Final Release:

Beyond our Sight

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Team Two*2

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Game Summary

Beyond our Sight is a cooperative multiplayer puzzle game, in which two players solve a level full of creative puzzles. However, both protagonists are substantially different in their abilities and how they perceive the world around them. While Anton sees the world monochromatic and orderly, chaotic Alice is surrounded by vibrant colours and disarray. In their plan to escape their everyday school life, *Beyond our Sight* lets players experience their journey and utilize the childrens' unique vision and abilities to succeed when confronted with creative and complex puzzles all throughout the school building.

Online Multiplayer allows friends to explore these two distinct visions of the same school house together. They help each other progress by investigating clues, sneaking around the observant eyes of the teachers, entering secret and creative passcodes to find new passageways and master diverse and ingenious puzzles. And through all that, communication is the key, as even though their characters might stand right next to each other, the surroundings might appear entirely different for both of them and thus also the obstacles they face. Objects clearly visible to one player might be non-existent, altered or displaced for the other. Only when communicating their problems, hints and solution approaches, Anton and Alice will be able to complete their challenging escape.

Beyond our Sight is played with keyboard and mouse on Windows and Linux PCs.

State of the Game and Evolution since Alpha Release

Menus & Gameplay

The menus experienced a big improvement since the alpha release, now sporting beautiful, thematic artwork matching the colorful buttons. The lobby-system, through which multiplayer games are started, now allows for more options, giving players the choice of playing Alice or Anton. The game starts with a short intro on the characters and the story. Presenting the setting this way will give players an incentive to progress through the level and immerse them more with their protagonist.

And after a while they became friends.
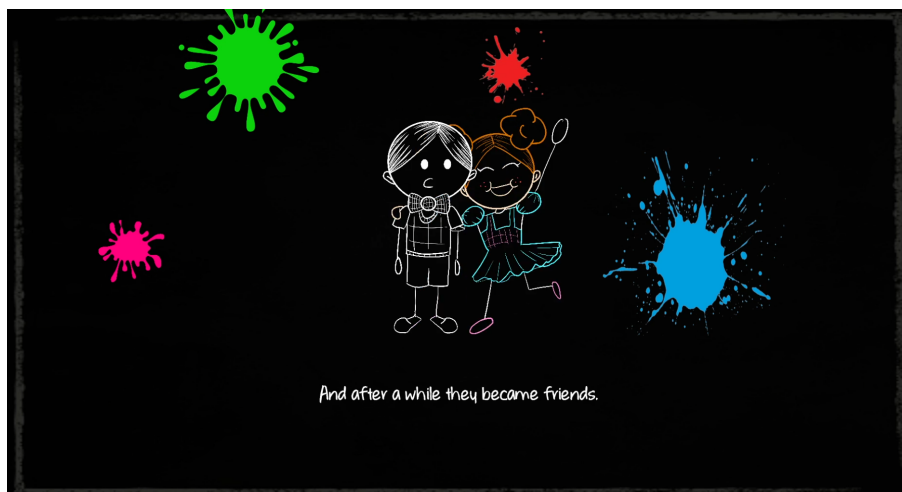
In response to some playtesters' feedback, we changed the camera to a wider angle but with certain, more stationary paths. This will allow a better view of the scene and helps us highlight certain objects or corners. Furthermore, objects between the protagonist and the player now become half-transparent, which is another step towards better orientation in the rooms. The jumping mechanic was also reworked, as it felt clumsy and hard to control. It is now much easier to perform more precise jumps, as is necessary e.g. in the science lecture hall, because the player can now influence the character's velocity slightly while in the air.

We also added a small ledge on the floor in all rooms where players have to move objects, to prevent deadlocks when players push chairs or similar to walls where they cannot retrieve them. Additionally, we added even more small clues and dialogue, mostly unique for each character, to avoid players being stuck in certain situations. When they reach certain areas in a room, e.g. in a wrong direction, they are still rewarded with a small piece of useful information.

A short Tour through the Level

The starting room is the elementary school classroom. Seemingly, the teacher has left for the moment and thus, Alice convinces Anton to escape the school grounds. Here the players look for a key to open the door on the right. They have to combine the clues on the board with the open book on the desk, which only Anton can read, to get a secret code out of animal icons. Mechanics like jumping on a crouched character and moving certain objects (a chair in this case) are introduced. Using either of them, Alice can reach the teacher's bag and enter the code to get the key. This classroom received a few more hints in this version, helping in getting to know the protagonists, and also heavily profited from the jump rework.

Behind the door is the hallway, where an open door, revealing a teacher's presence, prevents the players' immediate progress. Anton can sneak through however and provide Alice with cover. Sneaking behind a movable box, Alice can also get through the hallway safely. The ability to hide Alice behind the box is new in this release and replaced an older mechanic that was used during playtesting.

On the other side of the hallway is the science lecture hall. There, a clue for Alice is hinting to climb up the low-hanging lamps towards the beamer, which starts a helpful powerpoint slide. Anton is able to read it and find the clues that lead him to the giant periodic table. Searching the hinted-at elements on the slide in the table rewards the players with a colour-combination that opens a secret ventilation shaft behind the blackboard. This puzzle was clarified more, removing a few irritations that set some players on the wrong track.
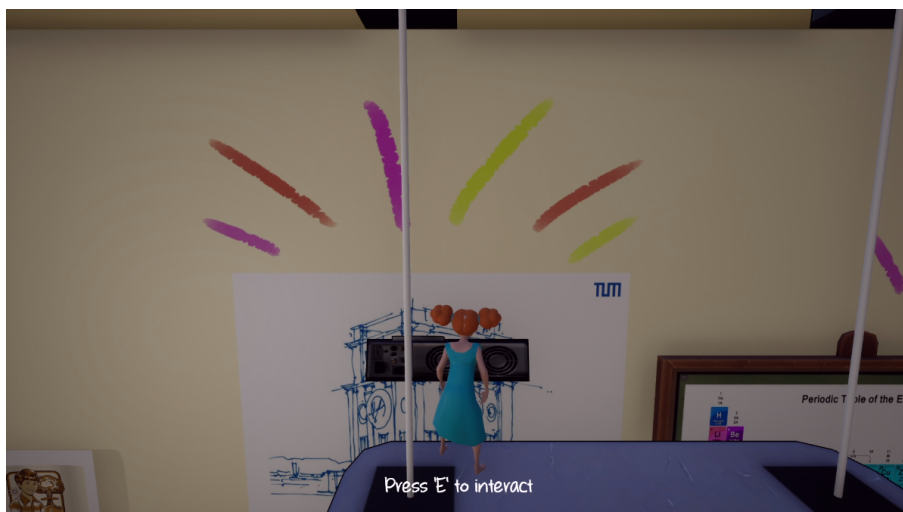
In the shaft, Alice can pass through the hole in the lattice that does not exist for Anton and break it open for him from the other side. This is possible after picking up the crowbar nearby.

The last room is actually two adjacent classrooms. Here Anton can climb on the woodwork beneath the ceiling and pass by a camera that would spot out Alice. Meanwhile, she can enter the other room, which is locked for Anton. There she can pass on a sequence of musical notes, allowing Anton to turn on the giant globe in Alice's room. She can then break it off it's mounting and smash in the door in Anton's vision. Finally, Anton is able to deactivate the camera that guards the door out of the building and they can leave together. New additions in this final part are windows between the adjacent rooms and a visible deactivated-state of the cameras. The former gives Anton-players a better idea of how Alice's room looks, making it easier for Alice-players to explain their situation. The end of the level is now more clear and a screen congratulating both players on their win is now available.
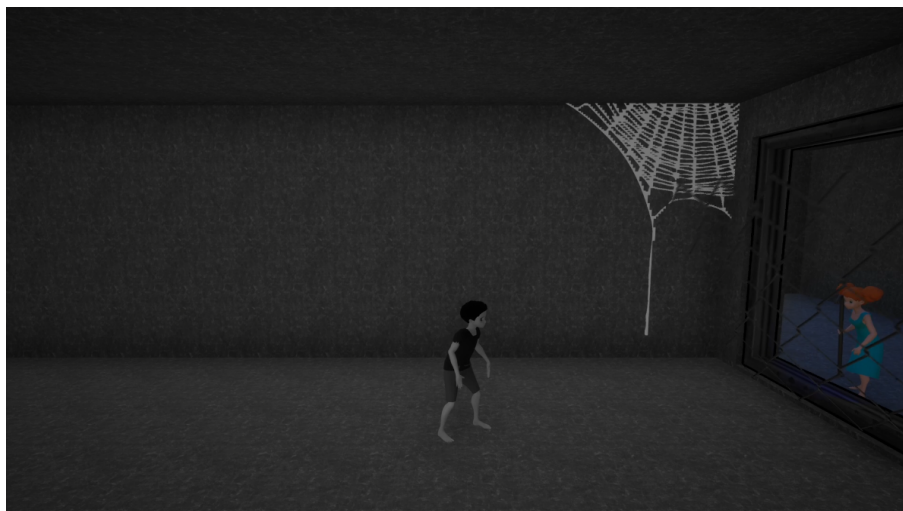
The Game in Pictures
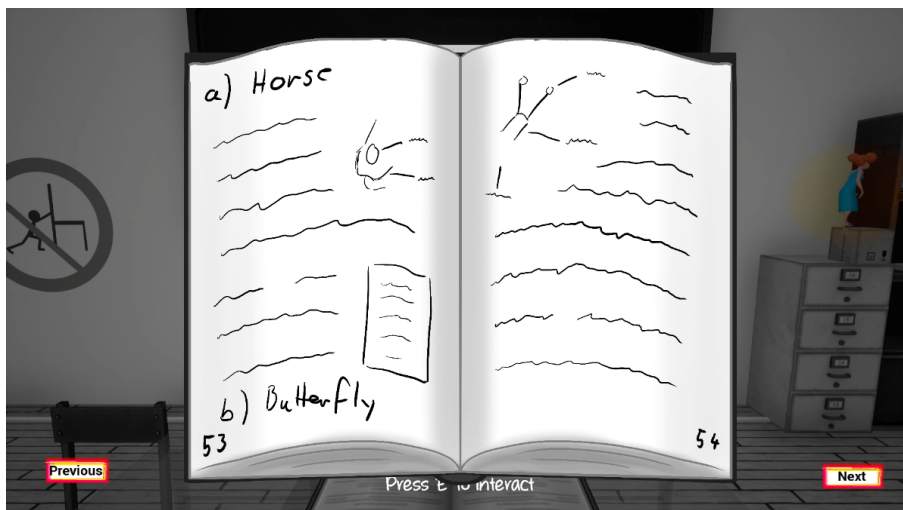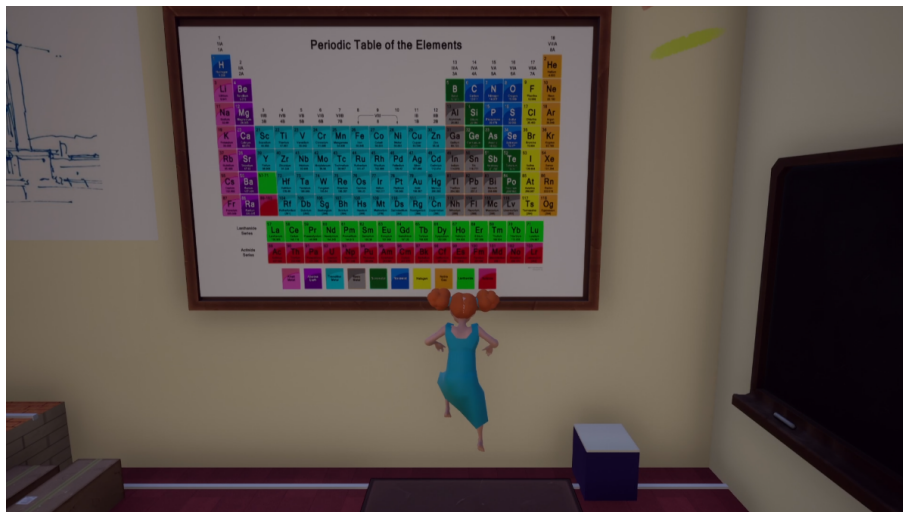
Our Experience

We were able to convert our original game idea into a complex and fun game without any major cuts to our vision. Our gameplay and puzzles exceed our initial expectations and the implementation of the two different views for both protagonists went faster than anticipated. Even the hiding of objects in one vision, which we originally expected as challenging, was already available very early in development.

However, the multiplayer took some time to be implemented successfully and led to unforeseen problems multiple times. It remained a technical challenge even throughout the playtesting phase.

Overall, we were able to stick to our schedule and rarely deviated from it. We were able to cover every feature we had in mind for our five rooms, and even though there are still some minor flaws for which the fix did not make the deadline, we are very content with our final release. We still think the game has a lot of potential and will consider updates with additional content, such as the "extra" targets from the game idea document, for the future.

Personal Comments

1. What was the biggest technical difficulty during the project?

The multiplayer implementation proved to be tricky, especially at the start, as the replication of actions and movement in the game takes some time to get used to and always has to be kept in mind. Furthermore, because of possible delays due to mediocre or bad internet connections of some players, certain gameplay mechanics that require precise input from the client-side are hard to implement. At some points fixing such things took significantly more hours to resolve but the multiplayer is now fully functional.

2. What was your impression of working with the theme?

The theme allowed for a lot of creativity and already provided a logical point of conflict that could be utilized for the game. Many design decisions came to us naturally, just through the theme. It was also interesting to see the different interpretations of the other teams and also helped make certain design decisions seem less arbitrary when presenting them to an audience.

3. **Do you think the theme enhanced your game, or would you have been happier with total freedom?**

The theme helped finding a game idea that satisfied all group members. Total freedom might have led to internal conflicts or disagreements, as then the discussion about the games genre would probably be at the centre of the discussion. Through the theme, the centre of the discussion is how the theme is best implemented and expressed in a game and each teammate's genre preferences appear less important.

4. **What would you do differently in your next game project?**

Provide the testers with a more polished version of the game or clarify more that their version is "work in progress". This way there should be more sympathy for bugs or faulty game states.

5. **What was your greatest success during the project?**

The greatest feeling of success was probably the completion of the sneaking-puzzle in the hallway. The box that should be moved by Anton and hide a sneaking Alice in the process took us a long time to debug, up to the point where we cut this solution of the puzzle from the playtesting version. When it finally worked correctly in online multiplayer it was a great feeling because it meant that all puzzles could now be completed without major bugs and thus the playthrough planned for the final release was possible.

6. **Are you happy with the final result of your project?**

We are exceptionally happy with our game and how the different features we imagined at the start now turned out. It is also great how detailed and intricate we were able to make our level and how much creativity we could express in the project. We are also happy to share the playing-experience with more people now that it is finished.

7. **Do you consider the project a success?**

Definitely. We learned a lot about the Unreal Engine and project work in general. We are also excited to see even more people play our game at the demo day. And presenting at the demo day feels like a success in itself.

8. **To what extent did you meet your project plan and milestones (not at all, partly, mostly, always)?**

We always met our milestones but it was a close call sometimes. Even if some specific thing required more time than expected, usually something else was finished a little bit earlier and thus the workload for the week was done anyways.

9. **What improvements would you suggest for the course organization?**

Having an additional week of time before the playtesting would be great, because it gives the testers more time to plan and requires them to be available on a less short notice. However, if an additional week cannot be given, it should not be taken from another milestone, because they are planned rather tight anyhow.