# **“Stonefall” — Game Design Document (v0.1)**

Lightweight, strategic RPG built with HTML/CSS/JavaScript which can be converted to an app on Android / Apple / PC.

## **1) Game Overview**

**Working Title:** “Stonefall”  **Genre:** Party-based RPG (turn-based combat, narrative exploration, town building)  
**Target Audience:** Players who enjoy strategic RPG games with meaningful choices, character & party customization, strategic combat, and growing home base.  
**Platforms:** Desktop & mobile browsers, later wrapped to android iOS, and PC.  **Engine/Tech:** HTML5/CSS3/JavaScript (ES modules) — responsive UI for touch & mouse/keyboard. Narrative Engine Tools like Ink.

**Art Style:** Hand-drawn backgrounds with minimally animated enemies and NPC’s.

**UI:** The top 60% of the screen will be the scene - background + sprites, and the lower third will be characters, text, and menu options.

**Perspective:** 3rd person view - single character and party view

**Core Pillars**

1. **Character and Party Customization:** Create a party of 4. Choose a species and class.
2. **Strategic Combat**: Turn-based with status effects, class skills limited by AP, and consumable items. Changeable perspective from Individual to party overview.
3. **Gear & Items:** Upgradeable Gear, Specialty Runes, Bastion, and Town
4. **Central Town:** Stonefall is an upgradeable home base for the players and where questlines can be obtained.
5. **Narrative Exploration:** Node based scenes with hand-drawn art;
6. **De-centralized Plotline & Player Choice:** Players engage with a branching plotline that is conditional on Character’s species, class, and player decisions. A quest has multiple modes of completion (stealth, dialogue, combat, etc). Outcomes determine faction favor.

**Elevator Pitch***Strategic fantasy RPG with modern mechanics where a player establishes a party of 4 characters and then helps to build or destroy the village of Stonefall. Immersion is obtained through narrative descriptions and hand-drawn artwork. Unique class and species questlines interweave with the main arc to enhance replayability. Players also help to build the starting village of Stonefall and help it grow into a prosperous town.*

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## **2) Core Gameplay Loop**

**Moment-to-moment (short‑term goals)**

* Talk to NPCs → accept/advance quests (branching outcomes).
* Narratively Explore locations and regions (town hub, wilderness path, dungeon room).
* Engage in turn-based encounters
* Earn XP, gold, and items → Level up, equip and sell
* Turn in quests and advance story line

**Session loop (mid‑term goals)**

* Complete quest chains & earn rewards. Plan next quests and new regions. Examine player narrative decisions and outcomes.
* Plan and strategize party synergies, re-build characters and optimize party.
* Enhance equipment, strengthen player bastion

**Campaign loop (long‑term goals)**

* Grow Stonefall from a village -> Town -> City
* Complete unique questlines and/or the main storyline.
* Replay for different outcomes.

## **3) Key Features**

* **Customizable Characters:** Characters start by choosing a Species and Class then allocate starting Stats.
  + **Species:** Offers flavored perks and unique questlines
  + **Class:** Offer unique skills and questlines and town unlocks
  + **Skill Tree:** Each class’s skill tree has 3-4 branches allowing for role specialization, Respec is allowed at a cost.
  + **Stats:** TBD - thinking of a modified DND system of ability modifiers.
  + **Levels** grant additional stats and skill points.
  + **XP** comes from equal parts battles and quest completion.
  + **DEATH:** Characters may die from events or combat and can only be revived through a Temple. The player can hire/create new characters mid-game and level them up via bastion upgrades. Death can be overcome via resurrection consumables.
* **Strategic Combat:** Turn-based combat with Skills limited by AP, status effects, and more. Player perspective in 3rd person from character to party view.
* **Gear & Items:** A Character may equip gear (weapons, armor, accessories with readable bonuses) and also upgrade that gear with crafting materials at a specialized shop.
  + Unique gear and crafting material is obtained by completing quests and defeating legendary monsters.
  + Runes - 3 slots/cha, provide passive buffs and are upgradable.
  + Construction materials improve Bastion which allows for party wide buffs.
* **Centralized City (Stonefall):** Stonefall is a town that can be improved by the Player. Nearly all quests come from NPC’s in Stonefall and its improvements impact the wealth and notoriety of the town in the region. Class questlines unlock specialized buildings.
  + **Stonefall Buildings**: unlocked as the story progresses or upon completing class questlines. Questlines for each vendor allows for shop improvements and town upgrades.
    - Village: Inn (rest and recover), Tavern (information, new recruitment), Peddlers cart.
    - Town: Town Square, Herbalist (heal from ailments), Market (shop consumables and accessories), Blacksmith shop (shop gear), Bastion,Training Field.
    - City: Artificer (Enhance Gear), Runesmith, Garrison,
    - Unlockable Buildings: Colosseum, Thieves Guild, Shrine, Wizard Tower, Palace, Dwarven Forge, etc.
* **Dungeons:** require narrative problem solving and screen contact to interact with objects. Party may discover a map or create a map on fog of war principles (Zelda Map)
* **Factions:** Players do not become factions, they are the citizens of Stonefall, but their actions and decisions earn faction favor which will have global effects as Stonefall’s influence on the world increases.
* **Branching Narrative World:** The Main storyline will present branching choices which will influence the main quest resulting in varied/multiple endings. Act Transitions form key decision branches and faction favor.
* **Quest Solution Options:** Some Quests allow for multiple solution options (dialogue, combat, stealth) which complete the quest. Solution options are determined by your class and species.
* **Quest Tracking:** Quest tracker so that you don’t lose track of the storyline.
* **Unique Questlines:** Classes, Species, Town, and Bastion quests provide unique rewards and result in party buffs such as more potent healing potions.
* **Unlocks and Replayability:** Unique classes, skills, buildings, and equipment may be obtained and unlocked through special quests. Special quests may be obtained from having a certain species, class, or milestone. Once a unit is unlocked then it can be accessed on future play throughs without completing the quest.

## **4) World & Setting: TBD**

**Tone:** Medium tone. Tension and intention are created throughout the plot to keep it driving. It plays off of many fantasy tropes, but is not self-aware of its own story.

**Central Region**

* **Starting Region:** Blackstone Mountain is the tallest and last of the Echoing Spires - a mountain range stretching far to the north and ending in the Windswept Plains. Blackstone Mountain is surrounded by the Charred Forest - an ancient forest that burned long ago leaving only blackened husks of dead trees. From Blackstone mountain flows the Azure river which carves deep canyons into the arid region below. Atop one of the canyons lies Stonefall, a struggling village.
* **Stonefall (Starter Town) -** A struggling village sitting on the edge of a canyon below Blackstone Mountain. Initially it has few resources: a Town Square, Small Market, Tavern/Inn, and a tired, old Blacksmith. Stonefall is a central hub for questlines and can be upgraded.
* **Lost Canyon (Starter Dungeon):** A dry tributary carved out the lost canyon where old fortlets have been overrun by goblins. Teaches choice vs combat.

Expansion into other regions: Main questline will send the player to other regions where if they are successful, advance the plot and can help improve the town Stonefall.

## **5) Characters & Progression**

**Playable Species** Mostly standard fantasy tropes with some unique options which may be unlocked through unique questlines.

* **Human** – adaptable, versatile, balanced.
* **Elf** – long-lived, magical, agile, attuned to nature or mysticism.
* **Dwarf** – hardy, tough, skilled with craft and stone/metal.
* **Halfling / Gnome** – small, nimble, clever, often comedic or inventive.
* **Goblinoids** – tricksters, cunning, mischievous, underdog-coded.
* **Dragonling**  – proud, elemental breath, tied to dragon ancestry.
* **Giantborn** – mountainlike endurance, tied to primal forces.
* **Orc** – Fierce, strong, brutal, passionate; tribal or noble warrior-coded.

**Classes & Roles:**

*Classes have a skill tree where each branch specializes in team roles. Each class has a unique questline which unlocks a town building, class, spells, or other game feature.*

* **Warrior (Frontliner):** Offers skills that enhance Martial prowess, defense, and damage. Unlocks the arena -> gladiator class
* **Ranger (Skirmisher):** Nature themed magics and abilities. Some Elementalism. Questline unlocks Charred Forest region which leads to revitalization and Druid Class
* **Rogue (Striker):** Sneak burst, chance, disengage, poison/bleed. Questline unlocks Thieves guild in town and its questline
* **Wizard (Caster):** Direct damage, small AOE, magic shields, one‑off big spells. Questline unlocks wizard Tower, new spells, and dragon species.
* **Cleric (Support):** Targeted healing, sanctuary, revive. Questline unlocks Temple building, unique spells, and character resurrection.
* **Bard (Support/Control):** Inspire, debuff, party‑wide buffs, high CHA.

**Progression**

* **Levels:** Earned primarily by quests/bosses; XP tuned to narrative progress. Each level provides stat increases and skill points.
* **Skills:** Skills offer powerful abilities for use in combat or outside of combat. Rare tomes grant bonus points. Skill and Class reset options for a fee.
* **Gear:** Equipment that can be upgraded from crafting materials
* **Runes:** Each character can equip up to 3, provide Passive buffs and can be upgraded.
* **Construction Materials:** Used for upgrading the bastion.

## **6) Gameplay Systems - To Be Expanded**

### **Combat**

* **Initiative Order:** Simple per‑unit roll; round/turn indicator always visible.
* **AP determines Actions:** Free Actions: Attack, Skill, Item, Flee (contextual).
* **Skills limited by AP:** AP accumulation allows you to cast stronger skills/spells. Skills have a cooldown of 1-3 rounds. Start with 3-4 AP.
* **Party Synergy:** Cross‑class buffs or synergies (Bard “Inspire”, consume debuff to deal additional damage).
* **Damage/Defense:** Undefined, but consider DND systems of damage vs JRPG systems of damage. Damage Range vs fixed damage. Consider multipliers for weapon stats + primary stat. Armor mechanics decrease damage.
* **Other stats:** Consider % chance to dodge, %chance to crit, damage, etc.
* **AP Economy: Base AP/turn**: 3 with a cap of 5. Up to 2 AP rolls over. **Every action = AP cost**, no movement or positioning.
* Examples of Action Cost:
  + **1 AP** → Basic Attack, Guard/Defend, small heals/buffs, consumable items
  + **2 AP** → Class-defining skills, strong heals, damage abilities, debuffs
  + **3 AP** → “Big” moves (AOEs, revives, ultimates), limited by cooldowns

**Status Effects (Extensible)**

* **Cold:** target loses AP
* **Stunned:** Target is unable to play. Loses all AP
* ***Wet:*** Lightning/ice gets +1 dmg; fire -1.
* ***Oily:*** Fire gains splash; movement (if added) risky.
* **Shocked:** Target performs all actions at disadvantage
* **Burned:** Target takes damage each round.
* Haste: +2 AP regen
* **Exhausted:** Carryover disabled until recovered
* **Etc.**

**Buffs:**

**Regen:** Heals the character by X% at the beginning of their turn

**Slow:** Reduces the speed of the character by X%

**Elemental Effects:**

* Earth, wind, fire, water, ice, thunder, lightning,

**Resistance:** a character or enemy takes 50% less damage from a specific element type

**Weakness:** a character or enemy takes additional 50% damage from an element type

**Narrative Exploration**

* **Stonefall**: Central location for party to upgrade, obtain quests and pursue main storyline.
* **Regions:** Regions have problems to solve and dungeons to explore.
* **Dungeons:** Provide mystery and exploration elements, exploring secrets of places, reveal mysteries and progress plot.
* **Map (Fog of War):** As dungeon rooms are visited, a simple map reveals rooms.

**Economy**

* **Currencies:** Gold (primary), crafting materials for other upgrades.
* **Vendors:** Fixed core items (e.g., Minor Tonics) and region specific items.
* **Loot Table:** Med-Low appearance, guaranteed as quest rewards.

**Quests**

* **Design:** Each quest supports multiple solutions (combat, stealth, dialogue, etc)
* **Journal for Tracking:** Lightweight journal entries (name, stage, status); a top‑bar “active quest chip” provides quick context and navigation.
* **Map for tracking:** As a dungeon is explored narratively room by room, a map is updated against fog of war.
* **Unique Questlines:** Classes, species, or plot progression points open up unique quests.

**Items**

* **Consumables (expandable):** *Minor Tonic* (+HP); later *Antidote* (cleanse), *Bomb* (tag: oily + fire).
* **Equipment:** Weapon/armor with readable bonuses; no inventory limitations.
* **Runes:** Mythic runes that can be equipped (3/char), leveled, and grant passive buffs.
* **Legendary and upgradeable Items:** Grant party wide buffs and modified through the bastion. Name TBD

## **7) Narrative Structure - TBD**

**Premise**Stonefall clings to life atop a canyon in the shadow of Blackstone Mountain. Monsters and bandits surround it, threatening to stifle its meager existence. A fledgling party is formed to defend and define its future.

**Structure**

* **Prologue:** Tutorial and background settings explained.
* **Act I (Rising Tide):** Actions of the Characters help to build Stonefall from a village to a town. The renown of the characters and the legends told from Stonefall influence the wider world.
* **Act II (Downfall of Fame):** Stonefall changes from a Town to a City. The fame of Stonefall and the renown of the characters brings bigger issues to the city that affect the town on a regional scale. Characters become a key part of building relationships and navigating geo-politics or faction states.
* **Act III (No Turning back):** Stonefall must build and progress its economy and military in order to fight back against the onslaught of its enemies. Stonefall becomes sieged and Allies made or lost during the previous acts transform it into a new empire or crumbling ruins.

**Branching & World State**

* Key decisions trigger relationship flags with NPC’s and faction states
* Outcomes are recalled in party dialogue and with key NPC’s.
* Branching storyline prevents “Soft locks” (e.g., need a token, certain reputation) offer alternative paths without hard failing the run.
* Key decisions: Vote for mayor when the village turns into a town. Select from 3 NPC’s. The greater factions are pleased and send favor or disfavor towards the Party.
* From Town to City, you may run for Magistrate, assassinate the magistrate, or plot to overthrow Stonefall itself.

**Dynamic Dialogue System**

* The main storyline will have Node‑based conversations with conditional lines for: Unique items held by the party, Character class or origin, or reputation.
* Ink/inkjs integration planned: compile ink to JSON; evaluate conditions in JS.

**World State Manager:**

* A persistent data structure tracking major world events, player decisions, faction standings, character relationships and reputations, and environmental changes. This system governs how future events, encounters, and narratives unfold across the game.
* **Dynamic Dialogue System:** Conversations evolve based on relationship levels, world state, and character memory of previous events. Dialogue branches are context-aware, and can reference prior party decisions. Dialogue Nodes directly impact faction standings.

## **8) Art & Audio Direction**

**Visual Style - 2D Minimalist but informative. Simple, not busy**

* Vertical mobile view, hand‑drawn art for backgrounds, NPC’s, or enemies with minimal animations (UI highlights, hit flashes, overlays).
* The background covers the top two-thirds of the screen with enemies on the upper portion and the character in 3rd person on the lower view. The perspective is always 3rd person, and may switch from one character to a party view. The bottom portion of the screen will show the menu options and dialogue text.
* Feel should be cozy, readable panels and large buttons.
* Layout similar to Knights of Pen and Paper. Strong contrast for mobile; minimal clutter.
* Inventory button should always be visible

**UI/UX Principles**

* 2–3 click maximum to perform any common action (heal, equip, start quest).
* Combat text should be simple and clear with 1-2 lines.
* Bottom of screen shows buttons to access character, Inventory, Bastion, Stonefall, etc. The Character screen has sub-screens such as equipment, skills, Rune equips,
* The inventory screen helps manage gear and runes
* Bastion screen shows a Bastion skill tree
* Stonefall (the town) shows available Town upgrades, Quest Journal, etc

**Audio**

* Fun, engaging fantasy music for the start screen.
* Stonefall music unlocks so that you can adjust your main town tunes.
* Minimalist, soft music with ambient tones for towns
* Animated music for battles.
* SFX cues for hit/heal/level up; optional mute toggle persisted in settings.

## **9) Technology & Tools**

* **Stack:** HTML5/CSS3/JavaScript (ES6 modules), Ink, etc
* **Saves:** localStorage keys for game state and settings; autosave on quest completion & post‑battle. Save notification should be minimal watermark in symbol, not text form
* **Dialogue:** Ink authoring → inkjs runtime (planned). Second implementation should be AI LLM with parameters integration. Fallback: JSON node tables with conditions.
* **Data:** Table‑driven DB for species/classes/abilities/enemies/items; quest states persisted in a plain object.
* **Build/Workflow:** Visual Studio Code; Live Server for dev; GitHub for version control with feature branches and PRs; semantic versioning of milestones. Chat GPT for architecture, code, and visual production. Sono for music development.

## **10) Production Plan & Milestones**

**Milestone 0 — Prototype (1–2 weeks)**

* Minimal Party creation: Name - Species, Class, Stats
* Stonefall Hub (village state) with Tavern & Inn, Peddler’s cart.
* Lost Canyon Quest: Intro quest to rescue a child and clear out goblins.
* Combat v0. Turn based combat with 2 enemy types, implement AP system, Item minor tonic, save/load settings.
* Start a new game -> form party -> Interact with Stonefall locations ->accept quest ->explore Lost Canyon ->complete quest

**Milestone 1 — Vertical Slice (2–4 weeks)**

* Stonefall and Lost Canyon fully playable
* Working UI
* 10 different enemies
* 6 classes playable from Lv1–5;
* Status effects listed - applied via status dust
* Add equipment screen and starting items
* 10 items available for purchase from market
* First pass ambience SFX; mobile polish; accessibility (font sizes, light/dark, reduced motion).
* Runes implemented

**Milestone 2 — Alpha (4–6 weeks)**

* 5 Status effects implemented
* Skill tree (names) for 3 classes
* 5 enemies
* Implement 10 scene art
* Implement 5 enemy art
* Character art
* New region added
* Buildings added

**Milestone 3 — Beta (4–6 weeks)**

* **Acts 1-3 playable to end**
* **Buildings panel with 3 upgrades**
* **Ability unlocks to level 5**
* **Faction relationships**
* **Death**
* **balance/tuning, performance & UX polish, content lock; bug triage.**

**Milestone 4 — Launch (1–2 weeks)**

* **Public web release; landing page; quickstart manual; analytics & crash reporting (privacy‑respecting).**

**Milestone 5 - Launch on app store**

## **11) Monetization & Post‑Launch**

**Launch Plan**

* Free‑to‑play, ad‑free web release to maximize reach. Monetize new species, classes, and DLC with micro transactions for gold and other materials.

**Post‑Launch Content**

* **DLC/Expansions:** Additional regions (e.g., full Kaldrin arc), new Shards, enemy sets, and faction storylines.
* **Cosmetic Packs:** UI skins/themes.
* **QoL Updates:** Accessibility, speed toggles, encounter variety.

**Open Questions (Monetization)**

## **12) Risks & Mitigations (Brief)**

* **Content Creep:** Keep encounters table‑driven; cap abilities per class to 5 at launch.
* **Mobile Readability:** Strict text limits; scalable UI components; mandatory device testing.
* **Save Integrity:** Versioned save schema; migration on load; periodic backups/export.

## **13) Appendix (Initial Tables — Example)**

* **Items:** Minor Tonic (+HP), Antidote (cleanse), Bomb (fire; reacts with *oily*). Weapons not unlocked show a shadowed version
* Discoverable Equipment: Show weapons found, runes found, color code tier rankings.
* **Enemy Types:** Wolf (lowest‑HP targeter), Goblin (basic), Captain (random targeter), Cave Spider (poison prototype).
* **Status/Tags (Candidates):** *wet, oily, brittle, burning, chilled* (ship 1–2 first).
* Classes and Species descriptions (shadowed image if not unlocked yet. Rolling left - right
* Examples of Class Skills:
  + **Warrior** → Guard refunds **1 AP** next turn if hit while Guarded.
  + **Rogue** → Critical hit refunds **1 AP** (max once per turn).
  + **Ranger** → Traps/arrows often **1 AP setup → 2 AP finisher** combos.
  + **Wizard** → Can “Channel” (skip actions, gain +1 AP next turn, cap 6).
  + **Cleric** → Most heals are **1–2 AP**, Mass Heal is **3 AP**, balanced by cooldowns.
  + **Bard** → Inspire costs **1 AP** and makes next ally skill cost **1 AP less** (synergy engine).

**11. Monetization & Community**

· Free to play with micro-transactions to gain resources and unlock discoverable classes sooner.

· Purchase DLC (new factions, party types, regions)

· Mod support through Steam Workshop

· Community feedback integration during alpha/beta phases