Henry Fuseli's
THE NIGHTMARE

GAME PROPOSAL BY JOANNA LAM

VIS149

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INTRODUCTION

Adapted from the Romantic painting, The Nightmare, painted by Henry Fuseli in 1781, the video game, The Nightmare, will reflect similar attributes and of forboding and dark twists on European stories about demons and witches. The original painting depicts a woman lying supine with a demonic figure sitting on her chest and a horse's head peeking out from blood red curtains. Many interpretations have been made about this painting, but most believe that the demon embodies the physical experience of chest pressure that can be felt during the dream-state. Germanic tales at the time foretold demons and witches possessed people who slept alone. There have also been many accounts of people seeing dark figures walk into their rooms at night and hover over them as they slept. They are, however, trapped by sleep paralysis, a condition that disables them from moving nor waking up. They are helpless and can only watch in fear as the figure continuously lingers. Scientific studies have tried to diagnose the symptoms of sleep paralysis, yet it seems only through physical pain or external interaction can people break out from their entranced state.

In the four stages of sleep, people experience different situations. The first stage is light sleep where the person drifts in and out of sleep and can be awakened very easily. In the second stage, eye movements stops and brain waves start slowing down. In the third stage, the person is in deep sleep and is very difficult to wake up. No eye or muscle movement is possible. REM is the last stage where breathing becomes irregular and rapid, eyes move back and forth, and muscles are temporarily paralyzed. During REM, brain waves are elevated to the same lengths as when a person is awake. Many people suffer who these symptoms suffer from sleep paralysis--a condition when they are consciously awake but their body is still asleep.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Premise

In the game, you play Mara, a student and employee. At the end of a long stressful day, you finally sink into the warm embrace of your bed. You close your eyes are are immediately transported into the dream realm. You are in pitch black darkness and you cannot see. All you have is a flashlight. You turn it on and realize the nightmare you have just entered. Inside this dream state, you trek through Mara's labyrinthine mind trying to escape; however, you are not alone. Monsters and demons are chasing you and you must successfully complete all puzzles in order to find the trigger that will wake you up and send you back to reality.

Gameplay

In the beginning of the game in the dream world, you have the ability to turn on and off your flashlight. The flashlight is the only item you possess. You must use the flashlight to maneuver your way through an intricate maze, which has embedded puzzles within it. As the game progresses, you are able to pick up more items and keep them for future uses. As you reach higher levels, the game complexities and puzzles increase in difficulty.

Solve the puzzles to find all the bed triggers. These are like your portal doorways between reality and dream realm.

In reality, your actions determine how many power-ups and add-ons you can have in the dream world.

All riddles and puzzles must be solved before the time limit in order to enter the next stage. Once the time limit runs out, you return back to reality and must start over at the last saved checkpoint.

Controlling your Characters

You are seeing from a first person perspective. You have full control of your hands, which can grab, throw, defend, etc. Your character has 360 view and can move left, right, forward, and backward. As you reach towards the third and fourth stages, your movements begin to become laggy. You start losing control of your character's movements to reflect the loss of control over the body experienced during sleep paralysis.

Multiple Stages

Throughout the game you progress onto next levels which represent the different cycles and stages of sleep. The first and second stages are during periods of lighter sleep so the games are much less complex and simpler. By the third and fourth game, the puzzles become more complex and you will have to start thinking outside the box to figure out the escape route. The processes behind solving each riddle and obstacle become more demanding on the player and the chosen resources.

Conclusion

After completing all four stages of sleep evading the terrors and demons chasing you in your dream. you must open the gateway back to reality with a hidden key OR find the special trigger that allows you to force wake up. After competing all levels in the game, you have successfully escaped from the nightmare state and have entered into reality; therefore, you have won the game.

This game could be played multiple times as the player's choices affect the outcome of the game. The maze is loaded with various puzzles which change and rotate every time the character wakes up.

At the very end, you discover you are adopting two perspectives: Mara's and the Demon's. In reality, you are Mara and should choose to go to school/work in order to increase stress levels. Higher stress levels give you more time to solve puzzles in the dream because in the dream you are actually the demon inside Mara's mind. As Mara becomes more stressed, she becomes weaker mentally. You as the demon must find a way to travel through Mara's dream and enter reality as a physical being. Thus, you can decide for yourself if you are the true winner or loser.

STORY

Background

Every time you descend into a sleeping state, you find yourself surrounded by darkness and demons. Dreams are the portals in which you simulate an almost too real experience. Dreams are, therefore, essentially a portal into another realm. You try to escape from this place, but find out that you cannot. You are trapped in this dream state every time your body is in REM state. Sleep paralysis has overcome your physical body and now you are inside your own mind.

Inside the labrinth mind, you must surmount various obstacles to escape the demons chasing you. Once you overcome all the challenges and unlock the last gateway, you have safe and secure access back into reality.

Main Character

The story follows Mara, a 19 year old college student, as she suffers from sleep paralysis and forboding nightmares. Every time she sleeps she is entrapped in a horror scene unable to wake up. After classes, she works as a barista at a local coffee shop. Her work ethics, however, are questionable as she ponders whether to skip class or work every day in order to go shopping or work out instead.

Since Mara suffers from sleep paralysis, she wakes up sleep deprived and agitated. Her two options are: class/work or gym/store. Whichever choice she makes distorts the rules in the dream world. If Mara chooses to be responsible, she will have to deal with stressful schoolwork and complaining customers. If she goes to the store, she can restock on supplies and items. If she goes to the gym, she can boost her stamina and strength.

The Demon

You are a demon possessing Mara every time she goes to sleep. The dream realm is your only chance at surviving and the perfect opportunity to possess more people. Going into the human realm is your main goal, and you decide to use Mara --a stressed and weak girl-- to your advantage. The only way to stay inside the human realm is to have a physical body, and the only way to obtain that is to feed on Mara's fear and eventually escape from her mind.

Backstory:
The demon world is horrible. There are no people to possess and the Demon King wants your demon species extinguished. You are almost the last of your kind, so you must escape before the King's horse minions find you. Using Mara is the only way to survive. Further, you must find a key to lock the gateway behind you so that the Demon King's followers and henchmen cannot follow you back. Doing this, however, may ultimately lock Mara inside her own mind as well.

DREAM STATE

As you enter the realm of dreams...you embark through the labrinth of the mind

Items

Some items in the dream work oppositely than you think. For example, medicine will actually do more harm than good. Certain items, however, are used to unlock other items and can be combined with other items to create more powerful items.

First Stage

Easy to solve exercises embedded with level one riddles and items you must find. Items in this level are important for advancing onto future levels. The items that are chosen could change various outcomes of the game. For example, grabbing medicine instead of an umbrella could decrease your strength in the game. The puzzles included consist of simpler puzzles and games to reflect a lighter sleeping mode.

Second Stage

The second stage is similar to the first with basic strategy games inside an actual maze game. You will have to go from point A to point B in order to retrieve an item required to unlock the room with the checkpoint. Horse demon minions are also introduced in this level. You must defeat them before they kill you.

Third Stage

Once you enter the third stage, games begin to become much more disconcerting and abstract. A hazy filter is put on and gradually gets darker. The puzzles here are more complex; you'll have to actually wake up and grab a specific item in the store before you can unlock this stage. A gatekeeper will ask for it. The item, however, is not in stock at the store so you must figure out how to obtain it.

GAMEPLAY

REALITY STATE Basic Rules

Cut scene: The game begins with a short glimpse into a pitch black maze; you enter through a doorway. Before you can see what's on the other side, the scene shifts into white and you open your eyes.
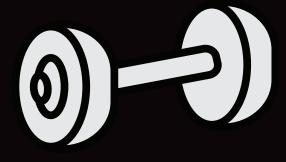
You are given the option to go to class, work, gym, or store. Choosing to go to work will be more stressful whereas the store will make you less stressful. Depending on your choice, you will be given more or less time to solve puzzles in the dream realm.

Classes &/or Work
- increase stress levels
- increase time available for puzzles
- decrease stamina and strength

sdfGym &/or Mall
- decrease stress levels
- decrease time available for puzzles
- increases number of items in stock

Fourth Stage

At the fourth stage, you must figure out that the flashlight's purpose becomes useless. You must actually turn off the flashlight in order to see. Once the light is off, the landscape around you begins to glow. Further, the lag ultimately becomes so harrowing to the game that the character control keys switch directions. When you press the button to go forward, your character moves left instead. When you press the button to go backwards, your character moves right instead. Character control becomes another puzzle to overcome. Only certain items retrieved from the real world will allow temporary relievement from the game lag. The puzzles are more complex and the player must figure out a way to use the demons as tools to your escape.

End Scene

At the very end after the last puzzle has been defeated, the scene cuts and you see yourself walking up a dark stairway. The only light is coming from the crack underneath the doorway, and as you open the door you see a mirror. Glimpsing into the mirror is yourself--the demon. You suddenly realize you have been playing the demon the whole time. The cut scene shows the demon crossing through the door and locking it behind it. The scsene shifts into Mara's bedroom in reality where the demon hovers over her sleeping body.

Force Waking Up

The only way to force wake up is to find Mara within the dream and start a conversation with her. Mara, however, is hard to find and never truly shows up on screen except for more than a couple seconds. (Remember, you are the demon and is chasing Mara. Once you catch her, she wakes up)

TECHNOLOGY & DESIGN

Interface
XBox, WiiU, Switch, VR (Oculus Rift)
Computer & Android

Design Direction
3D Game with first person perspective.

Aesthetic
The theme will highlight many features of chiaroscuro painting. Dark, black backgrounds contrasting with light dramatic overtones creates a daunting and dreamlike effect. A hazy filter gets darker as the player passes each level. This reflects how deep of a sleep the player in reality is.

Characters/Animation
Blender, 3DS Max/Maya - 3D Modeling
Unity - coding the game

Rendering Engine
Pixar's Renderman

Sound
Theme music in the background connecting everything together
Compilation of random voices and static
Random bursts of silence