Mechanics

One of the essential elements and what I deem as the key for immersing players into the game is the constant need to interact between the brothers in order to progress in the game. I played this game with my brother and used the co-op function where we control one player each. Although both players have the same set of controls, most (if not all) puzzles require some form of collaboration between players to complete. In a sense, this naturally implies the need for communication between players which keeps players engaged throughout the gameplay. Even for single player mode, the player has to strategically decide how and when to move each of the brothers simultaneously to proceed.

Although the controls and mechanics of the game are fairly simple, the puzzle-solving aspect of the game makes the gameplay more dynamic – different situations require different approaches or combinations of controlling the characters. Players have the basic movement options like moving in 4 directions (left, right, up, down), jumping, grabbing and climbing.

Story

The game provides a fantasy-based setting, where most of the entities are fictitious. It has the otherwordly feel which helps isolate the story into a specific “mini world”, where it focuses only on one problem. This gives the story a more coherent flow as the side plots are easily tailored to support the main storyline. The main conflict in the story was that the brothers’ father fell heavily ill and as sons, they wanted to find a cure. Emphasis was given on the “Water of Life” as the possibly only solution to save their father, hence the motivation to set on a journey to obtain it.

Personally, I feel that there is beauty in having a simple plot or context and expanding on it during the journey itself via tasks instead of introducing more complicated problems that digress from the main resolution. The game is well-made in a sense that it utilizes the potential setbacks or difficulties during the journey to be the puzzle-solving aspect, thus weaving in the plot and gameplay more seamlessly. Despite the storyline being simple, a plot-twist is introduced in the end which was impactful because (i) the plot involves kinship and death which makes it highly relatable to the human life, (ii) the journey gameplay gives time for players to get invested into the story and form attachment towards the character and (iii) it leaves players with thought-invoking topics and perspectives towards the ending. The plot ends in a conclusive (in terms of what factually happened) yet leaves you reflecting on life decisions and thinking back deeply about whether the journey was worth it in the first place.

Aesthetics

The graphics did a beyond impressive job at extending that immersive experience to make the fantasy more convincing. The lighting and illumination gave the game a dream-like feel, hence accentuating the aspect of fiction in the setting. Additionally, since the tale takes place in a rural environment, the sounds of nature and human-made noises are amplified to set the mood and context. For example, you will hear sounds from birds chirping, wood knocking and people going about their daily duties. At this point it doesn’t just feel like a game but a movie that indulges you in the presence of a society, and you will be left with wanting more!

Technology

BATOTS is available on many platforms, ranging from PC to controllers. Depending on the platform you use, the difficulty level of the gameplay may vary. For example, playing in co-op mode and sharing a keyboard may be more difficult than having a controller each.