

BREHÄMER

Game Design Document

Norse-Style Narrative RPG

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Written by Jason Conger-Kallas

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Table of Contents

1. Game Overview.....	5
1.1 Description.....	
1.2 Production Goals.....	
1.3 Project Breakdown.....	
1.4 Art Style.....	
1.5 Genre.....	
1.6 Scope.....	
1.7 Key Features.....	
1.8 Platform.....	
1.9 Distribution.....	
1.a Audience.....	
2. Controls.....	7
2.1 Movement.....	
2.2 Menu.....	
2.3 Options.....	
2.4 Settings.....	
2.5 HUD.....	
2.6 Camera.....	
2.7 Controller.....	
3. Levels.....	9
3.1 Locations.....	
3.2 Level Maps.....	
3.3 World Map.....	
3.4 Pathing.....	
4. Characters.....	10
4.1 Starting Characters.....	
4.2 Main Party	
4.3 Bosses.....	
4.3.1 Mini Bosses.....	
4.3.2 Main Bosses.....	
4.3.3 Optional Bosses.....	
4.4 NPCs.....	
4.4.1 Quest Givers.....	
4.4.2 Merchants.....	
4.4.3 Trainers.....	
4.5 Enemies.....	
4.5.1 Factions.....	

4.5.2 Creatures.....	
5. Story.....	11
5.1 Plot Synopsis.....	
5.2 Cutscenes.....	
5.3 Dialogue.....	
5.4 Lore.....	
6. Gameplay.....	12
6.1 Progression System.....	
6.1.1 Leveling.....	
6.1.2 Classes.....	
6.1.3 Skill Trees.....	
6.1.4 Class Upgrades.....	
6.1.5 Stats.....	
6.2 Objectives.....	
6.2.1 Missions.....	
6.2.2 Achievements.....	
6.3 A.I.....	
6.4 Physics.....	
7. Items.....	15
7.1 Armor.....	
7.1.1 Light Armor.....	
7.1.2 Medium Armor.....	
7.1.3 Heavy Armor.....	
7.2 Weapons.....	
7.2.1 Melee.....	
7.2.2 Ranged.....	
7.2.3 Magic.....	
7.3 Consumables.....	
7.3.1 Potions.....	
7.3.2 Upgrades.....	
7.3.3 Enchantments.....	
7.4 Quest Items.....	
7.4.1 Essential Items.....	
7.4.2 Loot.....	
7.4.3 Rare Collectibles.....	
8. Sound.....	16
8.1 OST.....	
8.1.1 Theme.....	

8.1.2 Leitmotifs.....	
8.1.3 Ambient.....	
8.2 Foleys.....	
8.3 Interface.....	
8.3.1 Audio Settings.....	
9. Amendments.....	17
9.1 Changes Policy.....	
9.2 Formatting.....	
 Appendix A	
i. DLC.....	18
 Appendix B	
ii. Game Development.....	
ii.1.1 Trailer.....	
ii.1.2 Crowdfunding Campaign.....	

1. Game Overview

1.1 Description

The working title of the game is “Brefhämer.” The game will be a narrative storyline with RPG elements and unique game mechanics.

The narrative structure is loosely based on Old Norse and Icelandic sagas, mythology, and folklore.

1.2 Production Goals

The goal of this project is to integrate a story and characters that players can be invested in, while still enjoying gameplay elements (no QuickTime button-mashing events). Emphasis will be placed on character interaction, animation, cinematography, story, and visual stylization.

1.3 Project Breakdown

At this point the logistics of producing an entire alpha game is a major risk until a trailer is ready and showing promising signs of being funded. The first goal will be to produce an animated trailer and/or game prototype. This can then be used to pitch a crowdfunding campaign for a longer cinematic trailer or a video game, depending on the amount of funds raised.

Preliminary discussions will begin with assembling a technical lead and game development team several months before the launch of the crowdfunding campaign.

1.4 Art Style

Art style plays an invaluable role in the success of many games, but there is the distinct possibility that budget constraints will limit the size of the art team. The art style will need to be kept feasible for the scale of the project. The game may use 3D for character animation, with 2D elements used for narrative and exposition.

The style and medium will be determined by the members of the art team. Stylization will be emphasized more than realistic next-gen graphics.

The game world is a dark and unforgiving place, so the color palette should reflect that.

1.5 Genre

Subgenres: Adventure, RPG, Real-Time Strategy, Narrative, Turn-Based Strategy incorporating elements of Dark Fantasy, Mystery

The initial tone of the story is intended to be ominous, mysterious, and claustrophobic. As the settings shift, there are changes in the tone of the story, but the darker undercurrent pervades the game.

1.6 Scope

The game is anticipated to last 7-15 hours, with side quests possibly extending that by a few hours.

There are four chapters, each broken down into two or three level areas, for a total of 9-12 levels. Some levels may be slightly shorter than others.

Each level area will ideally have a different look and feel, to reflect distinct cultures. Some recycling of modular elements may realistically be necessary, but the hope is to create unique assets. Areas may also implement new mechanics to break up the gameplay and keep things interesting.

Certain areas may be replayable after completing the game to extend game length.

The game will not likely be open world or as expansive as the worlds of Tamriel, Middle-Earth, Westeros, or The Northern Kingdoms. Much of the lore and backstory will probably have to be ancillary material unless there is a chance for DLC or expansions.

1.7 Key Features

- Player Choices that actually impact the story course, not just the good/bad alternate endings
- Story-driven Adventure game with RPG elements
- Flexible Class System
- Memorable characters and boss encounters
- Control players with unique abilities that alter the feel of the gameplay
- Party banter
- Unique locations, dungeons, and multi-path levels
- Loot, player customization, and skill tree-based level system

1.8 Platform

The game will need to be optimized for PC, Mac, and Linux. The target platform is Steam, so Open GL, DirectX, and Steam API formatting standards will need to apply.

1.9 Distribution

Target distribution platforms are Steam Direct, Devolver Digital, and Humble Bundle.

Advertising at Game Design Conferences and Expos would also be advised.

1.a Audience

Target Demographic: Gamers who like fantasy RPGs, narratives, and challenging strategic gameplay.

T-M Rating (Language, Alcohol Use, Very Probable Blood and Violence)

Age group- 12+

2. Controls

2.1 Movement

A- Left
D- Right
S- Down
W- Up
Right Mouse- Attack
Left Mouse- Defend
Spacebar- Jump
Shift- Sprint
E- Select
H- Use Item
F- Quick Switch Weapons/Items

Left Arrow- Player 2 Movement
Right Arrow - Player 2 Movement
Up Arrow - Player 2 Movement
Down Arrow - Player 2 Movement
F12 Screenshot
Enter- Switch to Combat Mode
1. Quick Select Slot 1
2. Quick Select Slot 2
3. Quick Select Slot 3
4. Quick Select Slot 4

2.2 Menu

Main Menu
Controls
Options
Settings
Pause
Resume
Quit

2.3 Options

Widescreen
Fullscreen Mode
Dynamic Shading On-Off
Subtitles/Localization
Multiplayer
Difficulty

2.4 Settings

Options
Resolution
Audio Settings
Framerate Settings
Gamepad Compatibility
Steam API
Configure Keyboard Settings

2.5 HUD

- Health bar**
- M- World Map**
- N- Toggle Local Map**
- I- Inventory**
- K- Player Stats**
- L- Lore Wiki**
- Special Attack Icons**
- Main Menu**

2.6 Camera

By default, the camera faces a fixed perspective angle, top-down isometric. The exception is for cutscenes. There might be an option to adjust the camera perspective.

- Ctrl-Middle Mouse- Rotate Camera**
- Middle Mouse- Zoom Camera**

2.7 Controller Settings

To be determined

3. Levels

3.1 Locations

There are seven main regions, with around 13+ major level areas. This number may need to be cut down to be feasible for production.

1. Forest Region

- Ruins
- Village

4. Mountain Region 2

- Homestead

7. Rocky Plains Region

- Ruins

2. Marshes Region

- Village
- Town 2

5. Coastal Region

- Fortified Town
- Seaport

8. Citadel

- Citadel

3. Mountain Region

- Caves
- Ruins/Dungeons

6. Plains Region

- Fortified Town

Some of the villages and towns are hub areas where the player can resupply, interact with NPCs, and explore the surroundings.

3.2 Level Maps

Areas should require around three hours to play through. Some levels may have traps, puzzles, encounters, hidden collectibles, or minibosses. Levels will be themed and have levelled enemies.

Many levels take place in open areas or villages rather than caves and dungeons, so environments will need to incorporate natural barriers that do not seem intrusive on gameplay. Maps will be designed in a compressed manner that keeps the file size small.

3.3 World Map

The world map will have areas that are not reachable in the game, due to budget limitations. Fast travel will be possible for certain marked locations.

3.4 Pathing

The main story campaign will follow a more linear course through regions, so the game is not open-world. Beating the game might allow a loosening on these restrictions.

There might be options to take different routes that trigger different instances. For example, taking a shortcut might allow the player to skip through a longer level, but they might miss out on rare instances, encounters, or drops if they do this.

4. Characters

4.1 Starting Characters

The game starts with two characters that are mostly interchangeable in terms of abilities. As the game progresses, more characters will become available, but they will not all be useable at once.

Story instances will force the player to use certain characters in certain areas, so the party size will usually be maxed at 2-6 players.

4.2 Main Party

Additional characters will be added to the game at certain points in the story.

End of Area 1- 2 Party Members Added, Hunter and Mage

End of Area 2- 2 Party Members Added, Healer and Bard

Area 2-3- Party Members Added, Warrior and Berserker, 1 can become permanent party member

Area 3- Temporary Party Member Added, Berserker

Level 5-6- Optional Instance, Tank or Mercenary

Level 6- Story Instance, 1 or 2 Party Members Added- Sorcerers

4.3 Bosses

4.3.1 Mini Bosses

4.3.2 Main Bosses

4.3.3 Optional Bosses

4.4 NPCs

4.4.1 Quest Givers

4.4.2 Merchants

4.4.3 Trainers

4.5 Enemies

4.5.1 Factions

4.5.2 Creatures

Story

5.1 Plot Synopsis

The story follows a simple structure where the protagonists discover a mysterious relic that ends up causing them a lot of problems. The intro sets up the story, setting, and characters, while the rest of the journey is basically a long chase with multiple encounters ramping up to a finale.

The story will attempt to portray the antagonists in a relatable light, with some positive qualities. The story also does not focus on a chosen one trope where the heroes are trying to save the world from eminent destruction. The characters' goals and problems are more personal and self contained.

5.2 Cutscenes

In-game cutscenes and cinematic cutscenes will be used for exposition. Some transitions will be text loading screens or screenshots to conserve resources

5.3 Dialogue

Close up shots of faces will probably be avoided for dialogue and conversations just to save time for the animators to focus on other aspects. Character portfolios will probably be substituted in the corner of the screen, with the text on screen.

Voice acting is preferable, but it really depends on the budget.

5.4 Lore

There is a mythology system for the world and careful attention has been put into giving factions backstories. How much of this content makes it into the game is yet to be determined.

To avoid exposition dumps, lore will probably be implied rather than spelled out in copious amounts of in-game text. There are wikis for any complex background lore.

6. Gameplay

6.1 Progression System

6.1.1 Leveling

Leveling unlocks more abilities, skill points, and raises the maximum thresholds for Wisdom, Fate, and Honor

Wisdom: Improves Interactions, Crafting, Magic Potential, and Use of Runes

Honor: Improves Reputation, Yields Higher Rewards, Improves blocking and Resolve

Fate: Improves Percentages for Critical Hits, Dodging, Drops

Fame: Aggregate of Fate, Honor, and Wisdom, determines level

6.1.2 Classes

There are eight standard Classes.

Rogue

- **Class Bonuses:** High Fate, Stealth and Agility Bonus
- **Class Traits:** Low Resolve, defense
- **Equip Traits:** Light Armor, blades, projectiles
- **Skill Upgrades:** Stealth, Incapacitate
- **Class Upgrades:** Pickpocket, Burglar, Thief, Fence, Assassin

Hunter

- **Class Bonuses:** High Fate, Stealth and Agility Bonus
- **Class Traits:** Low Health, defense
- **Equip Traits:** Light Armor, Ranged
- **Skill Upgrades:** Precision, Draw speed
- **Class Upgrades:** Archer, Tracker, Master of Beasts

Warrior

- **Class Bonuses:** High Honor, Attack and Defense Bonus
- **Class Traits:** High Endurance
- **Equip Traits:** Medium-Heavy Armor, Dual Wield
- **Skill Upgrades:** Heavy Strike, Parry
- **Class Upgrades:** Fencer, Swordsman, Footsoldier, Veteran, Shieldmaiden, Einherjar

Berserker

- **Class Bonuses:** High Honor, Attack and Agility Bonus
- **Class Traits:** High Endurance

- **Equip Traits:** Medium-Heavy Armor, Dual Wield, Two-handed
- **Skill Upgrades:** Shorten Cooldown, Frenzy
- **Class Upgrades:** Pillager, Marauder, Mercenary, Ulfhedinn

Mage

- **Class Bonuses:** High Wisdom, Magic Bonus
- **Class Traits:** Low Health, High Attack
- **Equip Traits:** Enchanted
- **Skill Upgrades:** Spells Index
- **Class Upgrades:** Necromancer, Elementalist, Sorcerer, Warlock, Thaumaturge

Bard

- **Class Bonuses:** High Wisdom/Fate, Runes and Speech Bonus
- **Class Traits:** Low Health, defense
- **Equip Traits:** Enchanted
- **Skill Upgrades:** Voice, Speech
- **Class Upgrades:** Scribe, Scop, Poet, Musician, Storyteller, Scholar, Philosopher

Healer

- **Class Bonuses:** High Wisdom/Fate, Buffing Bonus
- **Class Traits:** Low attack
- **Equip Traits:** Enchanted
- **Skill Upgrades:** Ingredients
- **Class Upgrades:** Herbalist, Soothsayer, Apothecary, Physician, Surgeon, Astrologist, Alchemist

Artisan

- **Class Bonuses:** High Wisdom/Fate, Buffing and Speech Bonus
- **Class Traits:** Low attack, High endurance and dexterity, Buffing
- **Equip Traits:** Heavy Armor
- **Skill Upgrades:** Tools, Materials
- **Class Upgrades:** Craftsman, Inventor, Engineer, Merchant, Architect, Artificer, Enchanter

6.1.3 Skill Trees

Classes will have different abilities unique to the class. Leveling Fame will unlock more tiers.

6.1.4 Class Upgrades

The stat system is designed to be flexible and balanced, for a variety of play styles. Certain characters cannot change classes, but they can acquire new skills outside of their default skill tree.

Earning Wisdom, Fate, and Honor points will allow the player to potentially mix hybrid abilities and upgrade their class. For example, the default settings for Rogue is high Fate, but gaining a lot of Honor might allow the rogue to acquire abilities normally reserved for the Warrior class.

6.1.5 Stats

Wisdom

Honor

Fate

Health: 10-240

Resolve: 10-240

Strength: 10-240

Endurance: 10-240

Intelligence: 10-240

Agility: 10-240

6.2 Objectives

See the wiki for full details.

6.2.1 Missions

6.2.2 Side Quests

6.2.3 Achievements

6.3 A.I.

Ideally basic A.I. will have conditions for attack, patrol, alert, attack, chase, and retreat. Difficulty settings may cause enemies to be faster and more aggressive.

Bosses should have custom attack set patterns and adapt to the type of character the player is using. They will press attacks when they have an advantage or become defensive if losing a fight.

Enemies should not attack unless provoked. There will be a cooldown in effect for how long enemies remain hostile. Certain enemies may be intelligent enough to seek support or call distant allies.

6.4 Physics

The game will focus on combat more than next gen graphics, so physics systems will primarily need to conform to the effects of attacks. Ideally some of this should be alleviated by animation.

Simulations will need to control certain weather patterns, wind, hair, cloth, grass, etc.

7. Items

See the wiki for full detail lists.

7.1 Armor

7.1.1 Light Armor

Cloth, Leather, Lamellar

7.1.2 Medium Armor

Fur, Maille

7.1.3 Heavy Armor

Steel plate

7.2 Weapons

7.2.1 Melee

7.2.2 Ranged

7.2.3 Magic

7.3 Consumables

7.3.1 Potions

7.3.2 Upgrades

7.3.3 Enchantments

7.4 Quest Items

7.4.1 Essential Items

7.4.2 Loot

7.4.3 Rare Collectibles

8. Sound

8.1 OST

8.1.1 Theme

The main theme

8.1.2 Leitmotifs

Certain characters and regions may use thematic leitmotifs to tie the audio together.

8.1.3 Ambient

Environments and idle background sounds

8.1.4 Instances

Sounds triggered by events like victory or death

8.2 Foleys

Sound effects

8.3 Interface

User interface and click sound effects

8.3.1 Audio Settings

Volume

Turn ambient music on or off

Turn off background dialogue

9. Amendments

9.1 Changes Policy

This is a living document that will be updated periodically throughout the project development. Please be respectful of other contributor's alterations and try to keep the document concise and organized.

9.2 Formatting

Please highlight recent changes or use a different color font so it is easy for everyone to keep track of updates. These sections will be formatted in a normal style by the next update cycle.

Include a tag in italics with the date, and a brief explanation for why the modification was made.

Avoid redundant information. Cross references are also not advised and should be used sparingly.

There will be one Master Game Design Doc to rule them all. All previous outdated versions will be exterminated with extreme prejudice.

Appendix A

i. DLC

Features that would be nice to have, but may not make it into the main game:

- HD Animated Cutscenes
- Voice Acting for All NPCs
- Multiplayer
- 3D Graphics
- PvP
- A few puzzles and optional minigames that do not interrupt the gameplay pacing

Note: All DLC will be free, except for possible story DLC and actual expansions to the game

Appendix B

ii. Game Development

Full-time production would begin following the crowdfunding campaign, assuming that doesn't fail dismally.

If the campaign doesn't meet the fundraising goal, efforts will be made to try and develop an animated short, which would clock in at around seven to twelve minutes.

ii.1.1 Trailer

The trailer can be either a narrative segment or a series of cutscenes. It may be easier to create a narrative trailer as there would be fewer assets.

The trailer should convey the tone of the story and get people interested in the project.

The projected length of the promotional trailer is one-two minutes.

Depending on the size of the team and the budget, production of the short promotional trailer is anticipated to take around eight months to develop. Since unexpected production delays always happen, it's probably realistic to add an extra few months to that number.

ii.1.2 Crowdfunding Campaign

The campaign will likely need to be split up into milestones or possibly two or three smaller campaigns to raise funds successfully. The first milestone goal is \$8,000-35,000 to produce a trailer or game level alpha. A full game will need to be leveraged between \$75,000-\$450,000. That number has a small chance of successful funding, so it may be necessary to break the game production into separate chapters, each with a separate campaign.

A website could be set up to fund the project development after the initial Kickstarter. This would also be useful for community updates.

If the campaign does reach the goals, a game would take two or more years to finish. Milestone markers and community updates would be set to occur at regular intervals during development.