

Tea in hand, wearing your favourite tights, you're ready to head to work. You approach the door. As you approach, you hear an ominous *THUMP* come from your bedroom. When you turn around, you see nothing but the curtain swaying gently in the breeze. Did you leave your window open? No...you didn't even bother opening the window this morning. Baffled, you turn back to the door and check that you have everything. Wallet, keys, phone, tea, backpack. *KETHUMP KETHUMP KETHUMP!* Suddenly, you feel something small and warm collide with your foot and latch on with razor sharp needles. Cautiously, you look down. There, looking very proud of herself, is your playful kitten. She's wrapped around your foot, and shaking her off doesn't work. You start dragging your foot along the floor, trying to get to the door while soothingly whispering to the cat. She lets go. You count yourself blessed that you didn't have to remove her yourself – you wouldn't want her to think that you didn't love her. Turning the knob of the door to the outside world, you feel the cat latch onto you again...but this time, she's reached up and snagged your stockings. It's your favourite pair! You can't get a run in them! What do you do? Picking the cat up will pacify her. But how long do you have to carry her before you can leave with your tights safely intact so that you get to work on time?

This is part of my morning routine – appeasing my cats so that I can safely leave the apartment with my tights intact. Picking them up does make them happy, but I don't always have enough time to ensure that I can leave without them chasing me to the door. As a game mechanic this scenario is very flexible, but I would like to apply it to a horror-style stealth game. I want the player to feel as if detection by unknown entities means total defeat, but to escape they must explore their surroundings. The sound of *something* hitting the floor and loud running footsteps, movement caused by invisible creatures will increase the players' fear until they feel desperate for escape. There is one respite – good spirits that can grant you immunity while you carry them. However, this immunity comes at a price – players cannot interact with anything as long as they carry the spirit. Putting the spirit down will cause them to disappear and the player will be left alone again. The alternating experience between long periods of vulnerability and short respites of immunity is what I would like players to experience as they try to escape the game.

With only a few weeks to produce a prototype, the design process will need to be well-planned and organized in order to meet deadlines. My first task will be to create a schedule so that I can incorporate all the activities I would like to complete. Tasks include recording the human-cat interaction in the morning, implementing a game scenario, acquiring art assets necessary for the atmosphere, informal user testing, and mechanic refinements. I will also start prior to the initial acceptance date on September 27th to optimize my time. Ideally, I would like to start prototyping by October 2nd to ensure that there is time for me to run informal user tests. I am unconcerned with art asset creation, as the purpose of the prototype is to demonstrate a game mechanic and not a finished game.

In the early development stages, pencil and paper will be used to record notes about my morning routine, as well as record my discussions with others about my routine to refine and expand my game mechanic to find what really captures the horror atmosphere. I would also like to incorporate research about sensory illusions that could create unique mechanics. Unity 3D will be used for prototyping as it allows users to easily change art assets to try the mechanic in different game genres. This would both test its application range and allow for user testing to see which style has the most impact. All of my work will be kept under revision control so that it will be easy for me to share my work and recover lost files.