

Sanity's Requiem (project name)

Eileen breathed heavily as she gazed into the remains of collapsed structures ahead. Her hands were still shaking badly and her mind constantly rebelled against the thought of entering that dark place. For a moment she heard screams and she recognized the voice; it belonged to a young woman whose brutal murder she had just witnessed very lively while she was searching through the last monster's mind. It should have been just a quick search but she got caught inside, finding herself witnessing the murder scene from the killer's view, feeling what he felt. Now while hearing the screams she still felt the disturbing satisfaction as if it was her own feeling. She shivered. She had to focus. In the darkness, another monster was waiting and she would have to search through its mind for clues. This time she would be more careful. After all, only the monsters knew the way out...

In Sanity's Requiem the player controls Eileen who used to work as a psychiatrist in the local mental prison. Before the events of the game, there was a sudden earthquake and the entire city collapsed into a maze of ruins where light is scarce. But something else happened too. Now the ruins are roamed by former inmates who have been turned into monsters reflecting manifestations of their insanity and they hunger to fulfill their dark desires. Eileen herself was not untouched either; she developed telepathic powers allowing her to enter these monsters' minds. Eileen's mission is to find the way out for herself and others who survived the disaster.

Gameplay

The game will be divided to two modes: physical world and telepathic. Both modes will be portrayed through Eileen's eyes. In the physical world, Eileen is a normal woman without any chance of survival in a fight against monsters. She can hide in the cover of darkness and shield herself in the debris and collapsed structures as well as use some tools but basically she's helpless. Death in the game is therefore very imminent if physical combat ensues but it should be rare because the game is more about insanity and actually tries to avoid game overs as much as possible.

In order to make things happen, Eileen always needs to enter the mind of her enemy. These places (telepathy worlds) are portrayed as disturbing and shifting. The danger that lurks there is the monster's insanity and if Eileen is caught by it, she has to witness horrible things the monster has done either as a bystander or in worse cases playing the part of the victim or even that of the monster itself.

However in order to proceed, Eileen continuously needs to go inside as the monsters hold clues and these are necessary to make progress. A monster might know a hidden passage leading onward. It is also crucial for Eileen to find their soft spots (happy memories or similar, something in contrast to all the insanity that reminds the monster of its humanity) and to invoke them as this will temporarily stun the monsters, allowing Eileen and other civilians to pass by them. This will become easier once Eileen finds reports describing the former inmates' derangements.

As Eileen spends more and more time inside the monsters' minds or is even caught by them, her own sanity suffers. She will start hearing and seeing things that are not there and usually these hallucinations are related to things she witnessed telepathically, or she might lose control of herself putting the player on the backseat until her fit is over. If the dark urges take control of her, she is in danger of attacking other humans herself, actually gaining monstrous features in the process. Eileen can temporarily regain sanity by resting and focusing but once insanity has rooted, it can only be pushed aside for a while and too often comes back with friends.

Target audience & why this game?

The game is aimed at horror game fans who are more into adventurous horror than action. Without doubt it will have enough violent scenes to make it an adult only game as well. The game specifically aims at creating a frightening and disturbing atmosphere while avoiding typical problems in most popular horror games. For example, in most horror games I have played, encounters with the monsters are actually less frightening than the feeling before the encounter when you don't know what you'll be facing. In this game the player has no means to kill the monsters and even stunning them requires a trip to insanity land. These places should never be taken lightly and therefore should be represented in such light. Also, since all mental damage is really felt as unwanted effects, the player has very great incentive to avoid unnecessary telepathic trips and to be extra careful during them.

The City

The game is set in the ruins of a large slightly futuristic city. Before the disaster struck, the city had tall buildings with their foundations laid strongly beneath the street level. Now the city has collapsed inwards, all the way to the street level and below, creating a maze of steel structures, concrete blocks and broken glass. A heavy dust has settled over the place, effectively blocking sunlight in the rare places where it would shine in through remains of collapsed walls and pieces of floors and ceilings still somewhat attached to them. The playing area is limited by rubble, still standing walls and doors etc. and most of the time only the monsters know how to pass from one block to another.

The few remaining citizens are harboring in a relatively safe block and they have no desire to try and head out before their safety can be assured. Their main role in the game is to provide company to Eileen; talking to them reinforces her sanity. Of course, sooner or later, Eileen has to lead them through monster-haunted ruins.

Telepathy Worlds

While it's often a good idea to avoid popular culture references, I think the best way to explain what a telepathy world might look like is to use *Black Lodge* from *Twin Peaks* as an example. In the series, Black Lodge is an otherworldly place where evil spirits dwell. It contains rooms and hallways separated by red curtains (see pictures) but while one can go from room to another, every room looks similar as if the visitor was actually just looping through one room. In the course of the series we see several different spirits inside. Overall it is a rather unnerving place.

The above description could easily be what a schizophrenic monster's mind would look like. The spirits within in this case representing different imaginary people who haunt the monster. While scanning through the monster's mind, Eileen would have to enter this place where the evil "spirits" would be the ones trying to confuse and capture her. In this particular example it would also be very easy to get lost since there are rooms that look all the same. Any clues and other useful information would be found by reaching out to the benevolent "spirits" while avoiding the evil ones. To make things trickier, the evil "spirits" work in a gravitational way: the view would always slowly pan towards them and at the same time Eileen would be pulled towards them. This gravitation would also grow stronger as time goes by. If caught, Eileen would have to suffer visions inflicted by the particular "spirit". The atmosphere in this particular world would be created by the feeling of looping through same rooms and disturbing speech by the world's dwellers. By listening to them Eileen might learn something, but their

voices are shifting and the words hard to follow. After spending some time in this world, Eileen might see flashes of the same evil “spirits” as hallucinations in the real world, for example.

In the game a telepathy world is entered by initiating a telepathy session with a monster. This requires visual contact which must be maintained until the connection is made. The visual representation would be something like Eileen's view getting pulled towards the monster's head. Telepathy sessions last from tens of seconds to several minutes most of the time where the limiting factor is increasing chance of being trapped.

Example of a playing situation

A typical problem situation in the game might be like this: Eileen enters an area where she sees a monster patrolling nearby a code-locked door. Since it seems to be the only way out, the monster must have come through it and might have the code hidden somewhere within its mind so getting it via a telepathy session is in order. This could be done in two scans to maximize carefulness: first a quick visit to obtain some idea about the general atmosphere and layout of the telepathy world and then a longer trip to find the clue. Once Eileen has obtained the code she still needs to get past the monster. She can either try to go inside immediately once again to blindly look for something that would calm the monsters for a while or she could try locating files about the monster's mental condition first.

In another example, there's a pile of debris with no clear route through it. Eileen then spots a monster somehow passing through from the other side. It would not be safe to search for the passage herself, so instead Eileen could use a telepathy session to tap into the monster's visual center and wait for it to pass through the obstacle again giving her much needed visual information about the passage.