Hex Doctor

DESIGN DOCUMENT

By Tabloid Enjoyers for the 2024 Pirate Software Game Jam

Introduction

Game Summary Pitch

Hex Doctor is a visual novel about brewing cures for victims of hexes.

Inspiration

Coffee Talk

Coffee Talk is a game where the player plays as a Barista in a coffee shop, and interacts with the world through the coffee he brews. It is effectively a visual novel where the outcomes of the story are shaped by whether or not the coffee being served is what the customer characters are looking for.

Our game borrows this concept of shaping outcomes through brewing, except instead of brewing coffee our player brews potions. Whether or not the player gets the potions correct shapes their relationship with both the characters and the world.

Our game also draws inspiration from the concept of experiencing the world entirely from a single location. The real draw of coffee talk does not lie in the game mechanics themselves, but rather interactions with characters and how these interactions shape the player's perception of the world. It is a game where the player gets to relax and savor each moment. This is very much the vibe we wanted to go for with our game as well, with a similarly singular setting and a focus on interactions with patrons rather than the game mechanics themselves.

Player Experience

The game is set in a cozy cottage in a remote settlement of a fantasy world. Players have up to 3 days of in-game time, dealing with one patient who has to be given the right potion once to be cured completely. Players must gain clues about the nature of the hex by navigating branching dialogue paths to get the best ending where the patient is cured completely.

Platform

The game is developed to be released on browser, windows PC

Development Software

- Godot 4.2 with Dialogic Plugin for programming

Genre

Visual Novel

Target Audience

Casual Gamers looking for a relaxing and mildly cerebral game that provides a mix of investigation and immersion. The main draw of this game is in interactions with characters in a calm setting, so it is not meant for gamers looking for a mechanically-intensive experience, but rather those who are more inclined to visual novels that require a less intense gaming experience.

Concept

Gameplay overview

The gameplay revolves around trying to brew the right potion for each patient that enters (in this case, there is only one patient). There is no retry mechanics, as we wanted players to be able to organically succeed or fail in curing the patient for a more immersive and relaxing experience.

Players must navigate branching dialogue paths when interacting with patients, and try to understand how to get them to provide the clues needed to cure the patient. This can be a complicated process as patients might have difficult attitudes. Most of them will have no idea what might have caused their ailments since hexes can originate in a variety of ways.
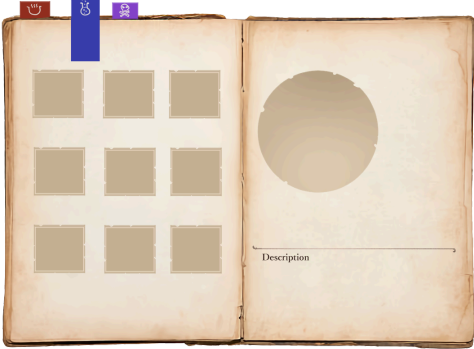
All potions are made from three ingredients, classified according to three types: effect, location and cause. These types will be revealed to players as clues throughout their conversation with patients. By matching the clues from the dialogue to the available ingredients, players can figure out and brew the appropriate remedy to advance the game. The remedies produced will each be depicted with unique artwork and descriptions. However, in this game jam we only made unique art for a few remedies due to time constraints.

Theme Interpretation (Shadows and Alchemy)

'Shadows and Alchemy' interpretation - Players use mystic knowledge and brewing arts to find cures for hexes and curses which are… shadowy in nature.

For our Visual Novel, emphasis is placed on immersion in the fictional world through the stories of patients dealing with mysterious hexes and sharing about their day to day lives in this medieval fantasy setting. Shadows and alchemy serve as storytelling and worldbuilding vehicles that players have to pay attention to in order to progress. Rather than go directly for a darkly toned game, perhaps implied by the word "Shadows", we wanted to create something light and cozy. We also wanted to emphasise the idea of the "unnoticed" or "unseen" implicit to shadows.

Primary Mechanics

Mechanic	Animated Mockup *(Art not necessarily final)*
### Brewing Players use ingredients to brew unique potions catered to specific hexes. Only some combinations of ingredients yield anything useful. Ingredients fall into three different categories and all potions are created with three ingredients, one from each category.	
### Recipe Book Players can refer to the recipe book at any time for guidance. The game starts off with basic recipes unlocked, while most recipes will be discovered via trial and error. The book keeps information on ingredients and potions which are intended to be useful and act as lore tidbits.	

Mechanic	Animated Mockup *(Art not necessarily final)*
<u>**Patients**</u> Each day, a patient visits the player to seek help for their ailments. Players will have to combine their observations, information from interviewing the patient, and knowledge from the recipe book to decide which ingredients to use to create a cure.	

Secondary Mechanics

Mechanic	Animated Mockup *(Art not necessarily final)*
<u>**Desk**</u> In the player's cottage, a desk at the side contains miscellaneous pieces of info like news parchments and letters. They act as additional channels of knowledge on hexes, potions, and the world	

Mechanic	Animated Mockup *(Art not necessarily final)*
outside in general.	
__Cat__ The player character's pet. For petting.	

Art

Theme Interpretation

The bright and pastel palette of the game aims to provide a cozy, rustic setting for the player, and complement the vibrancy of the alchemy elements of the game. On the flip side, some remedies and ingredients have slightly darker origins and appearances, embracing the idea of "shadows". For example, the remedy "banishing tea" is a cup containing ethereal flame. It is designed to have a darker aesthetic, and to lean more into the shadows theme.

Design

The game is set in a cottage, and is from a first-person point of view. We went for a hand-drawn, pastel art style to match the fantasy location, and also to emphasize the coziness of the atmosphere. Of course, we could not go without adding a calico in the corner too. We wanted to put a spin on the usual conventions. You're a hex doctor, yes,

but you're not a witch in a cave with warts. You're a herbalist, you're kicking your feet up on the table and biding the time for bizarre, quirky patients.

We took liberties with the art for remedies as well, focusing on making them aesthetically pleasing to players despite their strange nature. We wanted to make players feel like they are more than just a herbalist looking to cure patients, but someone who takes great pride in his work, taking care to give the patients a pleasant experience beyond a purely transactional treatment process. The herbalist's connection with his patient is what takes center stage, and we wanted the art to convey that feeling of intimacy and genuine care.

The pot where players will get to brew their potions.

Audio

Music

The music generally comprises slow and simple string melodies to add to the comfortable and cozy environment of the cottage while being in theme with the era.

Sound Effects

Simple foley effects for navigating between screens and brewing, such as paper rustling and bubbling sounds will be used to enhance the immersion.

Game Experience

UI

A simple pastel art style is used for the background, ingredient and potion icons, while UI windows follow a general theme of paper, ink and wood to match the setting. We wanted to keep the UI pared down and simple.

Controls

Mouse

Point and Click

Development Timeline

MINIMUM VIABLE PRODUCT

#	Assignment	Type	Status	Finish By	Notes
1	Design Document	Other ▾	In progress ▾	Jul 28,…	
2	Decide on Game Concept	Other ▾	Finished ▾	Jul 21,…	
3	Prototype for Dialogue and Levels	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jul 24,…	
4	Finalize MVP features	Other ▾	Finished ▾	Jun 23…	
5	Plan out required development tasks and distribute	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jul 25,…	
6	Come up with three hexes for MVP	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jun 23…	
7	Writing for plot	Art ▾	Finished ▾	Jun 24…	
8	Cottage Interior Layer	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jul 26,…	
9	Table Layer	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jul 26,…	
10	Brewing Layer	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jul 26,…	
11	Dialogic Signals to Game Handler	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jul 26,…	
12	Game Handler - Layer Navigation	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jul 26,…	
13	Custom Glossary Popup	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	Jul 26,…	
14	Stopped tracking with this table :/				
15					
16					

#	Assignment	Type	Status	Finish By	Notes
17					
18					

BEYOND (if ahead of schedule / extra time)

	Type	Status	
	Other ▾	Not sta… ▾	
	Other ▾	Not sta… ▾	
	Coding ▾	Finished ▾	