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Nikolas Whiteside Presents

THE SHUNNED

A FIRST-PERSON SURVIVAL-HORROR GAME

Nikolas Whiteside | The Shunned Design Document | September 1, 2018

Game Overview

- GAME CONCEPT

  - o You play as a college-aged boy who wakes up lost in a forest, with no idea of where his friends are. The sun quickly sets and as night comes, stalkers begin to approach you from the darkness. These cult figures relentlessly chase you through the woods, but they cannot touch the light. You must gather supplies to light fires, start generators and keep your flashlight alive. As you explore, you begin to uncover the secrets of the shunned and your connection to them through polaroids hidden throughout the woods. It is up to you to stay alive until sunrise. Can you find the light in the darkness?

- GENRE

  - o The Shunned is a survival horror game that emphasizes the gathering of materials to produce light in the forest to use as protection from danger. Effectively acting as safe zones, the concept was inspired by the "run and hide" subgenre of survival horror.

- TARGET AUDIENCE

  - o The Shunned is targeting fans of classic survival horror games. The game will focus heavily on exploration and survival mechanics in terms of having to generate sources of light for safety and gathering medical supplies to heal. The main target is men and women ages 17-24.

- LOOK AND FEEL

  - o Heavy inspiration is drawn from classic horror titles. The environment is heavily inspired by my childhood experiences in the woods off 5th Avenue in Oswego, NY. It also draws inspiration from the outdoor areas of *Outlast 2* and *Slenderman*. The game will be cloaked in darkness, with incredibly limited visibility and a very dark, sinister tone. Music reminiscent of classic 60s and 70s songs will play on stereos throughout the forest. Enemy designs are inspired by *American Horror Story Coven* and Ku Klux Klan robes. The Shunned should look ghostly and like they belong to a cult. The silhouette with the pointed hood will stand out to the player, clearly conveying what an enemy is to the player.

Gameplay and Mechanics

- GAMEPLAY

  - Game Progression

    - The game is open-ended in how the player progresses. The player can explore every portion of the forest from the very beginning, with no particular order in which they must travel. Polaroids and items do not need to be collected in any given order, allowing the player to explore as they wish. The goal is to create a map that works to confuse and disorient the player as they wander, making it difficult to keep track of where you are in the world.

  - Mission/Challenge Structure

    - Each area of the map will have its own unique challenge in terms of types of items that you need to create sources of light or the types of light sources that exist (motion activated, broken/flickering, pitch-black, etc.) and in terms of the traps and enemies that populate the space. The player is free to explore each of these areas as they desire from the beginning, collecting items for their inventory to perform a variety of tasks, including health, lighting items or Satanic artifacts. The game progresses in in-game hours which will increase the difficulty as time progresses.

  - Objectives

    - The game is broken up into three main objectives.
      - Collect Clues/Artifacts
        - The player should collect polaroids, providing insight into the cult that is stalking him throughout the woods and how he ties into it.
        - The player should collect Satanic artifacts, which will give them the ability to maintain their health in later hours of the night. Artifacts are randomly placed in one of several locations on the map each playthrough.
      - Survive Until Dawn
        - The game begins at dusk – the player awakes just as darkness begins to fall. The first in game hour (10pm), is mostly exploring and gaining footing in the environment as there is still some light. After that, the player must survive in the dark until 6am.
      - Get to Safety
        - The player must create or seek sources of light to protect themselves from The Shunned in order to complete the main objective of surviving until dawn.

- MECHANICS

  o Physics System

    ▪ The game will have a realistic, but relatively simplistic physics system with the player only able to run and jump and enemies only being able to walk around the world.

  o Point of View

    ▪ The player will be given a first-person point-of-view to fully immerse them in the environment and place them directly into the situation.

  o Objects

    ▪ The player will have a limited inventory where they can store items they pick up using the action button. The player can then go into their inventory and select an item to use it in situations that would call for that item. Items may include batteries, polaroids, gasoline, lighters, etc.

  o Interaction with the Action Button

    ▪ A universal action button (A on controller and ENTER on keyboard) will be used to interact with items and switches. Players can hit the action button to interact with generators/fire pits/etc. to create light by hitting the action button. This will open their inventory which will allow them to select the item they want to use to start the light source (gasoline/batteries/etc.).

  o Inventory

    ▪ The player has a limited inventory of eight items that they can carry at a time. The player can look at an item within the environment and a prompt to press the action button will appear to hover over it. When they do, it will be removed from the environment and exist in the player inventory.
    ▪ The player can open the inventory and inspect items – rotating them 360 degrees and getting blurbs about each item.
    ▪ The player can remove items from their inventory that they no longer want, and they will be placed on the ground in front of them in the environment.

  o Traps

    ▪ Traps are hidden throughout the forest, such as bear traps, that the player can fall into. When the player gets caught in a trap, they can no longer move, and they start gradually losing health.
    ▪ To break free, the player must repeatedly hit the ENTER key until a gauge fills, releasing the trap.

- o Conflict
  - The player has no defense against the enemies lurking in the dark. The player can create areas of light that the enemies can't penetrate to protect themselves. More in the Lighting System section below.
  - Some areas are pitch-black, requiring the player to strategically use their inventory to create sources of light to avoid enemies. Other areas may have sparse lighting or broken lights that flicker or turn on and off on a timer, making the player think about their timing as they navigate the environment.

- o Health System
  - The player health is out of 100% and is indicated to the player through visual and audio cues, as well as general warning signs in the form of a heartrate monitor on the inventory screen. The player health will go down as they are hit by enemies or stuck in traps or fall from a high cliff. The player can gain health by using a health pack that they pick up in the environment.

- o Lighting System
  - The player's main mode of defense is by creating light sources which will ward off The Shunned. The player can interact with fire pits and torches to light fires, assuming they have a lighter and lighter fluid in their inventory.
  - The player has a flashlight that is too weak to ward off enemies but will temporarily stun them and allows the player to see in the dark. The flashlight will deplete its battery over time, with its light flickering when it is almost dead. The player can use a battery from the inventory to reset its strength to 100%.
  - The player can start generators with gasoline, turning on emergency lights in the environment.
  - If a player sits within a lighting source for too long, it will eventually go out, forcing them to continue looking for safety somewhere else.

- o Time System
  - The game takes place over 8 in-game hours. An in-game hour is equivalent to 20 real-time minutes.
  - Every in-game hour will be indicated to the player through an on-screen notification that will appear for approximately ten seconds and fade away.
  - The game-state will automatically save for the player once they have reached a new in-game hour.

- o Morning
  - After the first half of the game (hour 4) – the player's health will begin to start depleting regardless of what they do. The only way to stop it from depleting is to be holding Satanic artifacts that provide you extra strength.

Each next hour will require one additional artifact in order to not lose health.

- The Final Hour
    - In the final hour (an extended hour that lasts 30 minutes real-time) – The Shunned have reached their full strength and all sources of light have no effect on them. The player can still build sources of light for visibility, but there is no longer a safe zone on the map. Enemies will become faster and more enemies will populate the map – making survival must more difficult than it was before. The player's flashlight will still stun The Shunned – allowing them some way to defend themselves.
    - There are several Satanic artifacts hidden around the environment which are required to be able to survive the final hour of the night. If the player is holding all the Satanic artifacts, then their health will not deplete on its own and they will be able to use them to light blue fires which will destroy The Shunned when they come into contact.

- Screen Flow
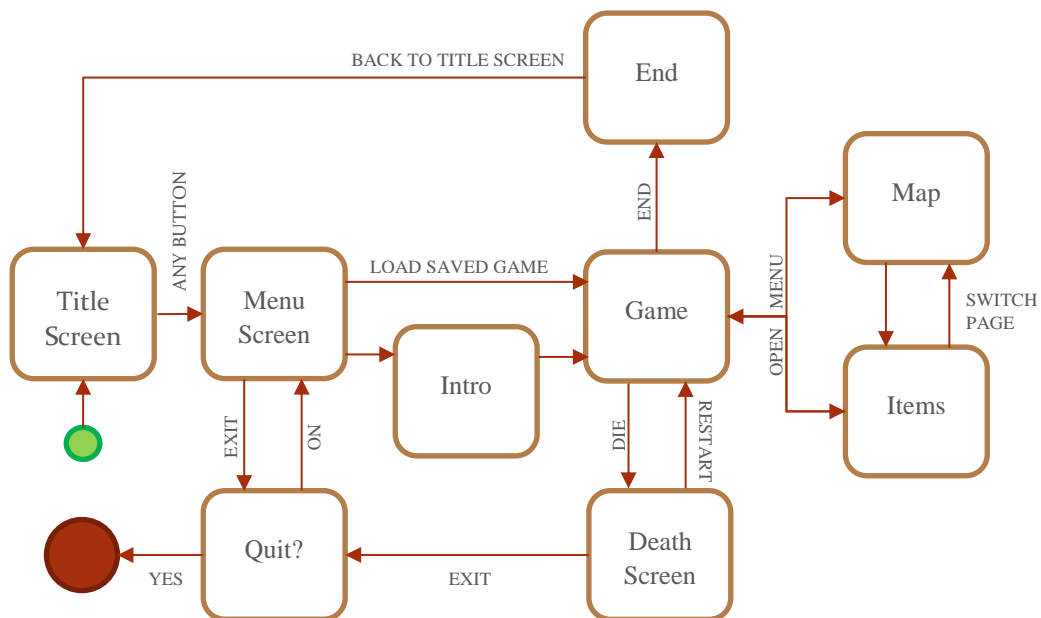
Story, Setting and Characters

- o STORY
    - o Ethan Clary was camping with three of his friends the last he remembers before he wakes up in the middle of the woods, with no idea where his friends or his campsite are. Ethan begins to wander the forest as darkness falls. As the forest is drowned in darkness, Ethan begins to hear odd noises in the trees and quickly learns he isn't alone. As the player explores the forest, they learn more about the Satanic rituals that used to take place on this land through Polaroids he finds. The player will learn of The Beast – a creature The Shunned were trying to spawn in the forest before something happened making them all vanish. The player learns of the fate of Ethan's friends, and possibly the world as they continue to survive through the night and uncover artifacts and clues into the dark past of The Shunned.

- o CHARACTERS
    - o Ethan Clary
        - ▪ A college-aged man that has woken up in the forest with no memory of how he ended up where he is or where his friends went. He is a 20-year-old Junior, tall and slim, and generally weak. The concept is to avoid the horror stereotype of weak female characters stumbling through the forest and providing a realistic look at an unprepared young man running into an over-the-top situation.
    - o The Shunned
        - ▪ The Shunned are an ancient cult of Satan worshipers. They appear large and menacing in black robes, reminiscent of the Ku Klux Klan. They have a ghostly presence to them, as they can seemingly teleport to the player, at one point appearing in front of them and then moments later vanishing or being behind them.

- o GAME WORLD
    - o The game takes place within a wooded environment that is home to The Shunned. It is home to multiple camp-sites as this is a popular area for college students to go drink and smoke for a weekend. There are dense trails mixed with some large open fields. Visibility is generally difficult, and it is easy to get lost with trails looping back on themselves and intermingling.

Interface

- HUD
  - The HUD will have an objective that temporarily displays in the top-left of the screen to provide general direction to the player. Nothing else will be displayed to make it as realistic and clean as possible to add to the horror effect. Player damage will be evident through a faux-anaglyph effect that will become more prominent as the player's health gets lower.

- CONTROL SYSTEM
  - WASD/Arrow Keys
    - Move
  - Mouse
    - Look Around
  - SPACE
    - Jump
  - ENTER
    - Action Button
  - I Key
    - Open Inventory
  - Q Key
    - Toggle Flashlight
  - E Key
    - Use Health Pack
  - R Key
    - Use Battery

- AUDIO, MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS
  - Audio cues will be significant to the player in the game. The player will have the ability to use their batteries to turn on a stereo. Stereos will play music normally, but if an enemy is close to the player, the audio will become distorted, playing backwards. If the player spots an enemy – there will be a momentary pause in the music before the enemy charges the player.
  - As the player takes more damage, the more he will huff and grunt while moving through the environment, showing he is in pain.
  - When the player takes damage – he will let out an audible scream indicating he has been hit.
  - All music will have a 1960s/1970s vibe.

The Shunned (Cult Enemies)

- ○ ENEMY LOGIC
    - ○ Enemies will be restricted to particular areas of the map. Enemies will be randomly placed within their area of the map on start and will randomly move at different intervals throughout the game. The number of enemies filling the map will increase as time continues in the game.
    - ○ Enemies will remain idle in the woods until the player gets within a certain distance to them. All sources of music near the player will become distorted when the player gets close to an enemy. When the player sees the enemy, they will pause for two seconds and then break into a sprint for the player.
    - ○ If the player enters a light source, the enemy will suddenly vaporize and will randomly appear somewhere a safe distance away from the player.
    - ○ If the enemy comes into contact with the player, they will lunge at the player, causing the player to lose 34 health points (out of a scale of 100) and vanish, randomly moving to a different point in their map area.

Technical

- ○ GAME ENGINE
    - ○ Unity 2018.2.1f in combination with Visual Studio 2017

Game Art/Sample Screenshots

○ SAMPLE POLAROID

Figure 1. A sample polaroid showing a simple message underneath the image. More detailed text will be written on the back of each image.