

This is a sample level design I created in one day, using only MS Word and Photoshop. The characters, world scenario, maps, and game concept are my own design.

## Level 2: Ancient Treachery

In this level, the player uses the character Simon Grey, who is adept at grabbing enemies in close combat and throwing them, as well as being particularly good at sending enemies flying at the end of combos. The throws are mildly difficult to pull off, but allow the player to choose the direction where the enemies go flying. This allows us to create situations where enemy positioning on the battlefield really matters, and knocking enemies into certain objects or areas can be particularly beneficial to the player.

The secondary objective for this level is for the player to find the battle plans of the Black Hand. This gives us a chance to pull the player further into the level as well as forcing the player to retrace their steps through the level on the way out, both saving us art resources and taking the level from a second perspective. It also gives us a chance to further the story with either discovering that the plans themselves are a red herring, or to use the plans to reveal the next point of plot in the storyline.

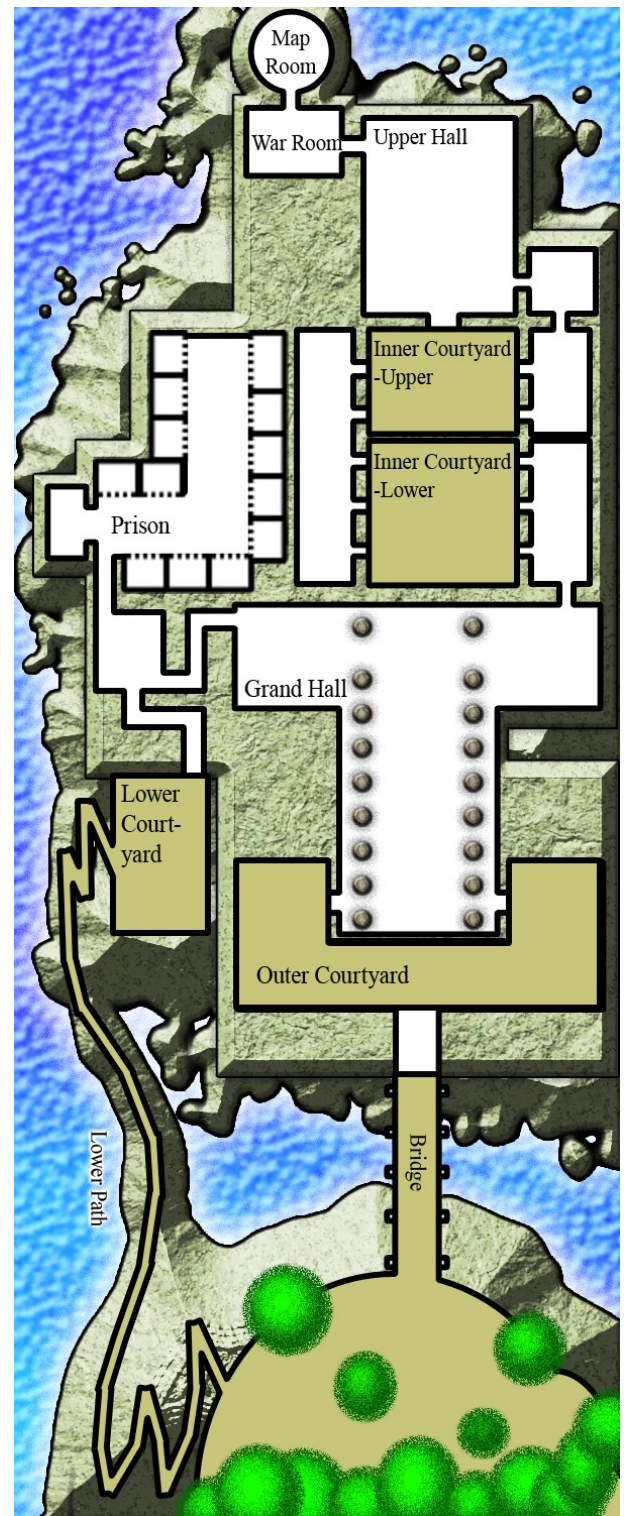
### *Ancient Treachery*

#### **PRIME DESIGN GOALS**

This is the first real level after the intro level for the character Simon. Simon specializes in knockback abilities and throws, so we want to give the player opportunities to explore those mechanics and what they mean in combat. Here we have the first chance to challenge the player to use Simon's abilities to their fullest. ***What Makes This Fun:*** The player gets to explore a fun game mechanic (throwing and pushing around enemies) with some very satisfying results (instant kills, extra hits, etc.).

#### **Level Summary**

In this level, the player will rescue Sir Jesko from the Black Hand. When Jesko betrays Simon, Simon is then forced to find the war plans on his own, then escape. Simon confronts Jesko one final time on his attempt to flee the castle. Once the seat of the empire, this castle is now a derelict that the Black Hand has taken control of as a launching point for their invasion.



## Special Design Goals

- Introduce various things for the player to throw or knock enemies into.
- The player will be able to knock an enemy off a cliff.
- Creaking ancient architecture and pounding surf add to the atmosphere as the player attempts to sneak into the castle. The creepy sounds and décor make the player wary of what might be around the corner.
- Use narrow hallways and doorways as choke points enemies can hold, preventing the player from easily skipping encounters.
- Reuse half the level architecture by having the critical path cross over itself, but then being able to explore that terrain from the other direction.

## Visual “Wow” Factor

- Lots of high vantage points for a sense of vertigo.
- Cool old crumbling architecture. We can get lots of polys into the external areas, as the horizon is mostly flat ocean.
- ***Coolest Visual Image:*** Battling Jesko atop the bridge should be a fantastic vista of the front castle facade, the bridge, forest and ocean horizon.

## Victory / Loss Conditions

- Player must:
  - Rescue Jesko (who breaks open the door to the Grand Hall)
  - Find the War Plans
  - Escape the level
- Player must not:
  - Fall from a great height/into the ocean or be defeated in combat

## NPCs

Presumably the Archers, Grunts, Cavalry and the Black Hand Elite would be featured elsewhere in the game. The Jailers may be a reskin of an enemy type found elsewhere as well.

- Archers – Longbow archers who attempt to retreat from Simon as he approaches. He will need to rush forward, blocking arrows until he can reach them and defeat them.
- Jailers – Slow and plodding, these guys will deal heavy damage if the player is not careful.
- Grunts – These enemies are weak in singles, but in a swarm can be a rough time. They rush towards the player and engage him in melee combat.
- Black Hand Elite – These minibosses have plenty of health and are particularly quick and good at surrounding the player.
- Cavalry – These strong opponents will charge the player, but need lots of room to turn around and maneuver in combat. Once the rider is dismounted, he fights as a Grunt until he gets a chance to remount.
- Jesko – See his encounter description in Area 9 below.

## **LEVEL PROGRESSION:**

### **Area 1 : Level Intro**

In the previous level, we saw Jesko captured by the Black Hand. *Reveal Objective:* Walking down the path to the castle, Simon reminds himself, “Get in, save Jesko, get the battle plans, get out. Piece of cake.” Upon seeing the heavily fortified gate, Simon says, “Well I’m certainly not getting in through the front door. There must be another way.” By looking around, the player will be able to spot an overgrown path leading down to the Lower Path. If the player attempts to take on the massive shut front doors, they will be pelted with arrows from the battlements.

### **Area 2 : Lower Path to Lower Courtyard**

Here the player can knock Archers off of the ledges into the crashing sea below. In the Lower Courtyard, it becomes trickier to just knock enemies off the ledge as there is much more space.

### **Area 3 : Prison**

Here the player can knock the Jailers into the prison cells bars where angry prisoners will hold them for a few seconds giving the player the opportunity for a few extra hits.

### **Area 4 : Grand Hall**

There is no combat here on this first run through the room, giving Jesko the chance to talk to Simon and attempt to subtly test his resolve to destroy the Black Hand.

### **Area 5 : Inner Courtyard**

Jesko suddenly turns against Simon, revealing he was merely bait so that the Black Hand could try to recruit Simon as well. The rose bushes in the courtyard provide another hazard for the player to knock enemies into, doing a little extra damage and temporarily entangling them as well. Jesko takes off in mid-battle, leaving Simon to finish off the Grunts and Archers. *Reveal Objective:* Simon’s VO reminds the player to go get the War Plans.

### **Area 6 : Upper Hall**

Here the player gets to fight a pair of Black Hand Elite. They attempt to knock the player into one another’s attacks, showing the player another good use for his ability. This room has lower galleries over balconies that the player can knock these enemies into. This is the best way to defeat them, separating one by knocking it into the gallery to give the player a chance to focus on the other without distraction.

### **Area 7 : War Room / Map Room**

The player finally acquires the battle plans here. *Reveal Objective:* Simon VO “Now that I’ve got the plans, time to make my escape.”

## Area 6 through 4 (Replayed): Escaping!

A slow steady stream of Grunts comes into the rooms from the War Room to the Grand Hall. Individually they pose no problem, but the unending stream encourages the player to get moving. The passageway to the west from the Grand Hall will be closed off, forcing the player to go into the Outer Courtyard.

## Area 8 : Outer Courtyard

Here the player encounters a few Cavalry. This poses a challenge to the player, as he has to figure out how to best use his abilities against mounted opponents.

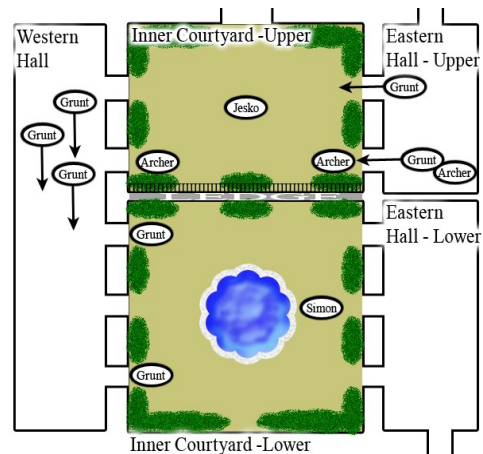
## Area 9 : Bridge

Here the player sees Jesko at the far end of the bridge. He tells Simon to return the plans and he will be let go. Simon refuses and battle ensues. **Greatest Gameplay Challenge:** The battle with Jesko should be the most intense and challenging. Jesko uses his grapple chain to pull Simon into close combat. Knocking Jesko off of the bridge sends him swinging back up from the other side of the bridge (using his grapple). In order to really hurt Jesko, the player has to send Jesko over the edge, then hit Jesko as he pops back up. This should require some good timing on the player's part as well as good aim.

*Here I include a sample section of the level at full detail:*

## Area 5 : Inner Courtyard

**Area Description:** There are two sections of the Courtyard itself, the lower and upper sections. These sections are connected with a narrow railing between the two. The player cannot jump up to the the upper section from the lower, but can easily move from the upper to the lower, or throw enemies over the railing to the lower section. Thorny rose bushes surround both sections. Bumping into the rose bushes causes minor damage. Being thrown into a rose bush traps a player or enemy for a moment while doing minor damage as well. In the center of the lower section is a large fountain that can be used as higher ground.



Two halls, one on the east and one on the west flank the courtyard itself. The eastern hall is split into an upper and lower section, divided by a wall. The western hall ramps upward slightly and connects from the lower courtyard to the upper. The player comes in from the lower eastern hall.

**Gameplay Description:** Simon and Jesko step into the lower inner courtyard. They are silent for a moment, and then Jesko uses his grapple chain to launch himself up into the upper section of the courtyard. Grunts appear in the doorways and Archers pop up from behind the bushes in the upper section. Jesko says, "You are a fool not to join us, Simon."

The Empire is doomed and The Black Hand is the new power in the world.” The Grunts and Archers then attack Simon.

In the lower courtyard, the player needs to defend against arrows from the upper courtyard while fighting the Grunts. Jesko taunts Simon from the upper courtyard during the battle. After fighting off the Grunts in the lower courtyard, Simon makes his way into the western hall.

In the western hall, Simon fights close-quarters through a second group of three Grunts. Here is the first time in the level the player has no terrain hazards to throw his enemies into. Also this would be the first time the player has fought more than two melee combatants at a time. If the player wishes, he could draw the enemies out into the courtyard again so he can throw them against the roses, but then he'd have to defend against the arrows from the archers above. After fighting off the Grunts in the hall, Simon makes his way into the upper courtyard.

In the upper courtyard, Simon encounters Jesko once again. Jesko says he has pressing matters to attend to, cueing the reinforcements from the upper eastern hall. The two Archers that once peppered Simon from above now are backing away to seek the cover of the eastern hall while the Grunts that appear from the eastern hall rush to intercept Simon. If the player is quick, they should be able to knock the Archers that caused him so much trouble into the rosebushes below. After defeating these last five enemies, Simon says, “With or without Jesko’s help, I will find those battle plans.”

## **NPCs**

- Archers – Longbow archers who slowly retreat from Simon when he approaches. He will need to reach them quickly, blocking and dodging their arrows until he can defeat them. These Archers need a Hold command and a Retreat command available to the scripter so that they can be controlled based on specific strategic situations. The Hold command causes the Archer to occasionally fire arrows at the player. The first shot should always be a ‘warning shot’, intentionally missing the player but letting the player know the Archer is there. The Retreat command causes the Archer to slowly walk away from the player while still firing, albeit more slowly. The Retreat command needs a target location to move to. Upon reaching that location, the unit automatically returns to Hold.
- Grunts – These enemies rush towards the player, then go into an attack mode. In attack mode, they mix up three actions. Action one is a simple swing attack. This should do moderate damage and be slightly telegraphed. Action two is a full combo. This should be three or four hits that if any one connects, the rest of the chain will connect. If all the hits of the combo connect, the last hit should knock the player back (possibly into a thorny bush!). The last action is a dodge. The grunt leaps back several feet, as if anticipating an attack from the player. These combatants aren’t terribly bright, but they will attempt to surround the player if given the opportunity.
- Jesko – He doesn’t fight in this encounter. He just stands up in the upper section taunting the player, then flees before the player gets close enough to do anything to him.

#### Art Assets (Common with other areas)

- Simon PC, Archer NPC, Grunt NPC, Jesko NPC with special grappling chain animation and taunting animations, fountain with water effects, water splashing when a character walks around in the fountain

#### Art Assets (Unique to area)

- Area Mesh
- Rose bushes, with animation of folding around a character that gets stuck inside. Should have very prominent thorns. *Talk with programmers and artists about how best to accomplish this visual effect. Should this be built into the animation or simulated via physics in code?*

#### Special Coding Resources for this area

- Rose bushes: folding around a character that comes into contact with it after being knocked back in combat, or jumping into it. Coding for this is probably very similar to the prisoners grabbing the Jailers in the Prison section.

#### Voice Overs

- “With or without Jesko’s help, I will find those battle plans.” – Simon, resigned
- “You are a fool not to join us, Simon. The Empire is doomed and The Black Hand is the new power in the world.” – Jesko, taunting
- “I see you’ve learned some new moves.” – Jesko, surprised
- “You cannot defeat the Black Hand. Join us.” – Jesko, taunting
- “Look at you, you can’t even defeat a Grunt.” – Jesko, taunting
- “With flailing like that, you’ll never defend the Empire.” – Jesko, taunting
- “Well, I have more pressing matters to attend to. Ta-ta!” – Jesko, escaping