

MILLION SELVES

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Core Game Concept

THEME AND GENRE

Million Selves is a dungeon crawler, turn based RPG with story and puzzle elements that are tightly linked to its gameplay, thanks to its main mechanic of recruitment, where you can convince enemies to join your party. As for the setting, in this world, there's a massive structure in which it is said you will find ultimate happiness. This structure is a physical manifest of the minds of those who enter, and it is where our protagonist will venture in. Naturally, psychology is one of the main themes behind the design of the game.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This game has only cartoon violence, but through text and sound effects some pretty gnarly stuff is portrayed. Still, audiences age 9 and higher should be able to play this game without many problems, even if they do not grasp the underlying themes yet. As for who might be interested in this game, anyone who has an interest in thematic/metaphorical storytelling and RPG/ Strategy fans are the main targets.

ELEVATOR PITCH

"Submerge yourself in a desolate world where you will face abstracts of your own mind in a unique fusion between puzzle and turn based combat."

TARGET EXPERIENCE

Million Selves is brutal at the start, but as you learn more, you will understand more and more about its mechanics and how to play it. Here, interpretation is key. Players will have to pay attention to their enemies, and through aspects like their behaviour and appearance, try and make a plan of action. Failure is an organic part of the game, dying should be but a stepping stone to reaching the end. The game heavily encourages interacting with enemies in ways other than engaging them in combat, creating a unique style of combat, where objectives are usually other than simply defeating your opponent.

DESIGN PILLARS

Knowledge is Power

The game is composed of knowledge checks that serve as the strongest and most effective way of clearing it. Figuring out the mystery behind how enemies work is the main fun of this game. There are clues as to what to do in the design of the entities, the dialogue, and the options available. Each wrong and right decision represents a key piece of information gained. That is why the enemies are always different each fight; they serve as puzzles to solve.

Thematic Importance

The game is very linked to the themes it tries to portray. The entities in this game are the prime point of interaction, and they are designed from the ground up to represent or deal with a certain subject. To beat them effectively, you will have to understand the logic behind their behaviour, which I think is an interesting way of figuring out what is being said through their designs.

Recruitment

Recruitment is the main mechanic of this entire game. It is the reason why you would rather talk to your enemies and try to convince them to join rather than simply defeating them at the first opportunity. Wanting to recruit enemies makes combat a lot more interesting than simply hurting an opponent until they die. Suddenly, you have secret conditions to meet, certain actions to try. It makes the game feel quite distinct from the typical turn-based RPG. Of course, you are free to play the game in a traditional manner and simply attack every enemy until they die, but you will soon realize that that will not take you far.

Gameplay Mechanics

CONTROLS

(Xbox layout)

A: Select option.

Joystick and arrows: Move in menus.

MAIN LOOP

The game as it stands now puts you against 4 differing enemies, the last one serving as the boss of the game. The game is organized in turns, defined by a hidden speed value each entity has, and asked to act. Your actions vary a lot depending on what entity you play as, usually only having the Pass action shared between everyone. Your only losing condition is having your avatar player die. There are two win conditions; kill all enemies or recruit all enemies. Obviously, the riskier and more complicated one is figuring out how to recruit enemies, but it is also a lot more rewarding, adding a whole new member to your party instead of simply letting you advance. Once you beat or recruit the enemy, you move on to the next fight with the current life totals and party you have.

PROGRESSION

Unlike traditional RPGs, this game does not have a level progression system. Instead, you progress purely by adding new entities to your party. This makes recruitment a core element that you must interact with to finish the game.

ENTITIES

Dust

LIFE 10 | SPEED 5

NO PASSIVE

Options:

Talk: Triggers dialogue.

Attack: Deals 3 damage.



Dust is the main entity of the game and the avatar the player will use to interact with most of it. He is the only entity (apart from the Actor) that can use the most important action in the game: Talk. Talking is the way you get enemies to join your party, but it is also risky to choose, since you will not be able to retract your decision once you select it and a wrong decision might be crippling to your run. Once you use talk, you will be shown several options in which to interact with your enemy in diverse ways. Apart from that, Dust only has one more action, Attack, which will deal 3 damage to an enemy. It is important that Dust has an Attack action since it exemplifies the two main ways to go about things in this game. Dust's stats of 10 life and 5 speed serve as the baseline for all other entities: above 10 is tanky, below is brittle; above 5 is fast, below is slow.

Hedgehog

LIFE 10 | SPEED 5

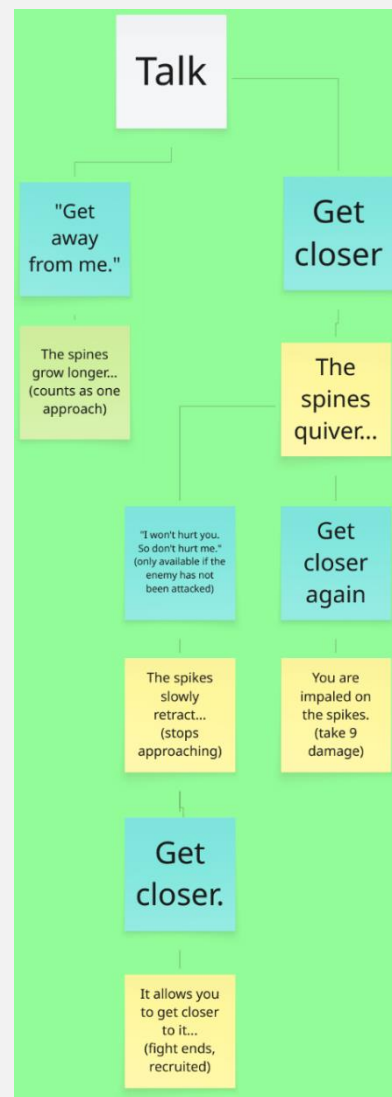
Deals 2 damage to attacking enemies.

Actions:

Approach: Once approach is used four times, deal 9 damage.



The Hedgehog is the first enemy that you will face, and thus, it serves a bit as the secret tutorial enemy. It is mechanically simple, with only one action: Approach. Every time he uses it, he gets closer to the player's party. The fourth time approach is used; it deals a devastating 9 damage, which makes it the strongest attack up to this point in the game. It teaches the player how this game works in quite a simple manner; you can beat the Hedgehog by simply attacking, but every time you attack it, you will get hurt as well, dealing you two damage in retaliation. If you go this way, you will kill it but remain at only 1 life. In other words, you can progress in this manner, but the costs will be heavy. Else, if you recruit him successfully, you will go through the battle unscathed. As for the thematic basis of the entity, the Hedgehog is based on Arthur Schopenhauer's Hedgehog Dilemma, a metaphor about the complexities of human intimacy. The metaphor describes two hedgehogs approaching each other for warmth, but their spikes hurt each other the closer they get. Humans want closure, but the more they open themselves to someone, the more they risk being hurt. The spikes represent the fear produced by that risk, and the tendency to isolate oneself out of fear of being hurt. Because the Hedgehog is a very direct mirror of the individual, its life and speed are the same as the protagonist.



Actor

LIFE 5 | SPEED 3

NO PASSIVE

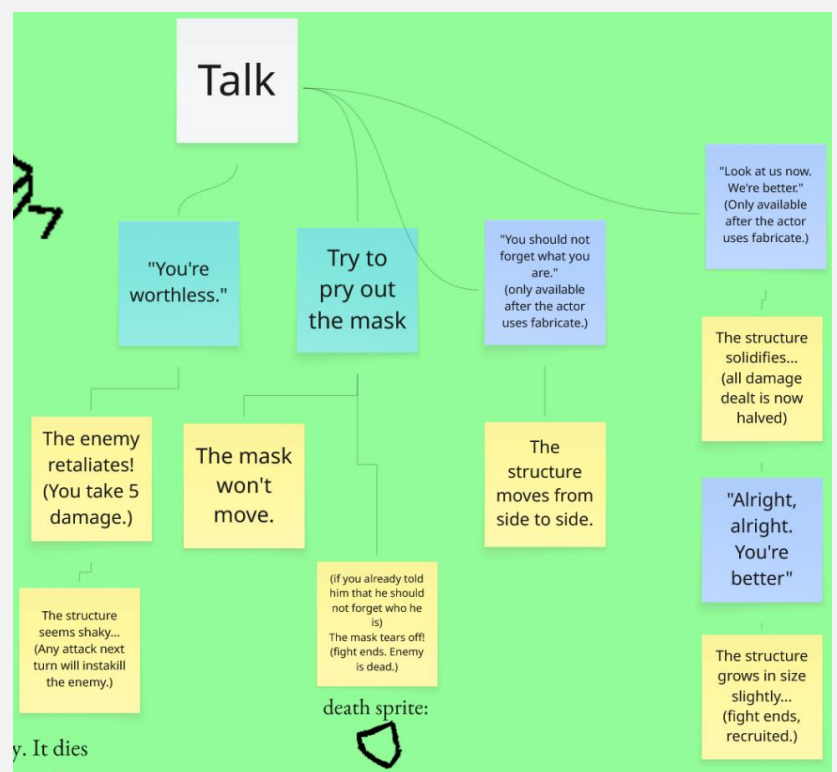
Options:

Fabricate: Copy all actions from target enemy.



The Actor is a bit weirder than the Hedgehog. It has 5 life, and 3 speed. That is to offset its only, but quite strong action: Fabricate. Fabricate will allow the Actor to look at an entity, and after that, gain all that entity's actions. It allows for weird interactions, and can be quite useful in certain situations, like bosses for example, since you have access to the same moves, they are using on you, which tend to be quite strong. This is a very easy enemy to beat since you will defeat it in only two hits, but as you play the game, you will understand it is quite a strong inclusion to

your party that should not be ignored. As for the thematic breakdown, the Actor is representative of the concept of identity. It is composed of concrete simplifications that allow it to feel more real. If you pay attention, it is composed of several random items usually linked to activities. It uses these activities or created qualities to give itself a more concrete and solid basis for its identity. As you talk to the actor, you can make it give in to its belief of importance, becoming stronger, and then eventually joining your party. Else, you can hurt its ego and make the structure more fragile, eventually being able to simply rip out its mask, revealing nothing behind it.



Hero

LIFE 20 | SPEED 8

Evil creatures take 2 extra damage.



Actions:

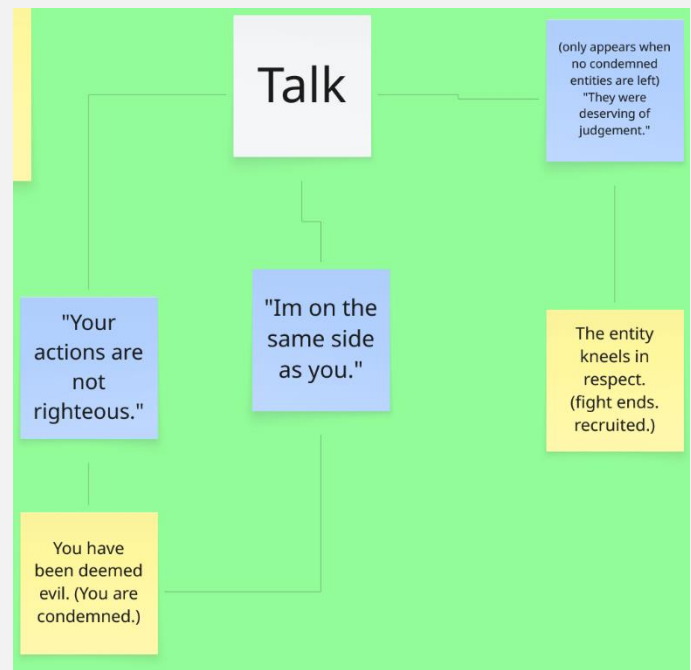
Condemn: Deems target evil.

Purge: Deals 4 damage to target evil entity.

The Hero is the strongest entity before the boss. It's a lot more combat centric, having a high life total of 20, a high speed of 8, and being able to dish out big damage. This also means it's a very valuable ally, but also a mighty enemy. The hero has 2 actions; Condemn and Purge. Condemn will make the target "evil", making everyone attacking it deal 2 more damage. Purge is a damaging move that deals 4 damage, but it can only be used on entities that have been deemed as evil.

The Hero cannot be reasoned until it kills whatever it deems evil. Only once there's nothing left to purge, will it listen to the player. This means that it is

a very expensive addition to the team, which offsets how powerful it ends up being. As for the thematic breakdown, the Hero is based on the concept of justice. The Hero chooses something to be evil, and only under the guise of being just, it can act. Everyone who attacks an evil entity feels justified to hurt it, making it easier, and that's why I gave it the damage buff. Of course, this is a bit critical of the whole concept of heroism and justice, and it's very much a personal view. I think believing to be just hurts our capability to be kind.



Anger

LIFE 50 | SPEED 5

Increases rage by 2 when damaged.

Actions:

Rampage: Deals damage equal to rage count.

Madden: Increases rage by 2.

Unbound Wrath: Deals damage equal to rage count to all entities.



Anger is the boss of this game. It's extremely tanky at 50 life, and has fine speed at 5. Being the boss, this is naturally the most mechanically complex fight in the game. Anger has a rage value that changes depending on certain actions. The higher this rage value, the stronger Anger becomes. It increases in two manners; getting hurt and using a specific action. Getting hurt gives him 2 extra rage. This means that as the fight progresses, the difficulty will ramp up. Anger has three actions; Rampage, which will deal damage equal to the rage value to an enemy, being the main method it has to deal damage, Madden, which will give him +2 rage, changing the tide of battle quickly, and Unbound Wrath, a move that is only available at 10 or more rage that deals damage equal to the rage value to all enemies, essentially working as a finisher that the player will have to avoid since it usually causes the player to lose on the spot. Now, how does the player manage the rage value? Well, there is a dialogue option that reduces rage by one every time its used. This means that the player will have to gauge when it is wise to attack and increase the rage value, or pass, defuse Anger more before continuing to deal damage to it, to prevent Unbound Wrath from triggering. The way I designed the

recruitment event of Anger also forces you to fight him quite a bit before being able to finish the fight, since you can only recruit him once his life is 10 or less, and you get the message "The creature is tired!"

Thematically, this isn't as profound as the other enemies. It's simply an embodiment of one of the most prominent human emotions. I feel that the wider and less specific the concept, the more powerful it feels.

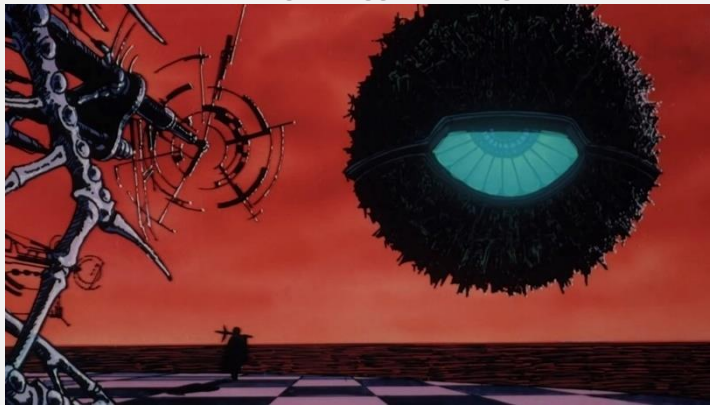


Art and Visual Style

ENTITY DESIGN

Despite this game simply being a game design concept, getting the entity design correctly was a particularly important part of it, since players should interpret and try to make sense what it is they are fighting against to know how to act accordingly. As for the overarching style, it's just a pixelish sketchy style because it's a bunch drawings I did quickly, and I thought this kind of style is decent looking and easy.

Also, the reason why the sky is red, and the ground is this checkerboard pattern is because I like how Angel's Egg's starting scene looks like.



UI DESIGN

The UI followed the entity design, low resolution, sketchy. It also looks funny because it is clearly drawn by hand, but well, it is consistent across the whole UI, which makes it a style. The enemies not having exposed stats is also a decision, making knowledge more important, but also making finding out their values a thing players must keep an eye out for constantly. I designed the game so players are forced to act to get information.



Audio Design

MUSIC

I used Kae Murphy's Instatracks albums, which are short snippets of music he makes and allows free use of. I also use a theme from those albums for the trailer. The reason why I chose it is because I think the free form proggy/jazzy style of music fits the psychedelic style the game has going for it. Also, it has so many tracks that I could use different tracks for each enemy encounter, so that's quite cool.



SFX

There is this useful page called BFXR which is just a very easy way to make custom 16 bit sound effects, that because the visual style is kind of pixelly, it fits the retro vibe it has going on. Every sound in the game apart from the music are sounds I made here. The main logic was to make the menu sounds sound satisfying, the hit sounds sound impactful and fit the attack being used, and some other sounds to represent what I think something that doesn't make any sound would sound like, like for example the Fabricate sound effect sounding a bit cheap because it's essentially just a guy copying another guy, and the Madden sound effect sounding like a boiling tea kettle to emulate those old cartoons where angry entities would be steaming off the ears.

