Level Design Document: Ilium XII

A death amidst darkness and despair - that is the faith you had resigned yourself to. The walls of the catacombs seemed to close in upon you- the whispered invitations of the ancient dead growing more alluring by the hour. However, you had never been one to give in to temptations. You are a Warrior of the Aegean. Someday you would taste death at the end of a *Blaze-blade* or *Arcbow* on a battlefield, littered with the broken bodies of those who stood before you. Not here though - not in this decrepit barrow with the Song of the Dead at your ears. You continue down the winding, tortuous corridors breaking smashing through the decaying walls that sought to break your spirit. Finally, when you open the last, decrepit door - a blast of light blinds you.

As your eyes adjust, you find yourself on a grassy hillock, overlooking ancient mounds, long ago claimed by nature. Only a few, moss covered towers remain to tell the tale of the people that once called this valley home. Only the howl of the wind amongst the empty hills remain to tell the tale of Ilium XII.

The basic map of Ilium XII is divided into two parts - a narrow, claustrophobic series of indoor maze-like corridors and a much larger open world area, featuring giant towers and rolling hills which add vertical gameplay elements to the map. The sheer contrast between the outdoor sections and the indoor sections will serve to awe players and make the towers seem more dignified and regal in comparison.

The Player Character starts in the catacombs, inside a barrow hill. The player at this point does not know why or how he got in there. It becomes readily apparent that whatever put him in there intended to bury him alive but had sorely underestimated the player character's strength (or overestimated the tomb's structural integrity). Breaking through walls the player must navigating the narrow, maze-like corridors to find the way out. There are a few larger open spaces, which defy the extremely narrow intimate spaces enforced by the corridors. These open spaces serve, either as nodes that connect multiple pathways or as environmental set pieces that serve to give a deeper insight into the history of the environment while also serving as dead ends to make the maze feel more challenging - e.g. one of these node rooms would contain nothing but creepy decor and mummified corpses.

The Central Node room in the catacombs contains the exit but it is behind the only functioning mechanical door in the structure. To get through it the player must explore the rest of the catacombs to discover two levers that jointly control the gate's opening mechanism. One of the levers is beyond a partially collapsed passageway through which the player must crawl to get to it. The crawl space is distinctly rhizome-like in how it spreads out.

As soon as they get through that last door players are introduced to the towers of Ilium - massive edifices constructed in days long gone. These towers not only serve as environmental set-pieces but serve as the objective of the map. Four smaller towers, Hector, Paris, Deiphobus and Helenus, encircle the massive Citadel in the center, Priam. Curiously, the Tower of Priam still has a beacon burning from its apex, thousands of years after its construction. Reaching this mysterious light should be the player's objective. In times long gone, every tower connected to the one adjacent to, it including the central one, via Skybridges. Now most of these bridges have collapsed leaving only path by which to reach Priam's Peak.

The Illians made extensive use of gravity manipulation to combat the Aegean Skytroopers and as such their defensive Towers lacked any form of stairwell leading up to them (though stairs do exist within the towers themselves). Though this defensive measure did not save the Illians from Aegean Skyships, it does serve as an hindrance to the player character's progression. Time however has provided a means to breaching these fortifications. A small mound of rubble near Tower Hector allows player to scale the towers and reach Priam. It is said that, in the final stages of the War of the Horse, the Aeneas Illianson escaped the planet by opening a Skygate from the highest point in Illian. Maybe that Skygate will also provide you the means to escape.

