Brefhämer

Game Design Document

Norse-Style Narrative RPG

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Version 1.00

Wednesday, June 14, 2017

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1. Game Overview

1.1 Description

The working title of the game is "Brefhämer." The game will be an RPG with a narrative storyline and unique game mechanics.

The goal of this project is to integrate a story and characters that players can be invested in, while still enjoying gameplay elements. Emphasis will be placed on character animation, cinematography, story, and visual stylization.

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

1.2 Production Goals

The first goal is 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.

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

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

1.3 Project Breakdown

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.

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. 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.

1.5 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.

If the campaign does reach the goal of $75,000-$450,000, 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.

1.6 Scope

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

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 Genre

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

1.8 Key Features

Aim for a unique take on visuals and gameplay, but keep the technical scope manageable

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

1.9 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

1.a Platform
The game will need to be optimized for PC, Mac, and Linux.

The art style and budget of the game will be a major factor in the choice of game engine software. If 2D, Gamemaker 2.0 would be the best option. If 3D or a 2D/3D hybrid, Unity is the top choice.

Middleware options or Unreal may also be considered depending on the preferences of the technical director. The platform will be determined before the crowdfunding campaign.

At this point in time, attempting to create a custom proprietary engine is not advisable.

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

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

1.c Audience
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
Middle Mouse- Ranged
Spacebar- Jump
Shift- Sprint
E- Select
H- Use Item

Left Arrow- Player 2 Movement
Right Arrow - Player 2 Movement
Up Arrow - Player 2 Movement
Down Arrow - Player 2 Movement

2.2 Combat

Enter- Switch to Special Combat Mode
1- **Quick Select Slot 1**
2- **Quick Select Slot 2**
3- **Quick Select Slot 3**
4- **Quick Select Slot 4**

2.3 Menu

Main Menu
Controls
Options
Settings
Pause
Resume
Quit

2.4 Controller Settings

2.5 Stats

Class
Wisdom
Honor
Fate
Health: 10-240
Resolve: 10-240
Attack: 10-240
Defense: 10-240
Intelligence: 10-240
Agility: 10-240

2.6 HUD

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

2.7 Camera

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.

2.8 Settings

Options
Resolution
Audio Settings
Dynamic Shading On-Off
Multiplayer
Difficulty

2.9 Compatibility

Preferably the game will be able to run on most laptops and computers without high-end graphics cards or drivers

2.9.1 System Requirements
Minimum Specs:

1.2 GHz Intel processor
250 MB RAM
Windows 7, 8, 10
Mac
Linux
PS4, Switch, Xbox?

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.

Forest Region
- Ruins
- Village

Marshes Region
- Town

Mountain Region
- Caves
- Ruins/Dungeons
- Village

Mountain Region 2
- Citadel

Coastal Region
- Fortified Town

Plains Region
- Town

Rocky Plains Region
- Stronghold
- Ruins

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

Level lengths should require around 30 minutes to an hour to play through. Some levels may have traps, puzzles, encounters, hidden collectibles, or minibosses.

Levels will be themed and have levelled enemies. Maps will be designed in a compressed manner that keeps the file size small.

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.

A skybox and draw distance will be needed for the open areas of the map.

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 2-4 players.

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

End of Level 1- 2 Party Members Added, Ranged and Magic
Optional Instance- Thief
End of Level 2- 2 Party Members Added, Healer and Bard
End of Level 3- Temporary Party Members Added, Tank and Shieldmaiden, 1 can become permanent part member
Level 4- 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

Story

5.1 Plot Synopsis
The story follows a simple structure where the protagonists discover a powerful McGuffin relic that the enemies want badly enough to kill for. 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.

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

6.1.2 Skill Trees
Classes will have different abilities unique to the class. Leveling will unlock more tiers.

6.2 Objectives
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.

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.

Certain enemies may be intelligent enough to seek support or call distant allies.

Enemies should not attack unless provoked. There will be a cooldown in effect for how long enemies remain hostile.

Pathing may need to be set to navigate complex terrain.

Difficulty settings may cause enemies to be faster and more aggressive.

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

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