

Walls of Nevermore

by Isac Vale

Target Audience: Teenagers and Young Adults

Gamer Type: Core Gamer (midway between casual and hardcore).

Target Platform: Android Tablets

Genre: Tactics

Number of Players: Multi-player Online

Projected Release Date: Winter 2016

High Concept Statement

In Walls of Nevermore, the player's goal is to protect his King and Chapels in the dark Victorian post-apocalyptic walled city of Nevermore. After the Evil Dark finally breached the city walls, it created clones of the King, starting a civil war that ruined the city. The only places within the walls that are safe from the Evil Dark are the Chapels, where players have battles to secure the locale, recruit warriors and acquire resources. As the game progresses, the player acquires multiple Chapels, allowing him to have several ongoing battles at any given time.

Battles, in this game, are fought with a unique system, composed of a juxtaposition (or layering) of multiple simple mechanics. The basic layer is of a traditional 'tactics game', in which characters battle in a square grid and have traits, like Hit Points, Strength and Agility. The second is a 'chess' layer: each person is born in this world with a role – as a pawn, knight, bishop, rook, king or queen. If a character hits an opponent while mimicking his correspondent chess movement, he deals critical damage. A third layer is 'paper-rock-scissor-like', as each character has a suit – hearts, diamonds, clover or pikes – which are weaker or stronger against each other. A fourth layer is 'formation', so that the relative position of characters (forming lines, crosses and so on) offer different bonuses. This layering of mechanics allows the game to have very complex interactions while keeping very simple rules.

The game relies on asynchronous battles. Once the player has made his moves and ended his turn, he must wait for his opponent's moves. But since the player can carry many battles at the same time (both attacking and defending multiple Chapels), every playing session will consist in taking a single turn in several different battles. Because of the Goth visuals and melancholic music, and the fact that characters are individuals (with individual names and stats), and because they're permanently lost in battles, the game will evoke a feeling of urgency to avoid disaster, and of transiency. It is intended to convey a sense of the ephemeral state of the world.

Feature Set

- Online Multiplayer
- Asynchronous Battle
- Multi-layered battle mechanics
- Character individualization
- Character evolution by actual experience (for a character to improve his attack, he must attack, to improve his hit points, he must endure damage, and so on)
- Characters gain feats, when leveling up, and teach their feats to comrades
- 'Breeding' system for troops (because pawns can evolve to other types and be taught feats by other characters, it is possible to 'breed' troops with specific skills)

Team Roles

The game is expected to be built by a small group of three members. One member will multi-task as the Game Designer and (Lead) Artist, including visual tasks such as modeling, animation and special effects. A second member will work as (Lead) Programmer, including user interface, database and connectivity. A third member will take the role of Audio Engineer, responsible for music, sound effects and voices.

The three main members are expected to hire freelance artists, programmers or musicians for specific jobs, or acquire ready-to-use assets if doing so doesn't compromise the unique feel of the game.

The Competition

The tactics genre isn't very well explored in Android platform. The majority of the games are paid, most notably Final Fantasy Tactics (which is a reference to any Tactics game), Blazing Souls and the Banner Saga, each of these with a very distinct feel, yet all very cartoonish.

Walls of Nevermore is expected to be a 'freemium' game, as are some others of the genre, such as Heroes Tactics and Brave Brigade. But these games are very cartoonish and do not handle terrain well – the positioning of characters, which should be crucial in a tactics games, is rather unimportant in them. There are, of course, numerous emulators that allow players to enjoy classic tactics games, but they lack the multi-player and other technological capabilities available to native android games.

The main inspiration to Walls of Nevermore is actually the Fire Emblem games, with their 'permadeath' rules. Of course, Nevermore takes a much darker, Goth, tone. It also uses asynchronous battle to deal with the issue of time: tactics games tend to either take very long or not be very profound (specially concerning relative positioning of the pieces). This solution is inspired by the Word with Friends game, which implements asynchronous multi-player gaming perfectly.

Innovation/Creativity

There are a few innovative aspects to Walls of Nevermore. First is the Gothic and melancholic tone. Then there's the asynchronous battles that allow for a deep game to be played in short sessions. A third aspect is the multi-layer battle mechanics, which allow very complex strategies with very simple rules. There's also an 'empire building' effect, as you conquer more Chapels, recruit more warriors and 'breed' them to you liking. Finally there's the massive multi-player capability, attainable by allowing players to have dozens of ongoing battles at a time.

Scope Management

The game will be developed in broad stages. The first is designing, making concept art, refining mechanics and collecting audio references. The second is building a working prototype, and since the multi-layer battle mechanics and the asynchronous multi-player capabilities are vital for this project, they must be implemented in this second stage. The main models, UI and music is expected to be accomplished at this time. A third stage involves desirable, but non-essential features, such as the leveling system, different models for Chapels and props, along with extra sound effects. A fourth stage includes extra features that were set aside during the concept stage. These include 'fairy pieces' (pieces from alternative types of chess, such as amazon, dragon, general, cannon), interactive scenery, such as falling boulders, electric wiring and collapsing floors, and voices for different characters.