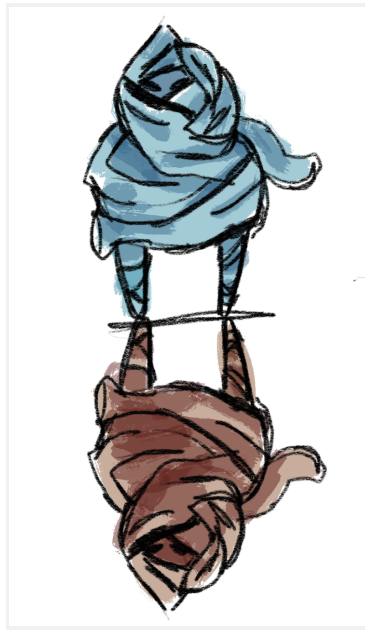# Game Idea Proposal

Soulbound Escape:
A Hunter's Redemption

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1. Game Description

Gameplay

Soulbound Escape: A Hunter's Redemption is a single-player hack-and-slay game where the character is set in two worlds: the overworld and the underworld. The player needs to escape this nightmare by fighting through enemies and monsters in close-quarter combat. Both facets of the world are deeply intertwined and as such, the player exists in both worlds and has to fight and protect themselves from both worlds at the same time. To escape this predicament, the player has to find points of interest to discover a portal out of this world. If the player is overwhelmed by the enemies on either side, they lose the game.

The core mechanic of the game is that the player can only fight in the overworld or the underworld at any given moment and can swap the side they are currently controlling using a button. Enemies are vulnerable only on one side depending on what type of enemy they are. However, the player is vulnerable on both sides at all times so the player has to act fast for incoming enemies on both sides and eliminate them before they overwhelm them.
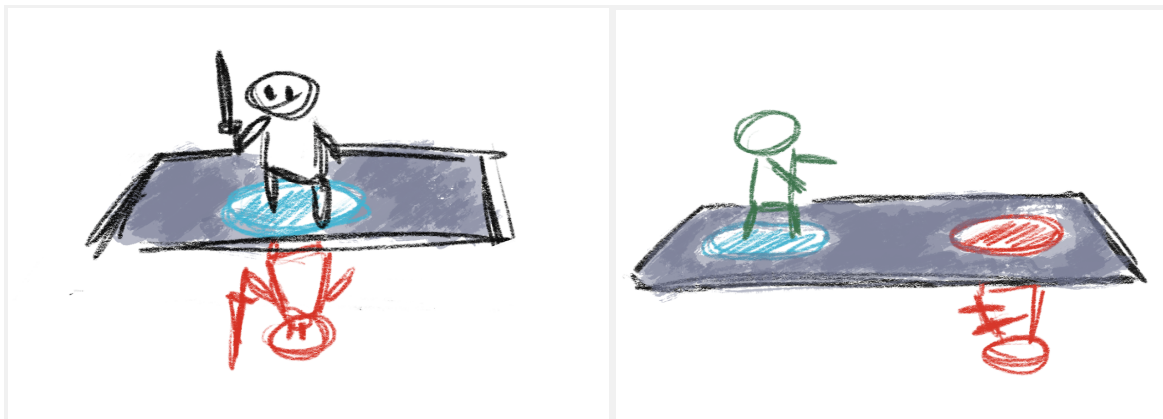
The environments in both worlds are mirror versions of each other styled in their respective thematic of their world. While the player can see their character on the side they are currently controlling, the other half of their character is also mirrored on the other side executing the identical movements as controlled by the player (only movement, not combat). To ensure visual clarity, enemies have a circular color-coded indicator that always tells the player the position of visible enemies regardless of which side the enemy is on. We adhere to a color code between the two worlds and their aesthetics so it is clear to the player on which side the enemy is on: blue, green, and white color hues for the overworld and red, orange, and black hues for the underworld.

Maps and environment we will generate using procedural generation methods to improve replayability and make the gameplay more diverse in each playthrough (which will be discussed in more detail in the Technical Achievement section. We aim to use low-poly models for characters, enemies, and environment as we want to focus on the gameplay first and go for a stylized look.

Narrative

The player controls a famous mercenary and monster hunter who has been in this line of work for way too long. One last job to finally lay down his arms and live a peaceful life. Just one last contract to finish it all. The protagonist finally tracks down and encounters his mark, a powerful demon that would turn out to be more than just another day on the job. When he is finally about to land the finishing blow on the demon, it casts one last spell and entraps the hunter into a strange world. A world where the material world co-exists with the demonic underworld and where reason ceases to exist. The hunter feels as if a part of him was ripped out of his body but is somehow still connected to it. Only time will tell if the hunter can survive this predicament and fulfill his one last job or lose body and soul in the process.

Up & Down Theme

Our main idea initially was to include an isometric camera as it would lend to interesting twists on the up-and-down theme with, for example, gravity. They were ideas to reverse gravity which might make a fun puzzle game with different floors and objects. Following that, we came to the idea of going through a hole in the floor and ending up on the other side of the floor and reverse gravity so the player would "stick" to the underside of the floor.

Eventually, we came to the idea of flipping gravity to flip the world's perspective and have the player on both the floor and the "underside" of the floor. Instead of going up and down through gravity, the player is located on the up and downside of a floor. We expanded this idea to make a fitting theme around this core idea and ended up with an overworld and underworld narrative.

Art Theme

As mentioned earlier, we are going to use low-poly models for both characters and environments. Thus, we could benefit from a better performance. Some assets (especially characters) might be designed and created by our team, but most likely premade assets from various stores will be used in the game.

Since the game follows the theme of 2 worlds, this would highly impact our choices for the assets. Models and environments in the upper world would be represented mainly by blue, green, and white colors, as those colors are often associated with spirituality, heaven, sky and leaves, and new beginnings. At the same time, the underworld would have red, orange, and black as dominating colors. Those are often correlated with rage, hell, fire, danger, and similar topics. Enemies in the finished game might also have different models or types, possibly various fight mechanics, depending on the world they are populating.

One thing we should consider for the level design and choice of models is the isometric camera view. It creates some challenges since some assets would not work with an isometric point of view. Especially in terms of environment, we should check if models would not cover the character from above if it is not intended for the gameplay. Also, characters and enemies should be easily distinguished from our point of view.


2. Technical Achievement

As for our technical achievement, we aim to integrate procedural map generation to generate our environment for every playthrough. This will ensure replayability and make the game more exciting for consecutive playthroughs. It will also add difficulty as the player has to deal with unknown locations and keep the game fresh. This will also allow us to procedurally generate enemies and interactable objects at unknown locations as well.

On top of that, we need to implement proper enemy AI that is not too hard but also not too easy to maximize player enjoyment. This will also be challenging coupled with the environment in terms of wayfinding for both enemies and the player. If time allows, we would like to incorporate adaptive difficulty to dynamically adjust the difficulty regarding to the player type and skill.

3. Big Idea Bullseye
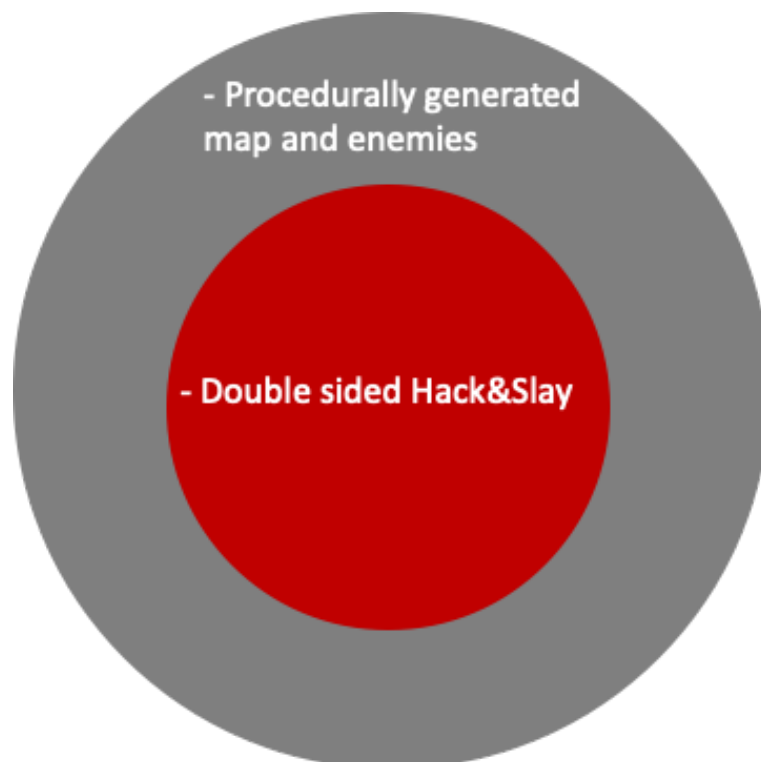
4. Development Schedule

Functional Minimum

- Simple map
- Isometric camera view
- Player controls
- Basic combat system
- Basic enemies

Low Target

- World flip mechanic
- Simple map generation

Desired Target

- Procedural map generation
- Interactables
- Animations
- SFX

High Target

- Boss enemy
- More enemy types
- Adaptive difficulty
- Complex interactables
- Audio

Extras

- More complex combat system: ranged combat, spells
- Different triggers for world flipping
- Infinite progression through levels -> rogue-like elements

5. Tasks and Timeline

Game project

TASK	PROGRESS	RESPONSIBLE	Planned	Actual
Milestone 0				
Brainstorming	100%	Team	10	10
Idea Refinement	100%	Team	10	10
Slides	100%	Team	4	4
Milestone 1				
Feedback	100%	Team	6	6
Re-Brainstorm	100%	Team	1	1
Rerefinement	100%	Team	3	3
Slides and Report	100%	Team	8	8
Milestone 2 - Prototype				
Re-re-reiteration	0%	Team	3	
Material Collection	0%	Team	3	
Sketching	0%	Team	4	
Slides and Report	0%	Team	4	
Milestone 3 - Interim Report				
Player/Enemy Logic	0%	Arda, Lukas	8	
Combat Mechanics	0%	Mariia	16	
Flipping Mechanics	0%	Lukas	10	
Environment Design	0%	Arda	8	
Slides and Report	0%	Team	4	
Milestone 4 - Alpha Release				
Character Designs	0%	Arda	4	
Storyline Refinement	0%	Lukas	4	
Procedural Map/Enemy Generation	0%	Lukas, Mariia	16	
Interactables Creation	0%	Mariia	8	
Animations	0%	Mariia, Arda	4	
SFX	0%	Lukas	8	
Mechanics Refinement	0%	Team	16	
Slides and Report	0%	Team	4	
Milestone 5 - Playtesting				
Audio / SFX	0%	Lukas	6	
Playtesting	0%	Team	16	
Bug Fixing	0%	Team	10	
Provide updates	0%	Team	8	
Slides and Report	0%	Team	4	
Milestone 6 - Final Release and Conclusion				
Monitor progress	0%	Team	4	
Trailer Creation	0%	Team	4	
Progress Evaluation	0%	Team	4	
Game Polishing	0%	Team	12	
Slides and Report	0%	Team	4	

Gameslab WS 2023/24, Team Onion, Milestone 1