The PATH

a short horror game by Auriea Harvey & Michaël Samyn

SUMMARY

There is one rule in the game. And it needs to be broken.
There is one goal. And when you attain it, you die.

In one paragraph

The Path is a short horror game developed by Belgian independent games studio Tale of Tales. It's a contemporary, interactive interpretation of the ancient tale of Little Red Ridinghood. A story about growing up and changing, temptation and obedience, about making the wrong choices and accepting the consequences. About playing and losing, living and dying. Not another action adventure filled with guns and violence but a calm and introverted computer game that finds itself a cosy place in the dark corners of your soul.

The story

Six sisters live in an apartment in the city. One by one their mother sends them on an errand to their grandmother, who is sick and bedridden. The teenagers are instructed to **go to grandmother's house** deep in the forest and, by all means, to **stay on the path**! Wolves are hiding in the woods, just waiting for little girls to stray.
But young women are not exactly known for their obedience, are they? Will they be able to resist the tempations of the forest? Will they stay clear of danger? Can they prevent the ancient tale from being retold?

The Path is a game about growing, about changing, about making choices, about accepting the consequences of these choices. A game about playing, and failing, about embracing life, perhaps by accepting death.

The game

The Path is a short horror game inspired by older versions of **Little Red Ridinghood**, set in modern day. The Path offers an atmospheric experience of **exploration, discovery and introspection** through a unique form of gameplay, designed to immerse you deeply into its dark themes. Every interaction in the game expresses an aspect of the narrative. The six protagonists each have their own age and personality and allow the player to live through the tale in different ways. Most of the story, however, relies on your active imagination.

The Path is designed with **accessibility** in mind. There are no ticking clocks or monsters to defeat. No hard puzzles will ever halt your progress. Most activities in the game are entirely optional and voluntary. The player has all the freedom in the world to explore and experience. The Path is a **Slow Game**.

While The Path does not contain any graphic violence or sexuality, it does allude to these themes. The overall melancholy mood of the game and the potentially unsettling course of events, make The Path **unsuitable for children**. Despite of its origins in fairy tales, The Path is decidedly a game for the mature mind.

The project

The Path is an independently created videogame. It was developed with digital distribution in mind. But despite the small file size of the installer, the game features a complete **realtime 3D environment** that can be explored through third person navigation. The characters in this virtual world, including the player's avatars, are governed by a form of artificial intelligence that gives them some autonomy. As a result, nobody knows exactly what you will encounter on your journeys.

Next to the multi-layered stylized graphics, The Path features a continuous soundtrack composed by goth rock diva **Jarboe** (ex-Swans). In fact, there are hardly any sound effects in the game. Instead the music is continuously changing according to what's happening in the game. Like the behaviours of the characters, the music too is never exactly the same twice.

For a satisfying experience, it takes about 6 hours to complete the game.

Languages

Text is not a vital part of The Path.
However, the game is available in English and in Dutch.

System Specifications

The Path requires a recent PC suitable for realtime 3D gaming with Windows XP or Vista installed.
Recommended minimum hardware includes: a 2 Ghz CPU, 1 GB of RAM and a recent Radeon or Geforce video card of x6xx type. Integrated videocards are not supported.
The game can be played with keyboard, mouse or gamepad. Logitech gamepads and the XBox 360 controller are supported.
The game can run in a window or full screen at any resolution as of 800x600.

On the web

Main game website with trailer: http://ThePath-game.com
Grandmother's House with the Red Girls' homepages: http://Grandmothers-House.net
Project website with all information: http://Tale-of-Tales.com/ThePath
Development journal: http://Tale-of-Tales.com/ThePath/blog

Website of composer Jarboe: http://thelivingjarboe.com

Distribution

Release date: 18 March 2009
Distributed digitally via Tale of Tales, Direct2Drive and Steam

Technology

The Path was created with Quest3D.
Blender was used for the modelling, Photoshop for the textures and 3D Studio Max for the animations.

C R E D I T S

Two people created The Path over two years of full time work. Carefully selected freelancers were hired for specific tasks. In total, seven people worked on different parts of the game, five of whom are women.

Auriea Harvey: design & direction, concept art, character/environment models & textures
Michaël Samyn: design & direction, interaction, effects, software programming
Jarboe: music
Laura Raines Smith: animations
Kris Force: sound
Hans Zantman: technical artist
Marian Bantjes: logo design and calligraphy

P R O D U C T I O N   S U P P O R T

Creative Capital
The Flemish Authorities
Flanders Audiovisual Fund
Design Flanders
CultuurInvest
Villanella

T A L E   O F   T A L E S

Tale of Tales is an **independent game development studio** founded by media artists Auriea Harvey (US) and Michaël Samyn (BE) in 2003 and located in Gent, Belgium. Harvey and Samyn first collaborated on many websites and internet artworks under the flag of **Entropy8Zuper!** Their work was awarded with the San Francisco MOMA Prize for Excellence in Online Art in 2000.

While their roots and motivation are highly artistic, they have always insisted that work created with digital media should also be distributed through digital means. In both their web sites and their games, they embrace the unique **intimacy** that the interactive medium brings. Nevertheless, the work of Harvey and Samyn has be featured in many art exhibitions as well.

Philosophy

Harvey and Samyn don't care much for the challenge- and skill-based interaction of traditional games. Their work does not involve combat, competition or puzzle solving. In fact, they often consider those kinds of activities as distracting. In Tale of Tales' world, games are *about* something. They deal with **original themes, complex issues, intimate problems**. The interactivity is designed to express this content. Not the other way around.

And while they consider their games to be narrative, they are never structured as a story. They hardly even use words. It's about **the poetry of experience**, about being in the world, in the skin of a character, living another life for a moment. About taking the time to explore an idea, to look at it from all sides and experience the intricate complexity of even the simplest of things. This in stark contrast to the epic scale and simplistic themes of traditional videogame narratives.

Tale of Tales' games inspire **imagination and association** in free-form narrative environments. They put the player in the center of the experience. Not to passively follow the rules and obey any orders, but to actively investigate and find meaning for themselves. It's not about the message conveyed by the authors. It's about finding something that pertains to your own life, that is meaningful *to you*.

Other work

Other projects by Tale of Tales include **The Endless Forest** (a multiplayer screensaver in which you play a deer) and **The Graveyard** (an ultra-short interactive vignette that casts you in the role of an elderly lady).

Future

Future projects include a "Plant RPG" developed in collaboration with **Foam**. And another "interactive painting" (like The Graveyard) about a biblical theme very dear to the 19th century decadents.

Tale of Tales' focus remains on PC and Mac platforms because of the accessibility of authoring software. But development for consoles is not excluded.

Press

- January 2009: Hands-on preview on **IGN**
  http://pc.ign.com/articles/951/951079p1.html
  "True, it's not everyone's cup of tea and there are people who will hate it precisely for the very qualities that others are praising it for. At the very least, it's always gratifying to see a small independent studio create a game that really challenges many of the conventional ideas of what games should be about."
- January 2009: Hands-on preview on **Game Informer**
  http://gameinformer.com/News/Story/200901/N09.0129.1833.38390.htm
  "Unlike many current developers, Tale of Tales isn't afraid to give the player freedom to take what they wish from their end product."
- November 2008: Alpha preview on **Eurogamer**
  http://www.eurogamer.nl/articles/the-path-preview
  "The Path zal ergens in de lente van 2009 verkrijgbaar zijn, en we weten nu al dat niet iedereen hetgeen ze te zien krijgen zullen appreciëren. Net zoals men oorspronkelijk Beethoven, Picasso en Bill Gates ook als vreemde vogels zag."
- February 2008: Alpha preview on **Rock, Paper, Shotgun**
  http://www.rockpapershotgun.com/2008/02/15/if-you-go-down-to-the-woods-today
  "Each time I've played, I've found something completely new. Each discovery is dark and unsettling, provoking emotional responses from your character."
- December 2007: double spread in **Edge magazine**
  "Even if its nature might diverge from being a videogame in the strictest sense, Tale of Tales' grasp on what makes videogames distinct from other media makes The Path consequential. While so many videogame makers continue their obsession with aping cinematic ideals, Tale of Tales is attempting to build on what makes videogames unique: interaction."

Awards

The alpha demo of The Path was nominated for Visual Excellence in the 2008 **Independent Games Festival**.