Shadow Play

STORY AND CHARACTER BIOS

OVERVIEW

Shadow Play is an open-world, sandbox type of game in which you play as Umbral. Umbral is on a journey of discovery, after being exiled from his homeland and unable to find his way in an unknown world. He is in search of a legendary land of paradise, hoping to find his place. It is either that, or perish in a world he does not understand how to live in.

STORY

The story takes place in the world of Penumbra, a mystical place outside of our reality, filled with haunting landscapes and ethereal beauty. There are mysteries to be found under the canopies of its forests and in the dark of its caves and canyons. But for every place of light in the world, there are shadows.

Umbral is the main character, a mysterious shadow passing through the lands. He belongs to a race of Penumbra called the Rajana, a people whose abilities and culture revolve around the dark. They are not evil, just well adept at living in the shadows. They enjoy their sequestered life in the dark places of Penumbra, ignorant to the rest of the world and its workings. They also have a strict code of conduct, one that Umbral breaks

by insulting his clan's patriarch. After being banished from his homeland, Umbral takes to wandering the vast expanses of Penumbra to find a new home.

After several years of unsuccessful searching, Umbral hears a tale of a place called Prakash, a hidden paradise in the world of Penumbra. Deciding that it seems worth a try, Umbral goes in search of Prakash. A piece of an ancient map to Prakash is given to Umbral, and his task is to find the remaining pieces, unlocking clues as to the whereabouts of the hidden paradise.

The rest of the game is spent exploring Penumbra, unlocking its secrets and gaining knowledge about it. Various enemies and obstacles appear along the way, but Umbral uses the knowledge that he gains on his journey and his people's shadow manipulating abilities to help him defeat whatever is in his way. Upon finding the final clue and reaching his destination, a temple hidden deep in one of Penumbra's forests, the only thing to greet Umbral is a shrine with a stone bearing a single engraved word, "Prakash". Umbral finds that the true treasure of Prakash is enlightenment, that when the veil of ignorance is lifted and knowledge is gained, the world is full of new doors to be opened and rewards to be gained. The story ends with Umbral leaving the temple and map behind, walking into a new world of light.

CHARACTERS

Name: Umbral

Race: Rajana (humanoid)

Age: 26

Gender: Male

Height: 5' 7"

Weight: 183 lbs

Bio: Umbral is a member of one of the major races of Penumbra, the Rajana. The Rajana live in the darker places of the world, and thus they are very adept at living in the shadows. They aren't a malevolent race, but they are quite reclusive, living in small tribe-like societies and secluding themselves from most of the world.

Umbral was content in his homeland, but one day he stepped out of line and insulted the leader of his tribe. The Rajana have a strict caste system, and they are deeply set in their laws. As punishment, Umbral was banished from his homeland and wandered the wilds of Penumbra for several years. He started exploring and trading with the many settlements and cities in Penumbra, finding odd jobs to do here and there to earn a living, but he always kept on the move, never finding anywhere to settle for good.

Umbral is rather stand-offish, he won't approach anyone unless he must, but he is very observant of his surroundings and likes to poke around. After his banishment, he became wary of others and is a bit paranoid about interacting with others. Due to this little fear, if taken off guard, Umbral will attack first and ask questions later. He is physically strong and lean, and very adept at using his katar. Umbral is also capable of using certain magical abilities, not the least of which is the bioluminescence on his skin, typical of the Rajana people. This allows them to see in darker places, and also makes others wary of approaching them because of the intimidation factor. He can also use a few spells to blast away an enemy or reach an out of reach object. Umbral's people can also use the shadows as a weapon by solidifying it into a whip like feature, that can also grab objects or people, and by gathering shadows to cloak themselves.

MAJOR RULES AND STRUCTURE

MODEL

Open-world, sandbox type of game. The player can go off and complete their goals in any order they wish.

The objective is to find the 6 map pieces, and to get to them the player has to go through different levels and areas looking for them, solving puzzles to find them. Once a map piece is obtained, they get another clue as to where and what Prakash is.

A secondary objective is to learn about the world of Penumbra, it isn't required and happens as the player searches for the map pieces. As they explore new places they learn about that place and everything in it. They learn what the creatures they meet are by observing and finding clues about them. Players gain knowledge as they search and explore Penumbra. While exploring, the player may run across artifacts from Penumbra

or even Prakash, and the player can collect these artifacts. Collecting the artifacts isn't required, but they may unlock new knowledge and skills for Umbral.

Though fighting isn't a major part of the game, the player will run into some hostile creatures and people of Penumbra. Swordplay is the major fighting technique, players use Umbral's katar in different attack combinations to bring down an enemy. Or they may use things in their environment to help them, such as, if a creature was weak against water and the player was next to a pond, they could figure out a way to trick the creature in, say with a rope or rock they found laying around.

As the game progresses and the player learns new skills and completes puzzles and defeats enemies, the character grows stronger. Umbral will gain new abilities and his health and chakra increase.

MECHANICS
AND RULES

Single player, puzzle solving, open world. There is no time limit, and the goal is to find the map pieces. The rules are simple, survive the journey. When they player gets into a fighting situation they must defeat their enemy or successfully evade them. Failing to do so ends in the character's death, and the player has to start again from an earlier checkpoint. The player doesn't always have to walk into a fight if they see one coming; they may sneak around the enemy or choose a different path. The risk they take when fighting or fleeing is dying, there is the risk of being noticed if they sneak around the enemy, and there is no risk to choosing an alternate path unless another enemy is that way. Rewards for defeating an enemy is better knowledge of how to defeat them later, and learning new skills and getting stronger.

Umbral's two main weapons are his katar and his magic. The player goes the whole game using the katar; it does not break or grow weak or strong. It can hack at and slash enemies. As Umbral learns magic abilities he may use them, as well as the abilities of his people to manipulate shadows. Shadows can be used to solidify into a whip-like weapon to stun enemies at a distance, or may be used to cloak Umbral so that he may hide. Using magic lowers Umbral's chakra, and his shadow abilities lower it even more, so the player must keep an eye on Umbral's chakra bar so that it doesn't run out.

The puzzles have simple rules as well, complete them. There are no time limits for the puzzles; their only goal is that you complete them. These types of puzzles are generally obstacles put in Umbral's way, such as a broken bridge the player must figure out how to cross, or how to retrieve a map piece trapped in an odd place. The player can't skip these puzzles, completing them gets them a map piece or continues Umbral's

survival, so solving them is required. The player may risk dying for some of these puzzles, but the reward is further progress in the game, an artifact, or a map piece.

Collecting artifacts is a side quest. These artifacts lay scattered about Penumbra and can bring rewards. Umbral may gain a new skill by collecting an artifact, or another clue about Prakash, but for the most part, they just give the player more knowledge about Penumbra. Collecting certain artifacts or all of them earns players rewards/trophies for PS3 and Xbox. Risk involved for the player is that getting to some of these artifacts can be dangerous, some require some dangerous puzzle-solving, or an enemy may be in the way, which means that Umbral may die and the player will go back to a checkpoint.

Umbral has a health and chakra bar that the player should keep their eye on. They increase as the game progresses and help Umbral survive easier. If either of the bars is completely depleted, Umbral dies and the player goes back to a checkpoint. The player can eat food or use herbs they find to help heal Umbral when his health is down. Or, if they are in a town or settlement, they may go to a doctor for healing or an inn for eating. The chakra bar is for how much of his magical abilities Umbral uses, he can only use so much in a period of time. The chakra bar regenerates when the player isn't using Umbral's abilities. It doesn't regenerate very fast, but it isn't at a snail's pace either. Certain herbs and potions may increase Umbral's chakra, and they may be found throughout the world or bought from a healer in a town.

Money isn't a big part of the game, but should Umbral need supplies, he must have some. Umbral earns money when he finds ma pieces, or a player may choose to do odd jobs for people they may meet in towns. Upon completing a job, they must return to the town and the person they got the job from to get paid. Some jobs are worth more than others.

Umbral is allowed to carry items other than his katar. His pack has five slots for items. Players may pick up and store health and chakra items, food, and objects and trinkets they may find. Some puzzles may require the player to find an item to complete it, like a missing lever or a rope, these items are picked up and stored until the player needs them, in which case they go into their inventory and take it out. Artifacts do not count as objects that Umbral carries with him, so they will not take up an object slot; they are collectibles and can be found under the menu where the player may look at them and read the info that comes with it. Items may be dropped and picked up later, if a health item is taking up the final slot and the player needs to pick up something else, like a piece of rope, they player may drop that item. Once they've gotten rid of the rope, they may go put the health item back if they remember where they put it and if they want to.

There are six "worlds" the player progresses through in the game. The player is allowed to pass back and forth between all of them freely, once they have discovered the new area. The new area may be a system of underground caves and the player discovered the entrance while going through the forest, entering the caves prompts a loading screen so that the game engine can load the new area. Entering or exiting a world also triggers a checkpoint. Each world is fairly large, with a few different biomes; one world may contain a large forest and a river, and a plateau. Another world may contain a large plain with a lake, etc. Each world has one or two towns in it and one or two map pieces, one world does not have a map piece.

Checkpoints are where the game saves. The last checkpoint is what the game will load when a player either exits the game and returns, or if Umbral dies. The checkpoints are auto saved, they player doesn't need to manually save their game.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The player wins the game by reaching the end of the story, after they've taken Umbral through all the levels and collected all 6 of the map pieces, and reach Prakash.

GAMEPLAY WALKTHROUGH

Retrieval Map Piece #2:

This scenario involves puzzle-solving and possible enemy fighting to get the reward. It starts off with a short cut scene; Umbral walks into a forest clearing but starts and immediately backpedals behind a tree. He chances a glance around the tree to get a better look at the scenario before him. A creature he's never encountered before is lounging in some temple ruins. It is one that Umbral has not encountered before; he has no idea what it is or what it can do. Umbral can see a map piece in the ruins behind the creature and knows that he must reach it, but he has to get around the creature.

There are two options available to the player at this point:

- The player can attempt to fight the creature

- The player can find a way to lure away and trap the creature

Both options involve risk for the player, the creature is able to kill Umbral and if it does the player will be sent to the last checkpoint.

Attempting to battle the creature will prove difficult and frustrating; the creature is very swift and very strong. Since this is only Umbral's second map piece, he won't have gained the skills to properly defeat this creature. The player will inevitably end up hacking and slashing desperately at the creature with Umbral's katar, and find that this method is not worth the trouble.

The other option is to do some puzzle solving. A quick survey of the area immediately tells the player that a corner of the ruins appears very eroded and unstable, and that one good push would send it toppling. This would be a perfect way to end the creature and get to the prize. But how to get the creature over there? The player could easily place Umbral in its path to lure it over, but that places Umbral in the way and doesn't give him time to get to a safe spot to kick the rubble over. As the player wanders around the safe portion of the ruins, they'll notice lots of small objects on the ground, such as rocks and stones, pieces of old pottery, etc. They player then picks up a few of these items, for they will make excellent projectiles. Now it's time to get rid of the creature. Approaching from the ground is a bad idea, the creature can attack easily from there. But there's a nice wall above and in front of it, and this wall happens to intersect with the corner where the rubble is, it would make a perfect walkway. The player throws their projectiles at the creature, and the agitated beast begins to go after them. The distance isn't far, and about 3 projectiles get the creature into place.. While the beast is figuring out the best way to end the moron who disturbed it, the player gets a prompt to kick over the rubble. Once they go ahead with the prompt, the creature is crushed and the path is clear.

One variance on this provides a less violent solution. If they player picks up four projectiles and lures the creature just a bit farther, kicking down the rubble just startles the creature away, and Umbral is free to claim his prize.

CONCEPT ART

Umbral – The main character of the game. Strong and silent, keeps to himself and tries to stay out of others' way. He is very observant and intelligent, and uses both of those skills to aid him in his quest.

KATAR

Umbral's Katar – Umbral's main weapon. It is a type of punch dagger, braced around the arm and used in thrusting and slashing movements. Because of the brace, it's easier to perform acrobatic moves to out maneuver enemies.

KVSHANI

Kvshani – (KIV SHA NI) One of the other races of Penumbra. As a whole they are pretty benign, but because of their excellent agility and cunning, certain groups became raiders and hassle travelers all over the country. They aren't extremely hard to beat, but you have to watch out for their tricks.

BHAARVA

Bhaarva – (BUH HAR VA) One of the various creatures found in Penumbra. The Bhaarva are extremely strong, extremely tough, and extremely stupid. They are easily outsmarted, but their ferocity is something to watch out for.

A forest path in Penumbra. The forests tend to be green and lush, and very thick in places. Ruins and various ancient objects are commonplace, and there are plenty of places for artifacts and map pieces to hide.

MARKET ANALYSIS

The target audience is for players 16+, because there is some violence and language in the game. The target audience also includes puzzle solvers and inexperienced gamers. This game targets them because it doesn't require a lot of gaming skill with fighting like a lot of other games do, there is fighting, but it isn't hard to do and doesn't take up most of them game. The game lets these less experienced players enjoy the game and exploring the world without having to worry about getting super good. Since there is some fighting skill involved, other gamers may still find this game enjoyable.

This game will appeal to its audience due to the success of open-world games and a game similar to Shadow Play, which is Shadow of the Colossus. The two share similarities in being an experience, as well as an open world game.

This article tells about the success of open world games. The games featured are some of the most successful and popular from recent years:

http://www.gamingunion.net/news/top-ten-open-world-games-this-generation--4125.html

This game's selling point is its style, its Hindu inspired story and visuals is compelling and intriguing. The game offers players and experience, they get to experience a world and a journey, not just play a game to beat up other players and win.