Title

Grayveil Home

Genre

jRPG/ActionRPG

Version

1.0

The Big Idea

Most are born with their eyes closed. Peaceful and safe. But there are some born with the gift to see through the Grayveil. Their purpose is to keep the rest of the world from seeing the ghosts, horrors, and things that go bump in the night–to keep them safe so their lives can go on, wrapped in the comfort that the world is just what it appears to be.

When the veil that holds back the unseen begins to thin, the orphans of Grayveil Home for the Sighted must learn why this supernatural barrier is tearing. To blind the evil from the city may no longer be enough. Now the orphans must protect the people of Chicago from the evil crossing into their streets.

Category

Secret of Mana and *Octopath Traveler* meets *Silent Hill* and *Call of Cthulu*. A bend of the jRPG genre like *Earthbound* was to *Dragon Quest* or *Final Fantasy*.

Grayveil Home is a jRPG with active battles. Has party management like Lego games, switching the primary character in the party while the others AI. However, the 'party' the player travels with guide a lot of the direction on where to go next with voice lines interacting with each other. There's also the aspect of 'ghost hunting' where non-combat scenarios to drive off ghostly creatures that can't be touched are just as plentiful as the physical fights against horrors from beyond the grayveil. The presence of these supernatural horrors affects the need to blind the city's residents to the supernatural. The 'encounters' also move in phases as the orphans chase the creatures down to keep paranoia and aggression from spreading.

Platforms

While the game works for consoles like Playstation or XBox, the genre tends to have wider audiences on platforms like Nintendo Switch, or even Steam PC release, where the pick-up and put-down aspects are easier for longer gameplay. Overall though, there are limited restrictions on which platform Grayveil Home is designed for.

License

The Grayveil Home IP began as a design for a Deck Building card game, for example. It is incredibly versatile and hits a wide age gap for merchandising and IP growth, from novels, comics, toys, animation, and movies, to even other video game types.

Play Mechanic

The selection of orphans to bring in your 3 CHARACTER PARTY will allow access to various ABILITIES and INVENTORIES based on the chosen orphans. The difficulty of each supernatural encounter will vary by who you've chosen to bring (i.e. one spirit may need a chalk circle to BIND it and eliminate it, but without Audrey, you'll have to BURN it with salt rocks that Otis is good at throwing). This party selection will also trigger various voice lines revealing relationships between each character and backstory of what's been going on up until the beginning of the story.

Combat and Non-Combat encounters with the supernatural will be done in active time, where the player will SWITCH between characters, controlling one lead character while the other two utilize AI (like Secret of Mana or Lego Star Wars).

Technology

Typical Isometric view gameplay, though some sections may appear better with sideview angles (a la Final Fantasy 9) if the game design warrants it. Octopath Traveler's HD-2D style fits perfectly for Grayveil Home, though 3d modeling works as well.

Target Audience

The IP has broad appeal from its entertaining young characters to deeper explorations of the 'see the truth' theme and horror for older audiences. Ages 12-35 is not an unreasonable bracket to market to.

Key Features – USP's (Unique Selling Points)

- Young diverse cast of characters with immersive voice acting which drives story progression
- Horror genre that can appeal to a much younger audience without significant gore, and still satisfy an older gaming generation
- Fun jRPG style with a genre-bending 1920s Prohibition era setting
- Action-based encounters with quick party management, not turn-based
- Special 'paranoia' mechanic that affects the city's populace and environment, and ultimately the player characters, as threats are left unchecked

Marketing Summary

With wide audience appeal, Grayveil Home is a lovecraftian mix of supernatural elements and 1920's prohibition era, in an Action-jRPG shell. Players will love selecting the right orphans to take in their party, and exploring the relationships between these diverse characters brought to life through voice lines that steer directionality and navigation in a natural way.
As they unravel the mystery of why the greyveil has begun thinning, allowing horrors to materialize in physical forms, players' pulses will amp up as tensions rise, chasing down the boogey men that terrorize the people of Roger's Park to blind them to the world beyond the greyveil, all the way to the final confrontation with the 'truth revealing' creature behind it all.

The ones killed the most gruesome? Those are the ones that usually have the most business left unresolved. They don't have time to come to grips. To say their prayers. It just comes too quick for 'em.

High-Level Design Document: Grayveil Home

Product Overview

Most are born with their eyes closed. Peaceful and safe. But there are some born with the gift to see through the grayveil. Their purpose is to keep the rest of the world from seeing the ghosts, horrors, and things that go bump in the night–to keep them safe so their lives can go on, wrapped in the comfort that the world is just what it appears to be.

The patron of Grayveil Home, Mr. Silver, has died of mysterious causes. As Otis, an orphan of less than a year, and the others at the home return from the funeral dressed in black mourning, Detective Roland Collins arrives and catches Otis alone. He informs him there is a lady down the street who's said she's seen something unsettling in her basement. These tips usually came from Mr. Silver, but now that he's gone, Otis realizes the orphans are alone in their purpose. Everything they can see, they must continue to help the city unsee.

But when the veil that holds back the unseen begins to thin, and the horrors begin to seep through, the orphans of Grayveil Home for the Sighted must learn why this supernatural barrier is tearing. To blind the evil from the city may no longer be enough. Now the orphans must protect the people of 1920's Chicago from the evil crossing into their streets.
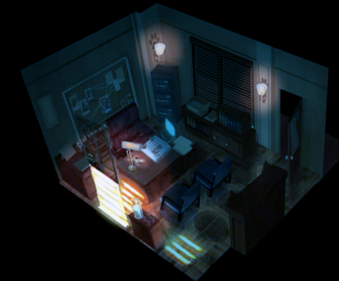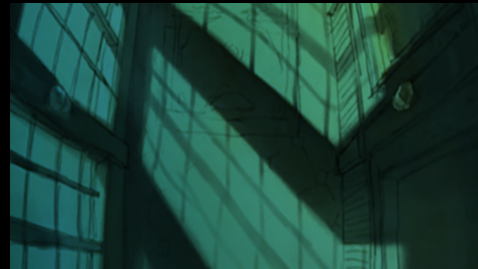
Part 1. Concept & Story

Party Characters

While you'll only have 3 characters in your party at once, selected from the orphanage, you can go back and switch our party members regularly. There will be several to choose from, but here are four as examples, along with the one playable adult later in the game.

Otis Wilmont

The newest orphan at Grayveil Home allows the player to learn and see via Otis' less familiarity than the others. Otis is clever and adaptable and is a natural paragon-type character others often listen to. He also has a good sense of dark humor about things.

When beings begin to break through the grayveil, Otis doesn't think they can do anything to fight the physical form of the horrors. But together with the other orphans they talk through what things might work to hurt the creatures. He begins to understand that what they're doing is critical to the survival of the city.

Otis learns to wield his BASEBALL BAT with IRON NAILS, uses SALT, can BLIND the citizens by making symbols in the air, and is quick.

Audrey Pickorney

Audrey is a sweet, mouse-voiced girl who is also an orphan at Grayveil Home for the Sighted.

She is kind and gentle and doesn't lose her temper easily, though she is quite prone to loud screams when frightened.

Her sight tends to allow her to see things in the 'white' spectrum through the grayveil more often than the others. Her whisper is all she uses to BLIND citizens against the horrors they shouldn't see, and she's able to do it very quickly. She often carries WHITE and BLACK CANDLES, COOKIES, PINK RIBBON, and SALTED CARAMELS to help with their hunts.

Ralph Marcus

Ralph is the foil to Otis, though the two of them have a level of friendship as well. Ralph disagrees and argues with Otis regularly, always making sure he sees both sides of the picture. He drinks the illegal moonshine he can get his hands on and smokes as often as he can get a cigarillo. Under the bravado of

never being scared, and always being the tough guy, Ralph does care about the other orphans, just not as much as himself. Ralph's sight sees the most horrible evil things more frequently than the others, the one's considered clearly 'black' on the other side of the grayveil. He's also the most equipped to deal with creatures when they start coming through, employing SILVER SLINGSHOT, throwing SALT ROCKS, using a BASEBALL BAT, and even a ZIP GUN as his inventory and abilities level up. He BLINDS by holding some INCENSE or his CIGARILLO under the nose of the citizen, then shouts at the spectral terror to go away.

Maggie Little

Maggie loves music, always listening to the radio whenever she can. She seems to keep up with what's 'hip' and tries to make sure everyone else is in the know too, for anything pop culture. Her parents had involvement in the city's organized crime, something she doesn't like to talk about much, so she's knowledgable about important criminals. She's fearful at times, but does her best to help just like Mr. Silver taught them to.

Maggie uses music played at unusual tones and radio static to BLIND citizens of the city. She carries all sorts of knick knacks that she thinks will come in handy, from STRING, to WAX, to a STOPWATCH, and PLAYING CARDS. She considers it being ready for anything, but now that she doesn't own anything as an orphan, she just likes to keep things to call her own.

Detective Roland Collins

Det. Collins is the primary liaison between the Grayveil Home and the Chicago Police Department in Roger's Park. He's newer to the station, and isn't particularly savvy on all the supernatural things going on. They told him at the station to come talk to the orphans after Mr. Silver's death, so he came. Little did he know what he was getting himself into when he began his investigation into his old acquaintence's mysterious killing.

For most of the game, Det. Collins brings information to the orphans to go check out, hearing 'bump in the night' stories from citizens of the city, but finding nothing to really substantiate it. After things begin coming through the grayveil, he's still skeptical, even though he can see there are really murders taking place. But later, once he's fully convinced, and he's unwilling to keep sending orphans into situations that are far too dangerous for kids to be involved in, he becomes a playable character, sporting his GUN, SILVER BULLETS, MALTOV COCKTAILS, and such. Once he's caught a glimpse of the horror, he has a hard time unseeing it.

1920s Roger's Park, Chicago
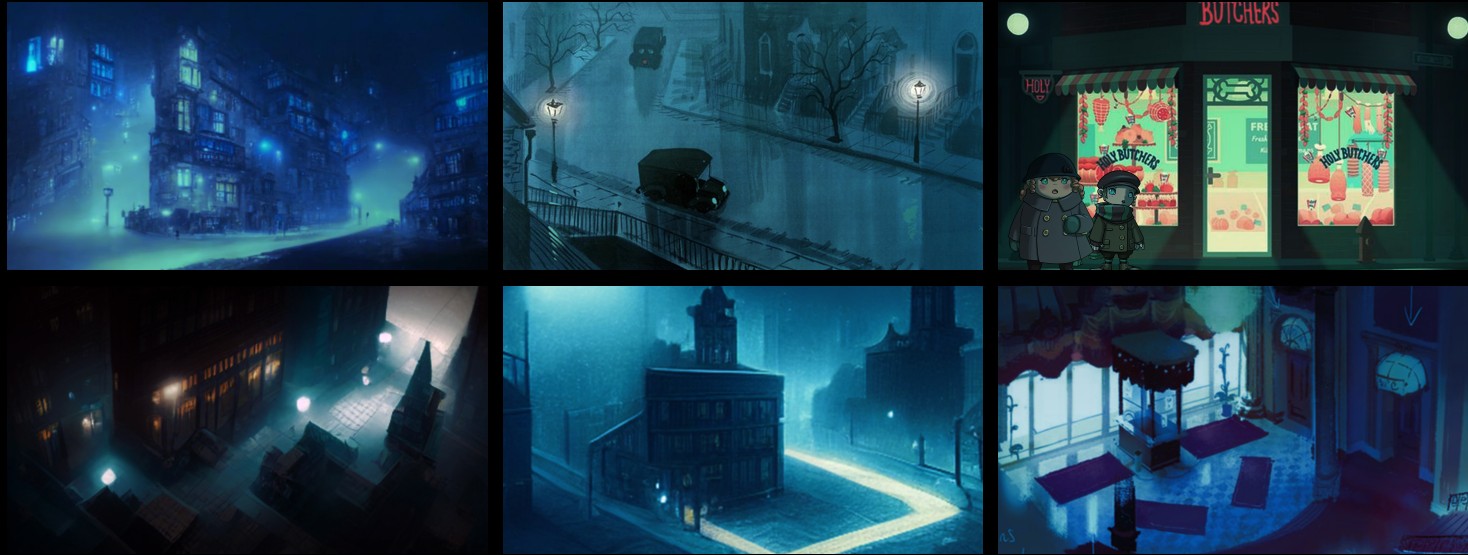
Grayveil Home is set in the prohibition era of 1920s America–specifically in the district of Chicago known as Roger's Park. All of the orphans come from 'in and around' the area, each of them knowing parts of it better than others. The city is dark when it's night, and dusky and dim when it's daytime, creating a cool but unsettling mood for players.

The characters will explore numerous apartment buildings, alleyways, fun hangouts like ice cream parlor and movie theater, and visit the police station and any number of parties and speakeasies while following up on stories of supernatural horrors and boogeymen. The map is relatively small overall, preventing long periods of travel without event, and focuses in on a tightly packed district of constant going ons.

Narrative Description Of Gameplay

Intro Cinematic

We open on a train of old Studebakers pulling up in front of the Grayveil Home for the Sighted (the sign reads). It's set in the middle of Roger's Park, a district in Chicago. It's 1920's era, we can tell by the vehicles, building, clothing and music. We see several somber children–quite diverse, we know they can't all be related. They're dressed in black. We surmise they've returned from a funeral as they unload from the cars and make their way inside the orphanage, led by Ms. Lobdell, a kind looking older woman.

As the children all enter the large grey home, we focus in on one last straggler, Otis Wilmont, one orphan still wearing his signature scarf and hat with his black suit. He lingers longer at the doorway as he spots an unmarked police car pull up, and a man he's seen before, but never spoken with, get out.

The man comes to offer condolences and says his name is Detective Roland Collins. He tells Otis he needs help. A lady down the street said she saw something in her basement that scared her, but he checked it out and there's nothing there. The fellas' at the station told him to come talk to someone here. He'd worked a few times with Mr. Silver before he passed (in fact he's known him quite a while). Otis nods, and accepts. He says he'll grab a few of the others and go see if there's anything to see. Otis turns and enters the orphanage, and the player takes control.

The Basement

DETECTIVE COLLINS has just visited and let the orphans know that someone called in saying there's something scary in their basement. The police took a look, but found nothing. The DETECTIVE was told the orphans sometimes help with these things. Following the opening Cinematic, Otis WALKS about the Grayveil Home for the Sighted orphanage, CONVERSING with other orphans to RECRUIT the orphans he wishes to take with him in his party.

OTIS then WALKS out the front double doors of the orphanage and his voiceline asks "2343 S Cooper. That's down over that way?" One of the other orphans in the party replies "Yeah. You remember where Audrey found that puppy? The one Ms. Lobdell told her she couldn't keep?" "Yeah." "Yeah. Take a right over there (he points), ya goof." "Very funny," replies OTIS.

WALKING in the right direction will continue to prompt occasional responses confirming you're on the right path. WALKING in the wrong direction prompts voice lines that steer you back the right way.

When OTIS and his party arrive at the right basement apartment house (not far away), they KNOCK on the door and the occupant lets them in, explaining. Clearly frightened. The occupant points to the basement door. They say "I saw it. Nobody believes me, but something is there. It threw a ball at me." OTIS leads the others down the stairs and they can immediately see a wraith-like ghostly creature. "What's it want, ya think?" asks one of the orphans. This indicates there's something the wraith needs resolved before it can fade. INVESTIGATING various things around the room will trigger responses from the orphans, hypothesizing.

In this time, the ghostly creature may have left the basement, depending on how it's moved. This may result in other apartment residents needing to be BLINDED, or gaining fear.

To resolve the ghost, OTIS and his party will INVESTIGATE and find the ball it hit into the basement window when it was alive, but never recovered. He will select the ball from his INVENTORY bar and give it to the wraith ghost. As it begins to calm, OTIS and the others may use other items in inventory to help it resolve itself, such as BLACK CANDLES, WHITE CHALK to make a CIRCLE, or SALT. The voice lines of the orphans will help guide them with what seems best. There are always a series of things to do to get rid of the ghostly specters from beyond the GRAYVEIL.

The Breakthrough

The orphans WALK towards the icecream parlor. Just before they go in, an event triggers and they see a creeping PHANTOM LYCAN creature passing into being, just down the street. With their VEILSIGHT, they are the only ones who see it, at first. Uncertain of what they're seeing exactly, OTIS and the others follow it, typically unable to truly be hurt by the things they see. However, they hear a scream and find the lycan is chewing on a WORKER, illegal moonshine still half unloaded from a truck in an alleyway (this is the era we're in). They're driven to resolve the issue of this phantom lycan-werewolf-like creature roaming. Can they handle it now or later (the longer they wait, the more people get killed and/or need to be BLINDED)? Things have changed. This is a physical danger. They'll need to TALK to the others at the orphanage. Maybe talk to DET. COLLINS about it. The player will decide.

If they simply go after the PHANTOM LYCAN creature right away, it will dash into a park. They may find it and try to FIGHT it. It will be difficult to kill, but it can be done. Character voice-lines from the party (including OTIS) will suggest what to do based on the direction they're heading.

If they go to tell DET. COLLINS (furthest destination away), he'll be skeptical and say he'll have some guys keeping an eye out for it. He also tells them don't go after it (which of course, they'll want to then, and the character's voice-lines will help drive that).

If they decide to hunt it but want to get equipment first, the character's dialogue will begin to make suggestions of what or who to collect back at the orphanage (i.e. SILVER SLINGSHOT BULLETS, MOON ROCKS, etc). This will make the FIGHT significantly easier.

The longer a threat is out there, the more aggravated and PARANOID people become, and potentially killed. The greyveil will react by increasing the fog and darkness that those with the VEILSIGHT can see, reflecting the mood of the city as it affects them. Creep factor goes up. Visibility gets worse, and things get harder to react to.

Patterns of the way to wear down and defeat the lycan will be revealed in the way you combo order and type of attack with the orphans. This may have already been clear prior, but this is the first FIGHT type enemy encounter in the game.

Part 2. Obstacles & Interactions

Enemies

The various supernatural entities and creatures will be strange and unusual (not following typical mythological descriptions). Some encounters, the player characters will be unable to physically touch and will be forced to chase away or bind the creatures. But once the grayveil begins to allow things through, the horrors become physically dangerous and encounters turn more to actual combat that can physically harm the orphan characters, as well as the city's occupants.

The Truth: The Veritanglic

As the grayveil dissolves and begins to show the human population the truth of what's beyond, the orphans and Det. Collins work their way through uncovering what's causing it. For some time after they discover its existence, they believe it to be some sort of abyssal horror that's more sentient than the other supernatural creatures–an evil that's trying to take over the world. However, after finally defeating it, they learn the truth.

The Veritanglic (truth angel), a spirit of the 'white' side beyond the grayveil is responsible. The Veritanglic has come to the

conclusion that all should see the truth. The 'veilsight' should be what all humanity has, because that's what's right. The truth should not be hidden, right? It is a thing of immense power, and it remains on the other side of the grayveil, intangible. There is debate amongst the orphans of what's truly right (and the theme throughout the game touches on this in various ways). Why do the orphans have to be the only ones who can see the terrible things? But in the end, when all hope seems lost, the Veritanglic is cast down by a power greater than itself–godrays pouring from the skies above. It becomes a Nephalim, having abused its power, and on the side of the grayveil that they can touch, it can finally be beaten by the orphans and Det. Collins.

Environment

Paranoia

When supernatural creatures are glimpsed or affect an area, the citizens of Roger's Park gain levels of Paranoia or Stress. If the orphans leave these horrors out in the city, some begin to wander as well. The more citizens affected by the Paranoia, the more they become aggressive. This starts with prompting annoying conversations with other NPCs as well as the PCs, which can hold up the PCs when they're in a hurry somewhere, but it continues to escalate unless these Paranoid citizens are Blinded by the orphan characters from what they've seen or experienced. Full Paranoia on citizens can even cause them to start killing other citizen NPCs or attack the orphan PCs.

The fog and mood of Roger's Park also deepens and gets thicker as the overall level of Paranoia amongst the city's NPCs rises. The grayveil seems to react and feed off of this, producing the change. This creates more tense situations where things can get closer without being seen, and then even friendly NPCs can startle the player.

Factions & Organizations

- Roger's Park Police
- McGregor Crime Syndicate
- Santini Crime Syndicate
- Catholite Cathedral

Interactions

Next, describe how the player interacts with the game to advance through the experience:

- NPC's
  - Communicating, 'Blinding' to reduce Paranoia, If Paranoid, Combat or Escaping
- Environment
  - Exploring streets, entering/exiting buildings, investigating and gathering inventory used to solve problems
- Weapons & Equipment
  - Many are directly connected with PCs abilities and inventory, though some can be picked up and purchased

Part 3. Player Actions & Levels

Character Actions

Exploration

The player uses many of the traditional jRPG controls to move the character party through the world, but controls 1 character while the AI controls the other two that cluster on either side. They can SWITCH the leader of the party at any time, and INVESTIGATE many of the objects around their environment.

Direct Effects on Character

Describe how the player utilizes, maintains, gathers and loses health during gameplay. Also, if they are affected by "power-ups," which can increase their abilities, describe how this works:

Health & Damage

Character Death

Part 4. Finance

Grayveil Home is fairly scalable in scope. There is an A storyline and a few B plots, and the rest of the game's scale is decided upon how many kinds of ghost hunting encounters do you want to include? Development costs should be in the $15M range, and perhaps double that for marketing expenses. (Ref https://vgsales.fandom.com/wiki/Most_expensive_video_games (Final Fantasy XI (2001) – $26.3 million development, Psychonauts (2005) - $12 million, Final Fantasy IX $40M development $22M manuf $62M marketing).

Conclusion

Grayveil Home is special. Special in a way that *Earthbound* broke the mold of fantasy jRPGs that existed as its predecessors. It iterates on new ways voice acting can be used to drive directionality in exploration of a world. It's horror, but is wrapped in a very wide audience age range–both charming, and mysterious. Its themes of revealing truth, and exploring death and life, are highly relevant. Games like this don't come along every day. Don't just see what it might be. See what it is.

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Born in 1977 in Seattle, WA, Terry garnered various local young artist awards growing up. At the age of eleven, he began the creation of the *Armageddon* fantasy world in preparation for its many stories to one day be told, and designed the tabletop RPG system to accompany it.

He has his Associate of Arts degree in Animation from Collins College and worked as an animator on feature films *Dreamworks' Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron (nominated for Best Animated Picture)* and *Adam Sandler's Meatball Studios' Eight Crazy Nights,* as well as pilot episodes of *Disney's Proud Family* and *Hannah Barbara's Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law.*

He later became the author, artist and creator of the YA fantasy novel *Armageddon: The Battle of Darkening Skies*; sci-fi, *Upgrader: Re-Engineered*, and *Upgrader: Adaptation*. He was also the primary creature-concept artist for the popular *Terra Monsters* mobile game franchise. And more recently, he produced, directed, sound designed, and voice acted, in *Armageddon: Black Dawn*, the 30 episode full-cast audiofiction based on his first novel, where it was a finalist in the *2021 Audioverse Awards*, and will return for its second season in 2023. He also is the artist for a yet-to-be-announced all ages comic published with Tidalwave Comics next year.

Terry now lives in Chandler, AZ with his wife and two children, trapped in a financial software product management job that pays far too much to leave for an entry level creative job he'd enjoy like writing (especially with one kid in college and another on the way). Please help him find a way out. Please.