

# *Plague*

Pitch Document



Written by  
Alexander Hill

## ***Executive Summary***

*Plague* is a PC/Mac action/adventure game set during The Black Death, where a father must fight through hordes of infected civilians and corrupt soldiers in a walled off town to cure his son from an outbreak of plague. *Plague* offers a classic top-down perspective action/adventure game with a new-school aesthetics.

## ***Audience Analysis***

The target audience we will seek is the casual male gamers between the ages of 25 and 35. The demographic that grew up with these classic adventure games where questing and platforming were important staples of games would still have a passing interest, but our demographic usually are the ones with free time to play. The 35 demographic allows for nostalgic fans a bit of old-school gaming while the 25 male gamers will enjoy its edgy gameplay and convenience of the port. Games through platforms like Steam have a way of acquiring interest from this type of retro gaming and generating a buzz for purchases. Our game doesn't require much time, or the purchase of a console. I feel if properly marketed to this audience as a smaller scale action/adventure game with its own atmosphere, story, and gameplay, then this would be the strongest audience to target first.

## *Story*

*Plague* follows Mor Ryder, a retired soldier who fights to survive “The Black Death” to save his dying son. The story starts with Mor and his son, William, being chased out of their village after William comes down with plague. Mor flees his village with William to a cottage on the outskirts of a walled-off town called Shackleford. There, Mor meets with an outcast healer named Euna. Euna tells Mor she can heal William if he gets a heart herb from Byron’s Keep. He agrees to find the herb and leaves William in her care. Mor encounters zombie-like creatures along his path into Shackleford while a black smog descends over the land. Mor pushes through and enters the town while it’s occupied by the King’s soldiers. He searches the town and makes it to Byron’s Keep. Mor meets the shopkeeper, Ethel, and bargains for the heart herb.

- If the player chooses to be rude, then Ethel will charge them for the herb and the player will have to search for schillings in the town square to get it and not receive her help in the future.

-If the player chooses to be understanding, then Ethel will give them the herb for free and offer her services as a potions healer.

Mor gets the heart herb. The shop is ransacked by a group of infected which Mor fights off. When Mor breaks his way free of the town square and makes it to the main gates, the King’s soldiers cut him off. They lockdown the town and their general, Alas, stops him from leaving the town. Mor tries to fight Alas but is easily dispatched. Defeated, Mor collapses at the town gates as they slam shut.

Mor wakes in the medical wing of a cathedral. A nurse named Agatha tends his wounds and supplies him with a mask capable of protecting against the infection, as well as weaponry to combat the infected. Agatha asks Mor to help guard the church, and he agrees. Agatha agrees to lend aid to him as he protects them. Mor keeps the church protected, guarding doors, quarantining patients, and defending the staff until a group of plague doctors enter. The main plague doctor, Mathias, closes the church and forces Agatha and her people out to the streets.

Mor, now back on the street, leads the nursing staff to a nearby stable while trying to avoid infected. Mor gets Agatha and her team to a horse stable and meets Fredrick, the stable owner. He tells Mor he plans to escape the town. Fredrick offers Mor a spot on his wagon, but he only has three healthy horses for a six-horse wagon. Mor wanders the city to find the horses. Mor frees two from drunken soldiers and the last pale horse comes to him after battling a group of Matthias’ men. Fredrick gathers the horses and readies the wagon to depart the town.

The wagon heads out with all aboard, but before they reach the gates, Mathias stops them. Mor mounts the pale horse fights Matthias’ men while Fredrick and the others get to the gate. He makes a path out of the town, enabling Fredrick and the others to escape. Mor kills Matthias, but not before being exposed to plague by Matthias revealing he’s

infected. Mor becomes infected and stumbles down the street, looking for another herb to heal himself. He's unable and falls lifeless to the ground.

Mor awakens in a spectral realm surrounded by corpses and spirits. He searches for a way out until he comes across The Cloaked Man. The Cloaked Man guides Mor through the spectral realm to William and tells him that everyone will die. The player has a choice to take the herb themselves and leave the spectral world or don't and fight The Cloaked Man to leave.

- If the player chooses to fight The Cloaked Man, they will return to the town in a weakened condition.
- If the player chooses to take the herb, then they will be healed and leave the spectral realm in good health.

Mor returns from the spectral realm and finds the town in flames. He spots Alas slaughtering townsfolk. After seeing this, Mor discovers the infected are just scared and dying townsfolk and that the smog is altering their perception. Alas, declares they will have to destroy the entire town and purge the surrounding areas. Mor escapes during the slaughter by retrieving the pale horse and battling his way out.

Mor rides out of the city and makes it back to Euna's cottage and, depending on the earlier choice made with The Cloaked Man: Euna is waiting for him with his son or Alas arrives at the cottage.

- If the player left The Cloaked Man with full strength, they fight Alas.
- If the player left The Cloaked Man in a weakened condition, they give Euna the herb and she takes it herself, forcing them to fight Euna.

At the end, William dies regardless. The Cloaked Man arrives on a skeleton horse and offers Mor a chance to leave with him. Mor mounts the pale horse and rides off into the spectral world with The Cloaked Man, becoming the first horseman, pestilence.

## ***Characters***

### **Mor**

Mor Ryder is the main character of the game. He lives a quiet life outside of the township with his son, William. He was a warrior in a previous life but settled to live life quietly after the great famine took his wife from him. He is strong with a blade, adept at horse-riding, a blacksmith by trade, and a determined, caring father.

### **Euna**

Euna is a mysterious medicine woman who lives on the outskirts of town. She is abrasive, untrustworthy, but maintains a reputation as a supernatural healer. She aids Mor at the beginning of his quest when no one else will help.

### **William**

William is Mor's dying 10-year-old son. He has a kind soul and is gravely ill because of the plague. He loves his father and doesn't want to die.

### **Alas The Harbinger of Death**

Alas is a bloodthirsty general sent by the King to contain the plague from reaching the kingdom. He is a brute who enjoys battle, and his actual intentions are to purge the town and all who inhabit it.

### **Matthias**

Matthias is the leader of a band of plague doctors who wish to eliminate the infected all together. He is decisive, cruel, and willing to destroy all to contain the outbreak.

### **Ethel**

Ethel is a shopkeeper at Byron's Keep. She is worldly and sarcastic but sympathizes with people still fighting to keep their humanity in this perilous time.

### **Agatha**

Agatha is a nurse who heads up a small team of other women to manage the infection. They barricade themselves inside a cathedral and she does her best to treat as many ailments of plague as she can. Agatha is an optimist in these dark times.

### **The Cloaked Man**

The Cloaked Man is a mysterious entity who dwells in the spectral world. He seems inhuman and wise to what is happening around the world.

Fredrick - Fredrick is an even-tempered stable owner. He's hiding in his stable with his family and hoping to fix his 6-horse wagon to leave the town.

### ***Plague***

Alexander Hill

## ***Competition Analysis***

*Plague* is a 2/D action/adventure game which means the competition would've been stiff years ago but isn't as in demand as it once was. There are many games which have similar concepts, with a lead male protagonist hacking his way through a desolate landscape. Games like the older *Fallout* and *Castlevania* games stand out in my mind as similar experiences. What *Plague* does differently is the story's shorter length and less involvement to get to the end of the game. This game isn't being marketed to the die-hard gamers, MMO community, or the action RPG crowd with their already established purchase history. The game is being released online as a trip down memory lane. Action/adventure games aren't flooding the market, especially the way *Plague* is being designed. The game mechanics and design give it a familiar feel to the glory days but with a fresh story, settings, gameplay, and approach. Many of the games mentioned have moved away from releasing games of similar build, giving *Plague* an opportunity to revitalize this genre of game and set itself up as a traditional action/adventure video game for gamers still nostalgic for a new vehicle with the same classic experience.

## ***Gameplay***

*Plague* makes use of branching dialogue, changing narratives, a crafting system, stealth mechanics, environmental hazards, and basic hack and slash mechanics. Players have the option at the start of the game to choose between searching the cottage or heading straight for the mission. These choices trigger actions later in the game, where the player must avoid conflict by using stealth or engage in combat with the various enemy types.

### **Toxic Environment**

*Plague's* environment isn't hazardous to the player at the start of the game. So, it doesn't require the player to equip PPE armor. The later stages as smog descends over the town make it necessary and a blue life bar appears overtop of the health bar. When an eminent smog is appearing, a warning will display to let players know to seek shelter or to prepare for damage to be done to their armor and health. Throughout the game, the player has the option to equip, craft, buy, or find PPE throughout the game. The only stage where its usage isn't necessary would be the spectral world stage where instead the only life is the health bar.

### **Gameplay Mechanics**

*Plague* uses a sword or melee weapon as the primary striking option but has different unique projectiles which can be crafted from infected remains, bandages, well water, and vials of blood. Players can shield incoming attacks with their sword and have a bash attack which, when charged, can push back all attacking enemies. Special moves include a circle of infected blood poured onto the player, which shields from soldiers, civilians, horse-riders, and deters infected from attacking. Another special move is purposeful rage, which creates a straight path through attacking enemies where players can line up an arrow for how intense the kill spree will be. Players can also specifically attack enemy limbs to avoid lengthy combat and disarm an enemy's armor to make them susceptible to the black smog.

### **The Crafting System**

Crafting mechanics are used to improve weapons or to design a weapon from scratch. This feature comes from finding materials throughout the mission stages or purchasing items through the shopkeeper. Players have the option of buying items such as heavy swords, lances, battle axes, scythes, and daggers or creating their own with special properties such as poison or slashes which can remove enemies' armor to infect them to the black smog. The display shows a weapon and the various items the player has. Up to six different attack, special, defense, or magical abilities may be equipped at one time. Players can modify daggers with spears, axes with scythes, and swords with shields. Each innovation made to a player's weaponry offers a range of fresh attacks and ways to dispatch of enemies in a new, fun way.

### **Rushing vs. Dragging**

The enemies are zombie-like creatures who can swarm the player, making retreat a viable option. They also can be led astray by using the stealth mode mechanics. Crouching and evading enemies allows for players to get items with little to no resistance. The hack and slash approach lets infected know where the players are and provides appropriate challenges with advancing but the benefits of this would clear out the host of enemies, making it easier to re-enter locations the player might need to return to.

### **Enemy Types**

The enemies range from the infected, soldiers, armed civilians, horse-riders, plague doctors, and boss fights. The infected mindlessly swarm and are easy to sneak past. They have no range of weapons and can be taken down with a few hits. Soldiers are harder to sneak past and use range attacks, plus will work together if in a company. Soldiers are susceptible to disease projectiles and being stripped of their PPE equipment. Armed civilians are disorganized and easy to strike down. Horse-riders parry and evade attacks and use both range weapons and thrown projectiles. Plague doctors are weak in head-to-head combat but are difficult to stealth past. They use a host of infected weapons, which can decimate health if equipped with weak PPE armor. Boss fights give the opponent a significant amount of health and a distinct taunt where they can be attacked for maximizing damage. They have invincibility when in charging animation but after missing are open to attack.

### **Mounted on Horse**

Players, when on foot, can choose between walking, running, and when missions require it, horse-riding. The horse-riding gameplay will activate once it prompts the player to mount their horse. Players will guide the horse through obstacles while being able to slow and speed the horse. A health bar will show the horse's life bar, so while ground or non-mounted enemies can't hurt the player, they can kill the horse.

### **Decisions**

The player has the option to choose how their story progresses. They can choose through branching dialogue to be rude and impatient, which will sometimes speed things along and, in other cases, move them backward. If players decide to be understanding in certain situations, it allows them chances for more help from NPCs, items, and opportunities that they wouldn't be able to get the other way. Decision based gameplay allows for variety in boss fights, character interaction, and parts of the story which wouldn't otherwise be disclosed.

### **Decision-based gameplay example**

At Euna's cottage, players have the option to explore the grounds or head out to the mission area. If players choose to leave, they miss the opportunity to gain a weapon necessary for fighting off the infected, meaning a more treacherous road ahead and finding an appropriate weapon before entering Byron's Keep.

If players stay, they will find a sword capable of fending off the infected and can immediately go to Byron's Keep when they enter the town. At Byron's Keep, players can choose to be rude to Ethel, the shopkeeper who will make her refuse her services in the future and charge players for the heart herb. If players are understanding, they get the herb free and the opportunity to use Ethel in the future.

## *Mood Board*



## **References**

Kelly, A. (2017, November 23). *The future of adventure games*. pcgamer.  
<https://www.pcgamer.com/the-future-of-adventure-games/>.

Whelen, P. (2020). *Aerial view of city during daytime*. Unsplash. photograph.  
<https://unsplash.com/photos/9kMOPpIg8AQ>.

Bouyer, P. (2019). *Smoke in gray metal range hood tube*. Unsplash. photograph.  
[https://unsplash.com/photos/riEXW9dJ0\\_Q](https://unsplash.com/photos/riEXW9dJ0_Q).

Mozhvilov, E. (2020). *Gold and white feather on glass bottle rack*. Unsplash.  
photograph. [https://unsplash.com/photos/vG\\_uILgo\\_FU](https://unsplash.com/photos/vG_uILgo_FU).

Timms, J. (2018). *Close-up photography of animal eye*. Unsplash. photograph.  
<https://unsplash.com/photos/pdR9sdvdb7Y>.

Kemper, J. (2020). *Gold and red steel helmet*. Unsplash. photograph.  
[https://unsplash.com/photos/zE612\\_hD6GI](https://unsplash.com/photos/zE612_hD6GI).

Kmaimg. (2019). *Free Bunker image*. Unsplash. photograph.  
<https://unsplash.com/photos/DBiExzhMt3E>.

Varthoumlen, C. (2020). *White and black skull on black surface*. Unsplash.  
photograph. <https://unsplash.com/photos/j-zQJk6aaaA>.

Hustava, H. (2016). *Man with steel and chainmail armor holding sword*. Unsplash.  
photograph. [https://unsplash.com/photos/j\\_Ch0mwBNds](https://unsplash.com/photos/j_Ch0mwBNds).

Huber, J. (2020). *Grayscale photo of people walking inside building*. Unsplash.  
photograph. <https://unsplash.com/photos/aVtp69CoRhQ>.

Farris, E. (2018). *Free Brown Image*. Unsplash. photograph.  
<https://unsplash.com/photos/6YanBQoTP6M>.

Rasmussen, M. S. (2016). *Photograph of man facing opposite of smoky spotlight*.  
Unsplash. photograph. <https://unsplash.com/photos/v0PWN7Z38ag>.