



Game Concept Submission Document

Title: Thief 4—Dagger of Ways (Working Title)

Genre: Action-Stealth w/ Horror

Submitted by: Ion Storm Thief 4 Team

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High Concept

Thief 4—Dagger of Ways is a dark, stylish game that takes place in a modern criminal underworld. It is the story of a talented thief who gets drawn into a hidden war with a mysterious supernatural cult.

Character

Garrett is a young loner who needs no one; other people just get in his way. He considers himself a thief, not a hero. He wants only to ply his trade and accumulate enough wealth to live in style. Garrett is grim and cynical—the classic anti-hero, bothered by his own troubled past. He doesn't want to get involved in the larger schemes of the world, but ultimately has no choice.

As a note, we want to leverage the well-defined, cynical character that was developed for the previous games in the Thief series; it's the same Garrett, simply moved into a recognizable, modern world.



Setting

Garrett resides in "the City," a highly realistic, yet unsettling urban nightscape.

This is not the unrecognizable setting from the earlier Thief games; this is modern Earth, at night, with some stylized elements—a blend of New York, Los Angeles, Boston and other American cities.

Game environments will feature recognizable elements from modern day society--streets populated by civilian pedestrians, derelict convenience stores and dark back-alleys.



We want to present a darkly colorful world of shadow, neon and moonlight, wherein Garrett will explore rooftops and street corners in one mission and a corrupt senator's mansion in another. The game will take him to a variety of familiar environments—from an abandoned subway station to the mysterious headquarters of a secretive global cult.

Fantasy Fulfillment

Garrett is a subversive rebel in a decaying modern world, slipping from the shadows and taking whatever he wants. Crawling over rooftops and skulking through alleys, he can move without a sound, pick any lock and outsmart any guard.

Dagger of Ways is the story of a thief, but it's more than that—as Garrett plies his trade, he becomes aware of an ancient secret and must infiltrate the most dangerous parts of the City in order to unravel the mystery.

As an ancient cult secretly grows in power, the effects are felt in the darkest corners of the City. Hidden from the daylight world, supernatural forces begin to spread like a cancer through the homeless and through the criminal underworld. Increasingly, Garrett is pitted against twisted, dangerous fiends. Finally, he is all that stands against the forces of darkness that threaten to consume the City.

High Level Game Goal

Core gameplay in the previous Thief titles was too slow-paced, too passive. We want make it fun/accessible by adding new core features/movement modes that are faster paced and active in nature.

Action-Stealth Gameplay: Following a lightweight, but dramatic story arc, the player will actively make his way through the game world, fighting and sneaking. The AI, maps and player tools will support both combat and enemy avoidance. From a fighting standpoint, we want tactical, visceral combat. In order to maximize the player experience, Ion Storm needs to invest in polished animations and higher production values in general. We want to strive for high quality tactical aesthetics—the combat should *feel* good and the player should always feel like he has influence over the strategic situation. At times the player will need to move quietly, hide or use stealth tools in order to avoid detection. At other moments the player will be able to engage in combat with

enemy guards and monsters, either using a silencer-equipped pistol or the Dagger of Ways.

The Dagger of Ways: Early in the game, Garrett will find a pivotal supernatural artifact—a rune-covered dagger. Initially only an exotic weapon, it will soon reveal other powers which will have a direct effect on the game world. The player will be able to use the dagger to shift into a “wraith realm,” bypassing human guards. However, this wraith world is filled with shadowy monstrosities, making it perilous and action packed. (Whenever Garrett kills someone, the wraith world gets deadlier, as the shadows multiply.) The player will have to decide, minute-by-minute, whether to deal with guards and security in the real world, or whether to increase the level of challenge in the wraith world by using the dagger to kill. This represents an ongoing, interesting decision for the player. Additionally, the dagger has another function that will allow Garrett to become wraith-like and quickly scout ahead, seeing guard locations and map layouts.

Artificial Intelligence: The Thief 4 AI effort will strive to create believable, responsive and entertaining characters that appropriately support the T4 gameplay. There are several key areas of emphasis that will allow us to take the next step in game AI development. First, we want to create game characters that are highly responsive to player actions. As much as possible, characters will have explicit reactions to anything and everything the player is capable of doing that affects the game world. Secondly, we plan on creating game characters that animate in a more human fashion; characters that are fluid, expressive, emotional beings that look and act more like people than robots. Finally, in order to really push the AI effort forward in new and exciting directions, we need to build characters that appear to have genuine relationships with the game world around them; for example, characters that can manipulate interactive game objects, or characters that can explicitly communicate with one another at appropriate times.

Accessibility: Unlike Deus Ex, Thief has the advantage of focus. Thief 4 will feature pick-up-and-play simplicity. The game will adhere to accepted console interface standards and, unlike prior games in the Thief series, will feature accessible and familiar fictional concepts.

Mission Based Structure: We want to give the player a controlled series of focused missions. Each mission will be preceded by an FMV briefing (or two, in the case where the player has unlocked a set of secret mission objectives). Some missions will return the player to a previously explored place in the City. In general, missions do not branch, though we might do this once, at a pivotal point, late in the game. A core set of characters will be referenced throughout the game, to build up player investment. We expect each mission to require ~45 minutes for completion and we hope to feature 10-16 missions. (Our target is 10-12 hours of gameplay, followed by additional downloadable mission content.)

Secret Missions: In addition to the player’s primary goals, each mission will include optional secret mission goals that can be unlocked by advanced or thorough players. If a player completes any secret mission goals during a mission, then he will get a secret mission briefing at the start of the next mission. We will use a particular character—someone not fully associated with the primary plot—to deliver the secret mission briefing. Some of the secret mission goals might even be at odds with the player’s primary goals. Secret mission objectives will periodically unlock higher level powers for the Dagger of Ways. For instance, the player might find a parchment that outlines the use of the dagger as a source of black light, capable of repelling wraiths.

Ion Storm Gameplay: Thief 4 is an immersive simulation. Variable gameplay (or Deus Ex-style ‘multiple solutions to problems’) will allow the player to engage in improvisational problem solving and will prevent the game from feeling like a simple puzzle game. We will provide a focused set of interesting, general-purpose tools that lead to self-expression, plan formulation and emergent gameplay. We will provide a highly interactive environment, filled with objects that have interesting utility. The game will feature lightweight resource management, allowing the player to collect, upgrade or buy items. For exploration value, Thief 4 missions will include some non-critical areas to explore.

Similar Games: Story/Action/Stealth/Freeform Gameplay--Max Payne, Golden Eye/Perfect Dark, Thief, Deus Ex, Splinter Cell, Metal Gear Solid, Starcraft: Ghost, GTA3 and GTA3: Vice City.

Similar Entertainment Products: Movies: Se7en, Dark City, Underworld, Blade, Salton Sea, The Ninth Gate. Books: The Da Vinci Code.

Franchise Potential

The Thief series has always been held back by esoteric, unrecognizable fiction and passive, slow-paced gameplay.

Thief 4—Dagger of Ways intends to broaden the appeal of the series by providing faster-paced, more active gameplay and using more universally recognizable (stronger) fictional elements.

We will stay true to the original high concepts of the Thief series: Garrett as a character, a deeply-simulated gothic city and stealth-action gameplay. As with the previous Thief games, various factions vie for control of the City.

Moving Garrett into the modern world opens the way for many potential upgrades and extensions to the series over time: Vehicles, Data Hacking, Counter-surveillance, etc.



Why Eidos?

Thief 4—Dagger of Ways is an attempt to take a potentially valuable franchise and fully realize that potential. We want to make a more commercially accessible action-stealth game.

Our ultimate production goal is to create a polished Thief title on a short schedule, attempting to use existing technology to its fullest extent.

Platform (Select one): *PC*___ *Console*___ *Both* *X*___

Target Audience: Gamers 16+

Risks

Technology: With Ion Storm's engine, we can start production quickly, we are confident that we can create the rich gameplay we want and we have a cutting edge Xbox rendering solution. However, the Ion Storm tools need some clean up.

Project Timeline: Though a real schedule and budget will be provided as one of our deliverables, at the end of pre-production, we are planning on a shorter timeline than Ion Storm's norm.

Animation Quality: Our animation system (as well as our ability to use it) will need to be significantly upgraded, if we're going to be competitive in the years to come. We are exploring the option of porting the Crystal Dynamics animation tools or the Granny animation package.

AI Quality: Though our AI programmers are often tasked with solving problems far harder than most games tackle, it is a fact that we are routinely criticized—by peers, press and players—for the responsiveness and believability of our AI. We have to prove, early in development, that we can address concerns in this area by designing, prototyping and implementing AI—combat and non-combat—that is second to none.

Wraith World Implementation: This is a new game feature that must be designed from scratch. This feature's look and feel, gameplay ramifications, and unique rendering needs are all unknowns at this time.

Fiction Overview

Story: A cynical loner within the City, Garrett starts the game as a young, but talented thief. He is a ghost within the modern system. Garrett doesn't fit in with the crass culture of the low-brow criminal underworld, but he is equally ill-at-ease with straight society.

As a child, Garrett's family was part of a scholarly secret society called the Keepers. Over time, the organization became more cultish. His mother and father—refined and educated—disappeared trying to escape. Garrett eventually got away from the Keepers, but his younger sister did not. Memories of these early years drive him and disturb him.

Garrett will eventually learn the chilling truth about his mother and father, who were sacrificed by the Keepers in order to maintain a code of silence dating back for thousands of years.

As the story begins to take shape, Garrett comes to see that there's a hint of weirdness in the underground recesses of the City: Homeless crack addicts babbling in Latin, misshapen forms—not quite human—slipping down through manhole covers in the distance.

Garrett gets caught up in a hidden supernatural conflict. Three factions participate in the struggle.

The Keepers—an ancient secret society with mysterious goals—seem to want to maintain the status quo. The Church, fading in the modern world, sees the conflict over the emerging supernatural world as a chance to make manifest their influence over their believers and wants exclusive control over the dark magic. The Openers—seemingly a new power, but with ties to forces older than human society—seek to unleash the dark magic that is awakening in the modern world.

Eventually, Garrett's sister, now a Keeper agent, confronts him with the truth about the conflict, giving him a choice to make—Garrett can support the Keepers, a faction that destroyed his parents, or he will have to stand against the last member of his family. Beyond this personal

struggle, Garrett must make sense of the larger conflict—he has the power to elevate one of the factions, but to do so will draw the wrath of the other two.

Though initially uninterested in this shadow war, Garrett alone has the will and talent to decide the fate of the City and perhaps ultimately the world.

Horror

Emotional Investment: We would like to get the player more emotionally involved in Thief gameplay by increasing the dramatic tension. We can accomplish this by using horror elements. The player will care more about the consequences of his actions if game scenes are scary enough to provide an emotional response (as in games like Resident Evil or the first Thief game).

Accessibility: We want to create a world that is still mostly realistic and modern, but uses recognizable influences from horror movies and games. Threatening street people seem almost ghoul-like. Garrett glimpses a wealthy, conservative woman partially unclothed and sees that she bears horrible, ritualistic scarring across her back and shoulders. A serial killer turns out to be plying his grisly trade in the name of an ancient cult. Garrett is a criminal in the modern world, relying on nightvision and semi-automatic weapons, but as the game progresses, he must use these tools against increasingly horrifying supernatural opponents.



Canonical Horror Example: Consider a scene from the movie Blade. There was a half-vampire ghoul in the tunnels under the final temple. In a horrifying scene, the ghoul's ex-girlfriend must get past the ghoul. She is relatively underpowered, being only human and being an everyday woman pitted against a savage supernatural creature. The ghoul here serves as a "guard," and the woman must defeat or sneak past the ghoul, who is truly horrible. In the movie, the ghoul is the twisted, pathetic, ruined remains of the woman's ex-boyfriend, calling out to her, still obsessed with her. The scene is gripping—it features one guard instead of twenty, yet the guard is dangerously powerful and twisted, giving the audience an emotional investment in the woman's fate. Aside from simply wanting to accomplish her goal (of helping Blade) in the movie, the woman has multiple reasons not to get caught, some of which involve primal drives related to horror fiction: She wants to survive, but also the ghoul (her ex-boyfriend) disgusts her because he is obsessive, half-dead and cannibalistic.

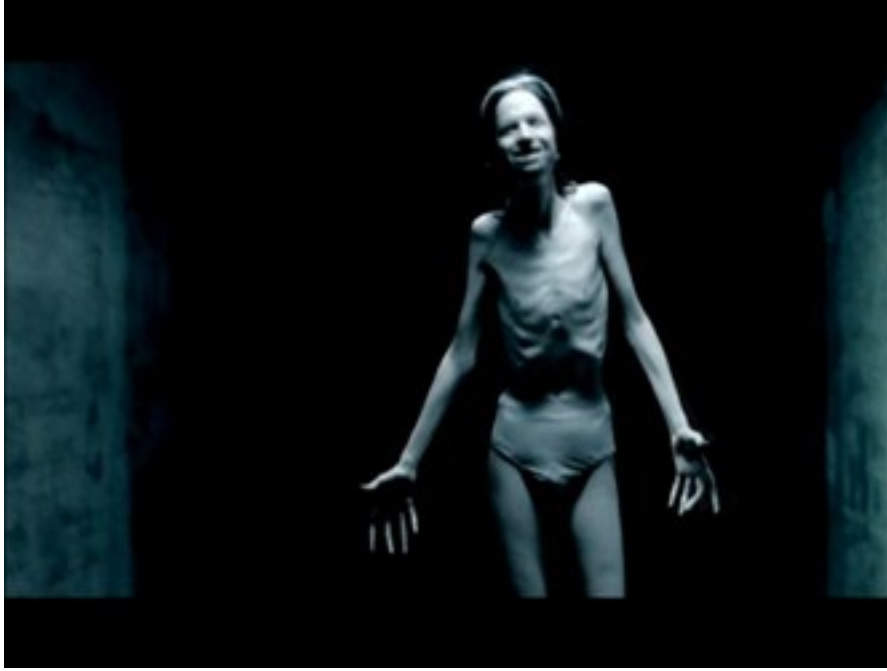
Thief 4 Horror Elements:

Horror Set Scenes

Horror Atmospherics

Monsters

The Wraith World



Five Minutes of Gameplay

The Setup: A briefing FMV sets the tone and the objectives for the upcoming mission, explaining the goals and drawing the player into the dark world of the City by revealing the major characters and the unfolding plot. In this case, Garrett must break into Senator Bafford's mansion, intercept a letter sent to the Senator by Constantine, a local crime lord, and replace it with a forgery that will set in motion a conflict designed to thwart the Senator's plans.

In addition, due to exceptional performance in the previous mission, the player receives a secret mission FMV briefing. This one, from a small-time drug dealer, tips the player off to a safe in Bafford's basement that contains sensitive materials being used to blackmail the drug dealer. Grabbing it will earn Garrett a fair amount of money, but will also allow the drug dealer to resume regular operation in the City. The consequences of these secret mission objectives will be tied to secret missions in the future.

Once the briefings are over, the player is taken to the loadout menu, where he carefully selects his equipment.

The Mission: You arrive just inside the front gate of Senator Bafford's estate, where lampposts create harsh pools of light and the shadows created by the hedges create safe zones.

Finding a lone guard on patrol, you take out a silenced pistol and quietly shoot out a small light mounted on the side of the house, then dash into the new safe zone and turn on your nightvision goggles.

As the guard passes, he notices that the light is out and wonders aloud, "What happened to that light?" He turns on a flashlight, which overloads your nightvision. Switching to thermal vision, which highlights the guard against the cold backdrop of the grounds, you quickly and quietly sneak behind him and slit his throat.

Leaving the guard's body safely hidden in the dark, you move to the back entrance of the mansion, which is watched not only by two patrolling guards, but by one stationary guard just a few feet in front of the door. Even getting close enough to observe the patrols would be risky.

Using the Dagger of Ways, you summon a wraith that is invisible to those in the real world. Looking through the wraith's eyes, you drift through the night air and scout the area. Aware that there are no easily-exploitable weaknesses in the mansion's security, you use the Dagger for a different purpose.

Using the arcane weapon to cut a hole into space, you step into the wraith world, a dimension that lives just beneath the real world. The guards become ghostly wisps, unaware of you, and for the first time you see the wraiths. They're relatively docile, because you've only killed one guard, but a few wraiths see you and begin to close in.

As quickly as possible, you glide toward the stationary guard's wispy form, dodging the wraiths as you go, and then slip back into the real world. From behind, you stab the guard with the Dagger, sending him into the wraith world, where he is instantly devoured. You can hear his agonized scream across the void, though it is merely an echo when heard from the real world.

You turn and pick the lock on the back door of the mansion, which consists of a contextual mini-game where Garrett looks into the keyhole and aligns the magnetic tumbler rings, aided by aural feedback. Popping the lock, you slip inside only to be greeted by a gruesome, ritualistic scene.

All around you are desiccated bodies, many of them hanging from the ceiling. A few of them twist slowly back and forth. As you steel yourself and walk across the room, one of the bodies on the floor suddenly springs to life, sees you, and charges you with an earsplitting shriek. The feral ghoul doesn't seem to notice that it's missing an arm as it races toward you with its dead eyes focused on your throat.

Panicking, you quickly flip back into the wraith world, where the demons have been awoken by the horror of the real world and immediately swarm you. You try to dash away, but quickly realize that your only chance is to turn and fight. Using the Dagger, you battle the wraiths one by one, dodging, jumping, and lashing out with the Dagger until they're all destroyed. Catching your breath, you get a moment of rest in this dark, dead world....

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