Roots Design Treatment

Concept & Vision Statement

Roots is a single-player, 3D narrative adventure game that explores how deep-rooted fears can fuel personal doubts.

The player plays a character who has just blown a tire on her car and is now stuck on the side of the road late at night. Amongst only trees and darkness, she is left with no other choice but to replace the tire herself. This is a beleaguered task, however, as the character's fear of the dark turns the night into an active antagonist that complicates the task and makes the character question her ability to succeed.

Roots is split into three short acts. In the first, the character has to balance the constricting effects of her fear of darkness while trying to collect tools and use them to fix the tire. As she goes through the process she gains confidence. However, in the second act, this confidence goes crashing back down as she has to retrieve an object from the darkness but fails to face her fear completely, panicking and rushing back into the light.

In the third act, the character must make the decision to step into the dark forest in search of gas. Deep within the forest, her flashlight goes out and her fear of the dark overwhelms her, sending her into an intense panic. The character must calm this panic by taking intentional breaths that root her and allow her to see past her fear. Calm now, the dark of the forest lights up around her – guiding her through the forest and to the gas station.

Experience Goals

There are two stages of experiences –
1. Players will feel anxious and paranoid as they try to escape an increasingly dark environment.
2. Players will feel a sense of catharsis as they gain control over their fear.

Player Role

The game is played with a single player.

The player inhabits the role of a female forester who has a deep-rooted fear of darkness. This fear, which the character views as childish immaturity, drives within her a sense of doubt in her abilities.

Finding herself stuck in the dark and forced to rely only on herself, the forester faces her fears – not only of darkness but of inadequacy and failure.

Objectives

The character drives the player towards two levels of objectives – characterized by minor and major dramatic arcs.

➔ Minor: Fix the car and escape from the darkness.
➔ Major: Overcome her fear and self-doubts.

Sequences

1. **Start Menu**
2. **On the Side of the Road (introduction)**
    ➔ Inciting incident where tire blows and character exits car**.**
3. **Car Interior**
    a. **Passenger Side - Glove Compartment**
        ➔ Player collects their only defense against the darkness.
    b. **Back Row**
    c. **Trunk**
4. **Car Exterior**
5. **Wheel Well (middle)**
    ➔ Player removes and replaces the blown tire.
6. **The Forest Edge**
    ➔ Player goes into the dark to retrieve an object; the character fails to face their fear.
7. **Driver Side**
8. **The Forest Depths (climax)**
    ➔ Character is overwhelmed by their fear; the player fights to calm her.
9. **The Forest of Light**
    ➔ Cathersis where the character gains control over her fear and the forest lights up around her.
10. **Gas Station (end)**
    ➔ Player exits the abyss of the forest. Game ends.
11. **Credits**

Procedures & Controls

➔ Start: player presses the Start Button in the opening menu.
➔ Movement: The [WASD] keys and mouse are the main movement controls for players to explore the space. [WASD] will control position movement and the mouse will control the player's camera rotation.
➔ Collection: an interaction system that will highlight selectable objects and allows players to pick them up. When an item is collected, an icon representing the item will appear on the player HUD.

➔ Fixing Car: using mouse movement to interact with parts of the tire and use tools to change the state of the car.
➔ Car Manual: a progressive checklist that logs what steps the player has completed towards fixing the car. Once collected, it is accessible as a pop-up menu using [M].
➔ Dialogue Event System: select dialogue will play upon introduction or completion of events.
➔ Darkness: a sphere around the player that gradually closes in on them and affects their ability to see or move. The sphere is pushed back out when the player moves to look behind them with the flashlight. When darkness gets within a certain range, player position movement freezes and the HUD is overlayed with effects.
➔ Breathe: special event that prompts the character to breathe when the player presses [Space].
➔ Game End: player enters a trigger area at the end of the forest. Prompts transition to calm view of gas station & credit sequence.

Game Feedback

Narrative
➔ Character soliloquy reveals the emotional state and offers direction for the player.
Visual/Audio
➔ Light cast from the flashlight points in the direction the player is looking.
➔ HUD icons indicating items the player has collected.
Darkness
➔ Player movement decreases in relation to how close the darkness is.
➔ Sphere of light surrounding the player gets smaller as the dark gets closer.
➔ HUD overlay the reduces player's field of vision as the darkness gets very close.
➔ Semi-creepy SFX coming from behind the player.
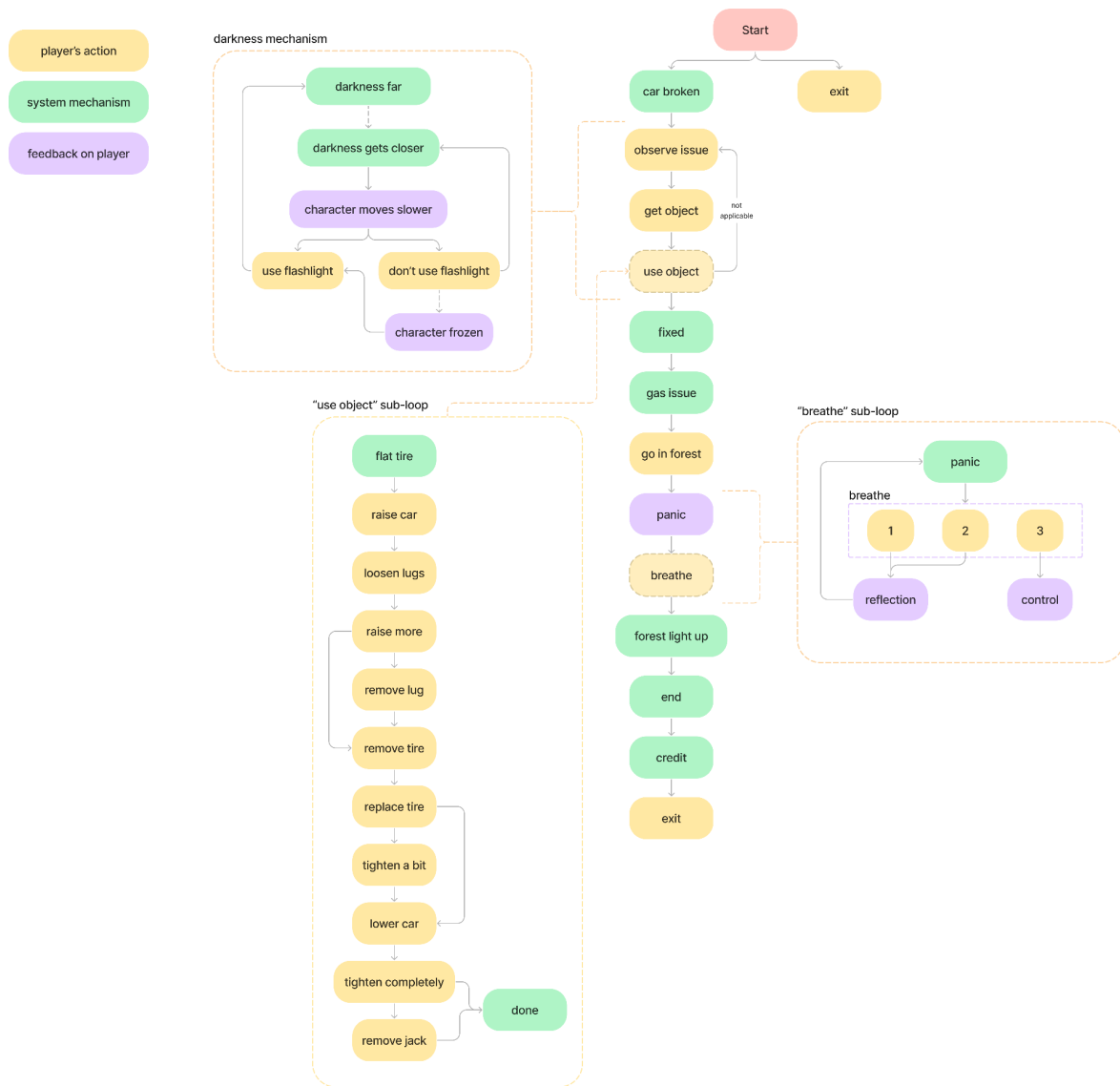Fixing Car
➔ The car manual checks off the progression through the steps of fixing the car.
➔ SFX of each action taken to fix the car.
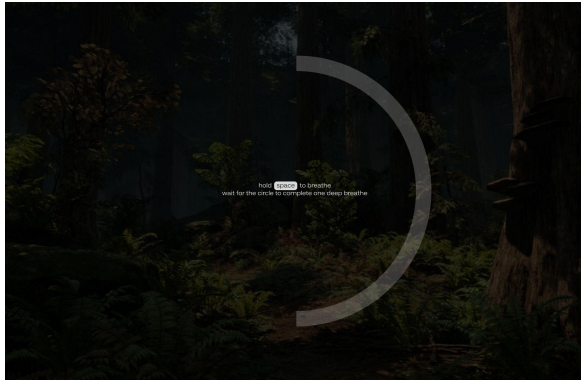➔ Visual change to objects in the tire space.
Breathe
➔ SFX of character breathing.
➔ SFX echoes of past dialogue.

Game Flow

player's action	(yellow)
system mechanism	(green)
feedback on player	(purple)

darkness mechanism

- darkness far
- darkness gets closer
- character moves slower
- use flashlight
- don't use flashlight
- character frozen

Start

- car broken
- exit
- observe issue
- get object
- use object
- not applicable
- fixed
- gas issue
- go in forest
- panic
- breathe
- forest light up
- end
- credit
- exit

"use object" sub-loop

- flat tire
- raise car
- loosen lugs
- raise more
- remove lug
- remove tire
- replace tire
- tighten a bit
- lower car
- tighten completely
- remove jack
- done

"breathe" sub-loop

- panic
- breathe
  - 1
  - 2
  - 3
- reflection
- control

Wireframes

Breathe_player instruction

car manual

HUD screen_darkness/collected obj/chad

pick up objects_object lighten up

Use objects_player instruction

Media Assets