Game Design Document - *The Cure*

CONTENT DRAFT

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# User Interface

The user interface will be minimal during exploration and non-combat interaction with the exception of dialogue captions and status updates. The interface will be reactive with contextual elements being summoned or dismissed as needed, staying out of the way as much as possible so as to keep the screen uncluttered and to not distract from the gameplay. During interactions, character portraits will be present to identify speakers and indicate which characters are affected by status changes. The user interface should not overwhelm the player, instead providing whatever information is pertinent at the time and remaining out of the way otherwise.

A familiar control scheme is intended - character navigation will involve [control system] and interaction can be performed through [control system]. These controls will be presented to the player in the game menu. The object of this is to provide an intuitive method of moving around in the world so that the player does not have to learn new controls and can focus on the game.

[Include a wireframe or mock-up of in-game interface and a diagram of control schemes?]

# Art and Sound

The game makes use of three visual styles: pop-in character busts for dialogue and interaction sections, using caricature or more realistic renderings of the characters; semi-realistic stylised character models for general gameplay, striking a balance between realism and economy; and more stylised cartoonish background art with outlines, allowing the characters and foreground to take visual precedence while providing an artistic ambience to scenes.

Multiple art styles have been considered, and to expand on this it is important to look at how a balance of graphical economy and visual appeal is achieved in other games of this genre. Possibilities include 2D-in-3D, in which characters and items are represented as flat sprites moving around in a 3D environment; 3D-in-2D, in which characters and items are represented as 3D models imposed upon a painted or pre-rendered 2D background; and full 3D, which can be achieved economically and with pleasing effect by using stylised low-fidelity 3D models and 3D environment with an aesthetic reminiscent of 1990s console games.

In the case of The Cure, the approach taken is full 3D as this allows for a dynamic and traversable environment without fixed or restricted camera views and characters that can move in arbitrary rather than predefined directions. In addition to this consideration, it is important to define the aesthetics - the look and feel of places and characters - such that the artistic design of the game agrees with the narrative direction.

The soundtrack of the game is fully diegetic, with the bustle of townsfolk going about their business offering an acoustic backdrop in the cities and towns of the land, the ambient sounds of nature in wilder areas giving the player a sense of tranquillity or isolation depending on situation, and the music of birdsong and travelling minstrels brightening up the soundscape here and there. A limited amount of incidental music may be included at key moments to supplement the natural soundtrack, but a full symphonic approach as is often taken with fantasy RPGs is to be avoided for our game.

[More description of look and feel coming soon…]

# Tools

For games with a focus on dialogue, story, and exploration, there are many options available for the game engine. As this is a small production it is best to use one of the most well-known and supported platforms, such as GameMaker, RPGMaker, Unity, Unreal, or Godot.

Focusing on the dialogue and visual novel styling, RPGMaker provides an easy way to create retro-styled 2D JRPG-format games including menu-based interaction, combat, and inventory management. GameMaker is more flexible but is similarly intended mostly for 2D production and uses an easy-to-learn workflow ideal for small independent game production. Godot is an open-source engine with a similarly intuitive workflow to GameMaker and as such is great for teams without a strong programming side. Unity is a highly versatile engine for 2D and 3D work and is among the most common choices in the indie scene; it requires competent programmers and various external tools to make effective use of its workflow, but it is a powerful engine. Unreal is optimised for 3D game production and tailored toward larger and graphically intense game production, finding use in a fair number of independent and mainstream games.

For our game, Unity would most likely be the best option for game development. Other production tools for asset creation include Blender, a free 3D modelling and animation program with a vast array of addons and tutorials available and a massive community and support base; Substance Designer and Substance Painter, which while expensive can drastically improve the quality of textures and the ease with which they can be produced; image editors such as PhotoShop, GIMP, Krita, and Paint Tool Sai, which can be used for concept art, environmental art and texturing, model texturing, and interfaces; vector editors such as Inkscape, which can be used to create clean scalable designs for interfaces and icons; and a Digital Audio Workstation such as FL Studio, which can be used to produce and sequence music tracks without requiring an actual soundtrack orchestra and recording studio.

[Need to make final choices on this.]

# Asset Lists

This section should comprise detailed lists of assets - objects, visuals, audio, and other game content - in tabular format. Other sections should make reference to these lists as appropriate.

[I’ll work on this more next week when I have a better idea of the content.]

# Technical Documentation

This section describes the methods of implementation and technical definitions, abstract from their gameplay purpose or design choices. This should include algorithms and data structures, artificial intelligence and procedural systems, application and network architecture, target hardware and requirements, file structures, technical questions and risks.

[I’ll work on this more next week so I can coordinate better.]