

## **Devil May Cry 4 - Mission 13 Redesign Proposal**

### **Intro**

In Devil May Cry 4 (DMC4), the player must change roles midway through the game. The player has been using the character Nero, and now the player assumes the role of Dante. Mission 12 is the first level the player uses Dante. Mission 12 combines a variety of enemies and platforming to encourage the player to explore Dante's controls and mechanics, however, Mission 12 is very short and has few encounters. Mission 13, the next level, require the player to go back through a previous level, but this time with a mysterious fog appearing throughout the level which will teleport the player through the level's zones in a different order. The player must learn the correct path to navigate through the level and arrive at the first boss for Dante. However, many fog teleporters will send Dante in a loop, as its purpose is to make the level more difficult to navigate. Dante is filled with daunting mechanics and controls that simply cannot be adequately explored within the duration of Mission 12. This leads us to Mission 13, where the player is still in need of training, but must also deal with a confusing puzzle.

### **Problem 1: Difficult New Character with a Complicated Level**

The player can no longer use Nero, and must learn to control Dante, a new character. While Mission 12 does an admirable job of getting the player to explore Dante's actions through a variety of enemies and platforming, the encounters are few and it is too short of a time to be effective. The player will still be focusing on learning to control Dante, so Mission 13 creates a frustrating challenge by also asking the player to navigate a confusing puzzle. Additionally, several zones do not prevent skipping encounters if the player knows the correct route, allowing the player to avoid nearly all combat. The player may also opt to do this if he or she becomes frustrated, and begin trying to find a way out instead of engaging enemies.

Let's change the level to focus on combat. Wall off all "incorrect" routes and let the player focus on fighting and learning Dante. Do not let the player advance until each fight is completed. This way we can ensure the player is learning the new character, and provide a fun and early level filled with action. This format should also serve as a great challenge for higher difficulties.

### **Problem 2: Unclear Audio Cue and Bug**

One of the clues to tell the player the correct direction is an audio cue. The level begins with a brief cutscene explaining what the fog is, and the game plays the audio cue for the first time, a taunting voice. This SFX is a hint to tell the player the correct direction

throughout the level. As Dante approaches the correct zone exits and fog teleporters, the player will hear the voice taunt them. This is a reasonable player aid, but because of the demanding thought behind adjusting to Dante, this is difficult to pay attention to. It is likely to be completely disregarded as background audio as the player will be fighting near the fog portals frequently. Furthermore, if the player skips the cutscene, which is likely if he or she is repeating the level because of failure or a second playthrough, the audio cue from the cutscene will leak into the start of the level. Since the player starts next to a fog portal, which is the wrong direction, this can cause the audio cue to completely lose its meaning at the very beginning of the level.

As suggested previously, revising the level to focus on combat is the solution to this as well. To keep the atmosphere, the audio can play when the player gets locked into a fight in each zone, or when the player fails, such as a game over state. Let's reduce confusion, allowing the player to focus on adjusting to Dante.

### **Problem 3: Confusing Camera**

The player must deal with a camera that is originally designed to play the level backwards, as previously Nero navigated the level towards the area Dante is coming from. The level begins by pointing the camera in the wrong direction of progression.



As this entire level was used earlier in the game, some of the camera angles are set in the opposite direction of progression, such as here at the very beginning of the level. Although this is technically the direction Dante came from the previous level, the new

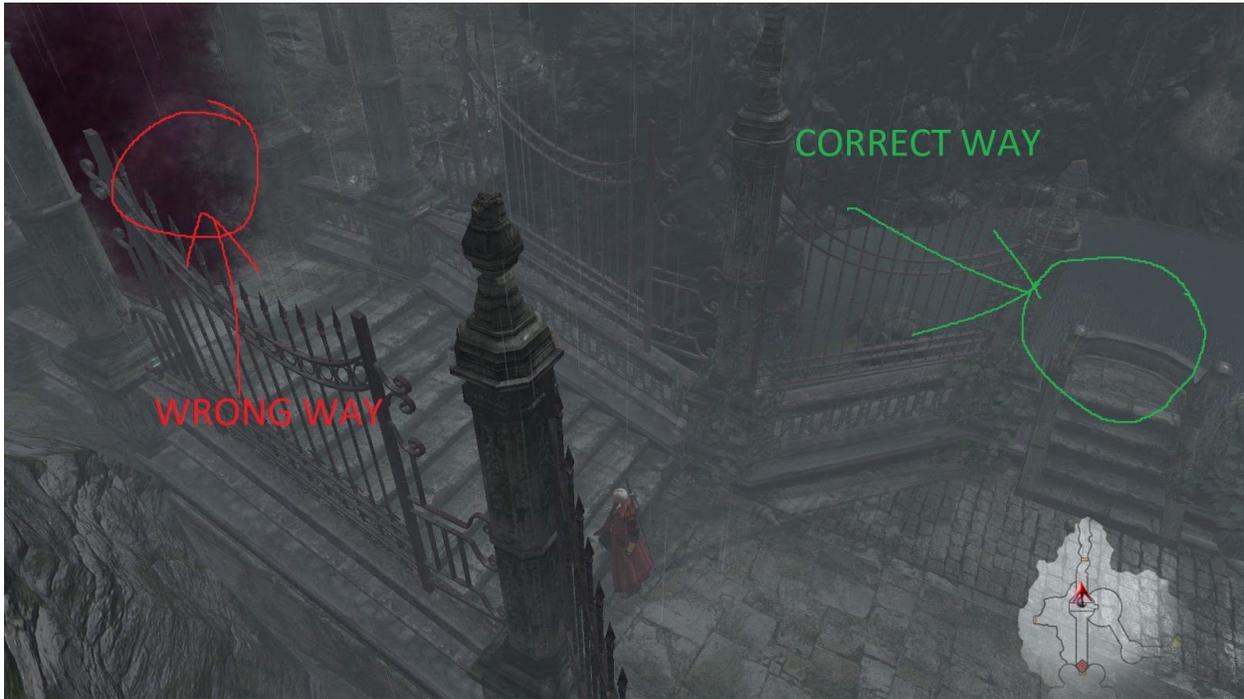
fog portal object draws the player's attention. The player is very likely to try going this way, which simply leads to a frustrating loop that will return Dante to this exact position. Instead, the player is suppose to head towards the camera, which will take them to the following area:



Here we have another instance of the camera pointing in the opposite direction of progression. Since the player is now backtracking through previous levels, this is becoming a common problem. This diminishes the camera's role in leading the player, which previously the player was trained to expect.



The above image shows the correct direction of progression, but it is rather obscured. In fact, it is walled off. A way to get there is visible, but it completely blends in with the level and can be mistaken as decoration. The player is also too far from the fog portal to hear the audio cue.



It is likely the player will pass right by it and once again go the wrong way. The wrong way will take the player back to the beginning of the level. The first fight in the level will not happen until the player finds the correct path. When the player overcomes this rocky start, through trial and error, he or she can progress through the rest of the level. Clever players may clue in on the taunting voice to know the correct direction. It is also rather likely that the player will simply get lost because of the camera and “fake” portals that are meant to halt progress by returning Dante to previous zones.

If the level is focused on combat, and we funnel the player so that there is not a wrong direction, then we do not need to do anything about the camera. Most fights currently occur in zones where the camera angle is not a problem. It is when entering zones and navigating that it becomes a problem, especially at the start of the level. Otherwise, we will want to look into changing the facing of each camera to better direct the player in some zones. Making sure all portals are in easily visible spots should also help the player with locating where to go. Let’s make sure paths to these portals are visible, too.

#### Problem 4: Recurring Puzzle

Eventually the player will stumble across a puzzle:



This is the exact same puzzle from Mission 8 when playing as Nero:



The solution to both puzzles is to move to the path opposite of the direction the alter's shadow is pointing. This is hinted by a riddle the player can read. The player must do this several times to show he or she has solved the riddle. The only difference is the

direction the shadow points for each character. If the player previously managed to solve the puzzle, then this puzzle provides no new challenge to the player. If the player did not solve the puzzle, and overcame it previously through trial and error, then the player still probably doesn't want to solve it and will only find it frustrating to be confronted by the puzzle again.



The above image is the zone the player is sent to if he or she goes the wrong direction when attempting the puzzle. The player must fight a group of enemies, and then a teleporter to leave the zone will appear and return the player to the beginning of the puzzle.

This puzzle should be removed. It provides no new challenge to the player. We can salvage the alter zone and “wrong way” zone as arenas to teleport the player to. This will help keep arena variety interesting and allow for a more focused experience.

### **Recommendation**

On Mission 13, the player is still learning an incredibly complicated character. Making the player solve the current design of the level will cause many players to become rightly frustrated as it is simply confusing. Dante's levels are an attempt to add content to the game through reuse of assets. This level specifically has teleporting fog because certain parts of the area were intended for Nero's unique mechanic, and it also adds

something new to a previous level. However, this level fails to deliver on DMC4's promise of surreal action-gaming.

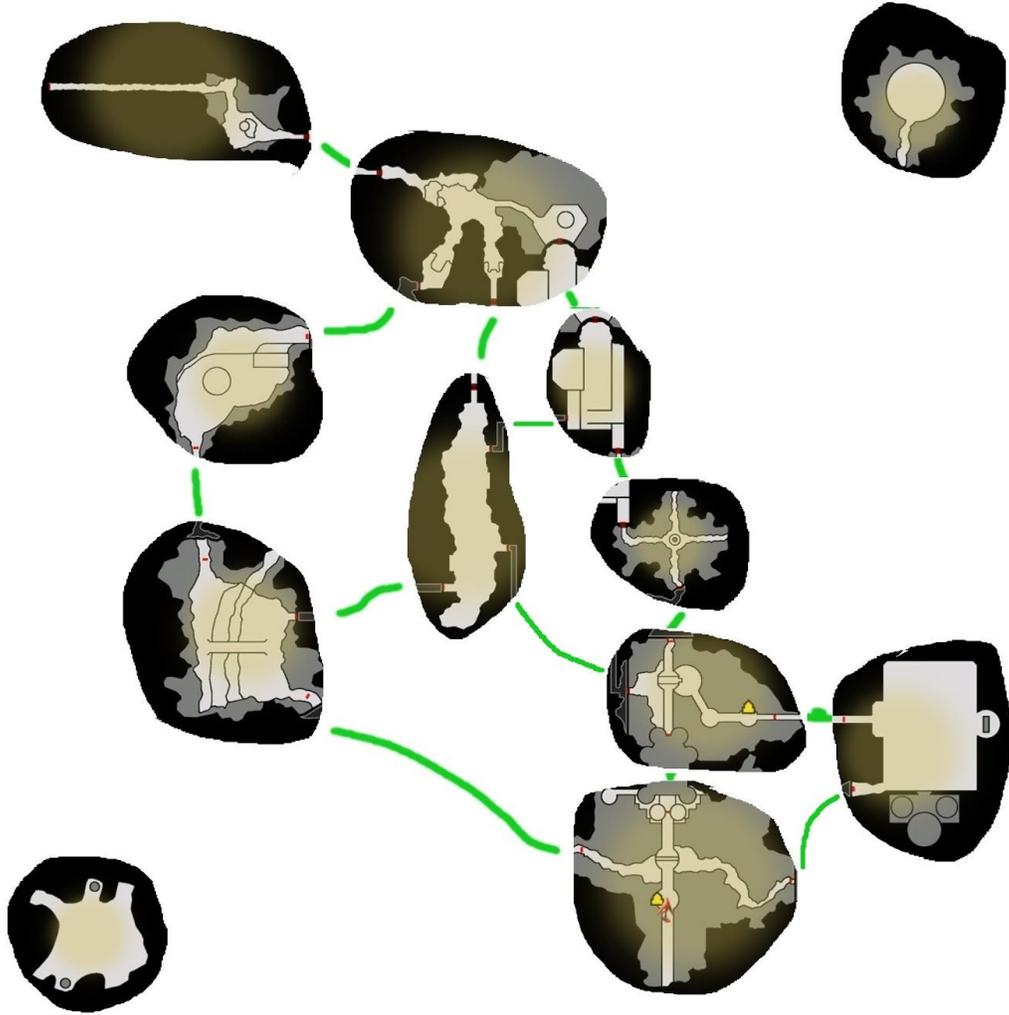
This level should focus on combat so the player can continue to adapt to the new game controls and mechanics that come with Dante:

- Put a barrier over any wrong direction for this stage (that is thematically appropriate - like fog of another color) to keep the player from worrying about where to go.
- Connect our set pieces with the purple fog teleporters - the same idea as the current version.
- Clearly implement the teleporters' positions to be more visible to the player and to allow for more interesting fight arenas.
- Lock the teleporters until the player finishes the fight - the current version allows the player to avoid many encounters if they know the solution. This challenge guarantees the player is learning Dante, and it provides additional challenge for higher difficulties.
- Remove the shadow forest puzzle from the level. It is redundant since the player likely solved it earlier in the game.
- Use the shadow forest puzzle's "wrong direction room" to pad the level out with more fights and connect areas together.

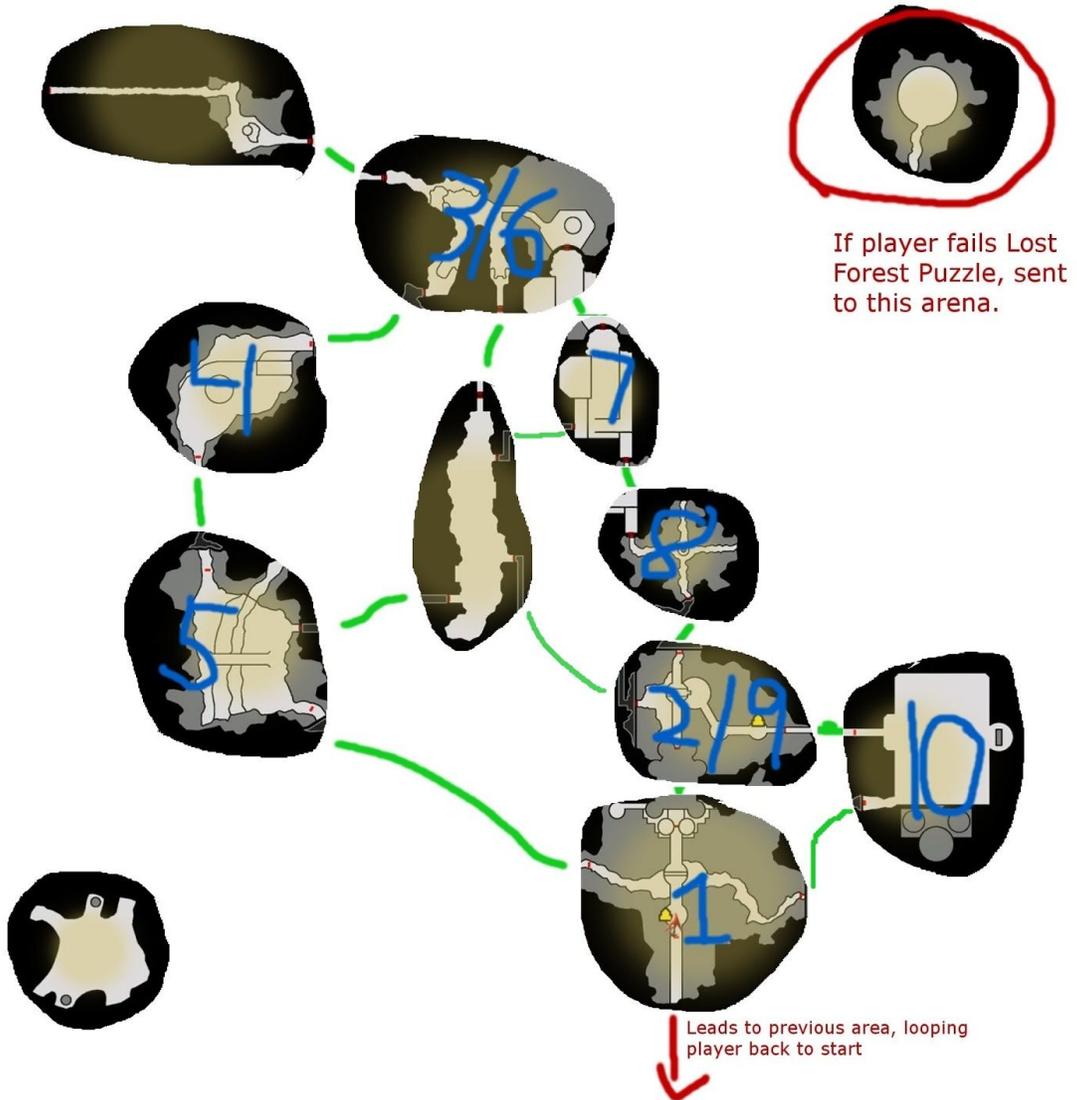
This redesign provides a better player experience. The player can focus on learning how to play the complex new character while enjoying an action-heavy level, instead of becoming lost and frustrated. Connecting our set pieces together with teleporters can allow for a bit of freedom with encounter balancing, as it can flow together in any order, since the game level is composed of thematically similar zones that are not actually connected. Not only will it let us tweak the encounters to help the players learn Dante, it can also serve as a satisfying experience at higher difficulties since we'll have a lot of encounters to rebalance and play around with.

# Maps

## Mission 8/13 - Mitis Forest



# Mission 13 - Correct Route



### Mission 13 - Redesigned

