GDD
Alone in the Woods

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Index

1.- INTRODUCTION

"Alone in the Woods" is a survival horror game designed in Unreal Engine in which we play the story a character who wakes up lost in a forest next to his broken down car. He, unknowingly, is a test subject of a mind control experiment that through hypnosis and various techniques has been mentally programmed to react to certain stimuli, causing terrifying hallucinations and making him submissive to certain orders through the use of fear. During the game, the character will have to survive the nocturnal creatures of the forest and the fears created by his mind with nothing more than a shotgun and a few flares and matches that we will collect around the map.

In this document we will review the references on which I have based my game, the narrative and the game's universe, the characters, objective of the game and the elements of the levels (enemies, pickups, etc ...), as well as the design around them.

2.- REFERENCES

2.1 Artistic

- **Blair Witch.**

Blair Witch is a horror game in which a policeman is investigating the disappearance of a child in a forest where from time to time people disappear without a trace. Paranormal phenomena occur during the game, further aggravated by the condition of the protagonist, who has a history of psychological problems in the past. Most of the game takes place in a forest (mostly at night), although occasionally you must enter bunker systems or houses to search for clues.

Figure 1: Blair Witch game image

I chose this game because I wanted to set mine in a forest at night as well and I think the way the developers have implemented the feeling of exploring an open forest, even though the walkthrough is quite linear, is very good. In addition, the existence of bunkers in the forest that serve for exploration and discovery of the lore is something I would also like to implement.

Another thing I really like about Blair Witch is that it plays very well with the sound, mixing animal noises (typical of the night in the forest) with those of the monsters in the game, without abusing them, giving an even more gloomy atmosphere without the need to make use of bloody or gore style elements.

Figure 2: Blair Witch game image

- **Slenderman.**

Slenderman is an indie first-person horror game released in 2012 in which the player must collect eight notes located in a night forest trying to avoid Slender, a humanoid specter that is roaming around the map trying to hunt the player.

The game mixes open and closed space exploration and the map design is quite simple, but effective and smart, as it is divided into several sections in which in almost all of them the player will be able to find one of the notes he needs to escape. This, and the fact that the player can move virtually freely around the map makes the game feel much larger and more labyrinthic than it is.

Figure 3: Slenderman game image

Again, as with Blair Witch, I would like to base my game's setting on this one, because besides using the night forest setting very well, it plays very well with sounds, giving an even greater sense of anguish to the player, with loud heartbeats or ringing in the ear.

2.2 Narratives

- **Project Mk Ultra.**

For the narrative of my game I have been inspired by the MK Ultra project, which actually happened in the USA during the cold war, especially around 1950 and 1965 and was carried out by the CIA in a secret way. This project was intended to gather information on mind control programs and reactions of the human mind to various types of narcotic and hypnotic stimuli. Often the test subjects were army personnel, vagrants, young people from orphanages or prisoners, although at other times they were also carried out on anonymous people chosen at random. One of the most terrifying points about this project was that most of the times none of the test subjects knew that they were being experimented on, and many times these individuals were pushed to the limit, as if they were being tortured.

In my game, the protagonist will be one of these test subjects who is unknowingly part of a similar experiment. In addition, the hallucinations and amnesia he will suffer during the game will be the result of hypnosis sessions and mental manipulation techniques previously performed on him.

- **Bioshock.**

Bioshock is a first-person shooter game released in 2007 that tells the story of someone who, apparently, after a plane crash, stumbles upon a city built underwater called Rapture by mistake. Once the protagonist enters the city he realizes that a tragic event related to the abuse of genetic therapies that happened not long ago, has unleashed chaos among its population, mentally upsetting most of them.

The part of this game that I'm going to base my game on is what Bioshock plays masterfully with, which is mind control based on specific words or commands.

As we progress through the game's story, it is revealed to us that the protagonist's memories and mental schema are actually a creation carried out by a scientific team in Rapture and that, throughout the game, the voice of a character named Atlas who was guiding us by radio was actually the biggest mobster in the city using another identity and forcing us to do what he wanted by repeating the phrase: "Would you kindly?" This is because the protagonist was programmed so that, upon hearing that phrase, he would obey the orders given to him afterwards.

I find this idea very interesting and I'm going to use a version of this in the game, since the main character, when hearing or seeing a certain type of pattern, will trigger hallucinations and other events programmed in his mind for the experiment.

2.3 Gameplay

- **Alien Isolation.**

Alien Isolation, as the name suggests, is a first-person stealth survival horror video game based on the Alien movie saga. During the game, the protagonist goes to a space station where the video registers of the ship in which her mother suffered an unknown accident a few years ago are supposed to be kept. Once there, she finds that the ship is in chaos and half deserted, since a beast known as a xenomorph has wiped out almost the entire crew.

This humanoid-reptile-shaped beast is intelligent and will try to hunt down the protagonist using various techniques throughout the game.

The aspect of gameplay that I liked about this game, and on which I would like to base my own, is the system of using flares and light sources. Here, the flares work like flashlights in other scary games, with the difference that as the flare is consumed, the player is able to see it and the light source that it generates is not a spotlight, but a halo around the object. In addition, when the player wishes, it can be thrown and left on the ground as a strategic way to control that area for a certain period of time.
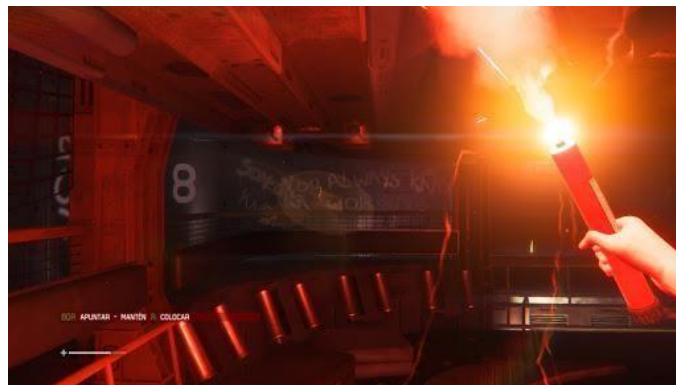

Figure 5: Game image of Alien Isolation

Another thing I like about the game is the cover system for stealth that it uses, as well as the artificial intelligence of the xenomorph when moving around looking for the character and the dynamic learning that it presents depending on how you play to know the most used tactics to evade it, although I know that this is quite difficult to program and may remain as a possible idea if at some point later I feel like developing it further.

3.- NARRATIVE

3.1   Game universe

The game is set in the USA in 1956. At this stage of the cold war, there is plenty of research on various warfare methods to gain advantage over the enemy. One of these methods is mind control, especially oriented to help in interrogations to make enemy soldiers talk or make certain people (even allies) obey orders without thinking about it or be more submissive due to various mental suggestions previously organized.

In this case we find ourselves in a testing ground located in a forest in which this type of methods are performed with subjects against their will and also, without them knowing it. One of these subjects is our playable character, who, after waking up at night without remembering anything next to his broken down car, believes that he must look for batteries in a nearby village to fix it, while in reality he is being monitored by scientists to check his reaction to the suggestion techniques used on him in order to test the results.

In the forest, in addition to wild animals (even more so at night), there is an uninhabited village and what seems to be an ancient system of bunkers, in which the protagonist must enter to find something that will help him escape from the place.

3.2   Characters

-   John Doe.

He is the protagonist of the story and the playable character. He is a former soldier recently returned from Vietnam whose family has been led to believe that he died in the war and has been chosen as a test subject for a mind control experiment by the government without his knowledge. After administering him different narcotic substances and using various hypnotic and mental suggestion techniques, the scientists are investigating the effects this has on people in order to find out to what extent someone can be manipulated without his own knowledge.

During the game, John will have to survive the nocturnal creatures of the forest with the help of a gun and he will also have to face the deepest fears of his mind provoked by hallucinations as an effect of the techniques used on him.

What John and the rest of the scientists do not know is that his mind has also been enhanced in such a way that he can see on certain occasions memory records or past memories stored in certain places as if they were holograms, as well as potential dangers due to the development of new mental abilities. In this way, John will be recovering part of his memories as flashbacks and will begin to understand thanks to certain written notes and these memory records what is happening: that he is inside an experiment and that all the memory records and lots of written notes he sees around are actually of himself in the past, as scientists are working all the time with the same test subject in the same place constantly repeating the same procedure until they manage to find the formula they are looking for.

3.3   Objective of the game

The main character's objective will change throughout the game and as he discovers the truth of what is happening. At first, John must seek to explore the forest in search of people who can help him find out where he is and repair his car with the battery parts he needs.

As the game progresses, John discovers what is really going on and the player's objective will then be to escape from the area where he is and recover his memories.

4.- MECHANICS OF THE PLAYER

4.1 Attributes

Life.

- The character has three life points.

- Receives damage when gets hit by enemies.

- It can be cured with bandages.

- When it reaches 0, the character dies.

- It is represented by reddish tones around the screen.

- The more damage it has received, the greater the reddish tones are.

Stamina.

- Allows the character to run.

- It is represented by a bar on the screen.

- When it reaches 0, the character cannot run until it is fully charged again.

- It recharges automatically when you stop running.

Inventory.

- Allows the player to access the objects collected throughout the level.

- When opened, the game is not paused.

- Each item has its own slot, in which you can store a certain amount of these objects (this will be better explained in the level elements).

4.2   Controls

Figure 6: List of game controls on the keyboard

4.3   Mechanics

Revolver gun.

-        The player will have a revolver gun (ranged weapon) that will be found at the beginning of the game.

-        It requires ammunition that the player will collect throughout the level.

-        Fires single bullets per shot.

-        Makes more damage if it's a headshot.

-        It makes a lot of noise when firing that enemies can hear.

-        It has 5 bullets per magazine.

Knife.

-        The player will have a knife from the beginning of the game that will be found together with the revolver gun.

-        Allows melee attacks.

- It has moderate damage, although lower than the shotgun.
- It has no cooldown and can be used every time the animation ends.
- Knocks out wolf enemies.

Flares.
- They emit point light (spherical aura around the object) of a wide range.
- They are rare in the game, but last a long time on.
- They can be thrown on the ground to illuminate an area and collected later.

Matches.
- The point light aura is small and will burn out quickly.
- They abound in the game.
- They can be switched off manually.
- If the player lets the match burn out completely, he will burn his fingers and make noise, which will make him visible to nearby enemies.

Stealth.
- The player will be able to duck and cover in certain areas to avoid detection by some enemies by making less noise.
- The noise emitted by the player is not completely eliminated, so if you get too close to an enemy, the enemy will be able to hear you even if you are in stealth mode.
- Crouching will slow you down.

Instinct mode.
- Through a command, the player will be able to access the instinct mode, which will allow him to reveal nearby traps and some enemies.
- It has its own bar in the HUD and as it is used, it is consumed.
- It recharges progressively and at a fairly slow rate.

-        If the bar is completely empty, the character receives one point of damage and makes noise. In addition, to use it, you will have to wait until it is completely filled.

Healing.

-        The player will be able to heal using bandages found throughout the level.

-        It is a sustained action and requires a certain amount of time to be carried out.

Interactions with the environment.

-        The player will be able to interact with pickups, doors and other objects, collectibles, and other textual or sound recordings by pressing the E button at a certain distance.

5.- ELEMENTS OF THE LEVELS

5.1   Pickups

Bandages.

-        Up to 5 can be stacked at a time in the inventory.

-        When they are used, a state of the character's life is healed and they disappear.

Bullets.

-        They are used as shotgun ammunition.

-        A maximum of 20 bullets can be stacked at a time in the inventory.

Flares.

-        Up to 5 can be stacked at a time in the inventory.

-        When used, they are carried in the hand by default.

-        They generate wide point light sources.

-        They can be thrown and collected to illuminate different areas.

-        Once they are turned off, they disappear.

Matches.

-        Unlimited matches can be stacked in the inventory.

-        When used, they are carried in the hand and cannot be thrown.

-        They generate small point light sources.

-        They can be switched off manually.

-        When they are turned off, they disappear.

-        If the player does not manually extinguish them before they are consumed, the character will burn and emit a sound audible to enemies.

Keys.

-        They are used to open certain doors.

-        When used, they are consumed from the inventory and disappear.

5.2   Interactable items

Doors.

-        They are opened by being at a certain range of proximity and pressing the interaction button.

-        They may or may not require a key.

-        When interacting with them, they open and once opened, they can be closed again at the player's choice.

-        Doors opened with a key no longer require a new key to reopen them.

Chests and drawers.

-        They are opened by being in a certain range of proximity and pressing the interaction button.

-        When opened, pickups can be found.

-        Like the doors, they can be opened and closed as the player chooses.

Textual, visual and sound records.

-        You can interact with them by being at a certain range of proximity and pressing the interaction button.

-        Only textual records can be put into the inventory and can be viewed at any time from there.

-        Interacting with them does not pause the game.

5.3 Enemies

Wolves.
- They are fast.
- They have a high detection range.
- Melee attack.
- They can jump towards the player to attack from a certain range.
- When attacking the player, 1 point of damage is inflicted.
- They are usually herded.
- They have a small life bar.

Bears.
- They are slow.
- They have a lower detection range than wolves.
- Melee attack.
- When attacking the player, 2 points of damage are inflicted.
- They have a large life bar.

Monsters/Hallucinations.
- The attacks have no effect on them.
- They detect the player within a certain radius, both by sound and vision.
- When they see the player, they chase him for a certain period of time.
- If they reach the player, a jumpscare occurs and the character faints, reappearing later in the same place where he was.

5.4 Traps

Bear traps.
- They are located in the forest.
- They are activated when walking over them.
- They do one point of damage to the player and anchor him to the ground for a few seconds.
- The player makes noise when stepping on one.

-        To release, the interaction command must be pressed repeatedly.

Mines.

-        They are activated when passing over them.

-        They instakill the character if he/she steps on any of them.

-        In case of being affected only by the radius of the explosion (an enemy steps on it), 1 point of damage is done.

-        They cause the player's ears to beep when he is near one to alert him.

6.- LEVEL ELEMENTS

6.1   Game World

The entire game will take place in a forest area and buildings within the forest itself, although there will be differences in the gameplay (enemies and game style) being in an open field and being in a house or closed place. We'll start with the main character waking up with no memory of anything next to a car that he assumes is his own and is broken down. After grabbing his things he makes his way to the forest looking for help and finds a village in the distance. After this, and as I said before, we will encounter the semi-open forest gameplay, which will be a large area bounded by embankments and brambles, in which the player can explore at will, entering abandoned houses and plotting, while facing enemies such as wolves and bears.

As the story progresses, larger buildings appear, such as the warehouse or the subway bunker, which have a more labyrinthic component and in which you will have to explore to find certain elements to continue in the levels, while trying to escape from the monster/hallucination that chases the character or patrols the area. In addition, you will have to make use of light sources, as there are areas of the level where there is almost no lighting.

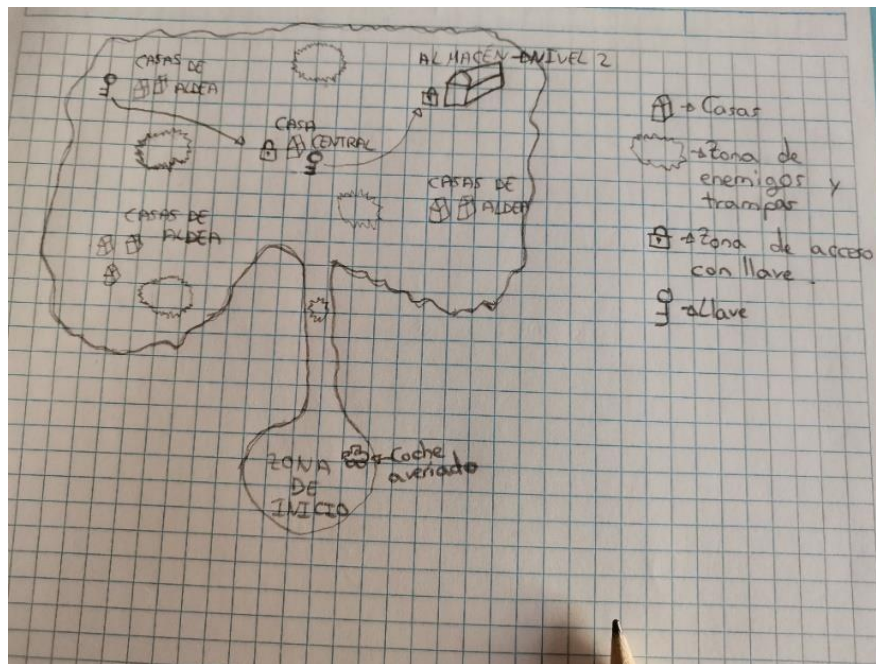## 6.2   Layouts, Flowcharts and Beatcharts

Level 1

Figure 7: Sketch layout of Lost in the Woods, level 1.

Figure 8: Flowchart of level 1 of Lost in the Woods

- In this level there is a small tutorial at the beginning of the level.
- Weapons are introduced (knife and revolver gun).
- The mechanic of instinct is introduced.
- Enemies appear for the first time: wolves and bears.
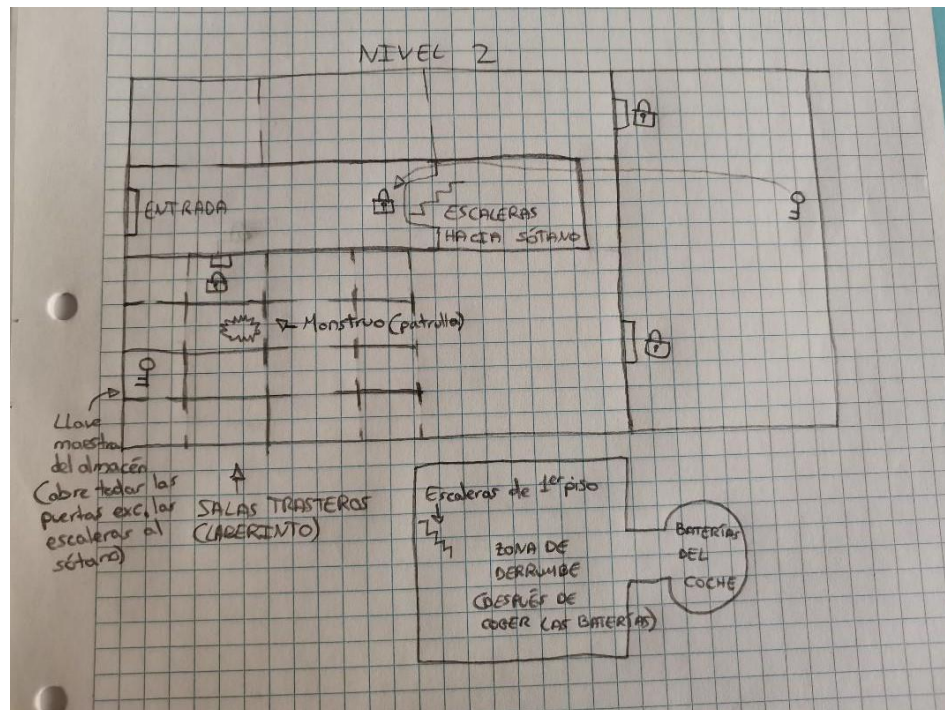- Traps appear for the first time: mines and bear traps.

Level 2

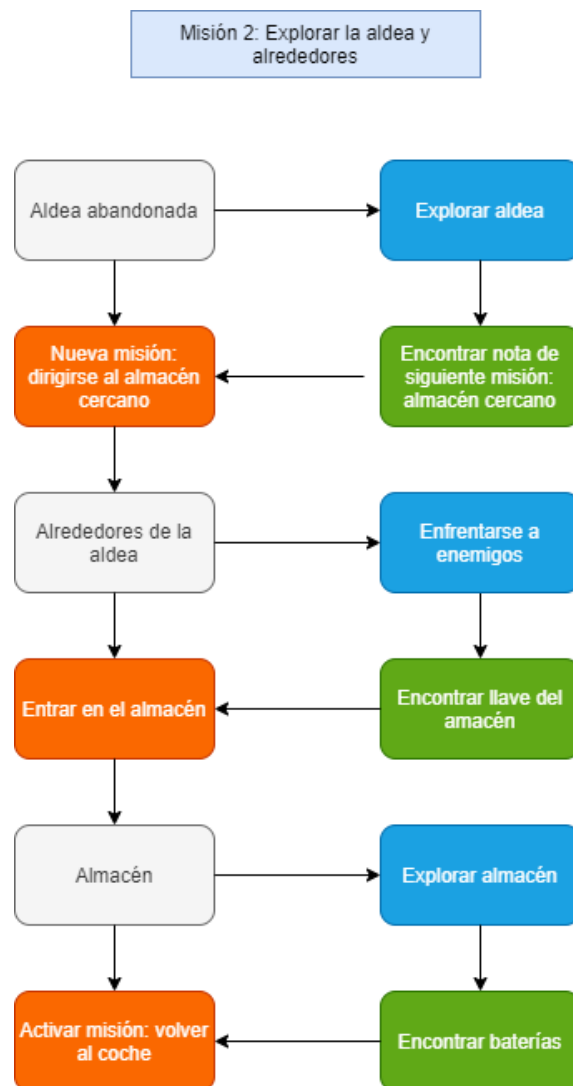*Figure 9: Sketch layout of Lost in the Woods, level 2.*

Figure 10: Flowchart of level 2 of Lost in the Woods

- At this level, the mechanics of light sources are introduced.
- The keyed door system appears for the first time.
- The first elements of mind control are introduced.
- The monster/hallucination enemy appears for the first time.
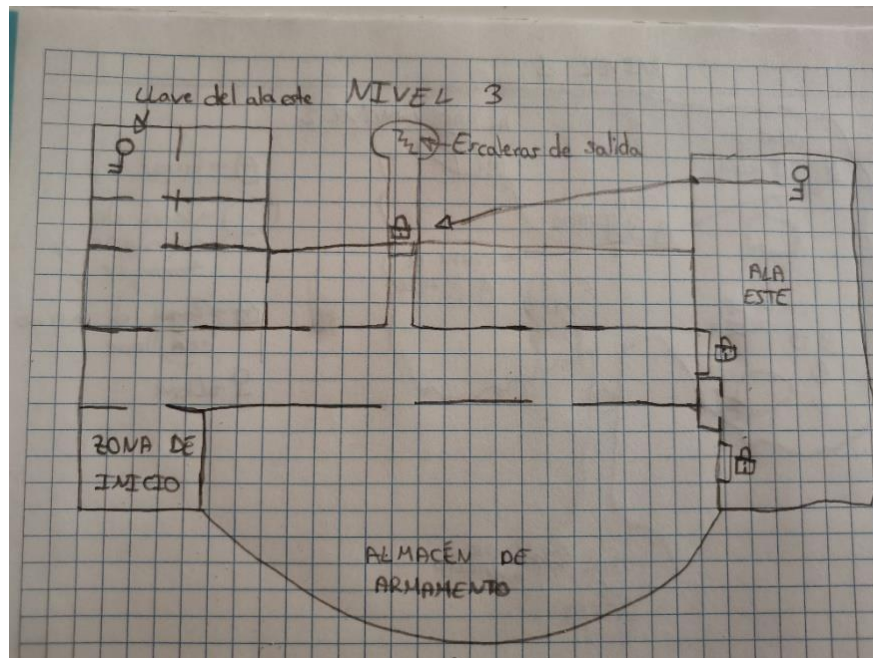
Level 3

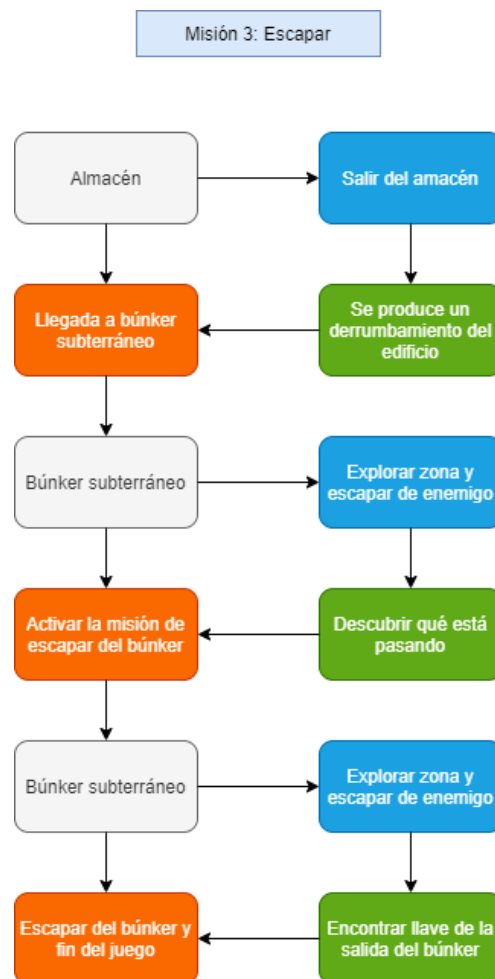*Figure 11: Sketch layout of Lost in the Woods, level 3.*

Figure 12: Flowchart of level 3 of Lost in the Woods

- It is a level primarily of stealth, monster chasing and exploration.

- The greatest load of lore elements is found at this level.

- There are many visual and sound elements trying to recreate the hallucinations of the main character.

- Weapons are subtracted (made to look like they have been buried by the building collapse), as the only enemy in the level is the monster/hallucination that cannot be physically attacked.

- Many light sources are found throughout the level.

- There are still some traps or mines.