THE LEAGUE [Mia Michel]

Narrative Design Sample: Location Breakdown

CORE CONTAINER - STAGE 8 ARENA

Game Context: A fantasy sports-combat game with hints of romantic drama. Paired champions compete in a sports tournament with combative elements inside magical arenas. There is live commentary, crowd reactions, and sponsorships.

Location Function: Boss combat, ally protection, and an important triggered confrontational event between characters (X and Kharo) which impacts the rest of the gameplay.

GOAL

This should feel like the one place where X has complete authority and exposure. Throughout matches she's part of several moving teammates. By summoning the Core Container, she brings down a sealed dome which isolates her and the person she most wants to confront. It's a space used for combat, that she's initially using to have a conversational confrontation.

This is shown through spatial contrast with the sudden silence, the isolation of just two characters, and the dome's field itself.

ENVIRONMENT & SPACE

The dome shows an obvious rounded force field but still contains the same nature-like elements as the actual main field. Yet it shows no people besides them and lacks any sound outside of their environment. This includes hiding the hourglass timer which is visible in the outer arena.

Key Features:

- A rounded force field enclosure with some occasional faintness to provide as a reminder of the match still ongoing. There's a light echo and reverberation with sounds to support this.
- Nature: The same as the grassy field - trees with golden markings, glowing waterways, shimmering portal points. This includes sounds of birds and distant creatures.
- The ball left on the ground between the characters at the start. Visible but ignored until the confrontation ends.
- The force field is felt if a character tries to rush out and acts as an impenetrable barrier unless the character X runs to it with the ball after the confrontation.
- The dome, while appearing wide, is limited in range to maintain a feeling of being restricted.

STORYTELLING DEVICES

1. **Confession Booth:** A space primarily used for physical combat instead used for emotional confrontation.

Narrative purpose: Using tactical isolation as an emotional choice to drive the story forth and help X confront the thing that's been affecting her gameplay. Kharo.

Player experience: The player has been locked in a Core Container before by other opponents in different matches, yet is using it for the first time for a different purpose. This should create some surprise as to how it might be used.

2. **Isolation Through Absence:** The dome removes every other person besides two, leaving only the arena intact

Narrative purpose: Create the impression of a large, private space within a public arena which represents a high degree of emotional exposure and connection which X has been wanting but could never attain with Kharo.

Player experience: The sudden silence should feel uneasy as it wipes out the crowd's cheers, the calls of teammates and the remarks from the commentators. The sameness of the field creates a grounded and peaceful serenity, yet there's still enough space creating a visceral distance between the player and the character isolated.

Design consideration: Coordinate with audio in how to cut the sounds of the crowd, teammates and commentary. No relighting changes are needed besides that which supports the forcefield.

3. **Hidden Time:** The hourglass timer is hidden from the player for the scene's duration.

Narrative purpose: The character's have stopped tracking the match, choosing what's more important in this moment.

Player experience: The timer will be visibly lower when the dome breaks, showing that the conversation was affecting the match and did have consequences even if untracked.

PLAYER EXPERIENCE & INTENDED PROGRESSION

The player enters this mid-combat at full intensity and is instantly dropped without a transition into a static two-character scene. It's both peaceful in how it appears but uneasy in how restrictive it is. And it grows more in one direction over the other dependent on the sequence of events within the conversation. One the dome breaks, it should feel as instantaneous as if the match didn't pause, because it hasn't.

IMPLEMENTATION SUMMARY

Proposed sequence:

1. The player fights through the outer arena encounter and reaches the mid-field ball contest.
2. Player-initiated contact with Kharo and the ball triggering the Core Container.
3. The outer arena, timer, and all other people are hidden as the dome encloses around them, launching into the branching dialogue. **[PORTFOLIO NOTE: this scene is depicted as both a cutscene and branching dialogue sample and differs depending.]**

4. The scene's outcome depends on player choices which shapes Kharo's behavior for the rest of the game.

5. The dome breaks on the scene's resolution and control returns to the player mid-game.

6. The match resumes under the new state until the horn sounds at the end of the match.

Development status: The above is the intended progression and a conceptual narrative design sample. The environmental details, gameplay flow, and collaboration notes represent proposed design intentions rather than implemented game features. Yet the exact pacing, character placement, and player movement would be determined in collaboration with level design and gameplay teams.

CROSS-DISCIPLINE CONSIDERATIONS

These are proposed considerations for collaboration during development.

Level Design

- The Core Container can be triggered anywhere in the play space as it is player-summoned by a specific move and point.
- Keep the dome's interior barriers partially visible as a shimmery force field with very faint hints of the outside yet nothing distracting or too obvious
- Have the rounded barriers create a push back to restrict characters to its position.
- When the dome breaks, it literally breaks into glass-like fragments of glowing light which fades out like dust.

Lighting

- Dome interior: no relighting. The same daylight carries through as from the main field. Which the exact same elements such as trees creating shadow as before.
- Use a shimmery effect to indicate the force field around them but lightly.
- A dome break could be indicated by weblike fragmentation of glowing light that cracks through the dome.

Audio

- Treat the dome seal as a signature audio event: cut sound from crowd, teammates and commentary instantaneously.
- Keep the field's natural ambience of the rustling trees, waterways, birds and other creatures alive inside the dome.
- Let there be some echo and reverb. So even dry vocals have a slight wetness to it.
- The dome breaking creates a glass breaking effect as the fragments fall apart instantly.

- The dome breaking immediately returns the sounds of the crowd, teammates and commentators with no fade in.

Animation

- Kharo's evasion combat set (retreating, deflecting, little to zero counterattacks) need noticeably different variants if this scene's outcome lowers his defense. Something like attacks and openings that weren't previously used or available.

WHAT THE PLAYER LEARNS WITHOUT DIALOGUE

By exploring the location, the player should be able to infer that:

- Whatever is unresolved between X and Kharo is larger than this single match and has been throwing X off of her game.

- The tournament continues and every decision has a consequence even permitted, including the right to cast a Core Container. This can be shown by the ongoing timer.

- Kharo's avoidant combat behavior with X is a character trait (e.g. constant retreat, evasion, etc.) which can shift depending on their interactions. And it may affect later gameplay.