

“The Smattering” Design Document

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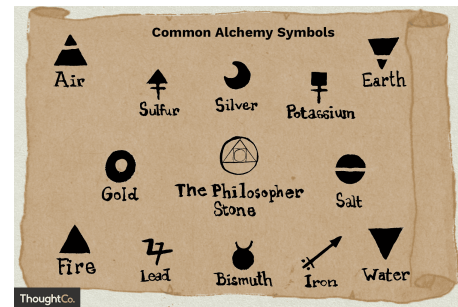
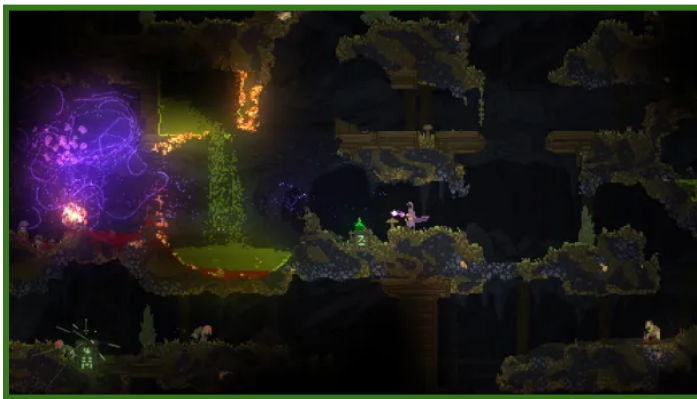
Made for Pirate Software Jam 15

Theme: Shadows and Alchemy

Inspo board:

Game inspirations:

- Noita
- Hollow Knight
- Hand of Doom
- Katana Zero



Overview

Pirate Software Jam 15 took place from July 17th to July 31st 2024, which gave participants two full weeks to build a game about shadows and alchemy.

I was the sole developer of "The Smattering," so the game's design, art, and programming was done by me and me alone, without the aid of artificial intelligence. Working alone on a project this big was a terrible choice, as I ended up being far too busy studying for college exams to fully bring my vision to life within the time frame.

Despite the time issues, I had a ton of fun and learned so much! I became far more efficient and proficient with each of the programs I used, and overall I feel like I've become leagues better as a game developer!

With all of that out of the way, this document contains the software and tools I used, my design brainstorming, some technical issues I faced, and my final thoughts on the jam.

Tools & Software

Game Engine: Unity

2D Graphics: Photoshop

Audio: lol

BrainStorming

Alt definitions of Shadows:

- Poor imitation
- Inferior version
- Constant companion
- Second self

Alt definitions of Alchemy:

- Seemingly magical transformation
- Hidden knowledge

Overview:

Old bearded man going through a dungeon that gets darker and darker. He must use his alchemy to fight his way through the shadows that protect the secret of the philosopher's stone

Name Ideas:

- This Dust of Words
- The Smattering <- i like this one a lot

Art:

- Dark castle kinda vibe
- Messy pixel art maybe
- Tiles maybe
- Keep animation simple, walking animation should be the guy bobbing up and down, using potions should be the guy holding the starting chemical and pouring in the second one.
- If there's time, draw up a combination sheet in case the player forgets. (I don't think this is necessary for the jam tho)

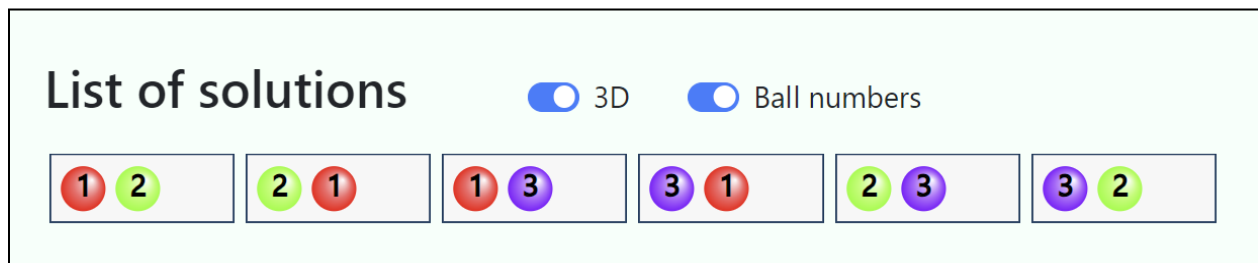
Narrative Concepts:

- Journey to knowledge

- Lighting up the shadows

Gameplay Concepts:

- Combine symbols to cast different kinds of effects
 - Could be lights, something to reveal secrets, or attacks
 - 3 symbols, circle, square, triangle
 - Represents 3 chemicals, visually stored in a flask, pouch, and tube respectively.
 - There are 6 combinations with just 2 chemicals, that is plenty. (order matters)
 - Heal potion (flask->tube)
 - Sword swing type potion (tube->pouch)
 - Close range explosion potion (pouch->tube)
 - Thundaga type shit (pouch->flask)
 - Light (tube->flask)



- Essentially a raid from start to finish, complete with combat, puzzles, maneuvering, and bosses.
- With the previous two gameplay ideas in mind, a balance must be struck between learning mechanics and learning your tools.

Audio:

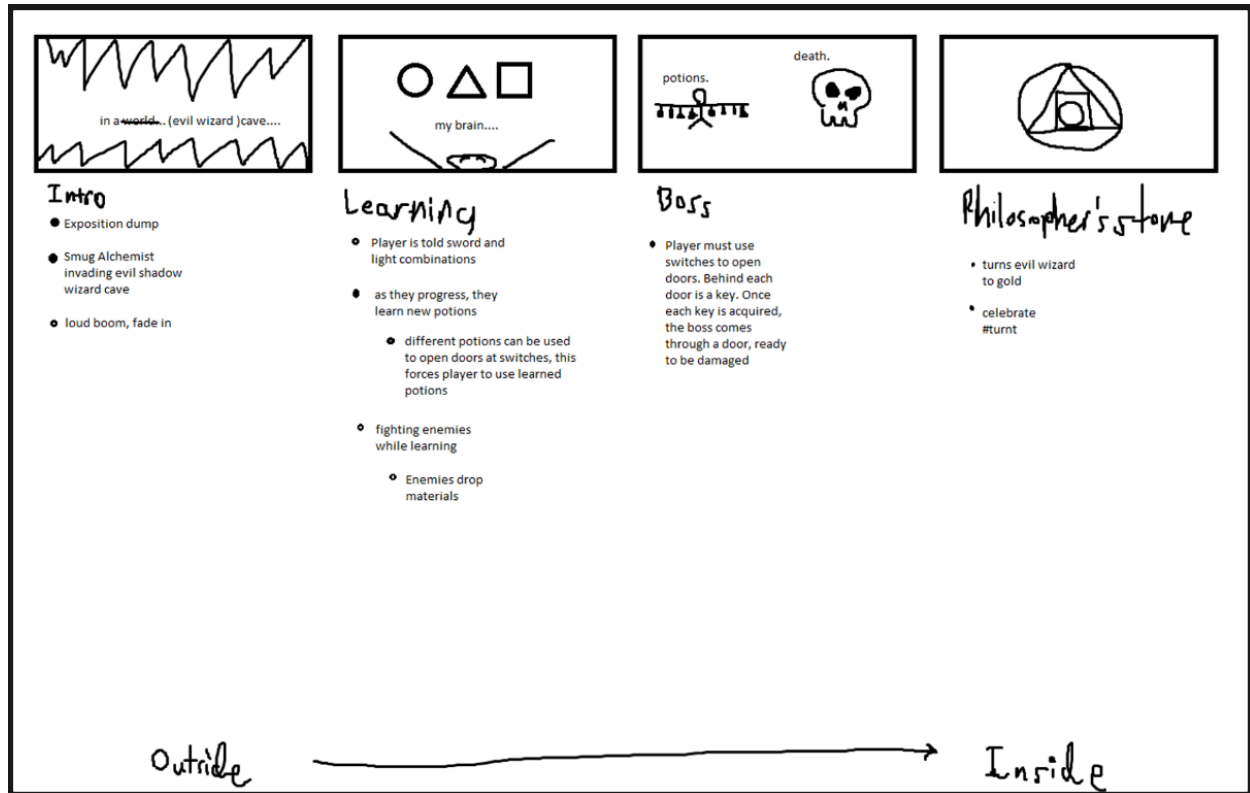
- Attacks should be voiced over
 - Record some nonsense in a silly voice
- There shouldn't be much dialogue besides the intro narration, maybe something in the middle, and the ending. All of these should be short too
- SFX for casting attacks, landing hits, getting hit, walking,

Tech Goals:

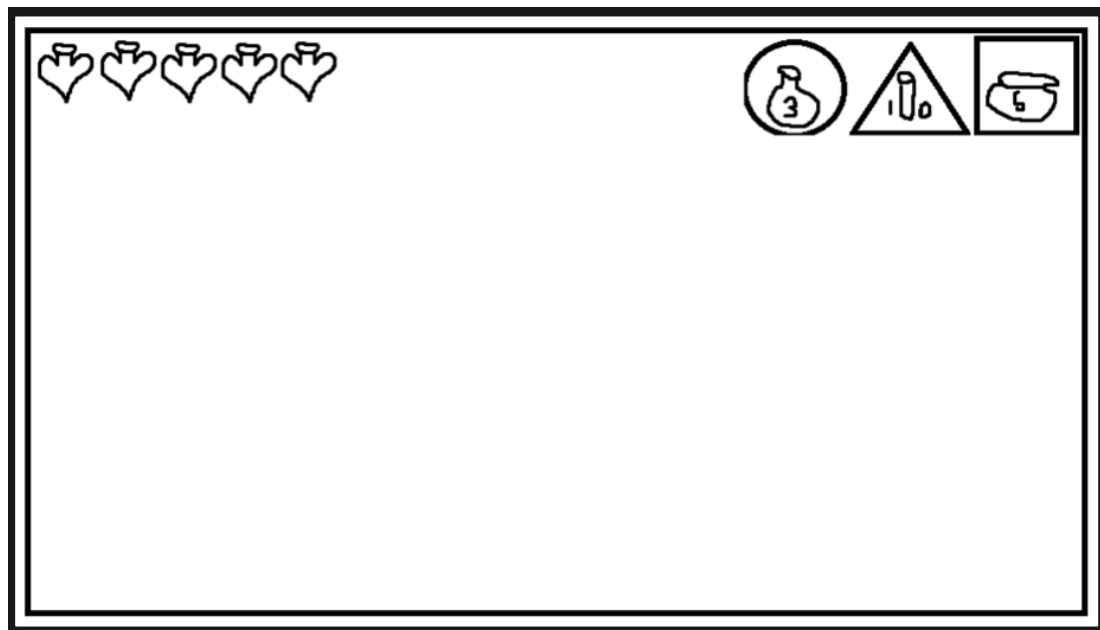
- If pixel art is decided on, I want the game to be as close to pixel perfect as I can get it
- Audio is a big one, I want things to feel chunky

Mockups

One overly-ambitious game timeline I drew up 5 days before the jam ended.



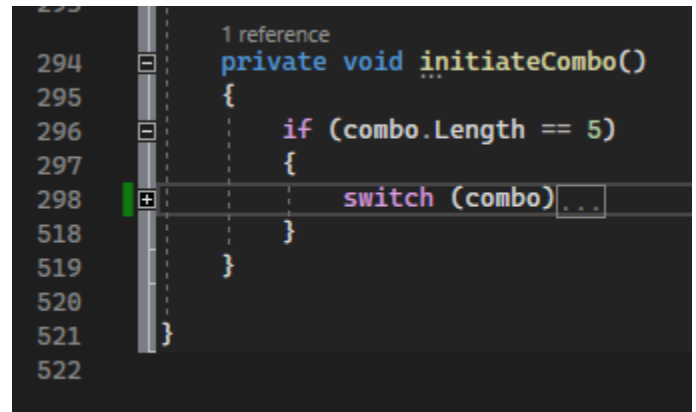
Cute HUD mockup, ended up spending 6~ hours designing UI elements



Challenges

The Potion Combo system was very easy to implement, I made a mockup of the system on my laptop the day the Jam began and was pleasantly surprised by how well it worked. However, my approach to this system felt wildly efficient and made several future tasks more painful.

200 line switch case lol -----



```
294 private void initiateCombo()
295 {
296     if (combo.Length == 5)
297     {
298         switch (combo)
299         {
300             case "f":
301                 // ...
302             case "k":
303                 // ...
304             case "l":
305                 // ...
306             default:
307                 // ...
308         }
309     }
310 }
```

How it works:

Pressing 'J' 'K' or 'L' adds characters to a string called combo that gets passed into a switch after two button presses.

Very simple, but this approach led to some glaring issues later on:

- Since I wanted to have certain actions carry out at different steps in the combo string, it turned into a MASSIVE hassle trying to keep track of which part of what case does what and when.
- This meant that for every additional feature I tied to the combo system, I had to think again about each of the 9 steps involved in activating a potion combo.



```
if (Input.GetKeyDown("j") && chemCount <= 2)
{
    Debug.Log("pressed flask");

    if(flasks > 0)
    {
        combo += "f-";
        //Debug.Log("combo: " + combo);

        chemCount++;

        uiManager.toggleCircOutline();

        holdingCheck(1);
    }
    else
    {
        Debug.Log("Not enough flasks");
        combo = "";
        chemCount = 0;
        uiManager.disableAllOutlines();
    }
}
```

I'm still very new to game development, this was a big big headache for me even though I had fun figuring it out.

Conclusion

For my second game jam submission, I think it went very well! My first jam submission was for Mini Jam 162, made in 72 hours, and I think it turned out a bit more polished than this one because I kept the scope for that one down. I think I got a little too excited by the two week time limit.

Overall, I think I've gotten a little better at this game dev stuff! Honestly I'd say I'm a better person now too. This jam basically made me rich if you think about it.

I haven't slept in like 36 hours, idk how to end this, thanks for reading