Design Document for:

Crayon Drawn Cthulhu

Adventure into Psychosis

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Overview

 Crayon Drawn Cthulhu is an adventure game dealing with the dark world of Cthulhu through the eyes of a child. The player controls Larry Craftson, a private eye and host of a conspiracy-based talk radio program, who has been chosen to venture through a young girl's mind for secrets of the universe implanted by an alien group. Though there are moments in the game that require quick reactions, most of the game can be taken at a leisurely pace to pass the puzzles. The game takes place inside little girl's mind and looks crayon drawn while still feeling dark and disturbing, a setting that should appeal to young adults and older players. This game should be suitable for all current generation consoles and the PC.

 The player's objective in *Crayon Drawn Cthulhu* is to navigate Larry through each level within the girl's mind to collect the tomes of knowledge placed by the alien group. There will be brief combat sections, but the exploration and puzzle-solving is the driving force of this game. Larry cannot fully die in the game, instead will just be teleported back to the Brain Stem when he runs out of health.

Game Mechanics

Overview

 Crayon Drawn Cthulhu is a third-person, side scrolling 2 ½ D adventure platforming game. The game focuses on exploration and puzzle-solving to progress in levels. The story is progressed through conversation with the mysterious Cloaks at the end of each level. Given these requirements, the game mechanics are designed to allow for ease of player control and intuitive use of abilities, as well as a robust text-based conversation system.

View Layout

 The view layout of any given level has four layers: rear background, front background, play area, and foreground. These four layers will each move at different speeds given the direction of player movement to give the illusion of a fully realized three-dimensional world through motion parallax. The rear background is a plane with a static image on it, which shows the distant background elements that the player will not have any interaction with. The front background is comprised of three-dimensional models but is still outside the area that the player can move, so none of the objects will require any collision meshes. The play area encompasses all the landscape that the player can interact with, so all three-dimensional objects will need to have appropriate collision meshes and accept player shadow. The foreground is entirely GUI and will represent things in the foreground area that the player will not have to interact with, but are required to create a more fully immersive level look.

Camera

In the context of the side-scrolling nature of the game, the player will always be in the horizontal center of the screen, viewed from a side view. The camera will be pulled back so that the player has a clear view of Larry and his immediate surroundings. In the case when Larry would be obstructed by any of the foreground images such as trees and fences, these items should be made slightly transparent so Larry will still be visible behind the object. Larry should be able to move up and down in the environment without the camera changing position.

Game GUI

The foreground environment should be a GUI laid on top of the lower section of the screen, so that some of the elements reach over top of the playable area. It should also scroll at a slightly different rate as the actual game play area to give the illusion that these elements are closer to the player using motion parallax. In addition to the foreground GUI, there should be elements above this to give the player information about the status of Larry and his progress.

- **Life Bar:** In the upper left of the screen, there will be a graphical meter representing how much health Larry has remaining, reducing as he gets injured in the game world.
- **Level Progress:** In the lower left of the screen, there will be a bar representing the total length of the level. As Larry progresses through the level, the iconic illustration of Larry will move further along this bar.
- **Speech Bar:** During the conversation sections of the game, there will be text of the dialog along the bottom of the screen. This will be under the head shot of the character talking since lip synching will not be possible with the Cloaks, as they have no lips or visible face of any kind, and they are the predominant speakers in the game.

Saving and Lives

There are no lives in *Crayon Drawn Cthulhu*. If Larry runs out of health in one of the levels, he reawakens in the Brain Stem hub area and has to start the level he was working on again. The game automatically saves the player's progress after each level. In addition, the player can choose save and quit from the menu, in which case, the game saves where the player is in the level as well as how much Larry has to accomplish to complete the level.

Control Overview

The player will utilize numerous buttons to control Larry's movement and actions throughout the game. The controls are based on a standard controller with analog and four face buttons. These controls are designed for current-generation consoles in mind, but could be readily adapted for other systems.

Sample Controller

Button 2

Button 3

Button 4

Button 1
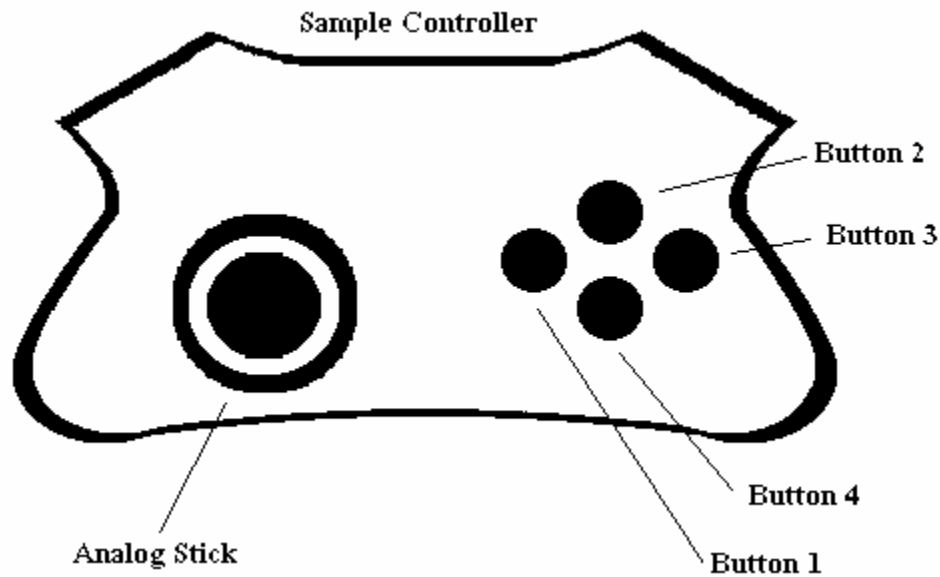
Analog Stick

- **Up, Down, Left, Right (Analog Stick):** The player will control Larry's movement through the game world with this control. Depending on the extent the player presses in a given direction, Larry will move slowly or quickly in response.
- **Left Arm (Button 1):** The player will control Larry's left arm with this button. This includes attacks in both forms of the arm. In addition, after the transformation the player can use this button to attach to node with which to swing across gaps and up to higher platforms.
- **Right Arm (Button 2):** The player will control Larry's right arm with this button. See left arm.
- **Left Leg (Button 4):** This button will be used by the player to control Larry's left leg. When this leg is still human the result is a normal jump. After the transformation, this button can be used to vault him further in the air or trip up his opponents.
- **Right Leg (Button 3):** This button is used by the player to control Larry's right leg. See left leg.

Playable Surfaces

Larry can walk on and jump onto any 3D object in the playable area. In the case where there are gaps in the ground, Larry cannot walk into them, he will just have to go around, jump or swing over them. If Larry jumps into a hole, he will teleported back out behind the hole after losing some health. He should be temporarily invincible at this time.

Weapons

Prior to any transformation, the weapons are limited to Larry's fists. After the first transformation, Larry can punch with his left and lash out with his right. He can also

use his tentacle arm to latch onto nodes to swing across gaps or climb to higher ledges. As the transformations continue, the reach of the arm grows allowing access to higher and further points.

After each leg transformation, Larry can jump further and higher with the appropriate leg. Combined with specific controller presses, Larry can do leg sweeps and knockdowns. After the second arm transformation, Larry can do multiple swings like vines across the jungle trees as well as a double tentacle punch.

Technology

Given the requirements of game play and design, this game will require a modern 3D engine that can handle the following things with ease, or can be retrofitted to make these things work.

- **Transparency in 3D Model Textures:** This is required to give the crayon drawn look so that the models are transparent through the gaps in the crayon-like coloring of each model.
- **All Elements Receive Shadows:** This is required to allow for ease in locating the character during platforming elements, so the player can tell where Larry is going to land.
- **Simple Physics:** This is needed to allow the character to walk, run and jump realistically as well as swing from his tentacles in a convincing manner.
- **Moving GUI Elements:** The engine must be capable of constantly moving GUI elements so that the desired parallax effect with the foreground GUI can be achieved.

Storyline Overview

The player controls a private eye named Larry Craftson based in Waldo, Ohio, who also has a monthly syndicated radio show about conspiracies both intra and extraterrestrial. The story begins with Larry being called into the local governmental branch and being hijacked by a four star general, General Jonathon A. Norrys. He takes you to a remote governmental facility outside of Wadsworth, Ohio, explaining the basic situation along the way. The government has had initial contact with tentacle-ridden alien species. They have been negotiating with them for nearly five years at this point without informing the populous, validating the gist of your radio program. Larry is interested, but is curious how this involves him. The general glares at him and makes it crystal clear that he is not happy with the situation. The aliens have apparently asked for Larry by name, claiming they've heard his show. The aliens have set up a test to determine if the humans are worthy of their otherworldly knowledge. And their champion is to be Larry Craftson.

Upon reaching the facility, the general leads Larry to sterile looking medical room with many overly high-tech looking machines, two beds, one of them filled with a girl about 5 years old. At this point the test is explained. The aliens have implanted the

knowledge into various places in the child's brain and using technology, Larry is to in looking for them. Anything that Larry picks up in the girl's mind can be taken out into the real world using the special coat the aliens have provided. Likewise, anything placed in those pockets can be available to him on his journey. The girl looks vaguely familiar to Larry, but the general can't tell him any more than she was a ward of the state at St. Gerard's Mental Hospital in Dunkirk, Ohio, but has never spoken to anyone, and no name was given when the child was committed. So Larry lets it go, straps into the machine, and releases a guttural scream as the device starts him on his journey into the disturbed little girl's mind.

As the game progresses, Larry will transform into a Cthulhu-like creature, one limb at a time. Each transformation will allow for tentacle based powers that will help him progress further in the game and complete more of the game's puzzles.

Game Environments

The game takes place inside the girl's mind. Everything is crayon drawn including Larry's avatar in her mind, but feels slightly off. Each level is based on the part of the brain it is located in.

Brain Stem – Pathway to the body, nerve center

This is the central hub of the game. Larry starts here and can enter each of the intermediary levels through the doors scattered around him. They become unlocked and reachable to him as the game progresses as Larry gains new abilities based on the knowledge he unlocks from the levels. One of the Cloaks is here to talk to Larry and offer hints.

Occipital Lobe – Shapes and Colors

This first level takes place on the floor of a children's playroom. The floor is red carpeting that represents lava as in standard children's climbing over the furniture games. The platforms Larry must jump around upon are wooden blocks with just colors on them (no letters or numbers). The main challenge in this level is the platforming, there aren't any enemies in this level. At the end of the level, at the top of a precarious block tower, is the first knowledge pedestal. There is an old weathered book and one of the Cloaks, who will offer information about the knowledge Larry is about to impart onto his world and what that means. After picking up the book, Larry's right arm turns into a tentacle and the Cloak disappears. He ignores it, writing it off as part of the adventure, but his actual body has changed as well.

Right Temporal Lobe – Visual Memory (pictures and faces)

This level takes place in an art museum. In addition to walking past paintings, Larry will have to enter paintings and pass their mini-games to progress through the world. Each painting will offer challenges associated with the painting itself. Larry

enters Dogs Playing Poker and has to win three hands in order to exit the painting, he enters the Piet Mondrian and the colors have been scrambled and he has to jump around from piece to piece to switch their colors back to what they should be, etc. Larry must also hide from security guards patrolling the halls, who if they catch him will send him back to exit of the last painting he passed.

Along the way, he sees a picture of the girl next to a picture of a similarly looking woman who you recognize as a fan of yours who you shared an evening with years ago. So the child is possibly your own. After climbing the stairs in an M.C. Escher painting, you come to a small platform with the next knowledge pedestal and another Cloak. The Cloak avoids all questions about the girl's lineage, but hints at something peculiar in Larry's own. The book changes the rest of the right side of his body into a tentacle-based creature from the shoulder down.

Cerebellum – Muscle Coordination

This level is a circus based level complete with tightropes, trapezes, and becoming a human cannon ball. This level is all about timing and persistence. There are safety nets in place, but the ladders only get you back to the last platform as opposed to helping you progress further. The cannon at the end requires Larry to aim through a specific target or have to repeat some of the course. Correctly aiming the cannon shoots Larry through the tent canvas in the ceiling and landing on the roof of the tent to find another Cloak and knowledge pedestal. The Cloak tells Larry that there is more truth to the conspiracy theories in his broadcasts and that Larry himself is destined for much more greatness than following cheating spouses. The book changes Larry's left leg to the tentacle form.

Left Temporal Lobe – Verbal Memory

This level takes place in a multi-story library. There are small knowledge pedestals scattered throughout the level that detail the events leading up to the slumber of the Old Ones. Of specific interest is the placement of one of the Old Ones in the shell of a human whose lineage would become the Old Ones' emissary to the humans when the stars realigned to signal their return. This person would have to endure great trials to awaken the presence within.

The platforming aspect of this level involves navigating the maze of shelves, avoiding falling books (which can hurt him) and climbing over book carts, slowly ascending the tower of the library. At the top floor there is a librarian's desk behind which is another Cloak and the fourth full-sized knowledge pedestal. The Cloak here tells Larry that he is the emissary of the rightful ruler of this planet and needs to awaken that part of him in order to reach that goal. His daughter, whose name is Harriet, is to be his war chief on her fourteenth birthday. Larry will need to escape the military forces that have been amassing since his real body and that of his daughter started changing form to closer match that of the "aliens." Larry just needs to shed his human fears to reveal his true self. The book finishes the transformation from the neck down.

Limbic Lobes - Fear

This level is a Halloween-based level. This level is populated with Earth based horror creatures: ghosts, vampires, werewolves, zombies, etc. With Larry's new tentacle form, he can defeat them fairly simply, but the idea is that as they get closer they should be more scared of him than he is of them. Like in the library level, Larry can actually be "killed" here. He gets three chances, starting at intermediary checkpoints throughout the level, before he has to restart from the beginning.

After making it though the main level, Larry has to face himself as a human to prove to himself that this new form is indeed superior. Human Larry can use a gun and has a weak punch, but Tentacle Larry is stronger so this battle shouldn't be immensely difficult. After defeating his human self, the last knowledge book rises from the earth. No Cloak shows up to urge him on at this point, just the book calling to him. This book purges the last of his human form, leaving him look like a traditional Cthulhu creature. A Cloak now appears and tells Larry that he reached his potential and must now go continue the prophecy.

Story Conclusion

Larry and his daughter awaken and quickly snap to upright positions. The military presence has their guns trained on them, but the sheer sight of them has already made some of them lose their resolve trembling in corners, their minds broken trying to rationalize what their eyes are reporting. The remaining soldiers are trembling, not really sure what these beasts can do. The general is only one that seems remotely calm as Larry and his daughter now look like the aliens he has been dealing with for the past five years. But Larry's bellow of slightly earthly origins breaks the remaining combatants. Larry leans over the cowering general and tells him that any attempt to track them down will result in more than just fear. Larry and his daughter ooze their way out of the room and out into the night.

Characters

Larry Craftson, P.I.

Larry is the lead character in Crayon Drawn Cthulhu. He is a private eye out of Waldo, Ohio who also has a monthly syndicated conspiracy radio program. He believes in fitting in the stereotype of a private investigator under the impression that it makes his clients feel more comfortable with the situation and his ability to do his job. To that end, he has a grizzled unshaven look, and is never seen without his rumpled fedora, khaki trench coat and a battered cigarette hanging from his lips. At a public appearance at the Marion County fair to promote both the PI business and the radio show, he met an attractive fan who ended up inviting him back to her place. The result of this meeting was a little girl named Harriet.

Unbeknownst to Larry, the seed of his family tree was planted by the Old Ones before they entered their Great Slumber. Over the course of the game, Larry comes to terms with this while physically changing into his true form of an Old One himself. With each change comes new abilities at the expense of the human ones associated with his previous appendages.

General Jonathon A. Norrys

General Norrys is a 4 star general with the Department of Extraterrestrial Life and Terran Anomalies based in Area 51. He has been the chief negotiator with the alien creatures for the last five years. He is not happy with their request for Larry Craftson as Norrys sees him as a security risk and a crackpot, even if half the things he spouts are true. Norrys likes to think that he can handle anything thrown at him being he is one of the few people on the planet who has had a documented conversation with a creature from outer space. He is a physically fit man of his late fifties, with distinguished salt and pepper hair and a default expression of general disappointment with the world.

Harriet

Harriet is a product of a carnal evening between Larry Craftson and one his fans. Once she was old enough to draw, her mother realized that Harriet was not right. Crayon drawings of otherworldly creatures with such detail, they appeared to be watching her from the page, waiting for her to turn her back on them. Harriet's mother left her on the doorstep of St. Gerard's Mental Hospital and fled to the hills to slowly go insane. Harriet's presence tended to disturb the people around her, so no-one talked to her if they could avoid it. As a result, Harriet never learned to speak herself, happy to just continue drawing. She is about four and a half feet tall with dark blonde hair that she puts in pigtails herself.

The Cloaks told the government to pick her up and brought her to finally meet her father and awaken her destiny as well. As Larry became more physically changed, so did Harriet, both changing into their full Cthulhu like forms at roughly the same time.

Cloaks

The Cloaks are the messengers of the Old Ones sent to awaken their emissaries to help hasten their return. To that end, they have appeared to the appropriate government agencies as an alien race here to talk with the primitive humans. After five years of trying to be subtle about their intentions masking them with subterfuge, they just started naming names and this sudden change in tactics has left the government trying to figure out if they should be happy they reached a decision, or worried that they've been had.

Cloaks are named such because that is pretty much their appearance to the outside world. The heavy dark cloaks they wear reach past the end of their arms and droop down to the floor. The hood is situated so that there is no view of the face at all, just a pitch

black void. They wear gloves to cover the fact that they simply have tentacles where hands should be. The only thing openly disturbing about them is the fact that they don't have any feet. They just have a mass of tentacles there, but the cloak usually covers that up.

Further Information

The ideas for this game came from an amalgamation of many sources. Any books in the Cthulhu mythos are suggested, especially those by H.P. Lovecraft. The Dresden Files books by Jim Butcher give a good impression of the type of private eye he is envisioned to be without the magic, one decent at finding things out, but always just a little bit over his head. The look and style of the early *Paper Mario* games gives an idea of the layer layout for parallax motion, and the hand-drawn look of *Yoshi's Island* gives a starting place for the art direction for *Crayon Drawn Cthulhu*, though *Crayon Drawn Cthulhu* goes in a darker direction.