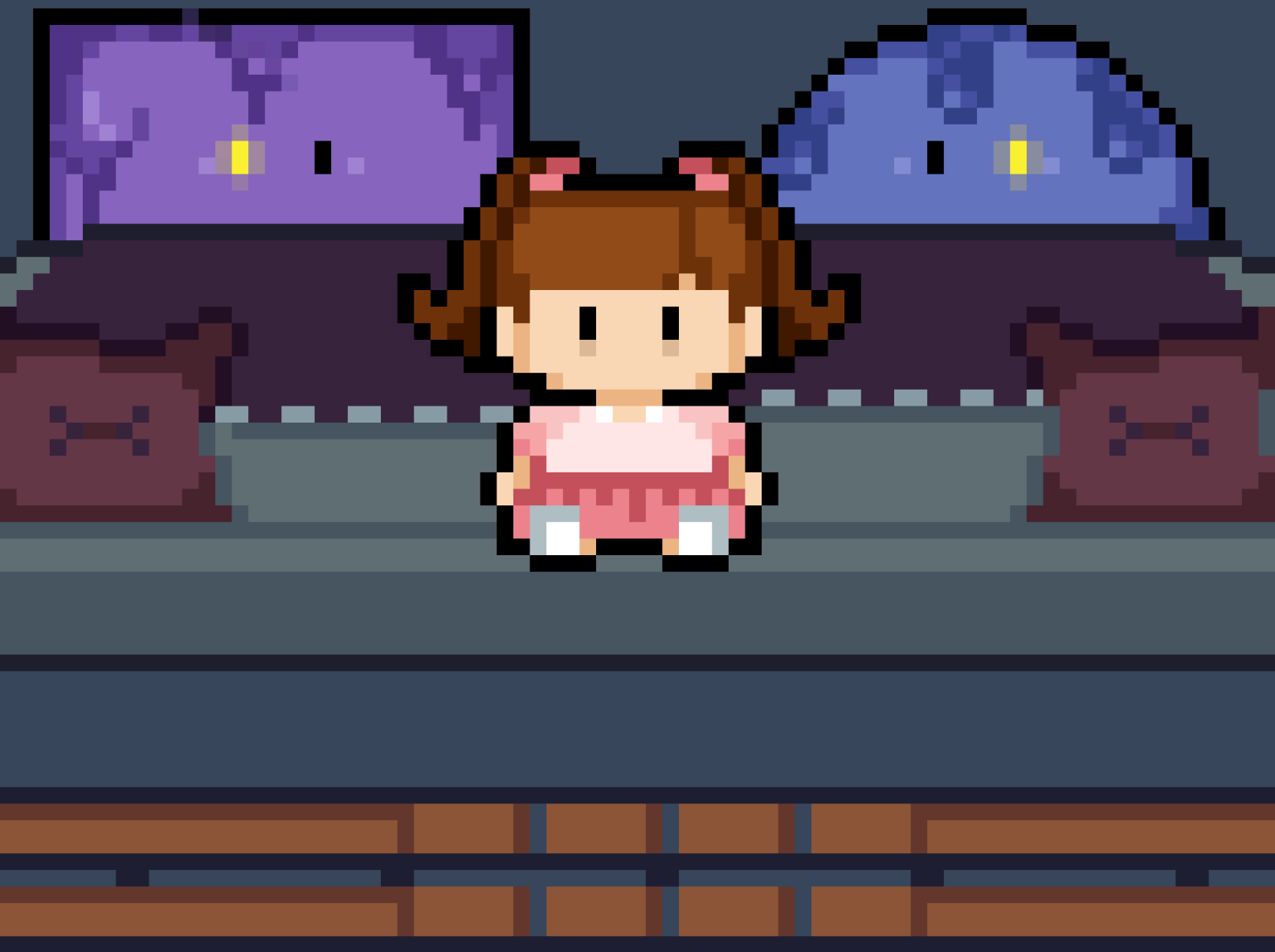


Lets Find Sophie

Game Design Document

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Lets Find Sophie

What is this game about?



Home alone, you, your partner, and a little girl named Sophie decided to entertain yourselves by playing hide-and-seek in the house. As you two work together to seek Sophie out across different rooms throughout the house, you and your partner slowly realize that something is not right with the game. *No, something's not right with Sophie.*

Thematic design research

I have categorized the research into 4 aspects: narrative, emotional, aesthetics and mechanical.

Narrative



The Others (2001)



Let's Find Larry

When it comes to narrative, I took inspiration from 'The Others' (2001), a movie where a mother and her two children believe their house is haunted, only to reveal that they are ghosts, feared by the living. Both narratives subvert initial assumptions, re-framing the protagonists as misunderstood figures rather than threats.

Another inspiration is 'Let's Find Larry', a game where the unnamed protagonist looks for his popular school friend, Larry, with the help of Findo. However, as the game progresses, the narrative take a darker turn, similar to 'Lets Find Sophie'.

Emotional



Little Nightmares

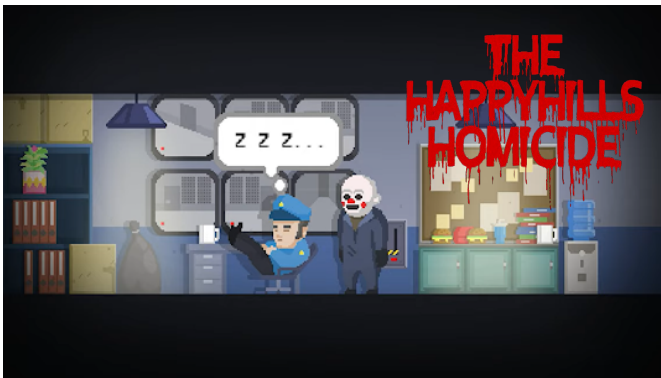


Let's Find Larry

When researching into the emotional aspect I want to create for 'Lets Find Sophie', I took inspiration from 'Little Nightmares'. This video game creates a sense of vulnerability and fear in the player due to how small the character is in a hostile environment. It also play with the duality of predator and prey throughout the game, forcing players to reconsider who is truly the threat.

I also took inspiration from 'Let's Find Larry!' as it builds up a sense of unease in the players as the game progresses, from the clues, dialogues and actions the player gathered from the character Larry as the player realizes that Larry isn't the high school friend that he knows.

Aesthetics



The Happyhills Homicide



Fran Bow

Regarding the aesthetics aspect of 'Lets Find Sophie', I took inspiration from two video games called 'The Happyhills Homicide' and 'Fran Bow'.

'The Happyhills Homicide' uses the lack of expressive animation in its characters, adding to the sense of unease. The movements feel stiff, and their deaths are depicted with an unsettling calmness, as if the violence is unremarkable.

When it comes to 'Fran Bow', the game uses dark environments with intricate details such as decaying objects and unsettling creatures. Safe spaces feels oppressive, as if danger could arise at any moment.

'Lets Find Sophie' aims to create an environmental contrast against its characters, designing the space to make the players feel that Sophie doesn't have anywhere safe to hide from the players, as well as animating the players to be stiff and emotionless, compared to Sophie.

Mechanical



Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes



With You

When it comes to the mechanical aspects of 'Lets Find Sophie', I took reference from two video games, 'Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes' and 'With You'.

'Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes' assigns a mouse to a player and a keyboard to another. The player using the mouse tries to diffuse a virtual bomb, while the other using the keyboard uses a bomb defusal guide to give instructions. 'Lets Find Sophie' also uses such controls, where players are also given a mouse and a keyboard to work together to get over obstacles in their paths.

'With You' uses similar game mechanics involving two players solving puzzles together using the concept of shapes. The controls are straightforward, limited to basic movements and jumping. The complexity comes from the puzzles themselves, which challenge players to think creatively and coordinate their actions with each other, bringing the attention to teamwork.

Portrayal of emotions

The emotions 'Let's Find Sophie' aims to portray are unease with a side of anxiety. These emotions will be shown through visual elements such as the characters, environment of the different rooms in the game, as well as through audio.

Characters



From left to right: Player 1, Player 2 and Sophie

The characters in the game are designed to be rather cute to have them contrast against the dark environment of the game, making the players feel emotionally unbalanced and have a sense of unease. The characters also give subtle clues in the game that something isn't right - such as Sophie having dark eye bags under her eyes.

Environment



Primary Color Palette

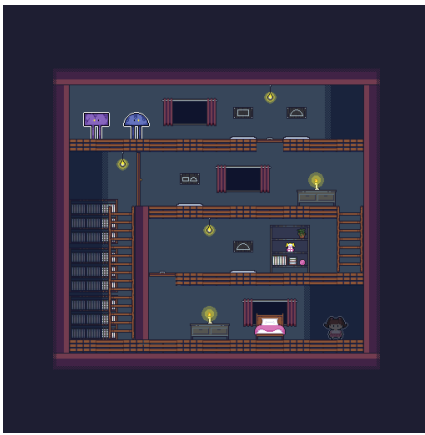
The muted color palette, dominated by dark hues and minimal bursts of color, subtly heightens feelings of unease and melancholy. The absence of vibrant tones creates a subdued atmosphere, emphasizing isolation and introspection. Players are encouraged to focus on the oppressive nature of the environment rather than any sense of comfort or familiarity.

The level's visual design reinforces feelings of anxiety and unease by employing several psychological techniques. The tight, confined spaces and the lack of open areas evoke a sense of claustrophobia, mirroring the overwhelming and isolating

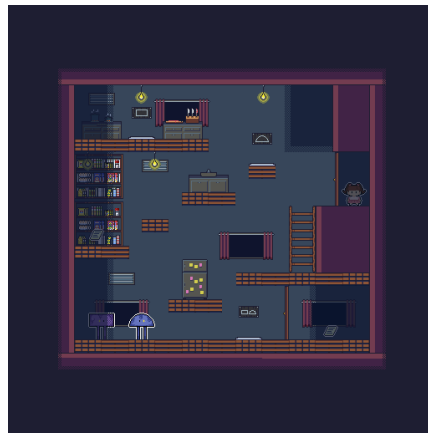
nature of Sophie's emotions. Players are immersed in her world, where the familiar becomes distorted and unsettling.

Finally, the framing of the rooms—where dark, undefined spaces enclose the boundaries—symbolizes Sophie's fragmented view of her world. By closing off open areas and reinforcing the sense of being trapped, the level design evokes the psychological effects of anxiety, such as hyperawareness and enhancing the impression of being confined.

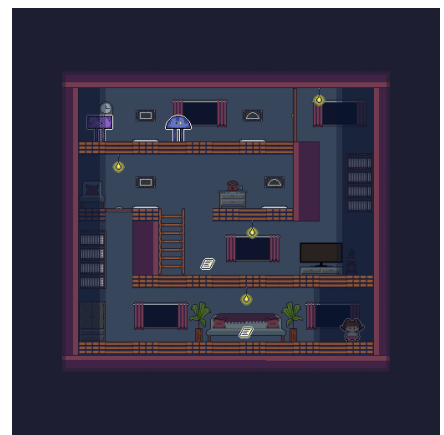
Level Design



Room 1: Bedroom

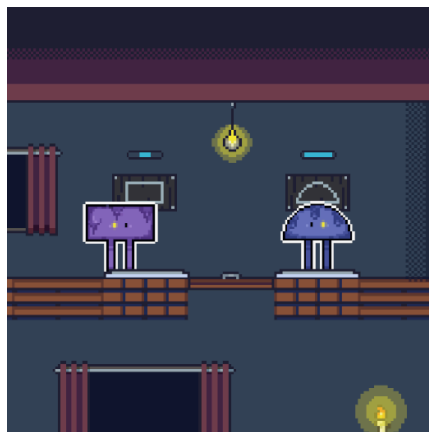


Room 2: Kitchen



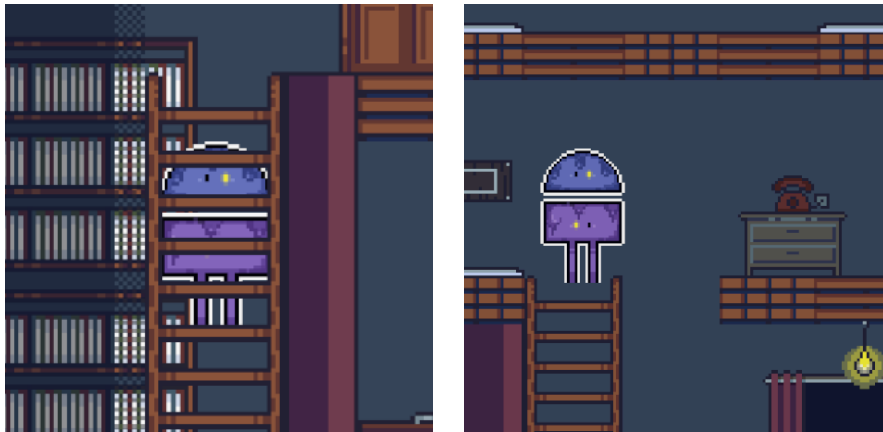
Room 3: Living Room

The level is divided into four sections of the house: the bedroom, kitchen, living room, and corridor. The first three rooms are compact and deliberately designed to be unconventional, reflecting Sophie's unique perception of her surroundings. These spaces serve as both a physical and emotional journey for the players, who must collaborate to find Sophie while piecing together fragments of her story.



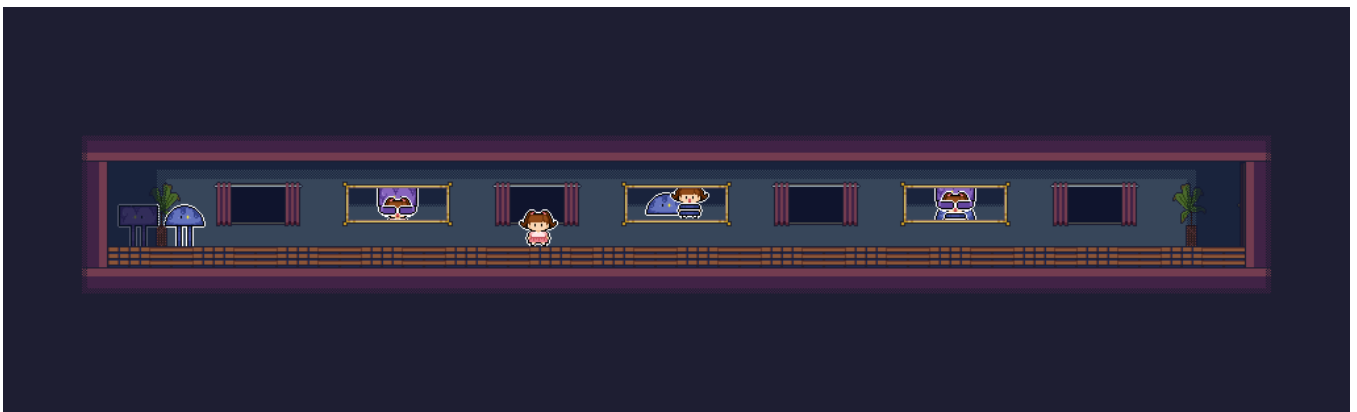
Players have to rely on each other as their character's form holds a piece of the puzzle to unlock doors. Pressure plates may require either one of the players on one pressure plate or both of them on one to unlock doors. This creates tension, as one

player might feel a lack of control, which reflects a sense of helplessness that often accompanies anxiety.



The player who controls the keyboard is also tasked to carry the other player as the latter is unable to climb up and down the ladder, or jump to get to other places. This makes the level navigation more difficult for the players. This dependency between the players can lead to moments of frustration or missteps, simulating the anxiety of relying on others when things don't go smoothly.

While being carried, Player 2 could lose some control over their movement, increasing their sense of helplessness. This lack of autonomy reflects how Sophie might feel trapped or unable to act on her own, enhancing the emotional weight of the mechanic.



Room 4: Corridor

In the last room, players are made to chase Sophie through the corridor, and on the walls are picture frames of Sophie's fear of the shadows consuming her. While the mechanics are more narrative in the final room, it portrays the anxiety Sophie has towards the players as she gained the courage to leave the house while trying to widen the gap between her and the players.

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Finally, the framing of the rooms—where dark, undefined spaces enclose the boundaries—symbolizes Sophie's fragmented view of her world. By closing off open areas and reinforcing the sense of being trapped, the level design evokes the psychological effects of anxiety, such as hyperawareness and a skewed perception of reality.

Audio

The background music establishes a surface-level sense of mystery and amusement, matching the dynamic's initial tone. The use of positive affect in music creates a false sense of security for the players, making them feel at ease as they explore the house. This comfort, however, stands in stark contrast to the ambient room tones, which represent Sophie's inner solitude. These tones convey a subtle impression of emptiness and sorrow, psychologically underlining Sophie's loneliness in a huge, empty house.

The absence of footstep noises for the game's player characters is a purposeful audio indication that uses cognitive dissonance to unsettle players. While players expect aural feedback from their movements, the lack of sound gently emphasizes the notion that their characters are not real, but rather extensions of Sophie's mind. This lack of sound generates a sensation of derealization, blurring the distinction between reality and illusion and prompting players to consider the nature of their existence within the game.

As the players move through the house, the diegetic sounds of the objects and furnishings they encounter provide spatial audio input, grounding them in their surroundings while increasing suspense. These sounds serve as triggers for Sophie's increasing anxiousness, as evidenced by the steady augmentation of her heartbeat sound effect. The heartbeat is a non-diegetic aural indication that externalizes Sophie's internal emotional state, using psychophysiological synchrony to make players feel more nervous as they get closer to her. The louder and more irregular the heartbeat, the more it resembles Sophie's autonomic symptoms, such as an elevated heart rate, which is typically associated with anxiety and panic.

Technologies and Engines



Aseprite



Unity



Soundly

These are the technologies I will be using for 'Lets Find Sophie':

1. Aseprite for the art of the game assets,
2. Unity for the prototype, and
3. Soundly for the audio aspects of the game.

Work Schedule

Below is the tentative work schedule for the documentation and prototyping of 'Lets Find Sophie':

WEEK	TO DO
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brainstorm idea
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pitch idea• Start on documentation• Start on poster
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finish documentation• Work on poster
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Start on prototype• Work on poster
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work on prototype• Finish poster
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work on prototype
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finish prototype

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