

~~the four of us are~~ dying

design document

# the four of us are dying

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## document history

- Revision 1.0 created 10/03/2017 by Josh Allen

# game concept

## introduction

The Four of Us Are Dying is a combination first and third person psychological horror thriller designed for the Playstation 4, Playstation Vita, and Playstation TV family of game consoles. The protagonists are a family of four, two adults and two adolescent children who are drawn to Old Town St. Peters, MO after receiving a letter from a deceased family member.

## background

The Four of Us Are Dying is a game that takes place in a real world small midwestern town called Old Town St. Peters in Missouri. The primary leads on this game (James and Josh Allen) both grew up in this town as very small children, and in fact still have family there.

## description

The Four of Us Are Dying intends to act as an advancement in the psychological horror thriller genre, with the intention of encompassing a story that has facets grounded in a real location and actual historical events that wrap the player in a möbius strip of story events that they must unravel to discover why they and their family have been called to the town, by fighting or avoiding horrific manifestations of the town's evil, as well as solving puzzles that reveal further fragments of historical data about the town to unravel the unsettling truth the game has to offer about the circumstances of the avatar's arrival.

## key features

### Old Town St. Peters:

The town itself will play a major character in the story as the player(s) unravel the convoluted history of the town through a series of interactive puzzles, cinematic flashbacks, and gameplay.

### Compelling Story:

The story will be presented in such a way that it leaves the player guessing and questioning the truth of their circumstances, putting them in a position where the more of the story they manage to reveal and unravel, the greater their sense of unease and dread will become.

### Graphics:

Based on a real life town, The Four of Us Are Dying will really immerse players into the game world, featuring natural characters the player with empathize with, as well as highly detailed and visually arresting environments that will both be beautiful and unsettling to experience. The game will really push to incorporate high quality cinematic methods in both the design and execution of the visuals to provide the highest fidelity world across all target platforms, while providing a consistently universal presentation regardless of the players platform choice.

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## Audio:

The game will feature an original score produced by our in house audio engineering team, with both set pieces for key moments as well as dynamic compositions to create a sense of tension and unease in the player as they explore the world we are presenting them.

## Difficulty:

The difficulty level will be adjustable using a two tier system that will unlock upon the first completion of the game.

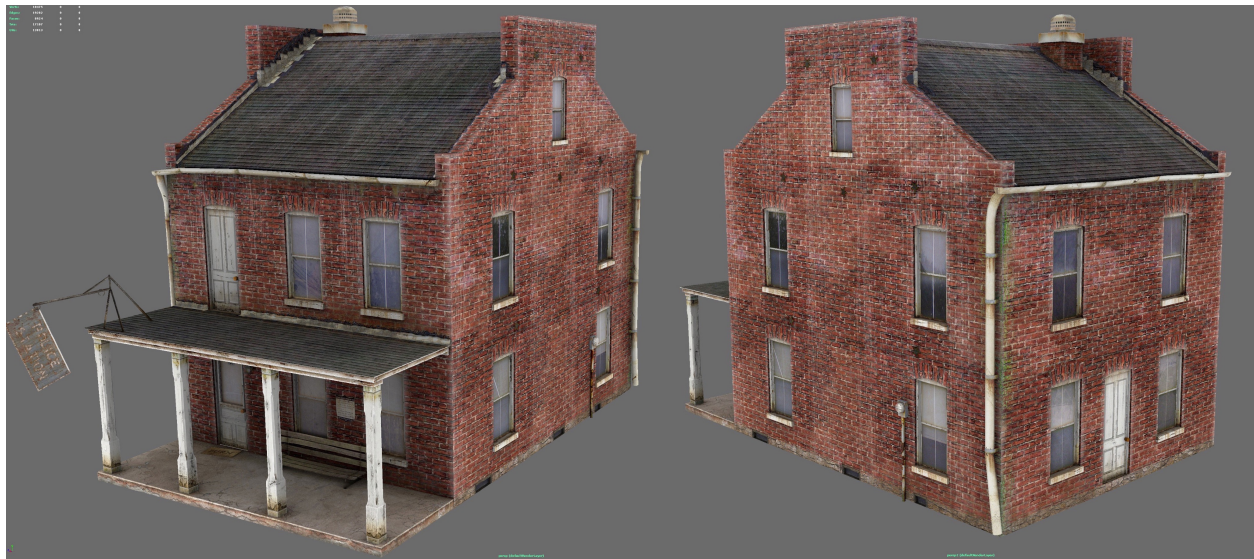
## genre

The Four of Us Are Dying falls somewhere in between survival horror and psychological thriller, with an emphasis on using psychological horror to both disorient and disturb the player, making them question the reality of the events they find themselves experiencing throughout the game, in a bid to create an emotional connection strong enough that the player(s) identify with their characters and experiences in game.

## platform

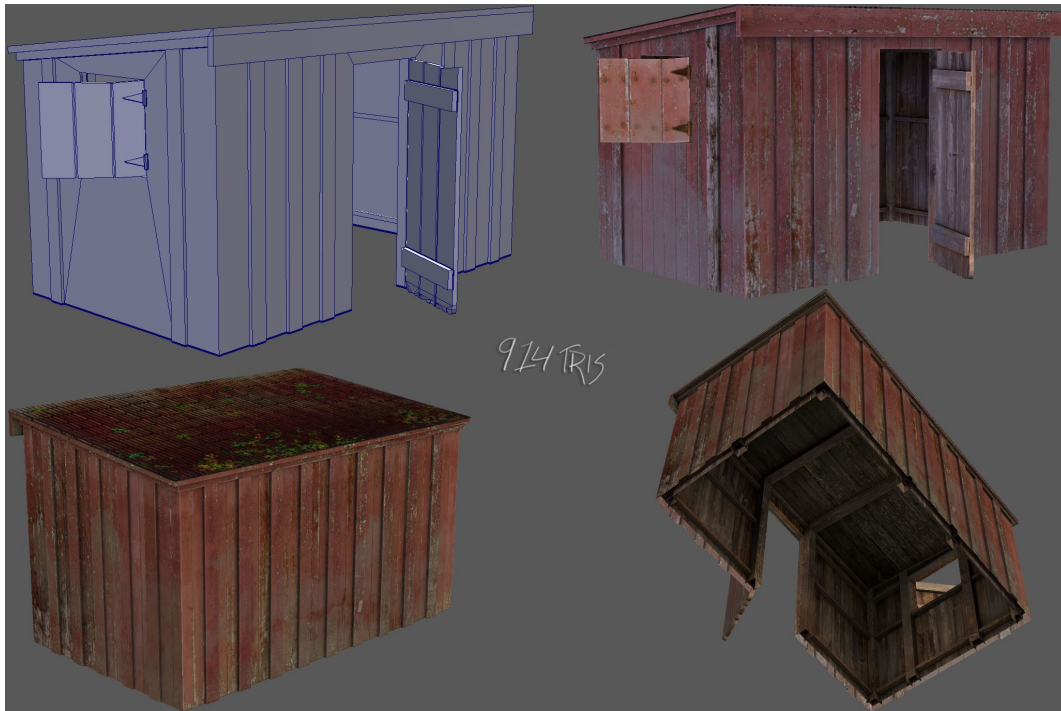
The targeted platform is the Playstation 4 with cross buy options for Playstation Vita/Playstation TV owners at launch.

## work in progress game asset art





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# game mechanics

## core gameplay

The core gameplay in The Four of Us Are Dying will be a mix of both fighting/avoiding manifestations of the town's evil ('monsters') and solving puzzles to reveal historical information about the town and player's/NPC's, both of which will serve to progress the game's plot. The gameplay will be presented in both first and third person viewpoints, with large outdoor areas of the town in a third person perspective and confined indoor areas such as buildings presented with a first person perspective, to increase the player's sense of immersion, terror, and dread when entering unfamiliar locations.

The 'monster' encounters will be designed in such a way as to disturb or create a sense of unease in the player, so as to encourage them to either desperately avoid combat or fight futilely in a conflict in which they will be likely hopelessly outmatched. This will heighten the tension of 'monster encounters', increasing the player's sense of isolation and fear.

In general, puzzle solving conventions in the genre tend to break player immersion in the world- our intention is to incorporate puzzles that utilize information gleaned via the story and history of the town for their solutions, requiring players to work to reveal that information to progress, forcing critical thinking and piecing together of clues to avoid the traditional tropes of item collection and combination unlocking via trial and error that pervade the survival horror genre.

## game flow

Typical game flow in The Four of Us Are Dying will be linear segments presented in a nonlinear grouping. Players will be given a portion of the story narrative based on their actions in the previous narrative (with a somewhat randomly selected initial narrative piece after the game introduction to alter the order of event reveal) which will give them a reason to explore a particular building or section in the town, which will usually be indoors (a 'level'). When entering the section, they will encounter three things consistently:

- Monsters
- A puzzle or series of puzzles
- Multiple narrative sections, with one or two plot progression sequences for the player to unravel

Once the 'level' is over, the same basic sequence of events will happen, doling out pieces of the story for the player to unravel giving them a reason to continue progression throughout the game. Scattered between usual game flow sections will be special 'set pieces' that will mostly house a cut scene (in engine), which will flesh out characters in the game world and reveal crucial plot points.

# art and video

## overall goals

The true artistic goal of this project is based on a concept of simultaneous repulsion and attraction, to define their impact to the player. Interior and exterior environments will look abandoned and disgusting, but at the same time will have a distinct charm, almost like the grim visual backgrounds and set pieces will have an aura of mystery about them. In addition, various artistic decisions placed around the game will give the player subliminal help with understanding the story. All of these visual elements will aid each other to convey a mysterious feeling of confusion and dread, which is the true nature of the game.

## two dimensional art

- All menu backgrounds
- End credit backgrounds
- All environment and inject textures
- Manual art
- Advertising/website art
- Town maps

## three dimensional art and animation

- All aspects of character animation
- All modeled assets (town, building interiors, props and items)
- All character, NPC and monster models

## cinematics

- All in engine cutscenes
- Promotional video for web advertising



# sound and music

## overall goals

The overall goal of the music and sound effects direction is to make sounds that create a sense of fear or revulsion in the player, such that they will stand out in comparison to the somewhat generic sound effects used in a majority of games. The music and composition will be handled by our in house audio engineer, who has years of experience with both high quality foley work as well as a broad variety of musical styles and both classical instrument and modern audio engineering training to convey a true sense of dread in the script, using unlikely combinations of tone and timbre to portray distinct emotional and visceral cues to the player.

## sound effects and music

To prevent repetition many of the general sounds being used will be sampled multiple times, such as doors opening and closing, player footsteps, and the like to increase immersion. More unusual sound effects like monster noises, random effects used to scare or startle the player, etc will come from many sources, including pure synthesis all the way to overlaid sounds from the real world distorted to sound disturbing and otherworldly in nature.

The music throughout the game will avoid things like upbeat major key sections, imparting a sense of melancholy and fear through the use of repeating, discordant motifs and instrumentation juxtaposed with elegant, delicate piano and string pieces to set the overall tone of the game's world and story, continuing the theme of contrasting both attraction and repulsion in the world the player experiences.

# target market

The Four of Us Are Dying will be developed for the Playstation 4, with a concurrent port to the Playstation Vita/ Vita TV. This platform was chosen because of the large install base and tightly integrated ecosystem, allowing us to reach a wide audience across all three platforms. The Playstation brand has proven to be a stable brand for mature styled games, and as consumers of prior Playstation consoles have a track record for conversion from those consoles to the current ones, that denotes our market with the targeted platform(s).

Years ago the survival horror market was a niche market, and over the years has had ups and downs (much like horror films do), but within the last few years has seen an almost unparalleled level of resurgence and acceptance in the video game marketplace. There is an audience of game players clamoring for these types of games, and we feel that we can reach them with our unique blend of real world environments and historically based events combined with a narrative focusing on the fear of the unknown and unfamiliar that every human experiences, regardless of age, race, or nationality.

The Four of us Are Dying will follow in the footsteps of established genre titles such as *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill* while bringing with it a distinctive visual and cinematic style as well as a unique story presentation method that will allow it to be a success for both the platform and the genre, hopefully broadening it for many years to come.