

Custom Level Design - “Starving to Death” By: Mykaela Anne

I created a custom level in *BattleBlock Theater* titled “Starving to Death”. A chaotic, puzzle-platforming adventure that throws players headfirst into a deadly, dessert-fueled escape challenge. The concept behind the level is both ridiculous and darkly humorous: you’re a starving prisoner stuck in this bizarre theatrical nightmare, and your only hope is to escape the playhouse while collecting sweet treats specifically, strawberries and a lone piece of cake. These aren’t just for show either; every time you grab a strawberry or the cake, you earn a small time bonus (10–15 seconds), which makes collecting them more than just a side objective. It ties directly into your survival. The pressure is constantly building as the timer ticks down, forcing you to move fast and make snap decisions in the face of relentless danger.

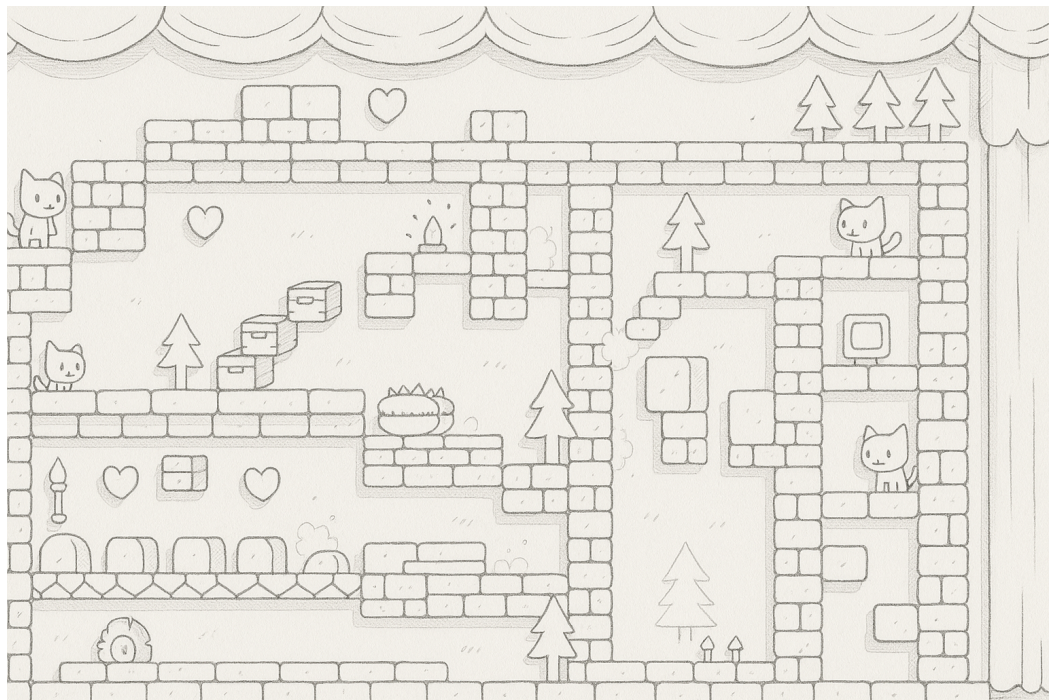
The pressure is constantly building as the timer ticks down, forcing you to move fast and make snap decisions in the face of relentless danger. The level layout includes both tight corridors and open spaces, all laced with brutal traps like spinning blades, laser beams, spike tiles, fireball cannons, and dissolving cloud platforms that vanish shortly after being stepped on. I designed the level to require fast reflexes and smart thinking, so players have to constantly adapt to new hazards and shifting terrain. I also included two enemy cats—because what’s a BattleBlock Theater level without at least a couple of those smug feline jerks? One cat patrols the top-right corner, guarding an area with a pressure plate puzzle, and the other stalks the far left side on a narrow ledge, waiting to pounce on careless players. You can sneak past them, or if you’re brave (or reckless), you can try to take them head-on. I wanted to give players different ways to approach those encounters. Speaking of options, the level has a multi-path structure that allows for freedom in how players want to tackle the stage. There’s a faster but more dangerous route loaded with traps and tight jumps, and a slightly longer path that’s safer but still filled with surprises. I designed it this way to encourage replayability and to give speedrunners some flexibility in how they optimize their runs.

The level also features a switch puzzle mechanic—players will need to activate certain buttons to disable barriers, open doors, and create temporary floating platforms in order to reach the final exit. The challenge is balancing exploration with survival, since going out of your way to press a switch might put you directly in harm’s way. I added collectibles like gems and yarn in harder-to-reach spots to reward players who take risks and explore every corner. You don’t have to grab everything to finish the level, but for those who want a full clear, you’ll have to

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face some of the nastiest traps. To make things even more interesting, I threw in some special materials like slippery ice blocks, disappearing cloud blocks, and even angel wings that let players glide through one of the more vertical sections, but you only get one shot, so you better make it count. The level includes helpful checkpoints and portals to break it into sections, which gives players a small breather in between the chaos.

My goal with “Starving to Death” was to create something that felt intense, challenging, and oddly funny at the same time. I wanted more experienced players to feel pushed to their limits, while still letting more casual players enjoy making slow but steady progress as they learn the level layout and discover secret paths. The overall tone is frantic and fast-paced, but it also rewards those who take time to learn its tricks. Even though the name is dramatic, the whole level is meant to feel like a wild theatrical performance where you’re constantly dodging death, all in pursuit of cake. It’s a weird mix of danger, dessert, and determination and I’m really proud of how it turned out.



Target Audience: Challenging Puzzle workers that loves to Speedrun levels and having good sense of humor

Game Type: 2D Puzzle-Platformer

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Game Engine: BattleBlock Theater Level Editor