. In the room housing this test is a pedestal with text describing Malroketh's victory at the Siege of Alspyre. Down steps in front of this pedestal is something akin to a large chessboard, upon which are a number of large pieces, seemingly scattered as if left in the midst of play. The player can push these pieces by colliding with the side opposite the direction they intend the piece to go. Once the player has moved the pieces to the desired positions, they can interact with the lore pedestal. If the pieces are in the correct position, one of the three bars across the vault door will be removed. If they are not, then the player will have to try again. The solution is encoded in the description of the battle; the player should move the pieces according to the plan set out by Malroketh for the taking of the tower.

The second puzzle is the Test of Alchemy. In the room below the center chamber is a lab with 5 pedestals and a large cauldron. Attached to the cauldron is a note, listing ingredients for a potion in somewhat cryptic terms. On each of the five pedestals is a supply of an ingredient and its name. The player is to determine from the note which three ingredients must be placed in the cauldron and in what order they must be placed. Doing so correctly removes a second bar from the vault door. Doing so incorrectly leads to the puzzle resetting and another necessitated attempt from the player.

The third puzzle is the Test of Devotion. In the room above the center chamber is a shrine consisting of a large obelisk and a pedestal on which something should be placed. Throughout the level are scattered four chunks of the ruined keystone bearing the name by which Malroketh was known to his followers, Kerashivaol. The player is to collect these chunks and return them to

the pedestal. In a more advanced version of the game, there would likely be more than the four pieces and the player would have to inspect these pieces in regards to a description of the runic language in which it is written to properly reconstruct the keystone. Collecting all four pieces and returning them to the shrine removes the third bar from the vault door, allowing the vault to be opened and the player to progress.

IV. Level Design Decisions

The door to the vault is designed in such a way that the only method of opening it is by solving the three puzzles within The Lock, as the vault was initially intended to be the store of all the treasure amassed by the lich Malroketh during his conquest. As such, the rim of the door around the vault is inscribed with runes that warn of the dangers of taking treasure from the lich, but do not reveal the true contents of the vault, the lich himself.

A large sigil adorns the floor of the main room of The Lock, a remnant of a teleportation circle which would have been used to transport loot back from the frontlines of Malroketh's conquest. In a cutscene following the opening of the vault, this sigil would be reignited, allowing for Malroketh's escape from his prison, as well as the means of egress from the dungeon for the player.

V. User Experience

The level should suggest that The Lock is a place of great age and power. As the player progresses through the level, it should become more and more apparent how magically infused this place is. The combination of lore and this apparent arcane existence should, by the end of the level, have the player excited for what they will find on the other side, though this same lore should, on its own – though in a more expansive game it would be supplemented by earlier information, give the player some level of apprehension. The grim construction of the level, in addition to the manner of the lore's delivery should instill a dark, foreboding aura, a sense of danger which should leave the player on edge as they progress through the level.