



MountainFell (working title)



Stakeholders:

- Joren Van Borm – designer, artist & developer



Elevator Pitch (focus)

MountainFell is a turn based tactics and strategy game taking inspiration from XCom 2, Into the Breach and Invisible Inc. In which the player controls a team of human units attempting to fight of an army of humongous titans.

Story

A new settlement is expanding in a hostile land, and you're in charge of fighting off the existing inhabitants. Build your forces to protect it before the ever growing titan forces trample your efforts underfoot.

Gameplay

The gameplay during combat is a turn-based confrontation in the style of XCom 2 (or any other entry after the Enemy Unknown reboot), with a different setting and a unique setting & theme and therefore a fresh set of abilities and tactical choices at your disposal. The core aspect that makes the fantasy of this game so powerful though, are the enemies. While smaller enemies will likely be a part of the game, threats can escalate dramatically in size to the point where an individual enemy can be large enough to be a part of the map, requiring careful traversal of it's body to several key points of interest on it's body. All throughout this process of nitty-gritty tactics, you still need to keep an eye on your available resources for so as not to run yourself dry before the end of the fight.

As a break between titan fights, there would ideally exist another layer of the game such as a less tense mode of play, potentially involving more real time control. I believe a light settlement builder could be aa good fit here, the more because it would allow both sides of the game to neatly interact. You could set up a residential area for the resources during

settlement building, only for it to get attacked in a titan fight, or you could invest your settlement building resources into reinforcements that give you an edge during fights.

Unfortunately, I highly doubt I'll have time to build out both of these gameplay modes over the duration of this course. Considering the core fantasy in this game is very much in getting to take on these massive beasts, that aspect will be my first priority. For this reason all the design principles below are written mostly in terms of their implementation in the combat side of the game.

Design Principles

Daunting Scale

- Details: This game is about FIGHTING TITANS. Don't let the player forget this. The titans themselves should at all times be at the forefront of your mind as the biggest threat in the game. The grander they seem to a player, the better.
- How it works: The full game's enemy roster would ideally span a large variety of sizes. Make sure to equate this size to the threat level of an enemy. Every single fight should involve what seems at that time like an insurmountable adversary. Even the fights against smaller enemies can involve a group of them that acts as a larger whole, or even better: they can serve as a reminder of the larger threats that are still to come. Every time the player has grown used to a certain scale of enemy, make the next one introduced even more dramatic. Frequently show the titans causing real destruction and affecting the player in major ways, so they feel like a part of the world that forms a real threat. In combat, make sure even the largest, most sluggish titans seem like active adversaries involved in the fight. DO NOT REDUCE THEM TO A GLORIFIED PIECE OF TERRAIN with some environmental hazards strewn about. Even while fighting smaller enemies, Titans are and will always be the focus here.

Interesting Choices

- Details: Being a tactics / strategy game, it is of vital importance that actual thought needs to go into each turn. Playing on autopilot should not cut it. On the flip side, this should not go so far as to cause analysis paralysis for every tiny choice on every single move, as this quickly gets tiring due to decision fatigue.
- How it works: Offer multiple good but mutually exclusive choices. Make the choices that are in reach at any given time always have some distinguishing features that make each one interesting for different reasons. Force players to think ahead and forge plans to some degree rather than always acting in the moment. However, don't be too rough on a player for making a small mistake and present at least some easy choices on each turn as a breather.

Pressure & Risk

- Details: If there is one thing I like about XCom, it's the eustress of the game constantly keeping up the pressure and putting you in seemingly impossible situations that always feel you can just barely strategize your way out. An important caveat here is that these games are at their best when you are taking risks and trying crazy plans, so the game should never be so difficult as to push players into a single safe-but-boring strategy.
- How it works: ??? How do you make a game feel incredibly hard while not actually punishing risk taking? A dynamic difficulty system might work, making enemies less aggressive when you are already under a lot of stress so as to never cross the line. Otherwise, just present big rewards for taking these big risks and unique plans.

Variety, Distinction & Expression

- Details: In the full game, there should be a good variety of enemies, maps, and friendly units. This helps keep things fresh not only by offering new stuff for the player to see, but also by their interactions offering an exponential amount of interesting tactical situations. At least as important as the number of variants - in my opinion even more so - is how distinct every one is from the others. Once again, multiple options are only interesting insofar as there are meaningful differences between them.
The side of this variety that ends up in the hands of the player also helps give the player the power to develop their own playstyle, though it is important in this case to regularly push them to try something new & get out of their comfort zone.
- How it works: For the demo, I'll probably have to focus on just one titan enemy, maybe with a single type of minion included, and just enough material on the friendly side to fill up one squad of units. I expect there will simply not be enough time to build variety on top of the mechanical depth required. What I do hope to show off however, is the uniqueness in each of the options I do manage to create – no two units on your team should feel alike due to different classes and / or equipment. Enemy abilities should be interesting.

Game elements

Oh sh*t I just realised I'm gonna have to write multiple complex enemy AI behaviors won't I?

Assets

Here is where you will include the assets needed as well as brief descriptions.

Art

- ...
- ...
- ...

Sound

- ...
- ...
- ...

Animation

- ...
- ...
- ...