

Map name: Ezekiel's Burial

Map Goal: Attempt to create a dungeon map with the same quality as those present in the vanilla game.

Premise: The premise is completely dependent on the player's progression through the main story. The dungeon itself is the burial of an ancient priest.

Why: The ruined exterior invites the player to explore what lies beneath.

Who: This is completely dependent on the player.

Where: The tomb is located to the north of Winterhold. It is located on an isolated landmass and is easily visible when heading north.

What: Explore the tomb.

When: Time is variable and depends completely on the player and the rest of the game.

How: This is also dependent on the player. He can pick up all sorts of items inside the dungeon to help him on his journey.

Walkthrough:

I will be walking through every room in the map discussing the space and events and how and why I implemented them. As a note, the navmesh for the map was built from scratch as the prebuilt navmesh generation functions were causing many problems.

Area 1: Tomb Exterior:

The exterior of the tomb is made to look like a ruin with rubble and an abandoned camp fire. This gives the player the impression that the tomb is very old and was visited by others in the past. The player can face wolves/sea lions in front of the tomb adding an extra layer of fun and difficulty to the tomb. The tomb is very visible and sits on an isolated landmass/island. This adds to the excitement of discovery for the player.



Area 2: Tomb Entrance:

Upon entering the tomb, the player sees the frozen corpse of what looks like a warrior/explorer. The ground around him is covered by ice/snow as it is close to the door that was previously opened and has let in the snow. We notice that the corpse is facing towards the door as if it was trying to escape and the dropped shield hints that the explorer was running away and needed to let go of the extra weight. He must have been injured and was trying to escape but bled out. After going down the stairs, the player gets an overgrown catacomb vibe from his surroundings.



Area 3: Hallway 1 and intersection:

As the player moves through the hall, he can see overgrown vegetation all around him hinting that the tomb is ancient. He can also see two draugr (Nordic zombies) resting. Skyrim players can immediately recognize that the draugr will wake up when they get close enough. This encounter is meant to be a basic warm up to the dungeon. After dealing with the enemies, the player spots an intersection. These intersections break linearity and give a slight illusion of choice. The door to the right is locked and the door to the left is unlocked. Most (if not all) players will investigate both doors and enter the left room.



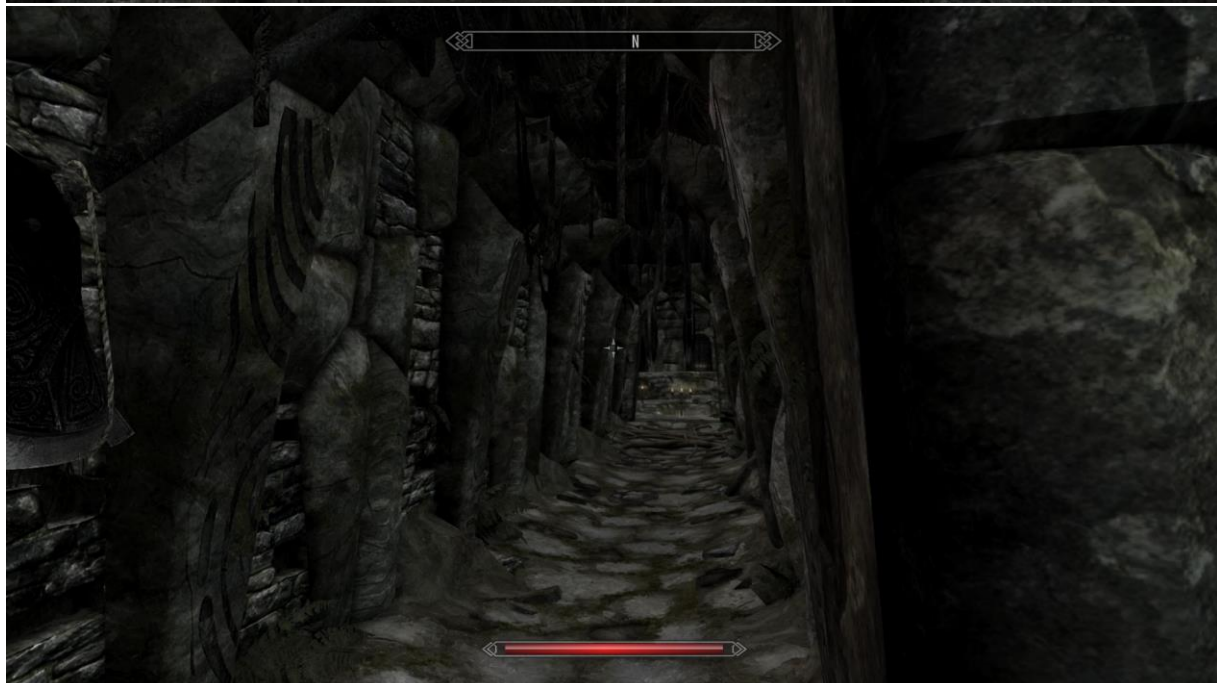
Area 4: Small Burial Room:

This room contains some valuable items to loot and an interesting surprise. The player can loot the shelves and then notice a gold purse on one of the sarcophagi. As he gets closer, he is surprised by a draugr overlord break out of his sarcophagus. This adds some dynamism to the map as some players might not trigger the overlord. The player can also see a shrine with small divine statues indicating that this is a place of worship, prayer and death.



Area 5: Hallway 2 and Trap Hallway:

After exiting the previous room, the player can move forward through the tomb. He can loot inanimate draugr and find some items scattered around. It is very important to always have items to pick up scattered around as that eliminates the monotone feeling of the map and increases realism and immersion as it encourages interaction. As a note, light sources also play a very important role in guiding the player and highlighting points of interest. When looking around, the player might spot a tripwire on the ground. If triggered, it spawns a series of continuous traps that the player has to avoid. There is also an extra tripwire further inside the hallway adding to the difficulty.



Area 6: Large Burial Room:

This is a core room in the map. Here, the player gets a good idea of the scope of the tomb he is in. The room has candles spread all around giving the room a mysterious vibe. As the player approaches the middle of the room, multiple draugar awaken. In the middle of the room, there seems to be a corpse that was in the process of being embalmed. The player can find valuable gems, gold and a key to exit the room. The exit was locked just so that the player does not skip the fight sequence. The player should not be able to spot the key while fighting. If he does, then he should be able to exit as a reward.



Area 7: Hallway 3:

In this hallway, the player can find a locked room. After unlocking it, he is rewarded with some loot. Rooms such as this one reward the player for exploring and having the adequate lock-picking skill. As he goes through, he notices that the hallway gets wider and taller, indicating that he is now in a more important part of the tomb. He can also find some rubble indicating this is deeper in the tomb.



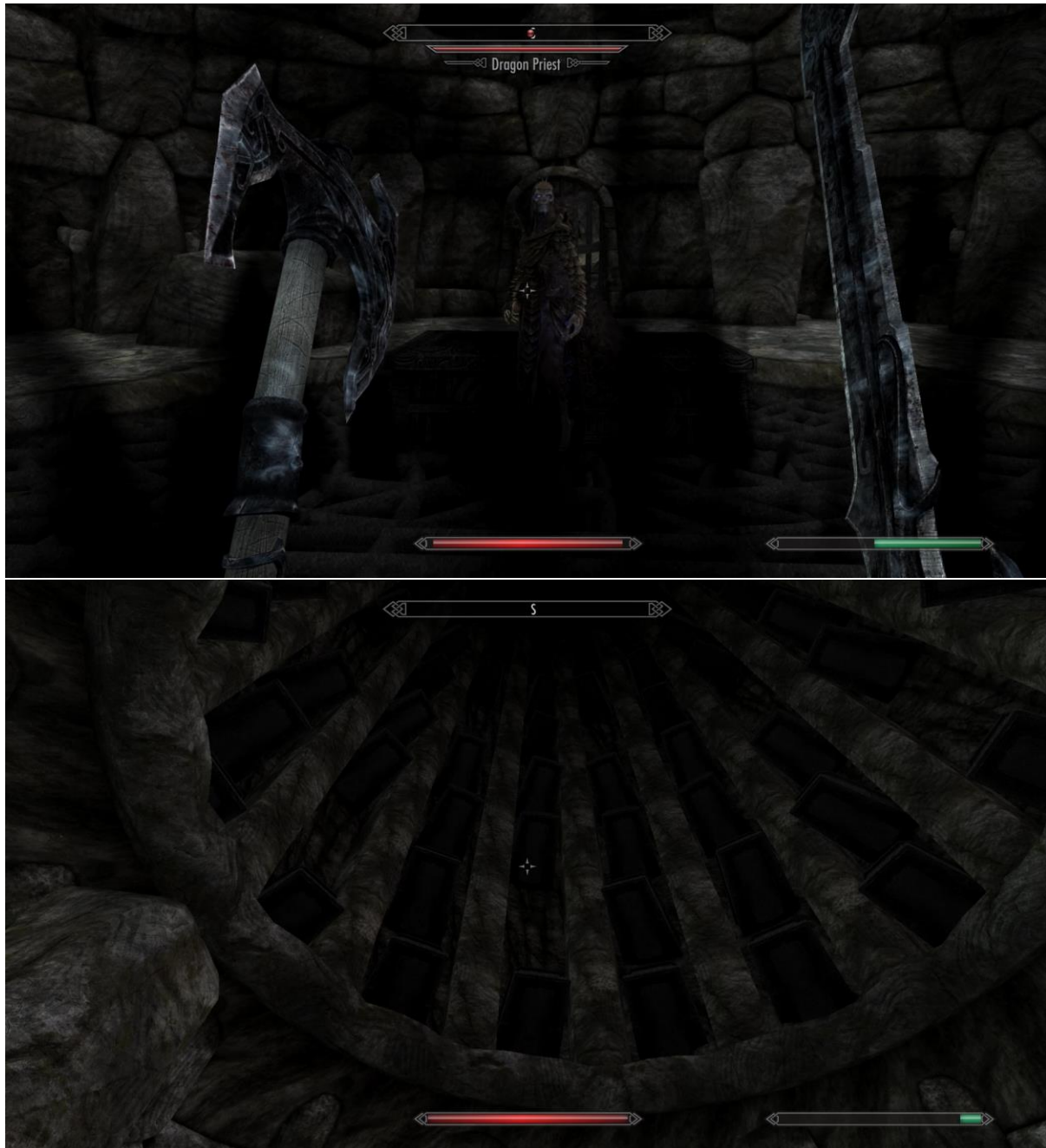
Area 8: Hall of Champions:

At the end of the previous hallway, the player can find some gold to pick up to break monotony. The player is then presented with a long hallway with a draugr overlord sitting at the end. This creates an epic feeling as the player gets closer to the draugr and the draugr stands up to face him. It seems like this draugr is the defender of something valuable and important. The player can then open a steel blockade and enter a small transitional area to the next room.



Area 9: Ezekiel's Burial:

This room is big in scope and revolves around a single sarcophagus, indicating that this is indeed Ezekiel's sarcophagus. When the player is in the transitional area, Ezekiel spawns in the main boss room by breaking out of his sarcophagus. This gives the player the chance to prepare or turn back. This also handles a bug that occurs. If the player is fast enough and gets close to the Dragon Priest while he is spawning, the priest needs to get some distance before attacking (making the fight easy). This small hallway mitigates that bug and adds more suspense. Once the player enters the room, the door behind him closes and he has to fight the priest. There is ample cover scattered around the room for the player to hide behind. After killing the priest, the door to the next room automatically opens.



Area 10: Altar/Reward Room:

This room provides ample rewards to the player. The player has to be careful however as the room contains two magical traps that need to be disarmed. This adds to the difficulty of the map as if the player is low on health, he can be killed for not being careful. The room contains gems, a chest with very valuable items and other valuable trinkets. On the altar, the player can also find a key to the exit door. When the player opens the door, he notices that this is the door that was locked at the start of the map. The player is now back at the beginning. This loop technique is very popular in dungeons as it minimizes monotony and gives the player a feeling of satisfaction for exploring the whole tomb.



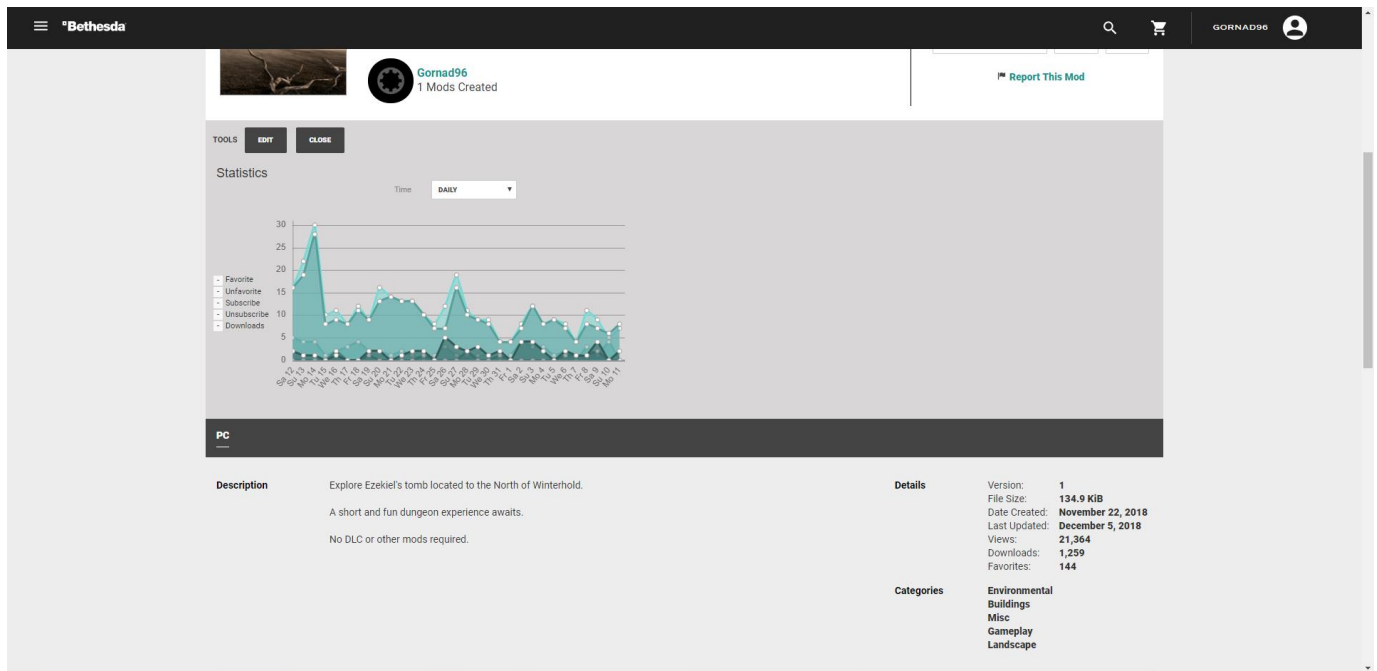
Conclusion:

This map is a fun and solid dungeon experience that comes close to matching the quality of smaller dungeons in the vanilla game. It uses sound, light, space and encounters successfully. It can definitely be improved upon by adding more back-story and communicating the narrative more efficiently. All in all, I learned a lot about the creation engine and was impressed by the modularity of the engine. The engine did feel older compared to other more modern engines (as it is).



Statistics:

This map performed well and was well-received. The map is still getting views and is being downloaded. I was very satisfied with the map, being my first project with the creation engine.



The map also has 3 five-star ratings not visible in the screenshot.

This capture was taken on 02/11/2019.