EATER

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INTRODUCTION

It has been 19 years since Aaron left the family farm. The return is not by any means a happy one, his visit prompted by the accidental death and consequential funeral of his older sister. This sorrowful occasion only marks the beginning of something much harder to explain as strange happenings start to occur at the remote, inaccessible farm.

The responsibility of unravelling the mystery falls on you. Navigate your way through the dark house and grounds to discover what happened, and find how you can put it right.

GENERAL CONCEPT

Eater is a PC narrative based survival horror game following the story of a young man visiting the old family farm which he left with his mother (Due to a divorce) at a young age, leaving his father and sister behind. The story takes place at least a decade in the future from this event, where the mother is hospitalised, the father is long dead and the sister has recently died in a farming related accident. The main character returns to the farm with his cousin the night before the sisters funeral. However after a power outage there are strange noises heard outside leading to an investigation which inadvertently allows a being access to the house. We aim to create a horror that slowly builds leaving the players adrenaline pumping; while we want it to be fun there are certain emotions we wish to evoke too, such as a sense of being trapped.

WHAT MAKES THIS ORIGINAL?

In order to stand apart from other horror games we have created an original combat concept; whilst no real damage is sustained by the enemy, he can be put at bay. To make these encounters more intense than just shaking ghosts off, which can become an annoyance, with each similar encounter taking you out of the game (e.g. "The Calling"). Following the "Ghost Rules" only certain items are solid to the ghost (Items that existed in a place known to the ghost during his lifetime). Therefore the player faces a dilemma each time the ghost attacks... Which item appears to be old enough to defend yourself with? The player is forced to quickly decide upon an item to throw at the ghost, increasing the stress and fear factor.

GHOSTS

There are two ghosts that appear in this game, one violent and another helpful. Both are loosely based on ghosts mentioned in Japanese Buddhism.

The violent ghost is based on a Jikininki, a human eating ghost. These ghosts are spirits of greedy, selfish or impious individuals who are cursed after death to seek out and eat human corpses. While this is related, our ghost will be more preoccupied with the living than the dead. While having similar "physical" attributes to the description of that particular kind of ghost, at no point in the game will he be referred to as a Jikininki.

The helpful ghost is based on a different ghost found in Japanese Buddhism, a Yūrei, one closely associated with the Ubume, women that have died leaving small children behind. Similarly to the other ghost she will not be referred to as an Ubume.

GHOST RULES

In this game ghosts have quite specific rules relating to their surrounding environment. Time determines what parts of the environment the ghost can and can't interact with, if an item or a wall existed during the lifetime of the ghost, it also acts as a solid object for the ghost, this stops totally random appearances through the majority of the walls in the house and provides the player with means of defence. If the item is new, for example an extension on the house or a digital radio the ghost will pass freely through and vice versa. This requires the player to think about which areas are safe and which objects can be used in defence. While being unable to touch the living directly, the ghosts can touch the deceased.

STYLE

In this game we want to induce feelings of fear in the player, however we want there to be a certain build up throughout the game until it crescendos. We want most of the fear to come from the environment surrounding the player, combined with lighting and audio. The ambience will be the main source of discomfort for the player. We generally want to avoid cheap scares like jump scares, although we have had the idea of having a couple small scares from items/animals that aren't scary, making the player second guess what's happening before a real scare. For example this would be something along the lines of a rustle in the bushes being nothing more than a cat. As far as the plot goes there are certain constraints, bearing in mind what can actually be achieved in the demo.

Character Breakdown

MC/Aaron:

Short dirty blonde hair with a hint of a quiff at the front. Small Light blue eyes, a slightly arching nose, thin lips and a squared jaw. Faint stubble and hint of a dimple in his left cheek. His eyes are shadowed slightly due to work tiring him out. Generally smart clothing however a bit "ruffled" or just untidy. Probably a dress shirt and jacket with no tie, any kind of trousers and old trainers for comfort.

An approachable guy, though a little cynical. He has a hard time believing in things unless they show themselves to him. He's also pretty collected, reacting to testing situations calmly or at least logically - for example when the power runs out he goes to fix the problem, and upon his first encounter with the ghost rather that run, his response is to defend himself.

Cousin/ Cheryl:

Very similar facial features as the Grandmother,however plumper lips and her cheekbones less prominent- generally more "healthy" looking. Her hair, a lighter shade of brown is cut shorter into a bob, slightly cropped towards the back. Her eyes are also rounder, and a dirty blue colour.

Clothes would be more modern but smart what with the times and city work, so I was thinking A blouse or simple shirt, with some full length slim jeans or 3/4 length paired with some simple pups.

Grandmother (before death):
Deep brown hair which would fall towards her chest when let down,
pulled into a low bun. A small nose with a slight inwards sloping
bridge. Slightly narrowed hazel eyes and visible cheekbones
and a small mouth. Very much a "lady" in appearance.

Typical housewife clothing for a woman during the
war-time. However she would often have boots instead
of shoes due to farmland.

Stalker/George (before death):
Close shaven hair however it would've been a blonde colour. Brown eyes
which have some creasing around them due to too many squints?
Narrow face though a strong jaw-line. Clean shaven and typically
"British" nose.

Keeps himself very clean and "prim". -probably ex-military
(air-force?)Often suit-type clothing and always polished shoes.

Setting

"horror stories are typically set in highly recognizable locations that the player can identify but which have been changed by an evil force. This force has usually altered the rules of this world."

- Richard Rousse, Horror
video games, 2009, pp.16

Our game is set on a very remote farm, mainly taking place in the house and gardens. In order to get the environment right we have planned a trip to a similar house, using artistic license we can alter this existing place. We feel that by creating and altering an existing place we will miss less details and make the game space more complete and believable. All photographs in this document are of the house and area in question; On our trip we intend to take many more up to date photographs as reference.

*"A popular game design device
is to give players some information about their surroundings, while leaving a lot out."*

- Richard Rousse, Horror
video games, 2009, pp.18

Most of this game relies on the ambience, lighting and sounds. Lighting research can be done with photographs but for the audio we have chosen a third year DFSA student who wants to get into sound to create the majority of sounds we need for the game.

In order to build player tension during the demo, the power will go out and the only available light will be a flashlight. Battery will not deplete.

This is just a small amount of the visual research that took place at the house we used for reference. More can be found [here](). Visiting the place as a group was incredibly useful as it allowed the entire team to experience the sort of ambience and style we're after. As well as giving us more ideas on what can be included in the game. A few ideas included a particle effect for breath on the character when outside, to show how cold the environment is. As well as several items that can be included in the house, as well as a number of sound effects, such as birds flapping above head while walking under trees.

Visual Style

During our original presentation we were encouraged to go for a more stylistic presentation, for example making everything black and white with a camera like filter. However I felt it would remove the player from the game. Any other style does not really fit either; there is a reason the walking dead game has black outlines, it is based off the comic book world and wanted to emulate to the same style. We realise that a realistic style will be difficult but the entire reason we're making a demo and not a real game is so we can put extra time and effort into the environment. We are looking towards other indie games such as Erie or The Lost Souls.

Erie

Lost Souls

Lighting is also very important in our project, other than in the opening sequence in the house, lighting is very minimal. While we feel the modelling is very important the overall ambience is the key. Katie's dissertation is based off of spaciality and narrative architecture, using this research we hope that the spaces we create will create a sense of unease in the player. Spaces that are good at creating a sense of unease include long slim corridors, stairs and any object which impedes the players view of what is up ahead. We want the lighting to create a sense of being exposed as well; it is incredibly difficult to traverse our environment without a light, though you are left feeling exposed with it. A good example of lighting making a player feel exposed can be found in Bioshock. The best example is where you enter the "artist" Sander Cohen's area and are hit with a spotlight. While most of the environment is dark, it makes the player feel uncomfortable knowing that everything in that space knows of their presence.
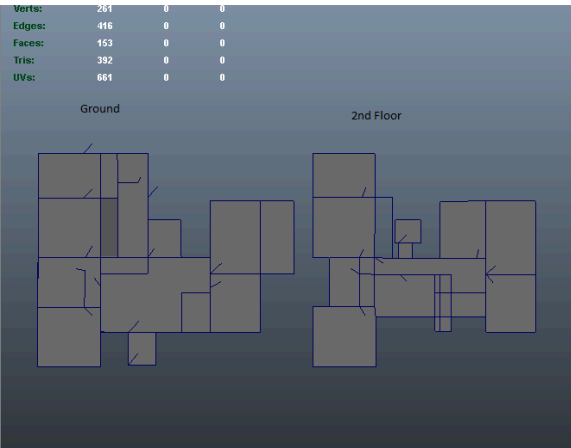

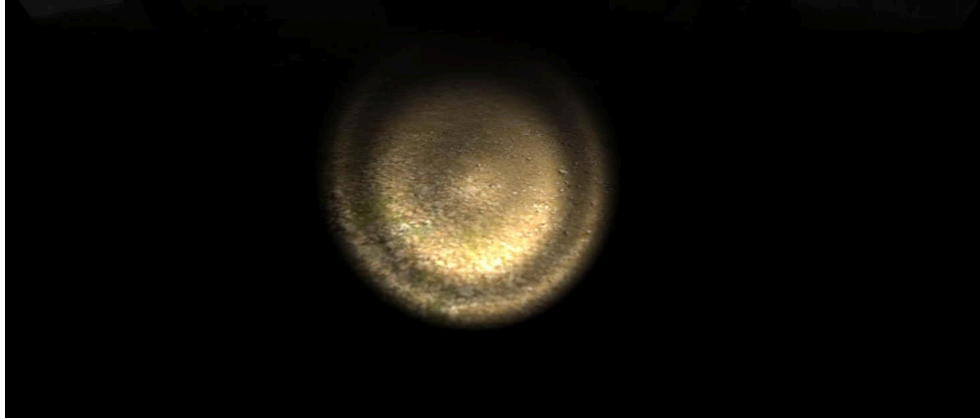Planned Demo

<u>Basic Route With No Deviation</u>

<u>[GIF With Blueprint](#)</u>

1. Upon entering the house you have to find your cousin who came in before you, finding her in the kitchen with the coffin of your sister (window open). After a short conversation it is decided to go to bed.

2. Your cousin leads you up the stairs, motioning you to follow her, she tells you that your bedroom is at the end of the corridor on the right through the study. You go in and settle down in bed.

3. You wake to a disturbance outside, looking out the window you decide to go out and investigate, you head downstairs towards the back door, finding a torch. Unfortunately the door is locked and there is no key to be found.

4. In order to get to the barn/disturbance you have to go around the entire house. Meaning that you have to exit out the front door.

5. Once out the front door you have to walk all the way around the outside of the house and through the garden to the barn, you discover some destruction/claw marks but decide it was just an animal of sorts. A key to the back door is found, allowing quicker access to the house. After entry the character re locks the door, after which strange noises come from the other side.

6. After re-entering the house, happy that there is no immediate danger, the character goes into the cellar to try and repair the fuse box, the attempt is unsuccessful and the character emerges into the kitchen to a scene of destruction where the first ghost attack takes place (ghost came in through the open window).

There is a more thorough plot description in Katie Harris's individual hand in.

<u>What we have achieved during post production.</u>

Verts: 261   0   0
Edges: 416   0   0
Faces: 153   0   0
Tris: 392   0   0
UVs: 661   0   0

Ground   2nd Floor

As far as 3d modelling go we feel that there is a reasonable amount for the Final Boss, pre production unit. All of our research has been completed, there is an original concept and plot. And the style in practice objects and characters is reasonable and can be carried forth into production. The entire building is boxed out and it has been decided which areas are accessible. Our on site research went very well and gave everyone ideas for the game and each group member has worked consistently throughout the project.

<u>Schedule</u>

<u>December</u>
Storyboard opening cut scene and script any dialogue.

<u>January</u>
Basic Items modelled e.g. Large furniture and doors. Animate character movements (walk cycles) and doors.

<u>February</u>
Fully modelled & textured house, grounds and characters., simple programming for doors, drawers etc. Audio creation & audio inserts. Create any required particle systems/effects.

<u>March</u>
Create and implement cut scene, smaller asset creation. Final touches to house and grounds. Code all trigger boxes and outsource combat programming.

<u>April & May</u>
Play testing and feedback from classmates. Fix any problems found. Record footage of people playing for a trailer.

<u>Roles</u>

Katie Harris
Producer, game designer, writer, programmer and minor 3d asset artist.

Chloe Chapman
Character enhancements, character artist, scene setup, arrangement, art director and minor 3d asset artist.

Jack Clements
Concept & texture artist, 3D asset artist and psychological Researcher.

Craig Brennan
Lead 3D artist, animator, co-programmer.