

Ratcliff Estate Concept Document

Ratcliff Estate is a 3D third-person stealth game in which the player is slinking around an elaborate graveyard with the purpose of digging up and robbing graves. As the player attempts to grab as many valuables as they can carry, they must avoid the horrific otherworldly creature that haunts these grounds. The intent of the gameplay experience is to put the player on edge as they balance between stealthing around the creature and desperately running away from it.

Who is our player?

This player is motivated by uncertainty and fear. The anxiety and fear felt while trying to execute a plan without being caught heightens the feeling of accomplishment and relief when the player succeeds. This player is also looking for something slightly challenging because without decent threat then the feeling of fear is lessened. Often this means when the player gets sighted by the enemy they feel like they have to flee. This is the other half of the excitement that the player is after, the excitement and action that comes from being chased.

This player enjoys more than just horror games when it comes to stealth, they would also likely be the type of person to enjoy Hitman or Assassins Creed. This highlights how stealth doesn't have to always be about the fear of a monster but the fear and anxiety of messing up a mission because they get spotted.

Context/Environment

The player is a desperate grave robber sneaking through an old elaborate graveyard. The graveyard would have once belonged to a wealthy family and houses many generations of headstones. It hasn't seen any upkeep in many years and has well known rumors of being terribly haunted. People go in and don't come back out. For our unfortunate grave robber it turns out these are more than rumors, there is a horrific beast walking these grounds. The grave robber, still determined to dig up the fortune buried in these graves, does their best to silently unbury the treasure beneath without drawing attention from the beast.

Gameplay

The player's goal is to explore around the graveyard and dig up as much loot as they can then escape without getting caught. The player has to avoid being both seen and heard as the monster has keen senses. This is a difficult task because digging up graves and hefting around treasure makes an unavoidable level of noise. They may also run into spirits that will screech if the player passes through them, drawing the monster's attention. The player can silence the apparitions wails with a bribe but this means giving away some of their treasure. Because of the noise of their haul the player will also want to occasionally return to drop off spots, the more treasure they pick up the more noise they make while walking. In the unlucky

situation that the player is found by the monster they must flee, if the monster catches them it's game over.

Player actions

Walking

Walking creates very little noise but will generate more as the player carries around more treasure.

Running

Running creates noise no matter what but will make a significantly louder sound if the player runs while carrying a lot of treasure.

Crouching

Moving while crouching makes no noise but is the slowest form of movement.

Digging

When the player encounters graves they can dig them up, this takes a little bit of time and makes moderate noise. The player can stop and start digging at any time, the process of uncovering a grave doesn't have to be done in one go.

Treasure

Buried

Buried treasure is found in graves. The exact amount is randomized but better graves give more treasure.

Carried

How much treasure the player is carrying affects their noise level. The player can only use the treasure they are currently carrying to bribe spirits.

Stowed away

There are wheelbarrows marked by the exits where the player can safely deposit their treasure and return to grave robbing. Treasure stowed away in this manner counts towards the final score.

Monster Behavior

Unalerted: Wandering

When the monster is not alerted it roams at a leisurely pace.

Investigating: Moves towards detected sound

The louder a sound the farther away the monster can hear it from. Louder sounds will also cause the monster to approach them faster. The monster has to be close by to hear a small sound like digging or player footsteps and will move only a little faster than their leisurely pace.

Chasing: Runs after player

If the player is spotted the monster will rush towards them. Once the player is not in the monster's direct line of sight it will pace around the area they were last

seen for a period of time. Because the monster is on higher alert it will move faster towards sounds it hears. Eventually the monster leaves its agitated state if it cannot find the player and returns to its default behavior. If it catches the player then the game is over.

Spirits Behavior

Screams

The player can pass through spirits but if they do so without bribing them with treasure then the spirit will begin to scream. This attracts the monster from almost anywhere in the level. Once triggered the screaming spirit slowly fades until it vanishes or until the monster reaches it. After this the spirit does not show up in that spot again.

Bribing

The player can bribe the spirit to stay silent so the player can pass through peacefully. All spirits want the same amount and it does not change. Once given this amount the spirit will also slowly fade and will not show up in that spot again.

Score

The player's score is determined by how much treasure they were able to stow away and steal.

Win state

Escaping with some amount of loot.

Lose state

Getting caught by the monster.

Aesthetic Direction

The currently discussed aesthetic direction is Alice in Wonderland adjacent with a surreal landscape. The art itself would be low poly to avoid putting strain on the artists. This landscape is meant to feel freightening and imposing. The player should feel like they are out of place, in a world they are not meant to be a part of. However the designs should not become too whimsical instead falling into that uncanny valley territory.

The sound direction would be very important because the player needs sounds so they know when a task they're doing is making enough sound to be heard. The background music should be something that builds a sense of anxiety or fear but doesn't draw the player's attention away from the sounds the player is making. The background music may also be used as an indicator to let the player know when the monster is nearby.