The Dragon at Castle Ivalyn

Design Document - 2024

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Overview

       The Dragon at Castle Ivalyn is an action-role playing game where the player takes control of a mysterious figure who travels to Ivalyn Castle to help liberate it from the evil dragon Dranomdrentyn and win the favor of the King in order to marry his beautiful daughter Vitoria.

       The Dragon at Castle Ivalyn (TDACI) has two game play modes. The first mode has a top down perspective where the player can navigate through the castle floors and exterior courtyard. The second is a third person combat mode where the player will fight the enemies that they have encountered. The goal of the game is to reach the top of the castle and defeat the Dragon Dranomdrentyn. To do so the player will have to clear five levels of the castle and defeat the boss on each level. Each level will need to be navigated with locked doors and traps the player must overcome in order to reach the Boss on each floor, defeat it, and move on to the next floor. All the while enemies will slowly pour in from the stairs from the above floor. Enemies that will increase in power the higher up the castle the player navigates.

       While the top down mode will be familiar to anyone who has played a game like Ultima, the combat mode is hopefully what sets this game apart from the plethora of others that have flooded the market. Instead of a traditional turn based or even real time RPG combat system, this will feature a unique system where the player must dodge the enemies attacks while taking the openings to return attacks to damage the enemy. A simple explanation would be Punch-Out with swords and sorcery. Taking a cue from the Souls series, the player will also have to deal with managing stamina and equipment degradation.

       TDACI will make iteself unique by all these features and provide a fun and exciting game play experience for any Action RPG fan.

Story Synopsis

Near the southern coast lies the valley of Bleyle. There amongst the rivers that run from the northern mountains into the sea lies the Castle of Ivalyn. From this ancient castle King Beinon has ruled over his subjects for almost thirty years.

While the origins of the castle are unknown, Benion is of a lineage that stretches back dozens of generations. Some say to the initial moment that the goddess offered herself to the king of the sea which created her children, the precursors to men. Benion's small kingdom makes up a larger group of allied nations that make up the modern Gradian empire, entitling him to protection under the nations that surround his lands. This however did not grant him any relief from what was to come.

An uncharacteristic summer storm brought with it a large dragon that chose to roost on the top of his castle. The dragon then was able to then use blood magic to create a small army that quickly overran the castle, pushing Benion and his men out into the surrounding village. After a devastating battle which destroyed the village, Benion and his men were able to push the dark army back into the castle. Refusing to leave his men, King Benion took up residence in a nearby church while sending out pleas for help to the surrounding nations. Wave after wave of his best soldiers would enter the castle, trying to work their way up to the dragon to defeat it, but were stopped. Soon they began to drop, one by one against the seemingly endless wave of cursed soldiers. On top of the that the replies from his allies came in, bringing with it more bad news.

Dragons are rare creatures, their own existence questioned by some. Others who have seen them noted the incredible difficulty in tracking them down, often times finding empty roosts in caves high in the mountains. Some believed that they were actually men who had the ability to change into dragon form causing persecution against some outcast groups in the greater continent of Gradia. Along with this came the belief that dragons may also be dealing out divine justice. Due to this the consensus amongst Benion's allies is that he should flee the ancient castle and wait to see if the dragon stays. If it begins to try and take more land from Benion then they will send their armies to stop the dragon's advancement.

Due to the lackluster response from his allies, King Benion sends out some runners to the 'four corners' of the continent with a decree. Any hero who can get rid of the dragon will be awarded lands and the hand of his daughter in marriage. A daughter who's beauty has been legend around the surrounding kingdoms.

This is where the game begins. The player arrives seeking glory, fortune, and the hand of Benion's beautiful daughter.

The overall mood of the game is darkness. The characters aren't really good people. The king can *seem* like he's making the right choices, but is he really? The princess may seem like she's excited that you were able to save them and slay a dragon, but she also has doubts and doesn't really want to be given in marriage to some stranger. A priest has been killed by some locals since he was knowingly researching dragons for fun beforehand. In the end the dragon is an old rival of Benion. Someone who Benion rightfully cheated. Someone who was wronged himself with an understandable backstory. When the character can spare the life of the dragon, the King will execute it anyway. This is not a happy story with a happy ending.

Art/Sound Design

The art design for the game is based on the purchased asset pack from Oryx (Ultimate Roguelike Tileset) which has been colored using the Apple II color palette, as the default palette for the artwork is just black and white.

The player and important NPC's will be fully covered (along with enemies and décor) while non-essential NPC's will be less detailed in their coloring. Hopefully this will cause the important NPC's to stand out.

Using the asset pack, the HUD for the game will border around the screen while displaying the necessary information and dialogue at the bottom. This UI will be ever present after the opening menu.

The sound design will be based off the sounds and settings from the Yamaha Reface CS. The sound effects and OST will both be created using that synth with the goal of creating a consitant and retro style soundscape that will hopefully feel nostalgic to players who grew up playing computer RPGs.

The soundtrack will consist of mostly typical medieval fare. From upbeat 'tavern' music to thumping overtures of danger, there will be a set of music to accompany every mood and setting in the game.

Gameplay

The Dragon and Castle Ivalyn has two modes. One is the top down mode where the player can navigate the world, interact with others and solve puzzles. The second is a third person mode that is only used for combat. This mode will hopefully provide the player with a truly unique RPG experience. One that is outlined in greater detail below:

Combat:

The focus of the game, the combat will be a hybrid concept. Pulling in design inspiration from games like Punch-Out and Super Punch-Out to Dark Souls, the combat will take place from a third person perspective and rely on the player's ability to dodge incoming attacks while taking advantage of openings to attack the enemy. A basic overview of the flow is as follows:

• The player runs into an enemy and the combat screen begins.
• When the enemy attacks it will give a quick warning animation that will visibly display to the player the direction of the attack. Either straight ahead, left, right, or even all three.
• The player will then dodge the attack by moving the left or right or even 'falling back'.
• The dodge will only last a second before the player is reset to their center position.
• When the enemy isn't attacking or blocking, they are open to being attacked themselves.
• There are special moves the player can use as well, such as parrying an attack or spell, causing major damage to the enemy.
• Once the battle is over the enemy will die and the game will return to the overhead mode and inform the player of the XP/Gold gained.

This is, of course, subject to change as the game is being developed.

The player will also be given a choice of three classes they can choose from when starting the game. Each class will provide it's own advantages/disadvantages which will give the game some replay value. The classes and their game play differences are as follows:

FIGHTER:
The fighter is the default class. This class uses melee weapons, which require an opening to attack the enemy, but also comes with a shield that can be used to block attacks. When attacks are blocked no damage is done to the player. This is the only class that can completely block incoming attacks. The fighter is unique in that they will need to keep their sword and shield repaired to prevent them from breaking and leaving the player without a weapon or shield.

MAGE:
The mage relies on magic to not only attack but protest. The player will start with a simple fireball and shield spell. The mage can attack an enemy at any time during the combat but will be unable to block when casting a spell. If the player blocks an incoming attack with magic they will still take damage but only a fraction. Mana is the mage's source of power and the player will need to keep up with both health and mana potions.

RANGER:

The ranger uses ranged attacks, firing arrows at their enemies in rapid speed. They are completely vulnerable to attacks though and rely purely on dodging in order to avoid taking damage. They will not need to repair any of their equipment but will need to buy more arrows. They also use less stamina due to light equipment.

NPCs

Here is the list of the NPC's that the player can find in the castle courtyard. Outside of the castle remains a small contingent of people who have decided to stay to hold the monsters in the castle. This not only consists of soldiers or knights, but peasants as well who's job it is to support the effort to defeat the dragon. As a reminder the overall mood for each NPC is being tired. They have been fighting a war for the last six months or so. They are exhausted, and impatient. Along with that they have also grown more nihilistic and hopeless.

1. King Benion:

The King of Ivalyn Castle and the surrounding countryside.

2. Princess Vitoria:

The daughter of King Benion. The princess is renown throughout the land for her stunning beauty, the same as her mother was.

3. Rhain the Knight Commander:

The commander of King Benion's knights. The knight commander was wounded while getting the King out during the initial invasion and now he has a hard time walking. He now helps organize raids into the castle and will be the 'trainer' for the player after visiting the King at the beginning of the game.

4. Anwill the Blacksmith:

The blacksmith at Ivalyn. Anwill will tend to any repairs that you need, for a fee. He has sent his wife and children away and stayed behind to take care of the arms for the King's knights. He hopes he can leave and see his family soon. That the King will call for them to 'retreat'.

5. Maddock the Scholar:

A scholar who is inside the upper levels of the church researching dragons using the priests old records. The priest, Samlet, was murdered by some suspicious towns folk who accused him of summoning the dragon.

6. Cynog the Knight:

A knight who helps guard the castle doors. He has fought in most of the raids that have gone into the castle. He is a good source of information, but is very suspicious of the player and will grow to become jealous of him.

7. Hafren the Lady-in-Waiting:

Hafren serves Princess Vitoria. She is very close to her and does not really like the player. She lets the player know that the offer to take the Princess as his wife if he defeats the dragon, is not one the Princess approves of.

8. Rhoslyn:

A lady of the night. She also craves adventure and will offer her services to the player.

9. Bevan the Bartender:

There is an inn with a bartender name Bevan. He is there to help lift the spirits of the men who have remained at Castle Ivalyn.

10. Elgar:

A swordsman who has come to kill the dragon and win over Princess Vitoria's hand in marriage. Elgar will sometimes be found inside of the castle looking over some loot. Eventually you find him dead on the 3rd floor. When he's not dead on the 3rd floor he can be found in the Inn and Tavern.

11. Ynyr the Court Mage:

The court mage. He is fairly weak but that is just due to his age. He is working on trying to heal Benion but being old and injured himself, he's unable to do much. He is a pervvy old man who lusts over Princess Vitoria.

12. Sion the Squire:

The squire for the Knight Commander. A younger man, Sion is privy to a lot of the scuttlebutt around the courtyard.

13. Twm the Bard:

Looking to make money bringing levity, and to get in on ground zero for some new lore in which to sing and profit, Twn is a middle aged bard who resides in the Tavern. Twn is dismissive at first but comes around and begins to ask the player for more information regarding their time inside of the castle.

14. Dilys the Barmaid:

Dilys works in the tavern. She was wounded earlier in her life and is missing an arm. She is still able to complete her job though and is the only female character in the game that gets any kind of respect from the males.

15. Eurion the Priest:

Eurion is a priest who arrived after hearing that the previous priest had died. He is there to give spiritual relief to those fighting, although most of them have become hopeless and don't rely much on Eurion. He is probably the only hopeful character in the game but has also begun to grow impatient with everyone there.

16. Seimon the Advisor:

Seimon is the top advisor to King Benion. He is cold and calculating.

There are also many generic NPCs that the player can find in the courtyard. Knights, wash women, stable workers, ect. These NPCs are only identified by their titles and will pull their dialogue from a set JSON file for each of their trades.

Some of these are; Soldiers, Knights, Gravediggers, Washwomen, Stable Boys, Squires, Children, Prostitutes, Advisors, Adventurers, Cooks, and more.

Locations:

Outside of the castle is the small courtyard. Here King Benion has setup a small camp focused on reclaiming the castle from the dragon and his dark army. Here soldiers and peasants alike are cramped together in a small living space where they make the best of it in preparing raids, repairing armor and weapons, burying their dead, and planning their next move.

1. Church:

The small church was once a place for knights to go and seek spiritual enlightenment. Now it is King Benion's makeshift command center. A new throne was moved in, and from here the King and his advisors plan out their next move.

The church is a two story building with the top holding the King's bedroom (the previous priests bedroom) and a small library where Maddock the Scholar works to find any kind of information that could give the King an advantage in his fight to reclaim the castle.

There is also a small room that has been turned into the princesses bedroom.

2. Tavern:

Here knights and peasants alike come to drown their sorrows or get a bit of food. While the citizens are given free food, adventurers must pay for the tavern's services. This includes room and board on the second level.

3. Graveyard:

A small graveyard where only knights are buried. Other dead are left where they lay inside of the castle due to difficulty getting out, or just taken outside of the city. The idea of having the knights buried near the castle is to honor them once this is over. They will become part of the castle lore.

4. Forge:

Here the blacksmith works to repair the armor and weapons for those fighting in the castle.

5. Barracks:

While usually a place for the castle guards to sleep, it is now overrun with soldiers who are going out on raids. Here soldiers gamble, fight, sleep, and gossip when not on duty.

6. Boardhouse:

A building that has been repurposed to house a lot of the peasant workers who are on the site to help with the battle to reclaim the castle. A lot like the boarding house, but less dangerous.

7. Stables:

Here horses are kept, those belonging mostly to the King's messengers. They have to ride fast in order to avoid any magic attacks from the dragon who seems to be casting them at riders or soldiers who are outside of the courtyard.

8. Training Grounds:

A small area where knights train. Here the Knight Commander sits at his post as he is now unable to continue taking the fight in the castle.

Main Quest:

The main quest of the game is made up of very few missions. The opening consists of seeing the King, besting the Knight Commander in a sparring match, and then clearing out the dungeon levels ultimately leading to the roof where a fight against the dragon Dranomdrentyn end with him morphing back into a human who the player can spare or execute. Either way it ends with him being executed by King Benion after providing the player with some exposition. In the end the player then takes Princess Vitoria and rides off with their new bride to a new estate where a small castle will be built for them.

Inventory/Equipment

Throughout the game the player will have access to various items and equipment services that will help them in their quest to reclaim Ivalyn castle.

The player will automatically arrive with starting equipment, along with some basic items, that can be upgraded from either the blacksmith or the priest (spellbook upgrades). Outside of equipment the player will have access to the following items to assist them on their quest:

1. Food:

If the player rests at a fireplace inside of the castle they will consume a single food ration automatically, which will replenish their hp/mp. Can be bought at the tavern.

2. Health Potion:

There are a number of set health potions you can buy per level of the castle. The priest will sell you that set number (to be determined during development) and once he's out he's out until you progress to the next level of the dungeon. Left over amount does NOT carry over to the next dungeon level.

3. Mana Potion:

Similar to the health potion, the priest will only sell a set amount (same as the health potion) per level you've completed. Amount does NOT carry over to next level.

4. Torch:

Used to light fireplaces inside the castle rest area in order to rest and possibly eat and regain health/mana if the player has a food ration in their inventory.

5. Arrows:

Ranger only item, that will auto-equip whenever it enters the player's inventory. If the player is NOT a ranger then the blacksmith won't offer the item for sale.

6. Small Key:

A small key used to open doors that are not the stairwell doors to the next level. When used on a door, these keys will disappear.

7. Door Key:

The key needed to open the door to the next level. When used the key will disappear, the same as the small key.

8. Gold:

      While an inventory item, gold will also possibly appear on the HUD as well. Used as currency in Castle Ivalyn.

      The starting equipment for each class is subject to change as development proceeds, but as for now will be as listed:

Fighter:
      Longsword, Shield, Health potion, Three Rations, Fifty Gold.

Ranger:
      Bow, Twenty Arrows, Health Potion, Five Rations, Twenty Gold.

Mage:
      Staff, Spellbook,, Mana Potion, Five Rations, One-Hundred Gold.

Spells:

      If the player chooses the mage class, they will start the game with a spellbook (they are also the only class that has access to a spellbook). This spellbook will start with two spells (fireball, shield) but can have more added as the game moves along. Spells will be added to the player's spellbook by purchasing more spells from the Priest in the courtyard.
      Some spells can be dodged by the enemy, or blocked if they have a magic barrier shield ability. The same way the player can block spells with his shield as well.

this spell list is subject to change during development, along with the ability to buy spells from the priest

Attack Spells:

Magic Missle: Shoots a missle at the enemy which can be dodged, possibly blocked.
Engulf: Engulfs the enemy in flames. The enemy cannot be dodged or blocked.
Ice Bolt: An ice version of the magic missle that is 'harder' to dodge.
Stun: Has a chance to stun enemies. Cannot be dodged or blocked.

Defense Spells:

Shield: Creates a magic shield that blocks 90% of all damage
Heal: Heals the player but takes time to cast
Invisible: Causes the mage to become invisible. Most enemies will not attack during this.

Stats/Leveling

      How this game handles stats and leveling up will not stray too far from traditional RPG faire. With the character killing enemies, or solving puzzles, to gain XP until they reach

the XP cap or the next level. Once the level is reached the player will then be given an opportunity to raise an attribute of their choice. These attributes will vary depending upon the class the player chooses.

The Fighter will be able to upgrade Strength(weapon damage), Stamina(decrease stamina cost), or Health(decrease incoming damage).

The Mage will be able to upgrade Wisdom(magic damange), Mana(decrease spell costs), or Health(decrease incoming damage).

The Ranger will have the same stat upgrades as the Fighter.

When it comes to how damage is dealth there is a simple formula that will be used to determine how much is done:

Skill + Attack/Spell = Sum/2 = Damage

This formula is used for enemy attacks/spells as well.

If the player is using a restorative spell, then it will heal using the same formula to determine how much health is recovered.

When the player starts the game and chooses a class they can then roll to see how many points are awarded the classes attributes with a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 10.

For leveling up the XP will use this formula to determine the next amount of XP needed:

(Max XP + 100) * 2

This will be calculated upon the player gaining a level. When that happens a screen will come up post battle, along with a small chime that will play, letting the player choose an attribute to level up OR to just skip and therefore lose the opportunity. Hopefully this will create some replay value with 'level one' runs.

There is a maximum level the player can gain, and that is 20.

The experience given by an enemy is based on their own level. This will award advantaged players who take on higher level enemies. If the enemy is the same level as the player they are awarded a set amount of XP (for example 20 xp). If the player is one level below then the amount is subtracted by 10%*difference: (20 – (20 * 0.n)). If it's a level above then its the same formula but it goes up by 10%*difference instead: (20 + (20 * 0.n)).

this is of course all subject to change as the game is developed. There may need to be some adjustments to make the game play more cohesive.

Enemies

The dragon appears to have the ability to open up a gateway and flood the castle with an endless supply of twisted beings who seem to be under it's control.

The enemies in the game are based on the sprites in the purchased asset pack. They range from various monsters to humanoid enemies. The enemies will NOT be listed in here but will be formed dynamically as they are being created based on the sprites provided by Oryx.

Outside of the 'basic' enemies that are in the castle, each floor will have a special enemy that holds the key to the next floor. These are also based on the pre-made sprites.

UI

The UI of the game will cover around thirty percent of the bottom of the screen. The purpose is, of course, to provide the player with up to date data concerning the player's health, mana, gold, ect. The HUD will differ depending on the class chosen by the player at the beginning of the game but will require the following:

Player HP
Player MP (mage only)
Player Stamina (Ranger/Fighter)
Player Gold
Equipment Condition (Fighter/Ranger)
Shield Condition (Fighter)
Arrow Count (Ranger)
Current Item (can be selected using bumper buttons)

There will also be a 'paused' display when the game is paused.

The player will also have access to a menu where they can open their inventory, check their status or quit the game.

The HUD will have a pixel outline using one of the outline tile sets in the Oryx asset pack.

whether the HUD will just cover the bottom of the screen or if there will be a border that surrounds the entire screen will be A/B tested during development.

Saving/Loading

The player can save their game at two places. When they light a fire in an empty fireplace in the castle (once lit the fireplaces will remain lit for a set amount of time before the fire goes out), and when they stay at the tavern.

Loading can be done when starting the game, from the main menu, or from the game menu. This will allow the player to reload a game at any time.

Technical Notes

Game Engine: Godot 4
Development Platform: Linux (Pop_OS)
Resolution: 360x180
Aspect Ratio: 16:9
Color Palette: Apple II
Sprite/Tile Size: 16x24
Save File: .iva
SFX: .wav
OST: .ogg
Target Platforms: Windows, MacOS, Linux(debian)

Sprite Editor: Aseprite
Audio DAW: Garageband
Script Editor: VSCode