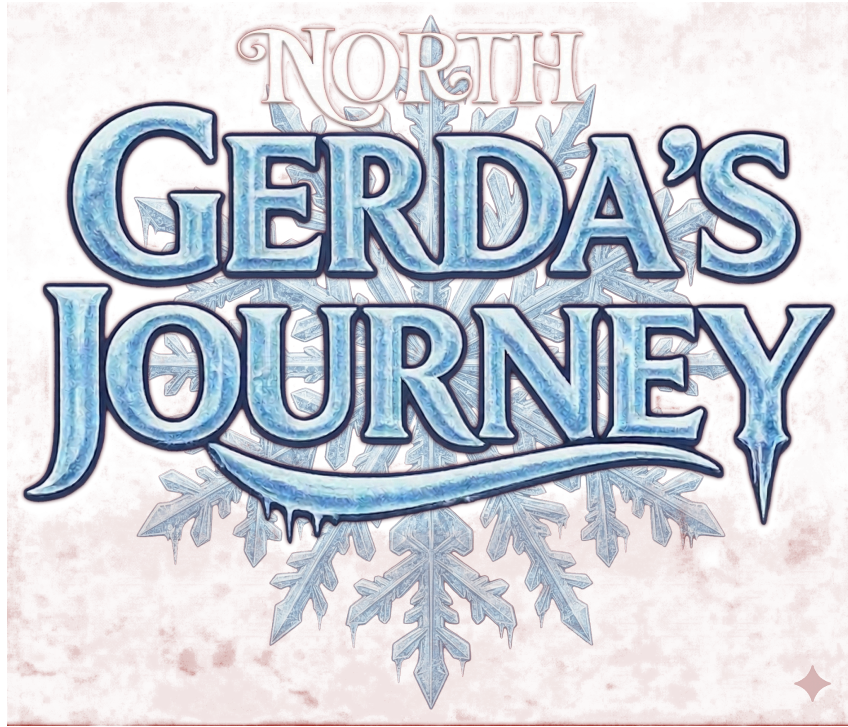




Design Document

PictoryLand

Executive Overview

Overview

North - Gerda's Journey is a narrative-driven 3D adventure that invites players to step directly into the world of the film, experiencing its story not as passive viewers, but as active participants. Taking on the role of Gerda, players embark on a journey across a magical, Scandinavian-inspired landscape to rescue her friend Kai from the villainous Snow Queen.

The game blends exploration, light platforming, environmental puzzle-solving, and companion-driven abilities into a cohesive and accessible experience. Players traverse a series of handcrafted levels inspired by key moments from the film, each expanded into fully explorable spaces that deepen the sense of place and discovery. Along the way, Gerda is

accompanied by Lily, a guardian angel whose abilities open up traversal options, assist with puzzles, and provide moments of safety and empowerment.

Designed with a younger audience in mind while remaining engaging for a broader player base, *North - Gerda's Journey* emphasizes readability, approachability, and emotional storytelling. Combat is deliberately light and non-violent, focusing on deterrence rather than defeat, ensuring that the tone remains consistent with the source material.



To maintain variety and pacing, the core gameplay is complemented by a number of distinct set-piece sequences, including traversal-focused challenges and interactive minigames. Optional integration with the Metanoid mobile app further enhances engagement by allowing players to use real-world motion during select gameplay moments.

With an estimated playtime of 4–5 hours, *North - Gerda's Journey* offers a focused, story-rich experience with light replayability through collectibles and character customization. Its compact scope, strong alignment with an existing IP, and clear gameplay identity position it as an accessible and marketable title within the family-friendly adventure space.

Vision Statement

Player Experience

The game takes players on a journey through a series of handcrafted levels that closely mirror key scenes from the movie *North*. While these environments remain faithful to the source

material, selective creative liberties have been taken to expand the world and introduce engaging gameplay opportunities, ensuring that each location feels both recognizable and meaningfully interactive.

At its core, the experience revolves around exploring these environments to complete main and side objectives. Players engage in a mix of traversal, light platforming, and environmental puzzle-solving, progressing through levels by interacting with the world and uncovering new paths. Occasional light combat elements - such as using snowballs to scare away hostile creatures - add variety without shifting the tone away from a primarily exploration-driven experience or veering into inappropriate violence.

To maintain a sense of freshness and pacing, the game introduces a number of alternative gameplay sequences and minigame-style moments. These segments provide temporary shifts in mechanics and perspective, offering players new ways to engage with the world and preventing repetition over the course of the journey.

The experience is designed to capture the feeling of actively participating in the story of the film. Players are not just observing events, but directly interacting with them, exploring familiar locations, solving challenges within them, and contributing to the unfolding narrative.

A steady introduction of new mechanics, abilities, and situations ensures that the experience continues to evolve throughout its runtime. In parallel, players are rewarded for exploration through collectibles that unlock visual customization options for Gerda, allowing for a degree of personal expression while reinforcing a sense of progression and completion.



Key Pillars

Exploration-Driven Adventure

The game places strong emphasis on exploration, encouraging players to engage with the world beyond the critical path. Each level is designed with opportunities to discover optional areas, hidden collectibles, and environmental details that expand the sense of place. This approach supports both progression and player curiosity, rewarding those who take the time to look deeper into the magical world of *North*.

Emotional Narrative Journey

At its heart, the experience follows Gerda's journey to rescue Kai from the Snow Queen. The narrative is delivered through a combination of recognizable set locations, spoken lines from Gerda, and select cutscenes from the movie itself, aiming to preserve the emotional core of the source material. The game seeks to create a sense of personal involvement in this journey, reinforcing the emotional stakes through player interaction rather than passive observation.

Immersion

A key priority is maintaining a strong sense of immersion within the world of the movie. Wherever possible, the game aligns closely with the film's tone, environments, and narrative beats. This consistency helps create a cohesive experience where players feel fully embedded in the story's setting, with gameplay systems and presentation working together to support that illusion.

Unique Selling Points

Playable Movie Experience

North allows players to actively participate in the story of the film, exploring recognizable locations, interacting with key characters, and experiencing pivotal narrative moments firsthand. Rather than retelling the story passively, the game expands on the source material by turning cinematic scenes into fully playable environments. (See: [Vision Statement](#), [Levels & Progression](#))

Companion-Driven Gameplay

The inclusion of Lily as a constant companion introduces a unique gameplay layer that blends narrative and mechanics. Her abilities enhance traversal, puzzle-solving, and moment-to-moment interaction, creating a dynamic player toolkit that evolves throughout the journey. (See: [Core Gameplay – Companion System: Lily](#))

Varied, Set-Piece-Driven Structure

In addition to its core exploration gameplay, North features a range of distinct gameplay variations and set pieces—such as flight sequences, environmental challenges, and minigames—that provide consistent variety and pacing. This ensures the experience remains fresh and engaging across its runtime. (See: [Gameplay Variations & Set Pieces](#), [Levels](#))

Interactive Motion Integration (Metanoid)

Optional integration with the Metanoid mobile app allows players to use real-world motion and gestures during specific gameplay sequences. This creates a more physical and playful interaction model, particularly appealing to younger audiences, while also providing additional in-game rewards. (See: [Gameplay Variations – Metanoid Integration](#))

Target Audience

The game is primarily aimed at a younger audience in the 8-16 age range, with design choices that prioritize accessibility, readability, and intuitive interaction. Mechanics are introduced gradually, and challenges are structured to be approachable without sacrificing engagement.

In addition, the game strongly targets fans of the movie, offering them an opportunity to revisit familiar characters, locations, and story moments in an interactive format. This dual focus ensures that the experience is both welcoming to new players and appealing to those already invested in the world.

Market Positioning

The game sits within the **action-adventure / 3D platformer genre**, combining exploration, traversal, light puzzle-solving, and narrative progression.

It draws comparison to exploration-focused action-adventure titles such as the modern entries in the *Tomb Raider* series and the *Uncharted* franchise in their use of traversal and exploration elements. At the same time, its emphasis on fun, varied gameplay sequences and accessible design shares some parallels with titles from Hazelight Studios, such as *Split Fiction* and *It Takes Two*.

Within the broader market, the game occupies a space between narrative-driven adventure titles and accessible, family-friendly platformers. Its relatively short runtime and focused scope position it as a compact, story-rich experience rather than a large-scale open-world production. To compensate for its runtime, the game is aiming at an Indie price tier (~9.99\$)

This makes it well-suited for players seeking a polished, contained adventure that can be completed in a limited number of sessions, while still offering enough depth to encourage exploration and replay.



Scope / Replayability

The game is designed to offer a focused experience with an estimated completion time of approximately 4 to 5 hours. The structure is primarily linear, guiding players through a curated sequence of levels while allowing for light branching and optional exploration within each area.

Replayability is supported through collectible-driven progression. Each level contains hidden or challenging-to-reach items that contribute to unlocking additional customization options for Gerda's wardrobe and other power-ups. Some of these collectibles are intentionally placed in locations that are not accessible during the initial visit, requiring players to return later with newly acquired abilities.

This approach encourages players to revisit earlier levels, reinforcing a sense of progression while extending engagement beyond the initial playthrough.

Target Platforms

The game is currently being developed for PC, with distribution planned through platforms such as Steam and the Epic Games Store.

Depending on the success of the initial release, porting the game to additional platforms, including consoles, is considered a viable next step.

Technical Details

The game is being developed using Unreal Engine 5.6, enabling high-quality visual fidelity and supporting the technical requirements of a modern 3D platforming experience.

Production Snapshot

The project is being developed by a multinational team in the 15-30 people bracket, combining a range of disciplines across design, engineering, art, and production.

The game is currently in the final stages of development, with the majority of levels fully playable. Remaining work is focused primarily on completing the final level, as well as implementing visual assets, polish, and overall refinement across the experience.

The project is scheduled for completion in early June 2026.

Story & Setting

Setting

North - Gerda's Journey is set in a fictionalized version of Scandinavia, spanning from the familiar landscapes of Denmark to the distant, northern reaches of Norway. The world blends grounded, recognizable environments with elements of fantasy, creating a setting that feels both authentic and magical.

Magic is an established part of this world. Witches exist alongside ordinary people - some living quietly within society, others isolated in hidden dwellings or remote regions. Their intentions vary: while certain witches pursue selfish or harmful goals, others use their abilities to help those in need. This duality reinforces a world where magic is neither inherently good nor evil, but shaped by those who wield it.

The setting is also deeply influenced by Christian values and imagery. Heaven is a tangible force, and divine intervention manifests through guardian angels who offer protection and guidance to those in need. This spiritual layer adds another dimension to the world, shaping both its moral framework and its narrative tone.

Together, these elements create a setting that combines folklore, faith, and fantasy - grounded enough to feel familiar, yet rich with wonder and mystery.



Narrative Premise

The story follows Gerda, a young girl who sets out on a journey into the unknown after her close friend Kai mysteriously disappears. With little understanding of what has happened, she leaves the safety of her home behind, driven by determination and care for her friend.

Along the way, Gerda encounters a range of companions who aid her on her journey, including a gander, a horse, a reindeer, and a kind-hearted witch. These relationships not only help her progress through the challenges ahead, but also reinforce the emotional core of the story.

Unbeknownst to Gerda, she is being watched. The Snow Queen - an enigmatic and powerful antagonist - has abducted Kai and holds him captive within her ice palace in the far north of Norway. At her side is Louie, a gargoyle-like apprentice who acts as both servant and enforcer.

As Gerda travels further north, the stakes of her journey become clearer. What begins as a search for a missing friend evolves into a direct confrontation with a powerful and hostile force. Ultimately, Gerda reaches the Snow Queen's domain, rescues Kai, and escapes the frozen palace. The story concludes with their return home after a year away, arriving just in time to celebrate together and bringing the journey full circle.



Themes

Love Over Self-Interest

At the heart of the story is the contrast between selfless and self-centered motivations. Gerda's unwavering care for Kai drives her forward despite danger and uncertainty, while the Snow Queen represents a more isolated, self-serving perspective. This contrast highlights the idea that love for others can overcome even the most formidable obstacles, while egotism and narcissism is ultimately corrupting and self-destroying.

Good vs. Evil

The narrative embraces a classic moral structure, presenting a clear opposition between benevolent and malevolent forces. This is reflected both in characters and in the world itself, where divine elements such as guardian angels stand in contrast to darker forces associated with certain witches and their familiars.

Courage and Perseverance

Gerda's journey is defined not by strength or power, but by persistence. She continues forward despite fear, unfamiliar environments, and growing challenges. The story reinforces the idea that courage is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to act in spite of it.

Friendship and Connection

Throughout her journey, Gerda forms meaningful bonds with those she encounters. These relationships provide both practical support and emotional grounding, emphasizing the importance of trust, cooperation, and empathy.

Characters

Protagonists

Gerda

Gerda is the central protagonist of the story, a young girl defined by her compassion, determination, and strong sense of moral conviction. She deeply cares for the people in her life, especially her family and her close friend Kai, and this emotional connection becomes the driving force behind her journey.

While initially grounded in the familiarity of her home, Gerda distinguishes herself through her refusal to accept unfavorable outcomes as inevitable. Rather than yielding to fear or uncertainty, she challenges circumstances and expectations, choosing to act where others have given up. This willingness to push beyond her limits and stand up for what she believes is right shapes both her personal growth and the trajectory of the story.



Lily

Lily is a guardian angel sent from heaven to guide and protect Gerda on her journey. She embodies a childlike personality, combining curiosity and playfulness with a sense of purpose tied to her role as a protector.

Though occasionally clumsy or mischievous, Lily is fundamentally good-natured and committed to helping Gerda succeed. Her presence provides both practical support and emotional levity, balancing moments of tension with lighter interactions.

From a gameplay perspective, Lily also serves as a key companion, enabling a range of abilities that assist with traversal, puzzle-solving, and interaction with the environment. Narratively, she reinforces the spiritual dimension of the world, acting as a direct link between Gerda's journey and the divine forces that watch over it.

Kai

Kai is Gerda's neighbor and closest friend, whose sudden disappearance sets the events of the story in motion. He is portrayed as intelligent and curious, though somewhat naïve; traits that ultimately lead him into danger and his eventual abduction by the Snow Queen to the northern reaches.

Antagonists

Louie

Louie is a magical familiar created by the Snow Queen, appearing as a bat transformed into a young boy. He serves as both her assistant and apprentice, carrying out her will while aspiring to grow in power himself.

Despite his role as a subordinate, Louie displays a distinct personality: willful, expressive, and at times unpredictable. His behavior suggests a tension between obedience and personal ambition, hinting at a desire to become more than a servant. As an emerging magic user, he introduces an additional dimension to the world's portrayal of magic and its practitioners (as the only male magic user in the story).

Louie's presence adds both narrative and gameplay variety, acting as a recurring adversarial figure who supports the Snow Queen's objectives while maintaining his own identity.

Snow Queen

The Snow Queen is the primary antagonist of the story, a powerful and enigmatic witch who resides in the frozen northern reaches of Norway. She wields formidable magic, shaping her environment and exerting control over those she captures.

Her motivations are rooted in a desire to preserve and elevate herself. She abducts young boys and uses her magic to extract their youth, transforming it into potions that temporarily restore her vitality. However, her ambitions extend further: she seeks to unlock the secret of a mysterious puzzle box, believing it will reveal her "true form", one she imagines as eternally youthful, beautiful, and powerful. Little does she know her true form is naught but rage and ice, as cold and tempestuous as her own blackened heart.

As an antagonist, she represents both a direct threat and a symbolic counterpoint to Gerda. Where Gerda is driven by care for others, the Snow Queen is motivated by self-preservation and ambition, reinforcing the story's central thematic conflict.

Gameplay

Game Flow

The game follows a structured sequence of levels inspired by key scenes from the movie, with particular emphasis on its more atmospheric “journey” moments. While the film focuses primarily on character-driven storytelling, the interactive format allows these environments to be expanded into fully explorable spaces, giving players a deeper sense of the world and its geography.

Progression through the game is linear at a macro level, guiding players through a curated narrative arc. Within individual levels, however, players are given room to explore, discover optional paths, and approach objectives with a degree of flexibility.

At its core, the experience is built around a clear and repeatable gameplay loop:

1. Players are presented with a goal or obstacle within the environment. This could involve reaching a new area, accessing a restricted location, or progressing past a natural barrier.

Example: Gerda wants to get into a trade wagon, but it is located in a locked yard.

2. To achieve this, players explore their surroundings, identifying interactive elements, traversal opportunities, or tools that can help them move forward. This often involves observing the environment and recognizing how different elements can be combined or utilized.

Example: Players will eventually find some movable boxes that permit them to get up and over the wall of the yard.

3. Once a solution is identified, players execute it through traversal, interaction, or light puzzle-solving. This may involve platforming challenges, manipulating objects, or making use of Lily’s abilities.

Example: Players must push boxes and perform platform jumps to get over the wall and into the wagon.

4. Successfully overcoming the obstacle rewards the player with progression: unlocking new areas, advancing the story, granting access to items or abilities, or triggering cinematic moments that reinforce the narrative.

Example: A scene will play out that explains how Gerda snuck on the wagon to leave Copenhagen and begin her search for Kai.

This loop ensures a steady rhythm of exploration, discovery, and reward, while maintaining alignment with the story's progression.



Core Systems

Movement

Gerda moves freely in a fully 3D environment, allowing players to explore levels with a strong emphasis on spatial navigation. Basic traversal includes running and jumping to cross gaps and reach higher elevations.

Traversal challenges are integrated into level design, encouraging players to read the environment and identify viable paths forward.

Health

Gerda has a health meter that is reduced when taking damage from environmental hazards or hostile entities, such as wild animals or dangerous plant life.

If Gerda's health is fully depleted, the player is returned to the most recent checkpoint, represented by campfires placed throughout each level. This system ensures that failure carries consequence while minimizing frustration and maintaining forward momentum.

Combat

Combat is intentionally light and accessible, designed to support the tone of the experience rather than dominate it. Gerda can throw snowballs - or other context-appropriate projectiles such as rocks - to deter or scare away hostile creatures.

These mechanics are also sometimes used in environmental interactions, such as triggering switches or interacting with distant objects, allowing combat tools to serve both defensive and puzzle-solving purposes.

Companion System: Lily

Lily plays a central role in both gameplay and narrative, acting as Gerda's companion and primary source of abilities. Through Lily, players gain access to a range of powers that expand traversal, interaction, and defensive capabilities:

- **Scan:** Highlights nearby interactable objects, guiding players and reducing friction during exploration.
- **Super Jump:** Temporarily enhances Gerda's jumping ability, enabling access to otherwise unreachable areas.
- **Angel Shield:** Creates a protective barrier that blocks enemies, projectiles, and environmental hazards, offering players a moment of safety in challenging situations.
- **Wand Attack:** Allows Lily to channel offensive magic, striking nearby threats with lightning and significantly increasing Gerda's ability to respond to danger.

Together, these abilities form a core part of the player's toolkit, adding variety and progression to the gameplay experience.



Item Use

Throughout the game, Gerda can acquire items that support progression and survival. These are divided into two categories:

Consumables provide immediate, one-time benefits:

- **Food** restores lost health.
- **Crystals** extend the duration of Lily's abilities, allowing players to extend their use in critical moments.

Tools are persistent items that enable specific interactions within the world:

- **Shovel** allows players to uncover buried items and hidden resources.
- **Matches** are used to light campfires, which function as checkpoints and save points.

This system encourages both preparation and exploration, rewarding players who engage with the environment.



World Interaction

The game world is designed to be interactive and responsive, offering multiple ways for players to engage with their surroundings. Key interaction types include:

- **Pickups** such as crystals, food, and keys, which support progression and resource management.
- **Environmental objects**, including movable boxes, collapsible trees, and other elements that can be manipulated to solve traversal challenges or puzzles.
- **Characters and NPCs**, who provide context, assistance, or narrative progression through dialogue.
- **Campfires**, which act as safe points for saving progress and managing customization.

These systems work together to create a world that feels dynamic and participatory.

Customizing Gerda

Players can unlock a variety of wardrobe items for Gerda throughout the game, including dresses, gloves, backpacks, and footwear. These items can be equipped at campfires, allowing players to personalize Gerda's appearance.

In addition to visual customization, certain items provide light gameplay benefits. For example, warmer clothing may offer increased health in colder environments. This system reinforces exploration and collection while maintaining alignment with the game's thematic setting.



Mounts & Riding

In select levels, Gerda gains access to animal companions that can be ridden to traverse the environment more quickly and efficiently. These mounts, such as horses or the elk Svante, are

integrated into specific sections where increased movement speed and fluid traversal enhance both pacing and scale.

Mounted movement simplifies navigation across larger areas and can introduce light variations in control and handling, distinguishing it from standard on-foot traversal. These segments are designed to complement the overall flow of the level, providing moments of momentum and spectacle while reinforcing the connection between Gerda and the world around her.



Gameplay Variations & Set Pieces

To maintain variety and pacing, the game introduces a number of distinct gameplay sequences that temporarily shift mechanics and perspective. These moments act as set pieces within the broader adventure, offering fresh interactions while reinforcing key story beats.

Metanoid Integration

The game supports integration with the Metanoid mobile application on Android and iOS devices. During specific segments, players can use real-world motion and gestures to control gameplay, replacing traditional inputs with physical interaction.

This feature is designed to enhance accessibility and engagement for younger players, providing an alternative and more active way to experience the game. Participation in these segments is also rewarded with in-game bonuses.

Boat Rowing

In an early gameplay sequence, players navigate a river using a rowboat controlled via independent left and right paddles. The challenge lies in steering through hazardous ice floes while maintaining control and collecting optional resources such as crystals.

When using the Metanoid app, rowing motions can be replicated physically, translating real-world gestures into in-game movement.



Hank Flight

- In the midgame, players get to re-enact Hank's iconic flight scene from the movie. Riding atop him, the pair must navigate a perilous storm conjured by the Snow Queen, while avoiding Louie's assaults.
- The gameplay has players moving forward along a tubular trajectory, but they get to decide Hank's up-down and left-right alignment to avoid hazards and grab pickups. Notably: speed boosts along the way that are necessary to stay ahead of the storm clouds behind!
- The metanoid app simulates being Hank, with arms spread and leaning left-right to adjust direction, or flapping the arms to ascend.

Midway through the game, players take part in a flight sequence inspired by a key moment from the film. Riding atop Hank, players navigate through a storm conjured by the Snow Queen while avoiding incoming threats from Louie.

The sequence follows a forward-moving path, with players controlling lateral and vertical positioning to dodge obstacles and collect pickups. Speed boosts are placed along the route, requiring active engagement to maintain momentum and stay ahead of pursuing hazards.

Through Metanoid integration, players can control movement by mimicking flight; leaning to steer and using arm flapping motions to adjust altitude.

Palace Escape

In the final sequence of the game, players control both Gerda and Kai as they escape the collapsing ice palace. This sequence emphasizes urgency and momentum, with players navigating a predetermined path while avoiding environmental hazards.

Designed as a climactic conclusion, this segment reinforces the stakes and resolution of the narrative. Its inclusion is currently under evaluation as part of final production scope decisions.

Levels

General Level Flow

The game is structured as a sequence of interconnected levels that follow the narrative progression of the story. Each level represents a distinct location inspired by the film, forming a linear journey from Gerda's home to the northern reaches of the Snow Queen's domain.

While progression between levels is linear, individual levels are designed with room for exploration. Players are encouraged to move beyond the critical path to discover optional areas, hidden collectibles, and environmental details that enrich the world.

Replayability is supported through a level select system that allows players to revisit previously completed stages while retaining all abilities and upgrades acquired later in the game. This enables access to areas and collectibles that were not reachable during the initial playthrough, reinforcing a light progression-gated exploration model.

As a result, the level structure balances guided narrative progression with optional exploration and revisitation, supporting both first-time players and completion-focused playstyles.

Gerda's Home

Narrative Context

The game opens with Gerda at home, preparing to set out on her journey. She gathers essential supplies - food, money, and a gift intended for Kai - while quietly coming to terms with her decision to leave. The level concludes with Gerda writing a letter to her mother, explaining her

departure. A cutscene from the film follows, reinforcing the emotional tone and narrative transition.

Gameplay Focus

This level serves as a guided introduction to the game's core mechanics. Players are gradually introduced to basic movement, including 3D navigation and jumping, as well as Lily's scan ability. Simple interactions such as picking up and using items establish the foundation for later gameplay.

Key Beats

- Explore Gerda's home environment and gather supplies
- Learn basic movement and interaction mechanics
- Use Lily's scan ability to identify key objects
- Write the farewell letter, transitioning into the journey

Unique Elements

- Tutorialized, single-location experience
- Strong narrative framing and emotional setup

Copenhagen



Narrative Context

Gerda arrives in Copenhagen, navigating its wintry streets as she prepares for her journey. While gathering additional supplies, she realizes she cannot simply leave the city due to the presence of guards. Instead, she devises a plan to secretly board a departing trade carriage.

Gameplay Focus

This level introduces structured traversal and environmental problem-solving. Players learn to manipulate objects such as pushable boxes and engage in basic platforming challenges. The environment remains safe, allowing players to experiment and build confidence without threat.

Key Beats

- Visit merchants and acquire essential tools, including the shovel
- Learn of the departing trade carriage through NPC interaction
- Infiltrate the warehouse yard where the carriage is prepared
- Solve traversal challenges to board the wagon and leave the city

Unique Elements

- Introduction of pushable and destructible objects

- First fully explorable “open” level structure
- Safe environment focused on learning through exploration

River



Narrative Context

Leaving the city behind, Gerda ventures into the cold wilderness beyond Copenhagen. While only briefly depicted in the film, this segment is expanded into a large and varied level, showcasing the breadth of the game’s world.

Gameplay Focus

The level introduces more complex puzzle mechanics, including a light-based puzzle within a cave environment. It also marks the introduction of hostile enemies, increasing tension in the latter half. Platforming challenges become more demanding, and navigation is further complicated by environmental elements such as a fog-filled forest maze.

Key Beats

- Help an injured owl by gathering ingredients for a healing remedy
- Follow the owl’s magical trail deeper into the level
- Unlock Lily’s Super Jump ability, allowing Gerda to cross the river

- Encounter wolves at a ruined chapel, introducing combat
- Rest at a campfire before confronting Louie in the first boss encounter
- Escape via a river sequence, transitioning into the next stage

Unique Elements

- First appearance of the lightbeam puzzle
- Introduction of combat mechanics
- Fog-based maze navigation
- Boat rowing sequence (with optional Metanoid integration)

Amanda's Island



Narrative Context

Gerda arrives on Amanda's enchanted island, where she falls under the witch's influence. Distracted from her journey, she occupies herself with domestic tasks. Over time, subtle reminders of Kai, particularly a hidden object tied to him, prompt her to regain focus and attempt to escape.

Gameplay Focus

This level shifts away from traversal-heavy gameplay toward smaller, self-contained interactions. Players engage in task-based activities such as gathering ingredients and preparing food, alongside light exploration and puzzle-solving within a confined space.

Key Beats

- Gather apples and prepare a pie
- Collect vegetables to cook a meal
- Herd geese into their enclosure
- Discover a hidden mechanism leading to a secret room
- Use a previously obtained key to unlock a chest containing the yellow roses
- Trigger the realization that prompts Gerda's escape

Unique Elements

- Focus on contained, interaction-driven gameplay
- High fidelity recreation of a film location
- Narrative-driven discovery leading to progression

Amanda's Island (Shrunken)

Narrative Context

Following a magical mishap, Gerda is shrunk to a tiny size and must navigate Amanda's garden from a drastically altered perspective. Everyday elements become obstacles, and new dangers emerge, including a persistent rat that cannot be permanently defeated.

Gameplay Focus

This level emphasizes dynamic and vertical platforming, introducing more experimental mechanics such as moving platforms and launch-based traversal. The second half introduces a pursuit sequence, shifting gameplay toward evasion and tension.

Key Beats

- Explore the garden to find a way past a blocked path
- Collect dew droplets scattered throughout the environment
- Trigger the arrival of the rat antagonist
- Navigate a maze while avoiding pursuit
- Reach Hank to escape the garden

Unique Elements

- Highly vertical and dynamic platforming design
- Pursuit-based gameplay with an invulnerable enemy
- Strong sense of scale through environmental transformation

Hank's Flight

Narrative Context

Gerda joins Hank during his migratory journey north. Their flight is interrupted by the Snow Queen's interference, as a storm is conjured and Louie attacks directly.

Gameplay Focus

This level is presented as a continuous forward-moving flight sequence. Players control Hank's direction, navigating hazards while maintaining momentum and collecting speed boosts to outrun the storm.

Key Beats

- Take flight with Hank
- Avoid environmental hazards and Louie's attacks
- Maintain speed through pickups to stay ahead of the storm

Unique Elements

- Fully dedicated flight gameplay sequence
- Distinct control scheme and pacing compared to core gameplay
- Optional Metanoid integration for motion-based control

Swedish Forest

Narrative Context

After returning to normal size and continuing her journey, Gerda travels through the Swedish countryside. The environment transitions from lush, summery landscapes into harsher terrain as she approaches Norway.

Gameplay Focus

This level returns to core platforming and exploration, expanding on previously introduced mechanics. Players encounter optional challenges and more complex environmental puzzles, including a multi-step boulder puzzle hidden within a cave.

Key Beats

- Assist Gustav the horse and unlock mounted traversal
- Explore the environment freely, discovering optional content
- Cross a fragile bridge under unstable conditions
- Face Louie once more in a repeated confrontation

Unique Elements

- Rolling boulder puzzle sequence
- Collapsing bridge traversal segment

North Pole

Narrative Context

In the final stage, Gerda reaches the frozen north and approaches the Snow Queen's palace. The journey culminates in a confrontation with the Queen and the rescue of Kai.

Gameplay Focus

This level serves as the culmination of all previously introduced mechanics. Players face more complex variations of earlier puzzles and challenges, culminating in the game's most elaborate boss encounter.

Key Beats

- Begin at a Sami encampment before venturing into the wilderness
- Escape a wolf pursuit while riding Svante
- Traverse hazardous terrain to reach the palace
- Complete multiple challenges to assemble the puzzle
- Confront the Snow Queen in the final boss encounter
- Escape the collapsing palace with Kai

Unique Elements

- Most advanced use of existing mechanics
- Final boss encounter
- Climactic escape sequence concluding the game

Enemies

Combat Philosophy

Combat in *North* is designed to support the tone and themes of the experience rather than dominate it. Encounters are intentionally light, accessible, and non-violent in presentation. Enemies are not "defeated" in a traditional sense, but rather deterred, scared away, or temporarily overcome.

This approach ensures that gameplay remains aligned with the emotional and narrative focus of the story. Combat serves as a source of tension and variety, introducing moments of challenge without shifting the experience toward aggression or intensity that would feel out of place for the target audience.

Encounters are therefore designed around:

- Avoidance and deterrence, rather than elimination
- Simple, readable behaviors that players can quickly understand
- Integration with traversal and puzzle-solving, rather than isolated combat systems

Common Enemies

Wolves

Wolves are the primary ground-based threat encountered throughout the game. They exhibit dynamic behavior, alternating between circling Gerda to create pressure and lunging forward to attack.

Players must respond by timing their actions and maintaining awareness of positioning. Wolves can be driven away by hitting them with snowballs, reinforcing the idea of deterrence rather than defeat.

Design Purpose

Wolves introduce players to reactive threats that require timing and spatial awareness. They create tension without overwhelming the player, serving as an accessible entry point into the game's combat systems.

Bats

Bats act as aerial hazards that target Gerda from above. They home in on her position and deal damage upon contact before dissipating.

Their movement patterns require players to stay aware of threats in three-dimensional space. Like wolves, they can be neutralized with a well-timed snowball.

Design Purpose

Bats expand combat into vertical space, encouraging players to look beyond ground-level threats. They reinforce quick reaction and targeting skills while remaining simple and readable.

Boss Encounters

Louie

Louie's encounters are structured as multi-phase endurance challenges. Rather than engaging directly, he summons waves of animals to attack Gerda while remaining temporarily invulnerable.

Once these summoned threats are cleared, Louie becomes vulnerable for a short period, allowing players to retaliate. This cycle repeats several times before the encounter concludes.

Design Purpose

Louie's fights emphasize pacing and endurance, requiring players to manage multiple threats before seizing opportunities to progress the encounter. His role as a summoner reinforces his identity as a manipulative, indirect antagonist rather than a direct physical threat.

The Rat

The rat functions as a persistent, high-pressure threat that cannot be defeated. Faster and more aggressive than wolves, it forces players into evasive play rather than confrontation.

Players must rely on environmental awareness: hiding in tight spaces, reaching elevated areas, or briefly repelling the rat with thrown objects to survive and progress.

Design Purpose

This encounter shifts the gameplay dynamic from confrontation to avoidance. It introduces sustained tension and encourages players to think defensively, using the environment strategically rather than relying on direct interaction.

Snow Queen

The Snow Queen serves as the game's final boss, combining multiple mechanics into a climactic encounter. The battle takes place within the eye of a storm, with the outer edges of the arena posing a constant environmental hazard.

Throughout the fight, the Snow Queen summons hostile creatures while also manipulating the environment. At key moments, she creates ice pillars that Gerda can climb. By reaching the top and collapsing these structures, players can temporarily expose the Queen to damage.

As the encounter progresses, the arena contracts, increasing pressure and difficulty until the final phase is completed.

Design Purpose

This encounter acts as a culmination of the game's systems, combining traversal, timing, and environmental interaction. It reinforces previously learned mechanics in a more demanding context while delivering a visually and mechanically distinct finale.

UI & Controls

Gameplay HUD

The gameplay HUD is designed to be clear, readable, and unobtrusive, providing players with essential information without distracting from exploration and immersion.

Health

Displayed as a simple and easily readable meter, indicating Gerda's current condition. It provides immediate feedback when taking damage and reinforces player awareness during hazardous situations.

Lily Energy

Represents the available duration or usage of Lily's abilities. This meter helps players manage their companion powers strategically, especially during traversal challenges or encounters.

Quick Slots

Allows players to access consumable items such as food or crystals quickly during gameplay. The system is designed for ease of use, minimizing friction during moment-to-moment play.

Quest Notifier

Provides players with clear guidance on current objectives, ensuring that progression remains understandable without removing the need for exploration.

In-World Interaction Prompts (Pick Up, Buy, ...)

Context-sensitive prompts appear near interactable objects, indicating available actions such as picking up items, talking to characters, or interacting with the environment. These prompts are designed to be intuitive and minimally intrusive.

Menus

Pause Menu

Accessible at any time during gameplay, the pause menu allows players to resume the game, adjust settings, view their inventory, or return to the main menu. It provides a simple and familiar structure to ensure ease of navigation.

Customization Menu



Available at campfires, this menu allows players to equip and preview unlocked wardrobe items for Gerda. It supports both visual personalization and the application of gameplay-related bonuses tied to specific outfits.

Controls

Controls are designed to be intuitive and accessible, following standard conventions for 3D platforming games on PC. Movement, camera control, and interaction are mapped in a way that ensures ease of learning for younger players while remaining responsive and reliable.

Art Direction

Visual Theme

The visual direction of *North - Gerda's Journey* is closely aligned with the aesthetic of the source material, aiming to faithfully recreate the look and feel of the movie while adapting it to an interactive 3D environment.

The game emphasizes a storybook-inspired, stylized realism, balancing recognizable environments with a slightly heightened visual language that supports readability and player navigation. Natural landscapes, from cozy interiors to expansive snowy wilderness, are designed to feel both grounded and magical, reinforcing the sense of journey.



Particular attention is given to:

- Environmental clarity, ensuring that paths, interactable objects, and traversal routes are easy to identify
- Atmospheric variety, with distinct visual identities across regions (urban, forest, magical, arctic)
- Lighting and color, used to guide the player and reinforce mood, from warm domestic tones to cold, desolate northern landscapes

Overall, the visual approach prioritizes immersion and recognizability, allowing players to feel as though they are stepping directly into the world of the film.

Tone Keywords

- Storybook
- Warm vs. Cold contrast
- Magical realism
- Cozy → Mysterious → Harsh (progressive tonal shift)
- Whimsical with underlying tension

Character Design

Character designs are based directly on their appearances in the film, ensuring immediate recognizability for players familiar with the source material.

Adaptations for gameplay focus on:

- **Clarity of silhouette**, ensuring characters remain readable during movement and interaction
- **Expressiveness**, supporting emotional storytelling through animation and posture
- **Consistency with tone**, maintaining a balance between stylization and believability

Gerda's design additionally supports customization through interchangeable clothing elements, which are integrated in a way that remains consistent with the established visual style.

UI & HUD Design

The UI design follows the same guiding principles as the overall visual direction: clarity, simplicity, and thematic consistency.

The HUD is designed to be minimal and unobtrusive, ensuring that players remain focused on the world rather than the interface. Visual elements are styled to align with the game's tone, avoiding overly modern or abstract designs in favor of shapes and materials that feel appropriate within the setting.

Menus and interface elements prioritize:

- **Readability** for a younger audience
- **Clear** visual hierarchy
- **Consistency** with the game's color palette and thematic identity

Where appropriate, subtle stylistic touches reinforce the connection to the world, helping the interface feel integrated rather than separate.



Audio & Music

Sound Design

Sound design supports both gameplay clarity and immersion, reinforcing player actions and environmental feedback.

Key principles include:

- **Readable feedback**, ensuring that interactions such as movement, item usage, and abilities are clearly communicated
- **Environmental ambience**, bringing locations to life through subtle background sounds such as wind, wildlife, and environmental effects
- **Tone consistency**, maintaining a non-threatening, approachable soundscape even during moments of tension

Enemy and interaction sounds are designed to be informative rather than aggressive, aligning with the game's non-violent approach to conflict.

Music

The musical direction aims to reflect the emotional and atmospheric range of the journey, drawing inspiration from the tone of the film.

The score is expected to:

- Support **emotional storytelling**, emphasizing key narrative moments
- Reinforce **environmental identity**, with distinct musical moods for different regions

Music is used to enhance immersion without overwhelming the player, complementing both exploration and key gameplay sequences.



Monetization & Post-Launch Plans

Monetization Model & Pricing Strategy

North - Gerda's Journey is currently envisioned as a premium product with an accessible indie-level price point, tentatively positioned around **USD 9.99**. This reflects the game's focused scope, family-friendly appeal, and relatively compact playtime, while remaining attractive to a broad audience. Final pricing strategy would, however, be determined in alignment with the publisher's market positioning and commercial goals.

Support Plans

There are currently no concrete post-launch support plans defined for the project. Any future updates, additional content, or platform expansions would depend on the outcome of publishing

discussions, the success of the initial release, and the broader strategic priorities set with the publisher.