DEVIL:ANGEL

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DEVIL:ANGEL – BRING DOWN THE GODS

LEVEL DESIGN DOCUMENT

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1.0 Level Design – Planning

1.0.1 – Overview

The idea was to develop a relatively expansive environment that was sparsely populated by the human faction. During this particular visit to the level, several key scripted events would occur to provide an exciting and unique experience for the player. The Golden Lands are perhaps a step away from the norm, evoking a series of emotions in the player as they progress through the area, culminating in a large scale battle and climactic conclusion that makes the player reflect upon what has just transpired

Whilst Devil:Angel offers a large degree of freedom, this particular iteration of The Golden Lands features several scripted events and is thus quite linear in terms of player progression This example level does showcase some of the three way battles that can occur during the game.

After considering how the game world of Devil:Angel was constructed (divided into themed areas) it was decided that this area should take the form of a large valley.

The Golden Lands are a beautiful sight to behold, receiving the blessings of God, the area is rich with nature, featuring hills, rivers and valleys interspersed with fields of crops and quaint houses. Aesthetically it should look and feel like a lush, green environment. The Golden Lands are comprised primarily of a large valley, with a series of small bridges providing a way to cross overhead.

1.0.2 – Creating the map
An overall map for the valley was produced; the general layout is shown below:
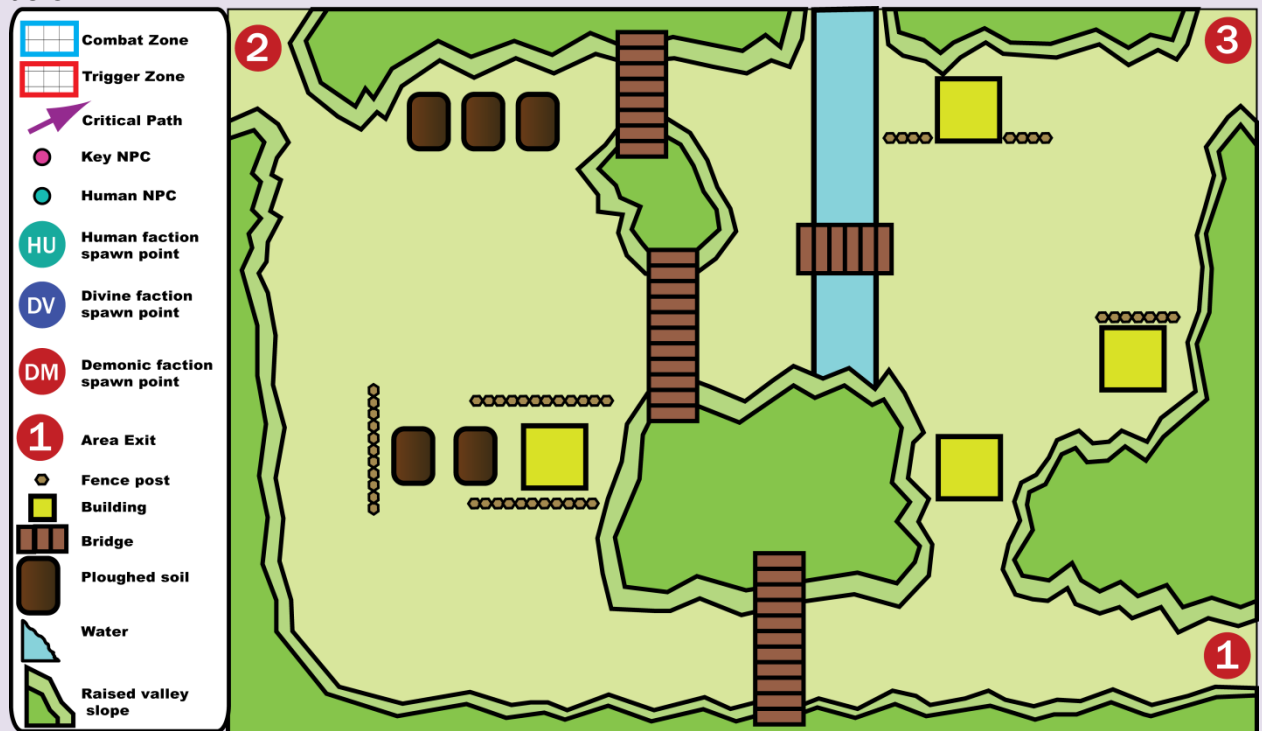
The design strives to be as open plan as possible, with no possibility of confusing the player or letting them get stuck. It is simple in its overall layout, with the steep walls of the valley acting as clearly defined boundaries to the overall playable area. This is a tutorial level and thus there should be plenty of space for the player to get used to the controls, this should be married with visual guidance to help new players.

There are three main open expanses of land in the level with plenty of space for combat. Bridges stretch overhead, connecting the upper areas of the valley. At this point in the game, the player is unable to reach the upper area of the valley and is restricted to the valley floor.

A small impassable stream is present to add some variety to the landscape – this disappears into an underground series of tunnels. The presence of a bridge over the water and the short drop will indicate to the player that they are not able to travel through the water. There are four separate buildings in the area. These cannot be entered by the player but may be destroyed by some of the more powerful adversaries.

There are three separate entrances/exits to the area – as shown in the above map.

Area Entrance 1 leads to the River Styx and Demonic Realm – the player enters from this area after awakening on the banks of the River Styx at the start of the game.

**Area Entrance 2** leads to a deeper area of the Golden Lands and is a dead end.

Area Entrance 3 leads to the Divine Realm and Human World.

1.0.3 – Marking key areas on the map

In order to efficiently build the level it is necessary to understand the flow of gameplay in this particular area. Specifically, this involves identifying and clearly marking:

- Area entrances & exits
- Spawn points for fixed/scripted event enemies
- NPC locations
- Trigger zones that instigate scripted events

These were added to the overall map, with each detailed in the key.
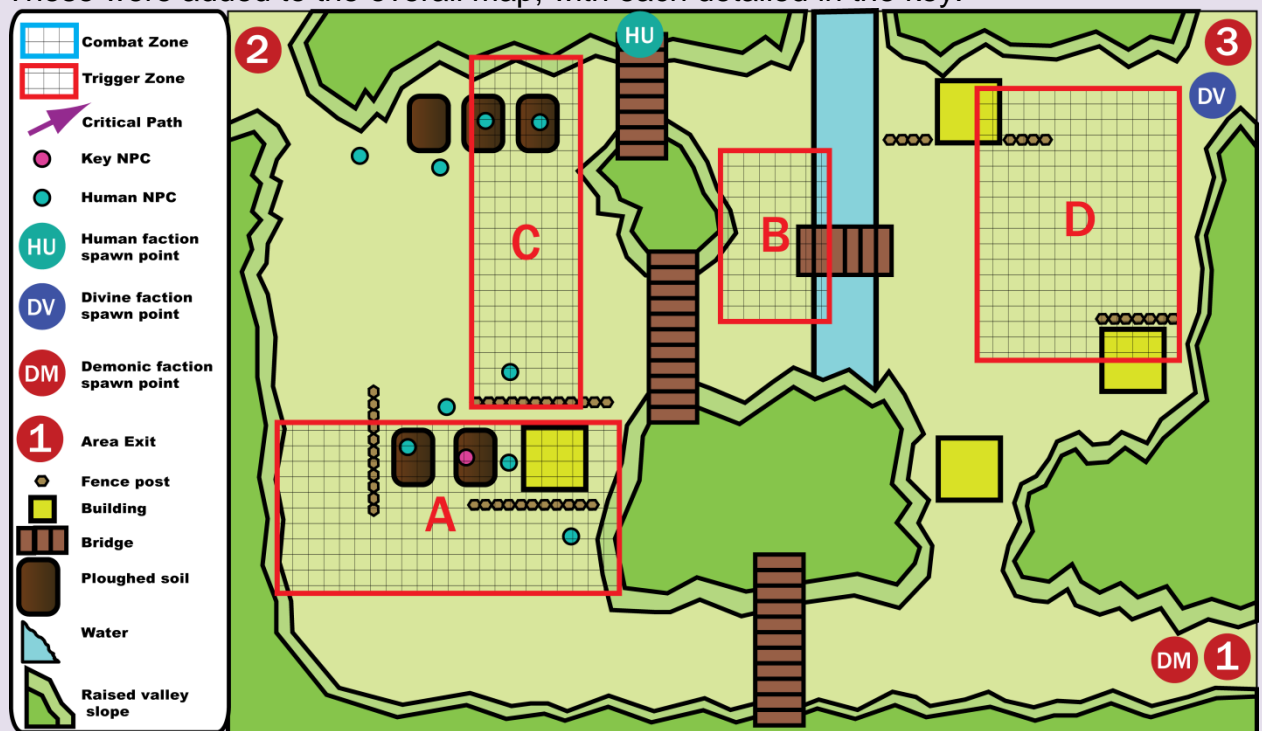
1.0.4 – Overall flow of the level

The overall flow of the level is as follows, the player's ultimate goal is to reach **Area entrance 3**:

- Player enters the area at Area Entrance 1.
- Player proceeds into main valley area
- Scripted Event A occurs
- Divine Faction appears – blockading the exit
- Player Action
- Scripted Event B occurs
- Scripted Event C occurs
- Demonic Faction approaches from Area Entrance 1.
- Player Action
- Scripted Event D occurs
- Clash – large scale climactic battle between the two forces
- Scripted Event E occurs
- Human reinforcements appear
- Player exits the area

1.0.5 – Scripted Event List

There is now a need to plan out and implement key events that happen during the level. Below is a breakdown of the major events that can occur during this level. Obviously, as this is a tutorial level, a managed introduction to various gameplay mechanics is essential in familiarising the player with the game world. As such, many of these events are tailored to work in the player's favour.

| Event Letter	Condition(s)	
A	• Player enters Trigger Zone A.	Several human NPCs hurry toward the player's location, shouting about Divine faction forces gathering near the settlement. The farmers gather together – the air is tense with nervous chatter. The farmers will nervously glance and point at the player character. The player may overhear them whispering about the angels looking for someone.
B	• Event A triggered. • Player enters Trigger Zone B	Control is briefly taken away from the player as the camera pans toward Area Entrance 3, showing a sizable number of angels amassing. The player is advised to search for an alternate means to bypass these foes. Control is returned to the player.
C	• Events A, B triggered. • Player has not already engaged Divine faction. • Player enters Trigger Zone C	A horn sounds and control is taken away from the player. The player learns that the demonic faction is approaching from Area Entrance 1. A carrier pigeon is despatched to summon human reinforcements. Control is returned to the player. A message is displayed, informing the player that there may be some way to use the appearance of the Demonic faction to their advantage.
D	• Events A, B, C triggered. • Player has not already engaged Divine faction. • Player is in Devil mode. • Player enters Trigger Zone D.	In Devil mode, the Divine faction will automatically give chase to and attempt to engage the player. This also serves the purpose of removing the angels who are preventing the player from leaving the area.
E	• Events A, B, C, D triggered. • Player has survived three minutes of combat since the opposing forces began fighting.	Human reinforcements appear atop the hills and bridges. These reinforcements decimate both the Divine and Demonic faction, providing a climactic and finite conclusion to the opening level.

1.0.6 – Finalised Key for all Maps

With the map design finalised, it is prudent to finalise the key that helps guide the reader through the map and level design. This can be used in conjunction with the attached A3 level map.

| Symbol	Description
	Combat Zone
	Trigger Zone
	Critical Path
	Key NPC
	Human NPC
HU	Human faction spawn point
DV	Divine faction spawn point
DM	Demonic faction spawn point
1	Area Exit
	Fence post
	Building
	Bridge
	Ploughed soil
	Water
	Raised valley slope

1.0.7 – Overall Faction progression

The two factions approach the area as follows. The blue arrow denotes the Divine faction, whose approach is dependant on player action (the player must attract their attention.) The red arrow denotes the Demonic faction, who will approach as soon as the player triggers the event.
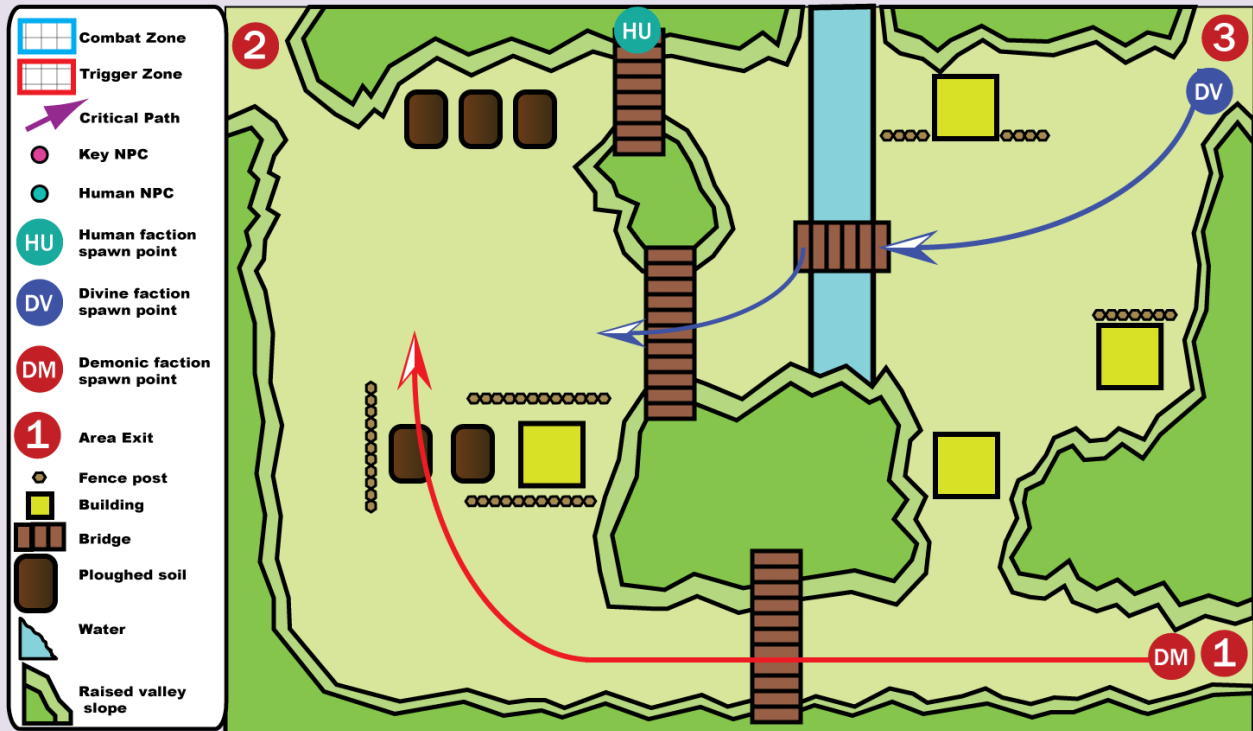
During the level, the two factions will clash at the marked area. The main focus of the level is to introduce various concepts of gameplay to the player – as such the two factions prioritise fighting against each other rather than the player character.

1.0.8 – Critical Path & how events affect the player

The player's **primary goal** in this level is to get from the starting point to the marked finish point. Naturally, there are several obstacles that impede their progression. As this is a scripted tutorial level, events will occur to guide the player. The critical path that the player must follow is shown below:
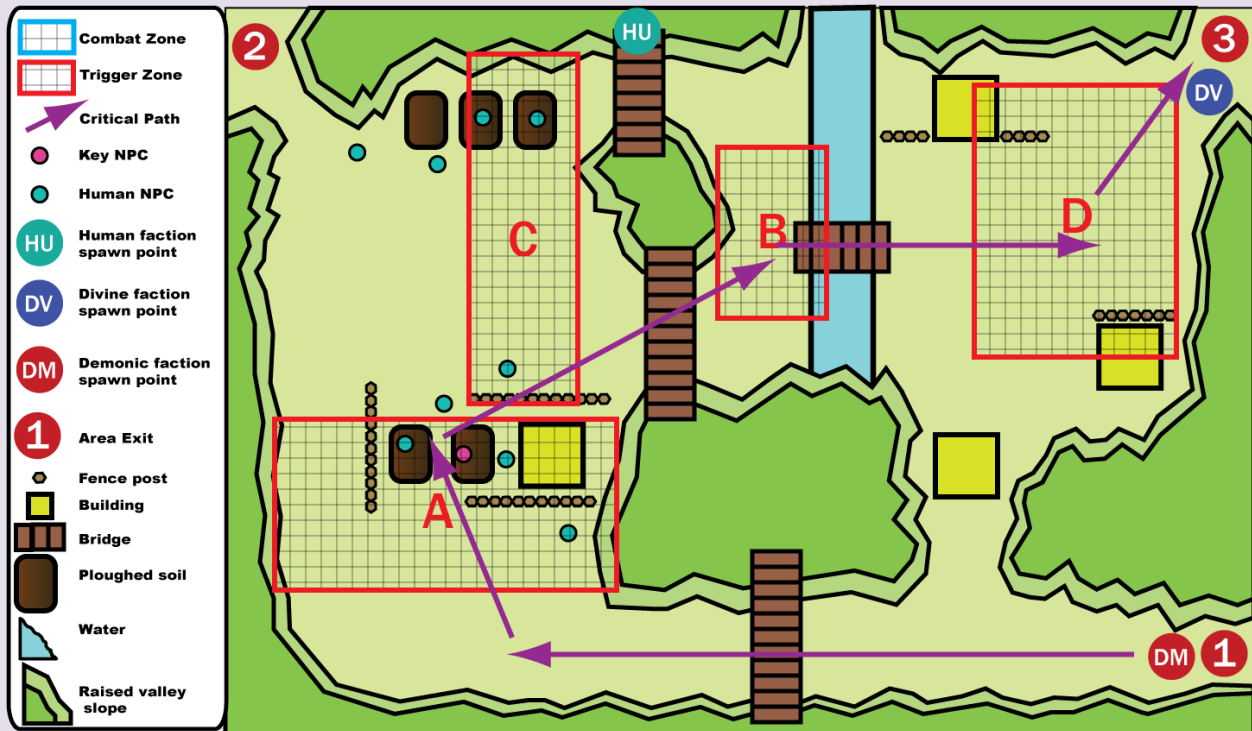
The "suggested" course of action is for the player to work with the human faction, leading the opposing forces into a trap beneath the bridge. There is a small amount of backtracking involved, between Trigger Zones B and C, this links in with **Scripted Event C**.

This serves to lessen the threat to the player whilst providing them with a sense of satisfaction at having outwitted their adversaries. From this point the player's goal is to survive until the human reinforcements arrive.

The arrival of the human reinforcements represents the opportunity to turn the tables on the supernatural factions. This will give the player a feeling of both relief and gratification at having defeated a much larger force. It serves as the culmination of the level, giving it a sense of finality as the player moves onto the next area and into the game proper.

The demonic army showing up unexpectedly serves to cause the player considerable anxiety – two large forces are in the area and one of them is heading straight for the player. This was structured to force the player to decide on a course of action. The player must evaluate the risk of having to take on two opposing forces on their own or deduce some other means of overcoming their foes. The level represents one of the fundamental ideas behind Devil:Angel's design – distracting the two factions and making them fight each other whilst the player tries to accomplish their true mission – overthrowing the deities.

1.0.9 – Defined Combat Zones

In order for a large scale battle to take place in a way that does not cause abnormal operation in the AI it is necessary to have well-defined areas tailored for combat.

There are three key combat areas in the design:

A – Area immediately after the entrance to the valley
B – Area surrounding the two bridges 2nd Area Exit
C – Small settlement, next to the 3rd area exit.

Combat areas serve no purpose in terms of mechanics but are designed to be relatively open spaces intended for large scale battles. I deliberately made these areas open in order to provide ample space for the various factions to do battle. Open expanses allow the AI controlled NPCs to engage in effective large scale battles, without being restricted by a cramped environment. This leaves the player as an observer or third party - immediately giving them a wealth of choices – do they want to join the battle or wait and see how things play out?

Rather than simply have open fields, various objects were added to the area such as wooden carts and bails of hay. These would serve primarily as destructible scenery that would progressively be deformed during the course of battle. They could also serve as a limited amount of cover for the player to refuge behind if fighting opponents who utilise ranged attacks. As the primary focus of this level is a large scale battle there was not much need for cover.

The marked Spawn Points represent areas from which reinforcements can arrive for a specific faction. For example, Divine and Demonic faction reinforcements will continue to spawn until the battle is concluded. Human reinforcements will spawn once, move to a specified area and a cut-scene will play.
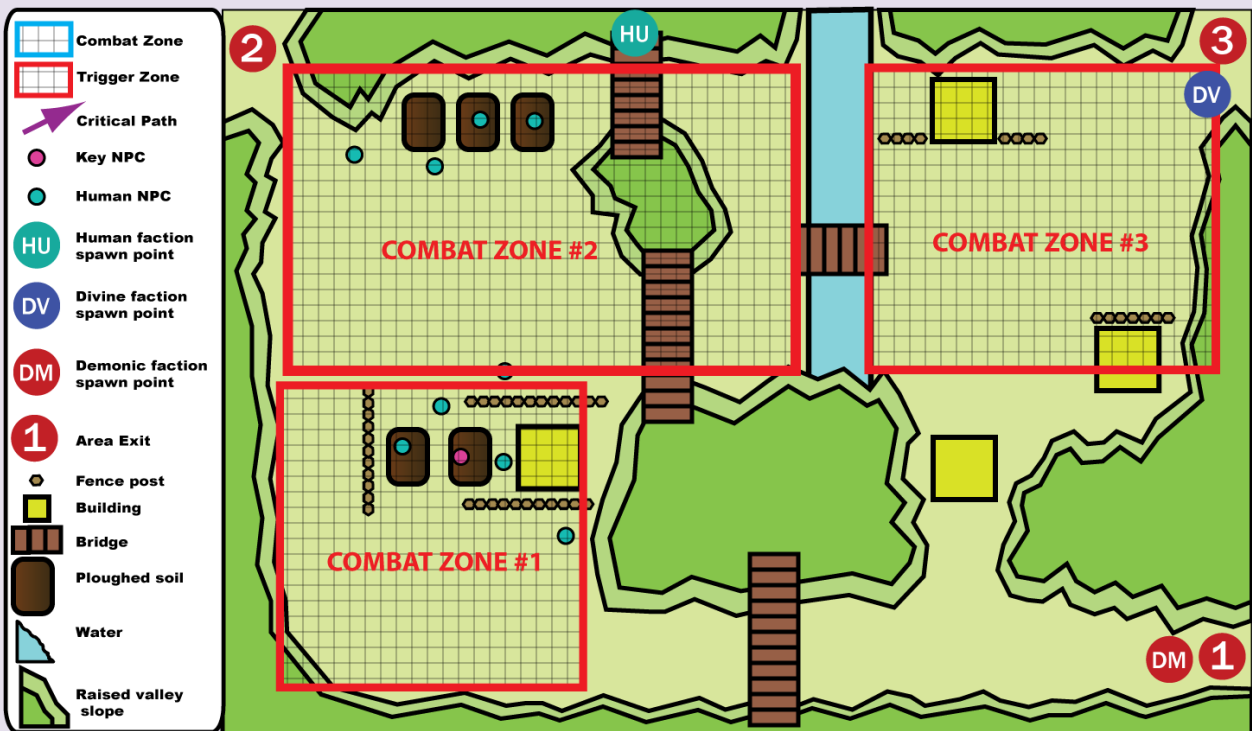
1.1 Level Design – High Level Implementation

1.1.1 – Grey boxing & wireframe renders

The next step of the process was to produce a rough representation of the map in 3DS Max. This would help to ascertain the overall scale of various parts of the map, such as showing how large the valley is relative to the player and other objects, etc.
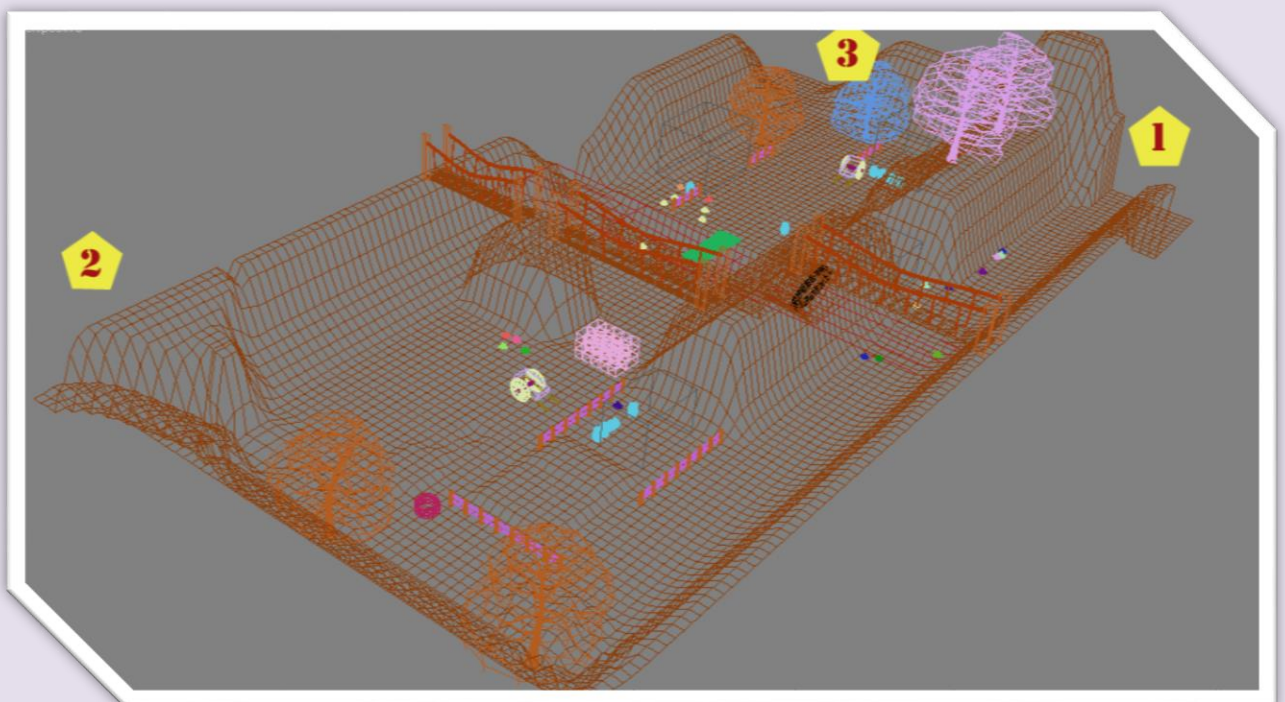
This grey-boxed version of the level gives a good overall impression of how the level could look.

Large expanse of open land for large-scale combat.
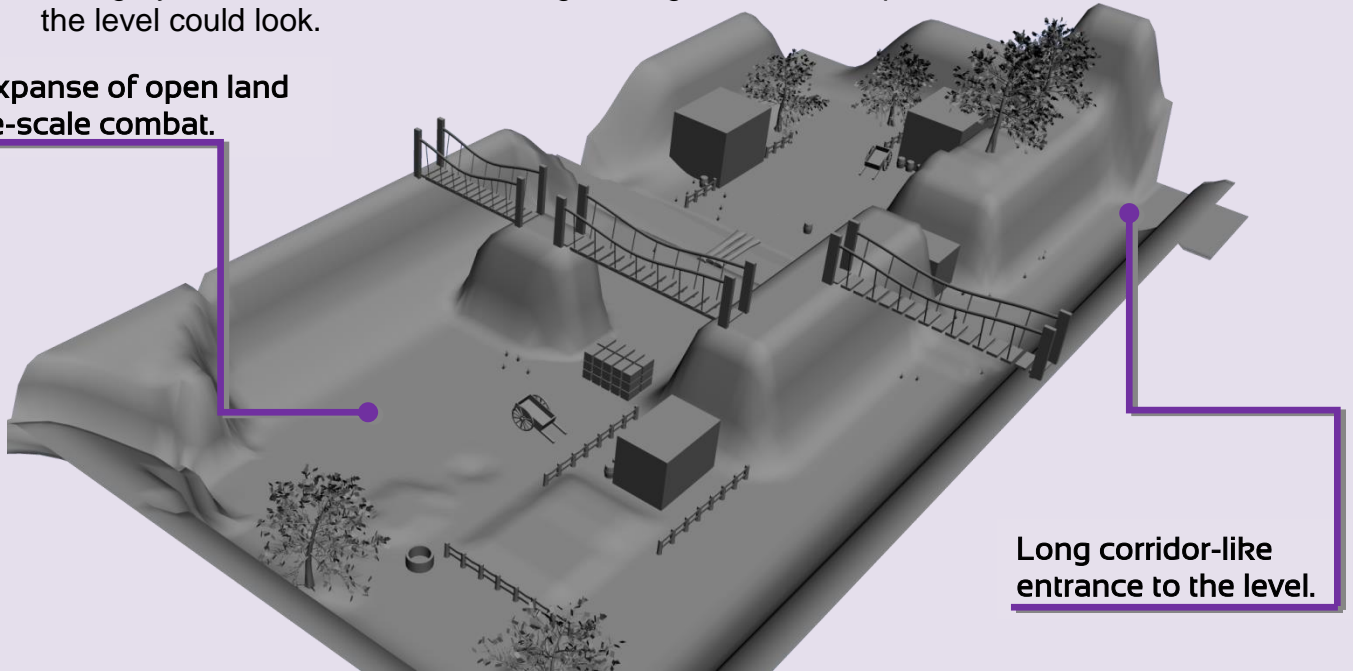
Long corridor-like entrance to the level.

The wireframe view also provides a good overview of the level. Here, the three entrances to the area are marked accordingly.

1.1.2 – Textured render of the environment

The final step involved applying various textures to the grey-boxed version of the map produced earlier. The goal of this 3DS Max render was primarily to demonstrate some of the visual guidance that would help to guide the player through the level. Obviously, many potential features of the level such as NPCs, destructible scenery and the crops/produce that would litter the stage are not present in this mock up. Only very basic lighting was applied to the environment so as not to detract from the purpose of the render.
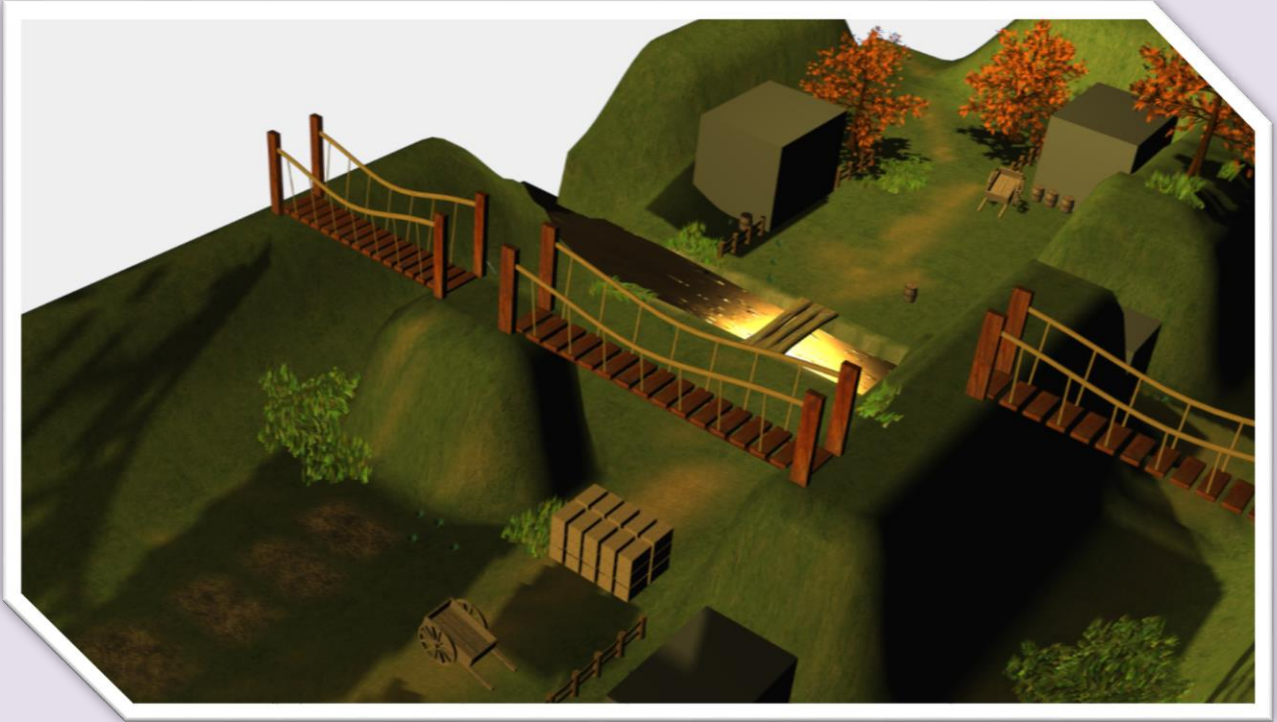
Above: Overall representation of "The Golden Lands."

The main function of this was to highlight how elements of scenery acted as visual guidance to the player (such as the trodden dirt path that runs through the entire area.)

A trodden dirt path is present throughout the entire area, subtly guiding the player's progression through the level. Several Branches of the main path lead to each of the potential **Area Entrances.**

This render also serves to highlight some of the potential scenery that will support the gameplay – such as the wooden carts and barrels acting as destructible scenery. The un-textured boxes in the scene represent various buildings that would be fully textured in the final level.

The function of the sloped valley walls is also demonstrated here – acting as both believable boundaries to the playable area whilst matching the overall aesthetic.

1.2 Level Design – Step by step walkthrough

### 1.2.1 – Level purpose & key design factors

As this level is the first area in the game and forms part of the tutorial, particular sections of it are quite linear. This particular level introduces several of the key gameplay concepts to the player in a deliberately restricted environment- ie: genuine player freedom is limited in order to familiarise the player with how the game works.

1.2.2 – Entrance to the Golden Lands

After the game introduction sequence, the player enters the area from Area Entrance 1; the tall valley walls funnel the player toward the main expanse of the valley. These tall walls also serve to mask the upcoming area from the player. As the player progresses down this space, they will notice the bridge overhead, raising questions in the player's mind as to how to reach the upper tier of the valley.
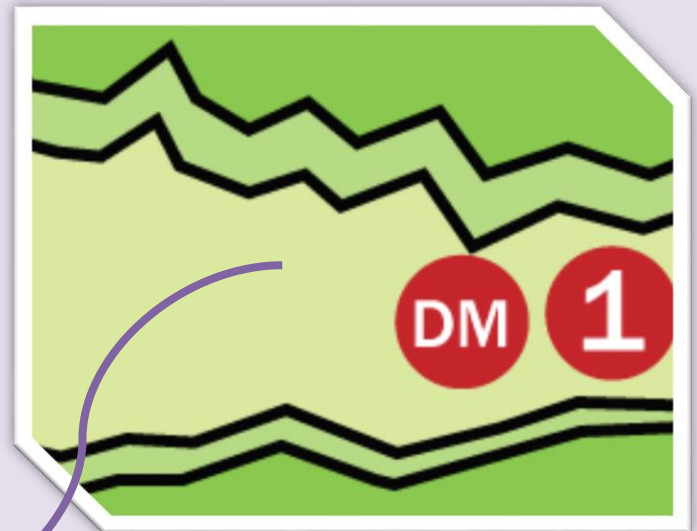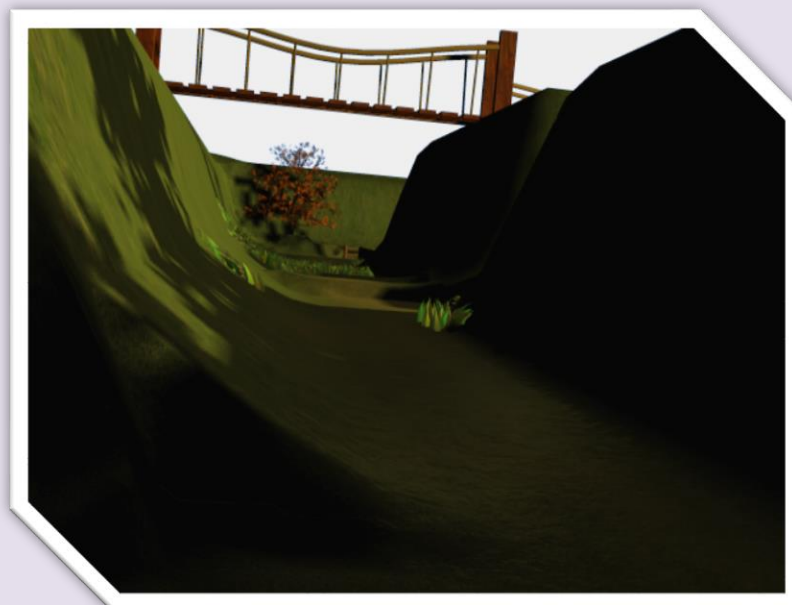
Player Starts at Area Entrance 1
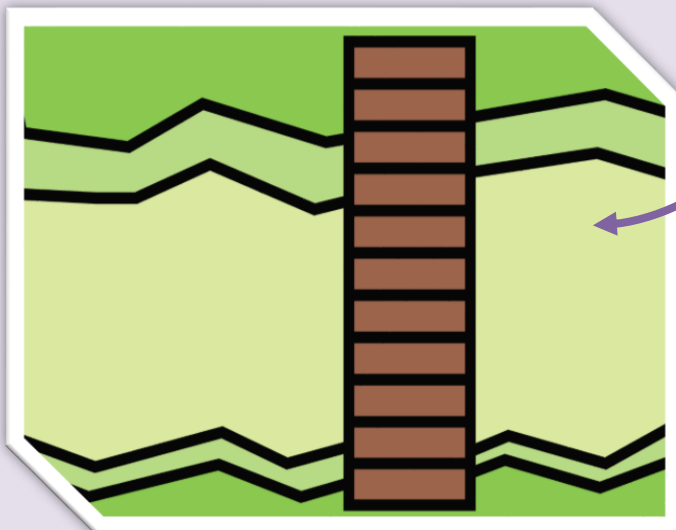
The player passes under the bridge and makes their way into the main area of the level. The raised walls on either side of this causeway prevent the player from seeing what lies ahead of them.

**Player moves through the causeway passing under the bridge**

Immediate Entrance to the level

1.2.3 – Main area of the Golden Lands

After passing under the bridge a large expanse of the open valley opens up before the player. Human farmers are working in the fields, produce is being loaded onto carts – the overall area is quaint and peaceful.
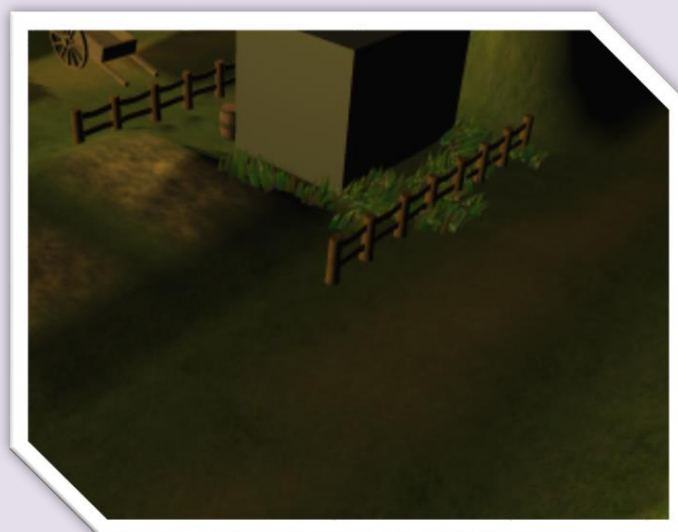
The immediate expanse of open land is designed to inspire both a sense of awe in the player and also a relative calm or lull before the storm. The music would soften at the point, allowing the player to take in their surroundings and become acclimated to the overall area. Typical farming/village imagery is identified by the player: a small house, ploughed soil, carts laden with produce, human farmers tending the fields. These all come together to make the player feel safe.
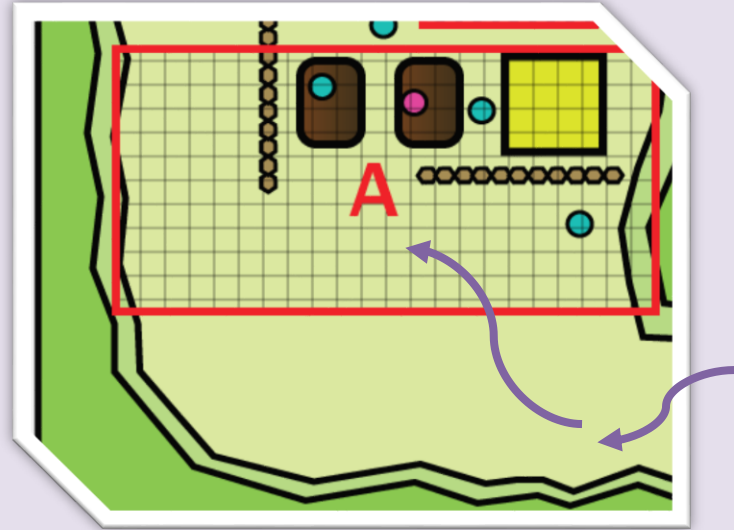
Shows player's entrance and progression into Trigger Zone A
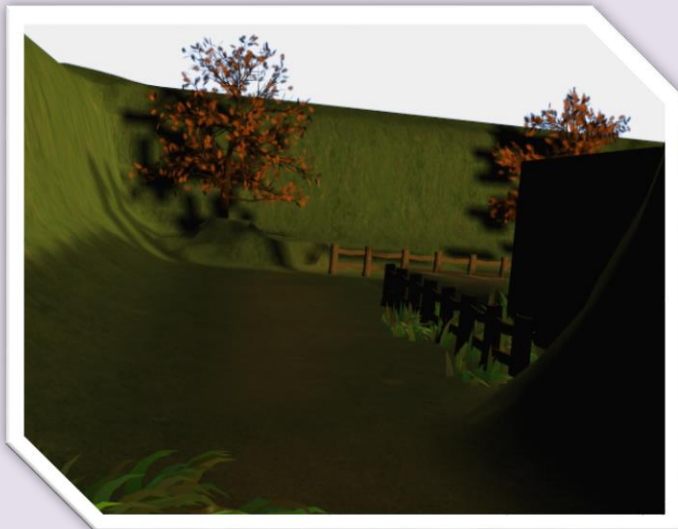
Shows player's POV as they approach the main area

The player feels secure and begins to explore the world around them – the pace is lessened as the player enters a gentle lull in gameplay.

As the player moves into **Trigger Zone A**, **Scripted Event A** begins – several panicked humans hurry toward the player's location, shouting about Divine faction forces gathering near the settlement, blockading the main exit out of "The Golden Lands."

The farmers huddle together – the air is tense with nervous chatter. The farmers will nervously glance and point at the player character. The player may overhear them whispering about the angels looking for someone. It Is implied that these angels are looking for the player character. This would tie in with the game introduction sequence.
At this point, tension would begin to increase and the music would change to reflect this.

In this area the player overhears some NPCs discussing the sudden appearance of Divine Faction angels in the area

1.2.4 – Player investigates the Divine faction blockade

The player is urged to investigate the gathering of angels that have blockaded the far entrance to the valley – tension begins to rise in the player. The player moves from Trigger Zone A toward Trigger Zone B, however, various obstacles impede their path.

Objects such as the bails of hay, carts and barrels pictured below are all classed as destructible scenery. A short tutorial message is displayed to the player, demonstrating how to use magic to quickly burn down the hay bails.
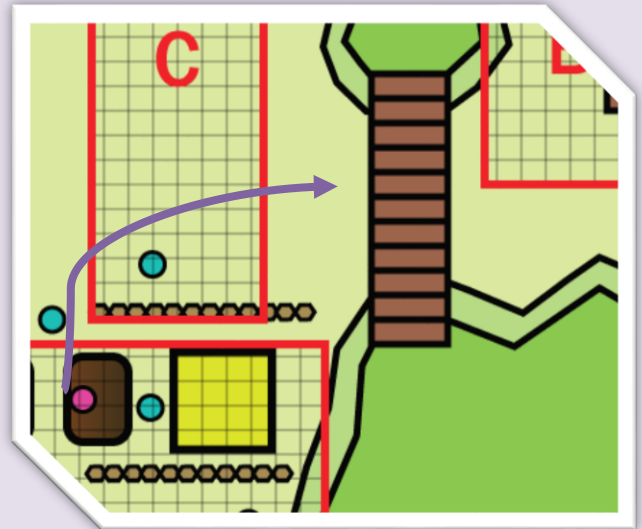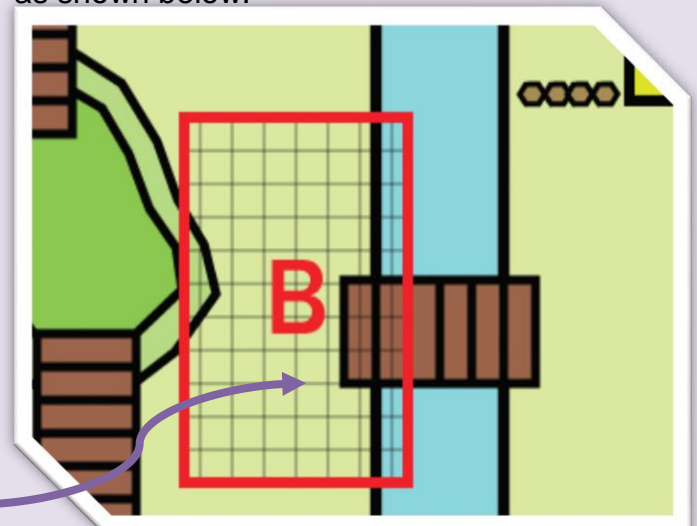

The player makes their way toward Trigger Zone B. Obstacles block their way underneath the bridge.

Player's POV when heading to Trigger Zone B

After destroying/bypassing the obstacles, the player moves toward that area, entering **Trigger Zone B**, as shown below.

Shows player's approach to Trigger Zone B after passing the obstacles

Upon entering **Trigger Zone B**, **Scripted Event B** immediately occurs. Control is briefly taken away from The player as the camera pans toward Area Entrance 3, showing a sizable number of angels amassing.

A message is displayed to the player suggesting that engaging in direct combat with such a large number of foes might not be wise and suggests the player seek an alternative means of passing through. At this point in the game the player would be defeated with ease


Player's POV from Trigger Zone B. A large group of Divine faction angels would be amassed near the trees.

1.2.5 – Player backtracks to seek another means of passage

Not wanting to directly engage a considerably larger force, the player returns to the fields, heading to the area where the farmers are gathered. The player crosses into the field, entering **Trigger Zone C. Scripted Event C begins.**

A horn sounds and control is taken away from the player. The music becomes dramatic. A farmer (shown as Key NPC on the overall map) rushes toward the player and the other humans located in the area. The farmer shouts that the demonic faction is on the move again and is headed their way, rounding up everyone they find. The player learns that the demonic faction is approaching from Area Entrance 1 *(see 1.0.6 – Overall Faction progression).*
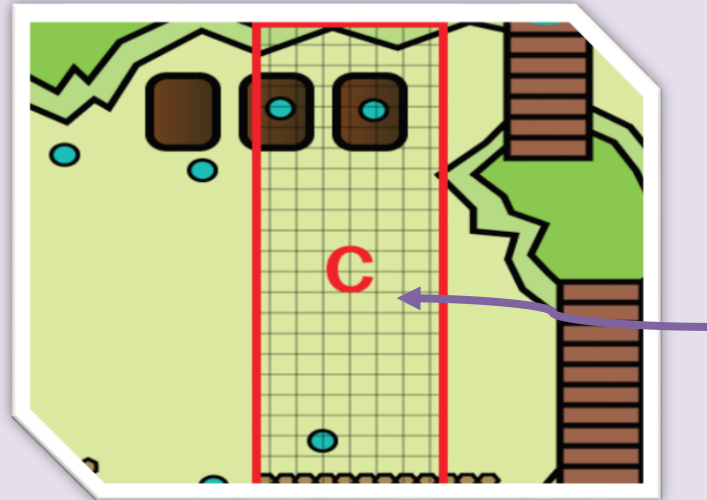
Shows player returning to the fields, entering Trigger Zone C

A carrier pigeon is despatched to summon human reinforcements. The farmers try to think of a way they can fight off the demonic faction until reinforcements arrive. The farmers complain that since the Divine faction is blockaded **Area Entrance 3** they have nowhere to run. Control is returned to the player.

A message is displayed, informing the player that there may be some way to use this turn of events to their advantage. From this point onward the player can take several different courses of action. For the purposes of the tutorial however, the player is urged to instigate a confrontation between the approaching Demonic faction and the stationary Divine forces that are blockading **Area Entrance 3**. The pace of the level begins to rise as the NPCs get riled up due to the impending attack.

1.2.6 – Player lures the Divine forces into battle with the Demonic faction

To achieve this, the player the player would switch to Devil Mode – causing a demonic wing to sprout from their back. The player then heads toward the Divine forces blockade, near Area Entrance 3. The player enters **Trigger Zone D. Scripted Event D begins.**


In Devil mode, the Divine faction is predisposed to attack and pursue anything Devil-like. Upon noticing the player, the Divine forces will give chase. The player is told to lure his pursuers back toward **Combat Zone #2.**
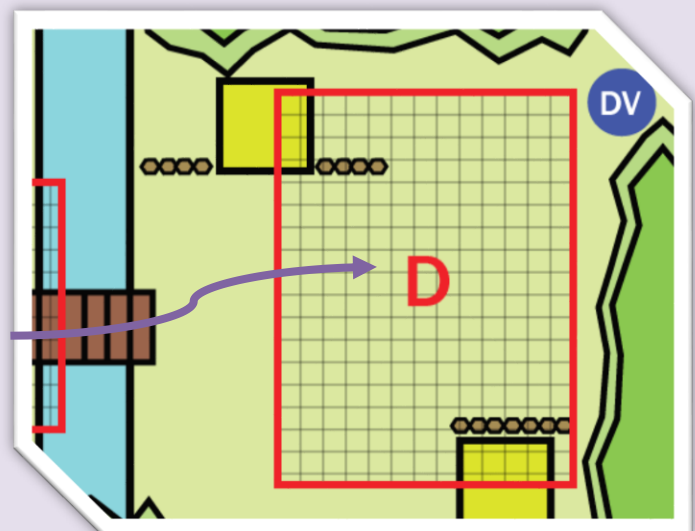
Player attracts the attention of the Divine faction, triggering Scripted Event D

Once there, the Divine Forces will give precedence to attacking the Demonic Faction over attacking the player. The map below shows the two factions movement. The blue arrow is the Divine faction, who are currently chasing the player. The red arrow is the Demonic faction, who are en route to raid the small settlement and fields.

By the time the player lures the Divine faction to **Combat Zone #2** the Demonic forces will have reached the field and will be in the process of attacking the farmers and ransacking the fields.
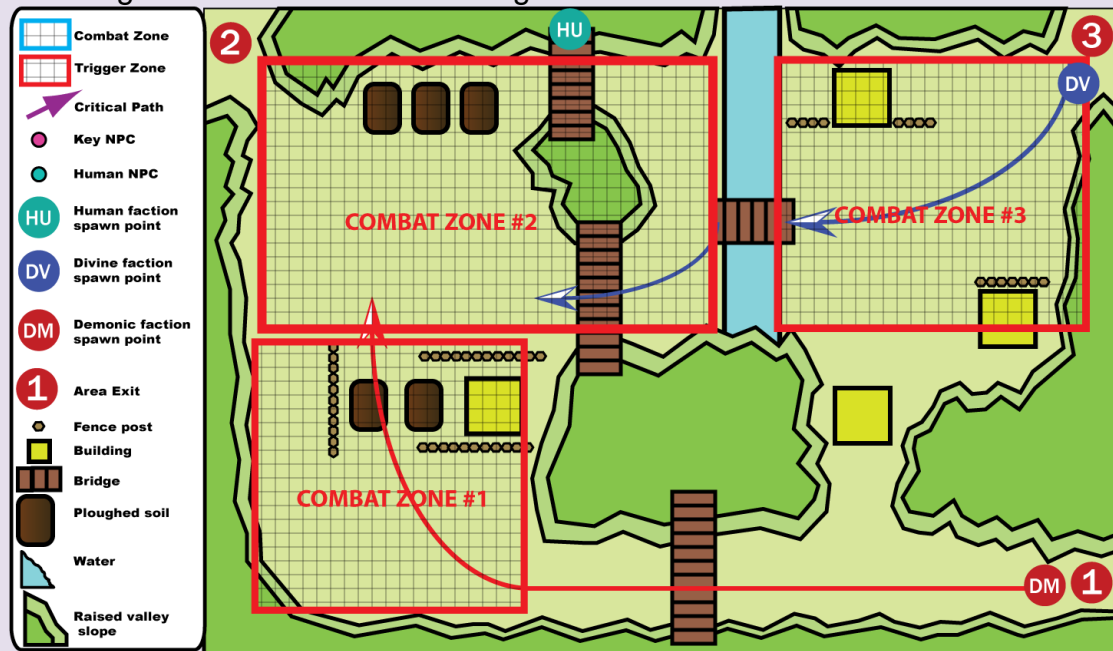

This introduces the concept of using the two factions against each other to the player – a strategy that is effective is splintering the enemy forces and making it much easier for the player to divide and conquer their foes. Both factions will regularly receive reinforcements from their respective "spawn points" – these reinforcements will make their way toward the main unit (which is engaged in battle in the vicinity of **Combat Zone #2**) and join the ongoing battle.

Should the player fail to incite the Divine faction to chase them, the faction will eventually notice the ongoing carnage and move to engage the Demonic faction as part of the scripted events for this level.

1.2.7 – Focus switches to action-based combat.

From this point onward the focus is on survival. The two factions are now committed to battling each other so it becomes easier for the player to move around unmolested. The battle will continue, and the player is encouraged to join the fray, a tutorial would introduce various combat techniques and the combo system to the player – specific enemies will target the player to facilitate this.

After a predefined period of time a final cut-scene would trigger, showing the arrival of human reinforcements atop the bridges
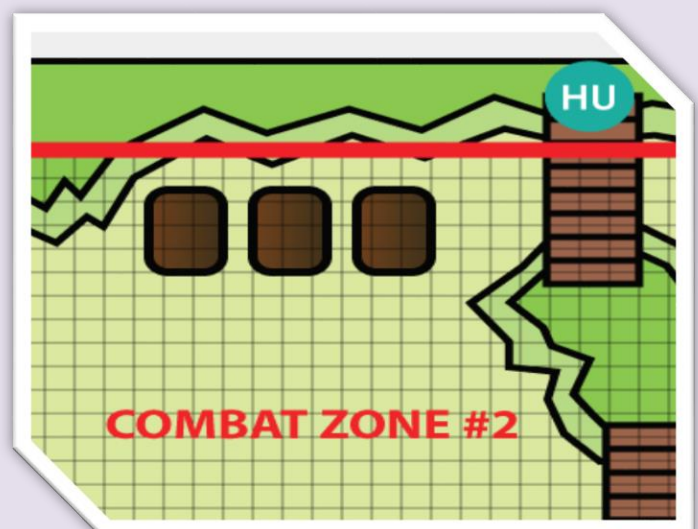
Human faction reinforcements are triggered by Scripted Event E

and high ground (these appear at the **Human Spawn Point marked HU**). The human forces proceed to rain fiery arrows down on both the Divine and Demonic forces – the unexpected attack completely obliterates both armies. During the cut-scene, the player automatically finds cover behind a nearby building. After the cut-scene, the human reinforcements leave the area. Control is returned to the player, who is now free to proceed through the smouldering remains of the battlefield toward **Area Entrance C.**

1.2.8 – Notes on level purpose

This short level serves as the introduction to game, and the game logo would appear on the screen as they exit the valley, denoting that they have entered the main portion of the game.

The player should begin to understand how unstable the game world is – the seemingly unwarranted carnage that just unfolded in this idyllic valley should draw the player's interest in a short amount of time. Moving into the next area, the player should want to find out just what is going on in the game world that warrants such sporadic violence.

Another key aspect of the level is how quickly the area descends into chaos when the two factions clash- by this point typical humans such as the farmers will have run for their lives or have been killed. Throughout the game there would be many opportunities for an astute player to use the situation to their advantage, with some possibilities being more obvious than others.

The various parts of destructible scenery would add an extra level of depth as the battle progresses – for example, fields of crops would go up in flames as various magical spells were flung around the battlefield.

The overall aesthetic of the level also plays a significant role in the player's immersion and keeping their interest, this is discussed in more detail in the final section.

1.3 Level Design – Exploring the Aesthetics

1.3.1 – Signposting the primary goal

This brief section touches upon how the aesthetic look of "The Golden Lands" supports overall gameplay, discussing how elements of its artistic design have a subtle influence on gameplay.

Area exit- bordered by two trees to serve as goal posts.

A weathered texture was applied to the riverbank to distinguish the impassable water.
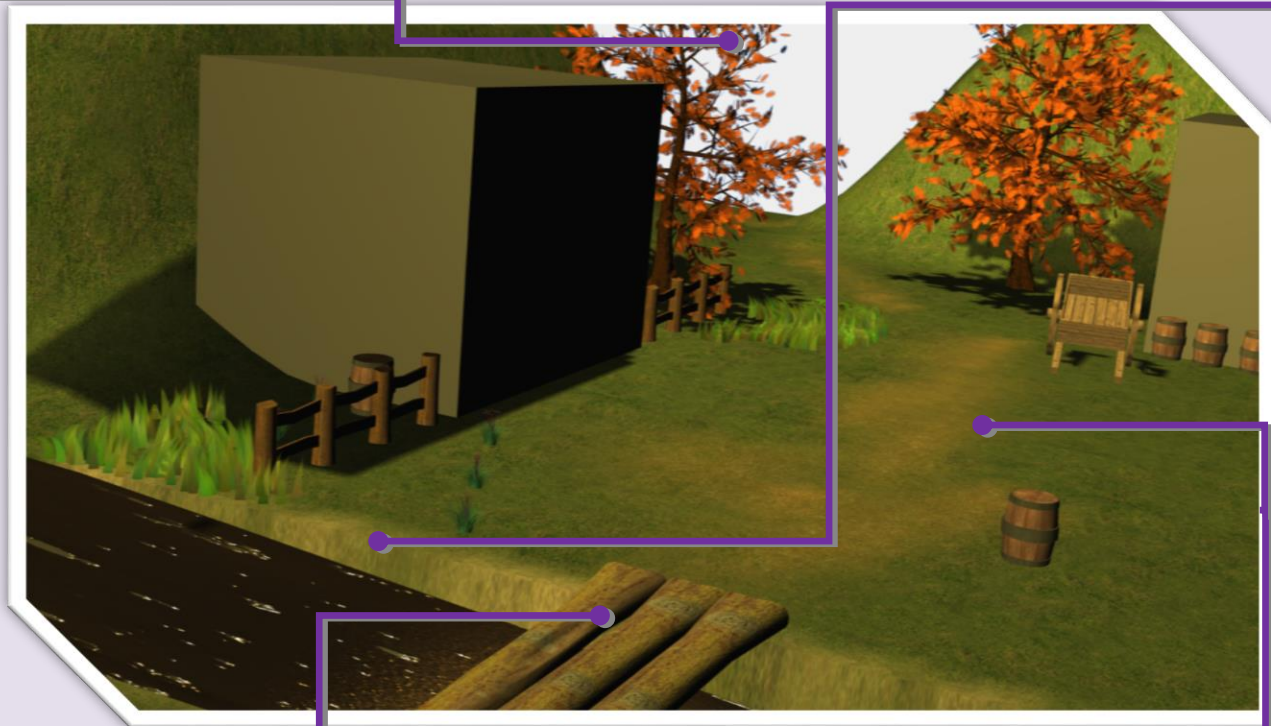
A log bridge uses natural scenery to add to the aesthetic.

Dirt path subtly guides the player through the area. Variable blending used to simulate wear and tear.

It was understood that "The Golden Lands" would be an area of greenery, and should take the form of an area that received the blessings of god. To this end, a river was incorporated into the design from an early stage. To distinguish this as impassable terrain a weathered texture was applied to the riverbank, suggesting to the player that the river was impassable.

It was important to provide subtle yet believable guidance to the player. To achieve this it was decided to implement a trodden dirt path throughout the majority of the level. This would serve to guide the player and also support the critical path the player must follow.

To further incorporate the aesthetic of the area into the design, the bridge over the river was formed by a series of fallen trees (replete with an aged, mossy texture) to enhance the visual appeal of the area whilst adding variance to player progression.

The end of the "critical path" is marked with two trees with the dirt path leading out of the valley area. These factors work in tandem with the environmental aesthetic to help guide the player toward the exit. Small touches such as individual patches of long grass were applied to the design to add some variety to the level.

1.3.2 – Creating a believable, interesting focal point

Since the player will be spending a fair amount of time engaged in combat it important that the area they are fighting in is interesting. To that end, several elements of destructible scenery were included, such as the wooden carts and barrels. Fences and long grass are also possible candidates for destruction as combat continues.

As discussed earlier, the main focus of this level is the climactic large scale battle, which is facilitated by the open expanse of land shown below. This provides ample space for the player and opposing factions to engage in battle whilst including enough aesthetic variance to keep the player interested.

The overall design uses a restricted palette, with green and brown forming the majority of the level. This helps in creating a stronger aesthetic image and would look even better with proper lighting in place.

Destructible scenery matches the overall aesthetic, helping the environment to mesh together.

Recently tilled/ploughed soil supports the idea that this is a farming community. The ground is slightly raised to make it stand out.

Long grass helps add variety to the landscape.