

# WALLS OF NEVERMORE

## DESIGN DOCUMENT

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And this was the reason that, long ago, / In this kingdom by the sea,  
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling / My beautiful Annabel Lee:  
So that her highborn kinsmen came / And bore her away from me,  
To shut her up in a sepulchre / In this kingdom by the sea.



– Edgar Allan Poe

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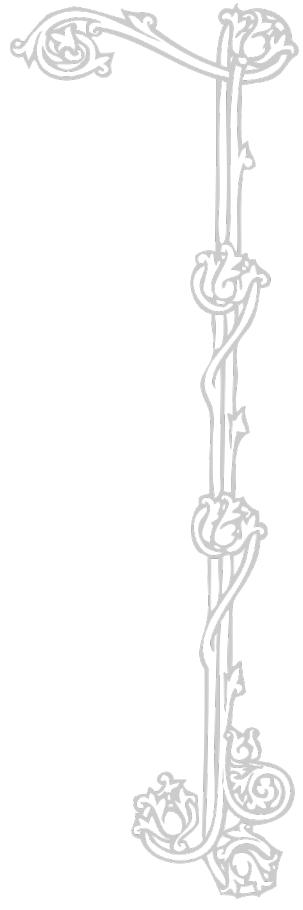
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You can check out the High Concept at

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/gamedesign/peer/dc6bi/high-concept-document/review/7EBNVNLHeWwoQrbIHhKaQ>

You can check out the Story Bible at

<https://www.coursera.org/learn/gamedesign/peer/CW5aa/story-bible/review/rUSa7djbEeWA6BleMfBWVQ>

# Philosophy

Walls of Nevermore is a Goth asynchronous multi-layered tactics game. Understanding and creating it requires us to answer some questions that are in heart of the project: what are each of this four components and why are they so.

## WHAT IS AND WHY TACTICS

Tactics are games that require little or no motor skill – it is only about strategy. They are turn based, each player controlling (usually) several troops, simulating a small scale confrontation. Chess, for example, could be said to be a tactics game. These games greatly appeal to players who want a mental challenge, and allow for incredibly deep gaming. If it is done right, an apparent minor difference in the state of the game (for example, one unit being one space to the right) causes a major difference in the game itself. Tactics are easily accessible, allows for very deep gaming and provide rigorous challenges, being the quintessential easy-to-learn-hard-to-master games.

## WHAT IS AND WHY ASYNCHRONOUS

Tactics game usually have one big drawback: they take a lot of time. Because it is turn based (and mentally challenging), a single battle can easily take hours. That's when asynchronous gaming comes in. In Walls of Nevermore, players can participate in several simultaneous battles, taking one turn on each battle every time he loads up the game. Players don't have to stare at the screen waiting an opponent's turn. Instead they go through all the games in which it is their turn, and make their moves. When the opponents have finished their moves, players get notified it's their turn. If a player engages in enough battles, there should always be a battle waiting for his attention.

## WHAT IS AND WHY MULTI-LAYERED

Complexity is a powerful tool to make games deep and interesting, but a game being complex is quite different from it being complicated. Complex is about interference of multiple components, while complicated is about how intricate and convoluted are the rules for particular components. Chess is a complex game, in which pieces with very simple movements create a very complex battlefield. Walls of Nevermore strives to be a complex game with non-complicated (aka simple) rules, and that is accomplished by layering simple mechanics on the same game.

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First, there's a very basic tactics game – the simple things: they move around in a grid, they hit, inflict damage etc. Second, there is a chess layer: if character mimic the movements of chess pieces, they get to deal more damage. Third, there's a formation layer: characters in a line boost each other defenses, encircling an ally heals him, encircling an enemy allows you to hurt him. Finally there's the suits layer, which is somewhat related to 'rock–paper–scissor': characters have suits (spades, clubs, diamond, hearts), and each suit is good against some and bad against others. Characters with the same suit have affinity bonus as well, if fighting side by side.

By layering these simple mechanics, the choices a player has to make are much deeper, and the game becomes complex, even though the rules behind it are relatively simple.

## WHAT IS AND WHY GOTH

Goth is a subculture unified by aesthetic principles that are considered morbid, dark, ephemeral, romantic. Victorian garments and architecture, dark clothes, heavy black and white make-up, music and art invoking sorrow, loneliness and longing. These things speak to the Goths because they find aesthetic beauty in contemplating how ephemeral and transient the world is.

And its relation to tactics and war gaming, although very strong, is seldom acknowledged. Such games usually focus on an upbeat, energetic vibe of 'let-us-conquer-and-destroy'. On the other hand, war is much more likely to call for sacrifices and bring about sadness than excitement. Walls of Nevermore aims to evoke this felling of sorrow for things lost and sacrificed in the path of doing what must be done.

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## Feature Set

Walls of Nevermore relies on few very important features. Although some of these elements were already covered under Philosophy, it is important to underline them as features.

### ASYNCHRONOUS BATTLES

Waiting for one's turn in a turn based tactics will, in principle, take half the time you spend playing. That's one thing that makes chess less popular than it deserves, and causes modern tactics game, like Final Fantasy Tactics and Fire Emblem, to be oriented to single player experience.

But games are more fun against brain than chips. That's why Walls of Nevermore incorporate asynchronous gaming (you can see this feature working flawlessly in games like 'Words With Friends'). Each player is engaged in several battles at the same time. Every time he loads up the game, he gets to move in the battles in which it is his turn. When his opponent has finished his move, then the player is notified and allowed to take his turn. Every session of play allows the player to move on several different battles

# MULTI-LAYERED GAMING

As stated before, multi-layering simple mechanics allows for the game to be very complex, deep and challenging, even though the rules in play are each very simple. This allows beginners to easily pick up the game and play, but also allows room for experienced players to become very skilled in the game. There's another positive outcome still: being good at a complicated game, usually means knowing all the obscure rules, all the different cards and memorizing the fine print. Being good at complex games requires experience and the development of a (very hard to describe) intuitive understanding of the game. The latter is much more satisfying.

## LEVEL UP AND PROMOTION

It is important for the player to get the sensation of moving forward. In campaign mode, this is accomplished by beating maps and progressing in the game, but multiplayer mode requires other kinds of feedback. Because of that, it is important that characters evolve with time, not only their stories but also their statistics and powers. In Walls of Nevermore, characters can improve their base stats and some (the Pawns) can even promote, mimicking the rules of Chess.

## PERMADEATH

If a character dies, it is dead. That's a controversial rule, but it suits Walls of Nevermore perfectly because it is exactly the sentiment of fragility, impermanence and emptiness that the player is supposed to feel (not constantly, of course – let's not be sadists). In order for the death of a character to be meaningful, a few precautions must be made: each character has his own name; each type of piece (pawns, knights, rooks, bishops, queen and king) have some variations of appearance, so a character may be recognizable; each character has a variation on the base stats of its class, so that they are distinguished in usefulness in the eyes of the player; the player can choose Feats for them, allowing customization; finally they must require multiple battles to level up and develop, so the player is invested on them.

But permadeath can be very problematic, so there are a few precautions the game must take. First, there's a relatively low cap in character progression (five levels per class), so a player doesn't get so invested in a character that its death prompts him to abandon the game. Second, characters with backstories and relevant to the plot do not die (well, the Amazon is the one exception, but that is part of the challenge). If losing a character means losing part of the story, part of the cinematics and, basically, not getting all out of the game, the death of a character will be hated by the player (instead of felt). Finally, characters can be stolen from the player (following the rules of Shogi, Japanese chess). When it happens, the stolen character must be placed back on the battlefield, which gives a chance for the player to steal him back.

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# Game World

The setting, plots and history included here are a summary of what was presented in the longer Story Bible document. This is due to the length of that document. If you wish for a more in-depth description, please check the Story Bible (for which there is a link in the second page).

## MOOD AND SETTING

The nameless world surrounding the City of Nevermore is dark, colorless, filled with mists and silence. The game aims to evoke a feeling of longing and sorrow, and does that by emphasizing the shadows by using strong, but thin beams of light that pierces it. It emphasizes the silence by breaking it with far away weeping and raven cries.

Most of the game takes place inside Gothic Chapels, filled with statuary, stained glass and mystical iconography. Characters also have very unusual appearance, being pale, with dark eyes and hair and an overall Goth look. When the city is viewed from outside, its silhouette is marked by the black wall's thorns, culminating in a lonely tower in front of a full moon. When the forest outside the city is shown, it's eerie and full of mists.

This visual emphasize the overall state of the world, engulfed by an evil force, a black mist called the Dark. It corrupts people, causes them to be sorrowful, aggressive, paranoid and heartless. It also possesses beasts and people, and can even create doubles to spread chaos. Nevermore was the last city standing against the Dark, and the game takes places in the last days of that city.

Prior to the rise of the Dark, the human world was already in conflict with beings called Others, which have god-like abilities and sometimes appear as terrible monsters. Nevermore had lived in a state of enmity with these beings for hundreds of years. The Others are somewhat related to our fae – not the pixies and sprites of fairytales, but the sinister, powerful and unpredictable entities that haunt our mythology. Think Fomorians, sluaghs, redcaps, grendel, balrogs.

## STORY IN A NUTSHELL

Once upon a time... there was a specially powerful, vile and chaotic Other who took the shape of a great dragon. Being fearful and envy, the Others forged a sword who could imprison the spirit of its victims, stealing their powers. They called it Gram. Because they were afraid to face the dragon themselves, they sent a human hero in their stead, wielding the sword.

The hero soon found out the dragon kept a slave girl called Annabel, and together they killed the beast. The sword captured not only the dragon's soul, but also its cunningness. It tricked the hero into not returning the sword, keeping it instead.

Enraged by the betrayal, the Others incited the people to slay Annabel (using Gram to do the task), and then they placed many curses on the sword. Annabel soul merged with the dragon's inside the sword. It became a powerful and enchanting weapon, cunning and treacherous, and it started calling itself Annabel. (Every day...) For centuries to come, Annabel would control the kings of Nevermore from the shadows behind the throne.

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But one day... the Dark finally breached the walls of Nevermore. Fearing it might control the king and Annabel, the Others kidnapped the then King Theodore. Soon after, doubles of him started appearing in the city – each amassing its own army in order to conquer the impostors. This led to a civil war.

When all hope was lost, Gregory, the player character, encountered by accident the dying king. As he was beyond help, he decided to name Gregory as king, giving him the mission of unifying the city against the Dark.

Because of that... Gregory has to find warriors and convince them to join him. To do so he must kill ghouls and gargoyles, fight skirmish against all odds, save innocent civilians and conquer and hold Chapels, which are havens against the Dark. After a while, Gregory starts to become famous as a champion of Nevermore.

Because of that... many false Gregory kings – doubles made by the Dark – also start fighting for the city (these are in fact other players, controlling who, for them, is the real Gregory).

Because of that... princess Samantha, daughter of old king Theodore, sets a trap to have all the false kings kill each other. Gregory stands out by trying to save the bystanders instead of killing his rivals.

Until one day... Samantha accepts helping Gregory reach the chambers where Annabel is kept. Since the sword is the keeper of the royal family, it is believed she is the only thing able to reveal the identity of the true king. After many battles, Annabel finally agrees to an audience with Gregory.

There are three possible endings to the game. Each one allows the player to alter his character for use in future multiplayer battles.

And finally... first ending. This is the default: Annabel reveals to Gregory that the king Theodore who crowned him was himself a fake, and so Gregory is no more than a usurper. Gregory decides he is too close to give up on unifying the city, he locks Annabel away, gets really dark and evil (he “turns to the dark side”, so to speak) and starts a new dynasty “to see the end of the world”.

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As he appears at different parts of the game.  
From left to right: as a Pawn before the game starts; as a King during the campaign mode; as a Regent after ending option 2; as a Usurper after the default ending.

And finally… second ending. Gregory must have found the fairy Gwendolyn and convinced her to join him. Then, when Annabel announces Gregory as a fraud, he returns it to the Others. Annabel retaliates by telling the truth about the Others – that they kidnapped the king, and his daughter, and that they've cursed the city. Gregory becomes regent of the city, but he is “spent”, apathetic, disheartened. The Others finally destroy the dragon and Annabel, and give an empty Gram to Gregory as a reward.

And finally… third ending. Gregory must have won the heart of princess Samantha and he must not recruit fairy Gwendolyn. When Annabel rejects Gregory, Samantha asks if the sword would recognize her unborn son as king, which she accepts. Samantha and Gregory marry and have a son, but are killed by Annabel soon after. She takes their child, Alphonse, to raise him as the ultimate warrior.

## FATE, CLASS AND SUIT

Characters in the nameless world believe there is an absolute, all powerful rule in the universe, called Fate: all that must be, will be. This belief (or Fate itself) molds them into a very peculiar way: they are bound to a particular class and a particular suit for life.

Classes are the general skill set and talents a character has, which will eventually determine his occupation (or his role in the army). These classes are taken from the game of Chess, and are: Pawns (underlings), Knights (agile and cunning), Bishops (magic wielders), Rooks (strong and resilient), Queens (powerful and versatile) and Kings (rulers).

Suits are determined by circumstances of birth, much like zodiac signs, and are believed to determine personality. They are: Spades (feisty and belligerent), Diamonds (serious and practical), Hearts (spirited and passionate) and Clubs (obedient and pragmatic).

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## Development

Walls of Nevermore will be developed by a team of three, which includes a Game Designer/ Lead Artists, a Lead Programmer and an Audio Engineer. Each member is expected to buy assets and coordinate efforts relating to his area, and to hire freelancers to aid him in specific tasks.

The game will be developed in Unity3d, accompanied by softwares like Blender, Inkscape and Gimp. It is important that all (or most) of the software is free, and even better if they are open source, because it allows the group to recruit volunteers interested in the project.

Milestones are expected to be reached at the end of four stages of development. The first is designing the game concepts, making concept art, refining mechanics and collecting sound and visuals references. The second is having a working prototype of the battle system, including the layered mechanics and asynchronous playing. It includes having main models, basic UI and AI. A third stage includes adding the other necessary elements, such as music and SFX, arts, models, animation – having the game ready to launch as a basic, stripped down version. The final stage is adding extra content, desirable but not essential, such as extra music and props, refining systems, AI, UI and arts, adding tutorials and cinematics.

# Aesthetics

The game aims to provide the user the experience of fighting against the tides, mourning the life that passed and appreciating the impermanence of the world. This is to be achieved by:

## VISUAL ELEMENTS

The mains aesthetic inspiration is the Goth visuals: dark, eerie, sorrowful, nonconformist, placid and yet aggressive. This includes a shadowed scenario with strong but thin beams of light, peculiar goth-like characters, stained glass, gargoyles, statuaries, mystical iconography, destruction (broken window, overgrown yards, decapitated statues). Colors must be used careful: grays and black are the norm, with few colorful element, like bright red roses or glowing stained glass, so the presence of colors emphasize the lack of colors.

## SOUND ELEMENTS

Music should be slow paced ans somewhat sad, with few instruments – like a single solo violin lament for the opening screen. The game must make use of silence, but for it to be perceived by the player, it must be broken by elements that remind the player he 'should' be listening to something. Distant cries, ravens, chains, crumbling walls, maniac laughter, these sort of thing. Chanting is definitely desirable, although lyrics are not.

## WHAT THE GAME WILL LOOK LIKE

Below is a game screen sketch. The map has a grid where characters move, including back row for deploying captured pieces. It is necessary to have enough background to remind the player the world is crumbling around him, and that his petty disputes have very little meaning (in the hopes he will hold tighter to the meaning it does have).

At the left of the screen ia a button called 'lenses' that allow the player to access information on the unit. When pressing it, the stats of all troops and Feat icons will appear over every unit's head. Moving a piece is accomplished by dragging it across the board. Attacking an enemy is accomplished by dragging the character on top of his target.

Directly below it is a 'camera' button that allows the player to toggle viewpoints between the default perspective and a top-down view.

Moving a piece is accomplished by dragging it across the board. When the player releases the drag, the character will immediately follow the path of dragging. To abort a movement, the player must release the drag on the original space. Attacking an enemy is accomplished by releasing the drag on top of a target.

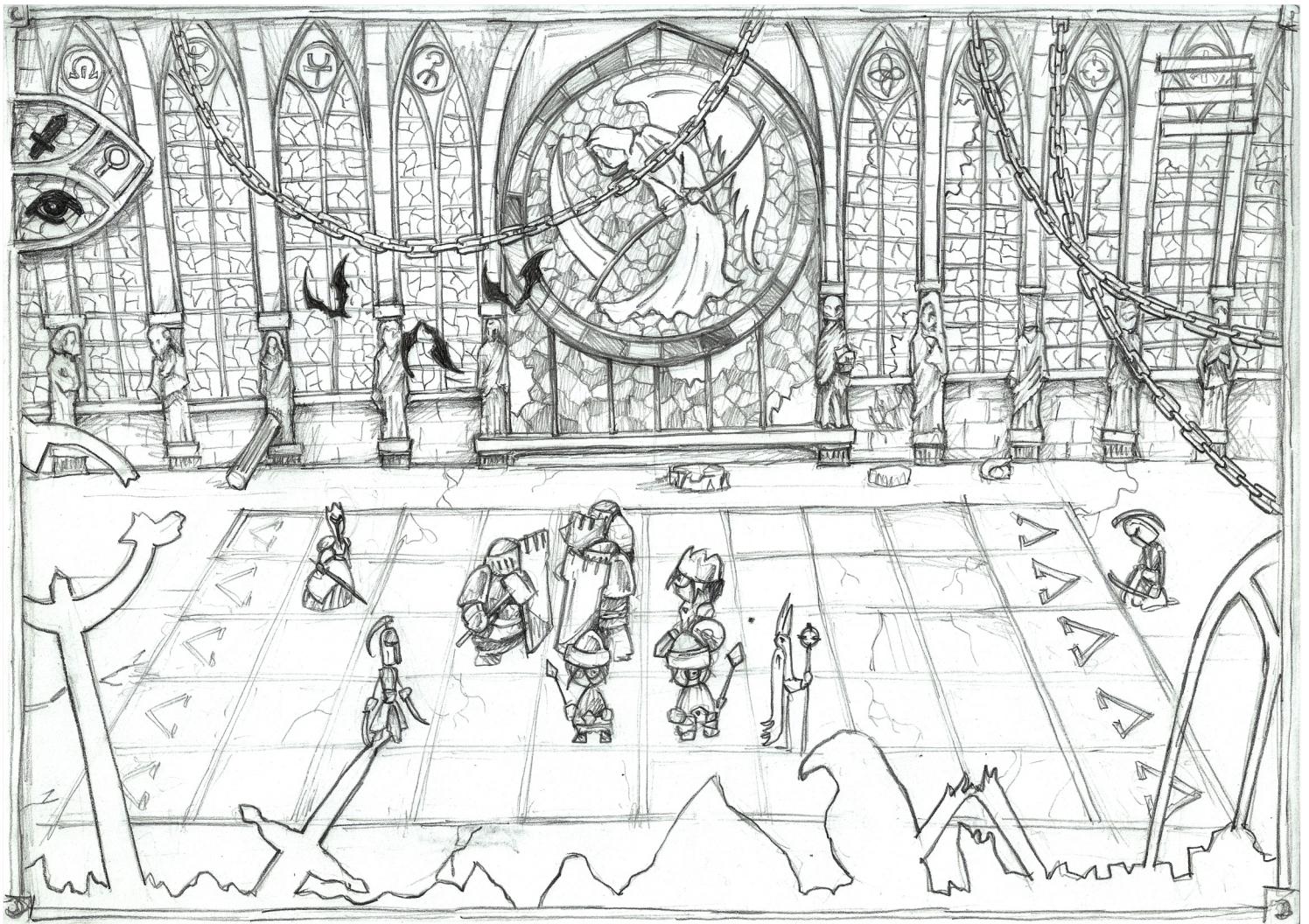
Clicking the character will open a statistics table, showing Traits and Feats. This screen allows a player to toggle Feats on and off.

To click on a character or to drag him one must click on the square on which he stands. It is the square, not the character model, that respond to inputs. This is so because characters vary a lot in height and width, and clicking a short character behind a big one would be challenging. Clicking the square projection, once one learns, is much easier.

The story is told with the busts of the characters on the first plane, as is common for RPGs and tactics games. Choosing missions is done on top of a city map.

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## CHAPEL BATTLE IN PERSPECTIVE VIEW

Notice the buttons on the upper left for accessing statistics and toggle viewpoint. Also notice the flying bats and the raven in the first plane: this elements move and have sounds intended to highlight the emptiness and silence by contrast.



## STORYTELLING

Game dialogues will feature first plane handdrawn images of characters. In this case, Gregory trying to reason with Samantha when she tries to kill every King in town, including himself.

# Mechanics

## DICE

Chance has a part to play in the system, and Walls of Nevermore use a simple concept regarding it. When chance is relevant, it is applied modifiers consisting of a random number picked from the list: -1, 0 or +1. Because several of these modifiers are stacked, the resulting modifier is a Gaussian distribution centered on 0. In other words, the most common result is 0, but it can range from  $-x$  to  $+x$ ,  $x$  being the number of modifiers stacked. We shall call these modifiers "dice".

## CHARACTER TRAITS

Each character in the game has four traits: Attack, Skill, Defense and Health. The Attack trait measures how much damage his attack inflicts. The Skill trait measures both how likely he is to hit a target and how likely he is to dodge an incoming attack. The Defense trait measures how much damage is soaked every time the character is dealt a blow. Health measures how much damage a character can take.

Traits typically range from 1 to 10, although at high levels they could go higher, and average score is about 4. The system was designed and tested so that each trait is worth relative the same, so scores are comparable (having 8 points of Skill is relatively as good as having 8 points of Health).

When a character is generated, it uses its class base Traits, plus add two dice to each trait. This means each trait can be up to two points higher or lower than its class' average. It also means characters vary in power, so it might be disadvantageous to recruit some, and lucky to recruit others.

The base attributes for each class are as follows (the traits are Attack, Skill, Defense and Health, respectively):

**Pawn 4/3/4/4.** Pawns are the average guy, except they are not very skilled.

**Knight 3/7/3/3.** Knights sacrifice high power and stamina in favor of great agility and skill.

**Bishop 5/4/4/3.** The Bishop's magic makes his attacks powerful, but he lacks endurance.

**Rook 4/1/7/7.** Rooks are extremely resistant, but are slow to act and aim poorly.

**Queen 5/6/4/4.** Queens are agile and powerful, but her defenses are just average.

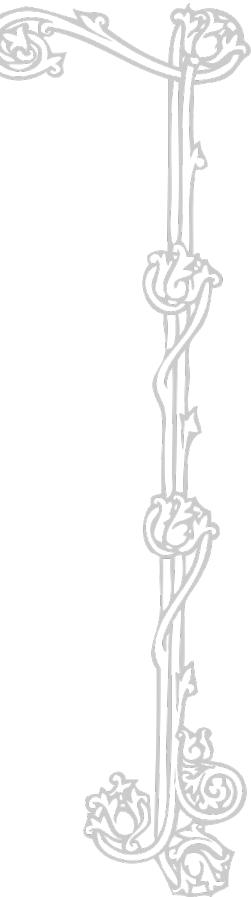
**King 4/4/3/4.** Kings are not very powerful and should be kept from harm.

All fairy pieces have increased Health to balance their rarity. Their stats are:

**Dragon 4/4/4/7.** The Dragon is a resilient all-around piece.

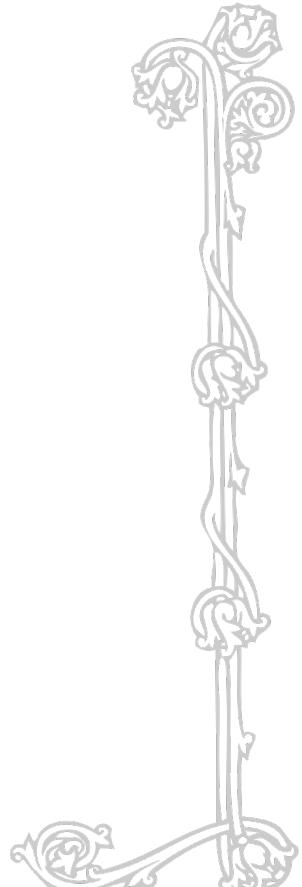
**Cannon 6/2/1/6.** Although powerful, the Cannon wear no Armor and often misses his targets.

**Amazon 6/5/2/8.** The Amazon has great attack and Health, but carries light armor.



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## CHARACTERS SKETCH

From left to right: Pawn, Knight, Bishop and Rook

## CHARACTER FEATS

Feats are abilities the player can give a character in order to customize it. They incorporate both chess more specific rules (such as castling and 'en passant'), but also supply staple RPG powers (like healing and sneak attack). Each class has 4 Feats associated with it, and every suit also offers 4 Feats. That means each character can choose from up to 8 available Feats. They are succinctly described below.

**Pawn.** En Passant (allows him to hit enemies as he moves by them); Promote (allows him to be promoted early); Double Step (allows him to move forward at half action); and Cover (allows him to receive damage instead of nearby allies).

**Knight.** Whirlwind (attacks all nearby enemies); Jump (may move from occupied spaces); Double Attack (may attack at half action); Momentum (gets an Attack bonus if successfully dodged an attack last turn).

**Bishop.** Searing Light (may attack multiple targets in a line); Sidestep (may move diagonally indefinitely when attacking); Haste (causes target to move and attack at double speed); Healing (nearby allies recover 1 Health).

**Rook.** Bash (attack that pushes opponent back one square); Charge (may move orthogonally indefinitely when attacking); Shield-breaker (attack with reduced Skill and sharply raised Attack); Defend (sharply raises Defense).

**Queen.** Dash (may move orthogonally and diagonally indefinitely when attacking); Anger (Skill is decreased when used defensively, but sharply increased when used offensively); Full-attack (convert remaining moves into additional damage), Merciless (a powerful blow with sharply increased Attack, but that will kill rather than capture).

**King.** Castling (may move to a space occupied by an ally, switching positions with him); Allegiance (targets captured by the king are automatically converted, healed and dropped); Raise Hero (an ally gets a bonus to both Attack and Skill); and Boost Spirit (an ally gets a Defense bonus and recover some Health).

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### SOME NPC SKETCHES

From left to right: Aurelius, Alphonse and Samantha.

**Spades.** Attack boost (permanently raises attack); Aim true (Skill is boosted when used offensively); Rage (lowers Defense while sharply raising Attack); Wound (subsequent attacks against the target cause increased damage).

**Diamonds.** Defense boost (permanently raises defense); Counter (if incoming attacks are blocked or dodged, the character launches counter-attacks); Evasion (Skill is boosted when used defensively); Protect (nearby allies get a Defense boost).

**Hearts.** Skill boost (permanently raises Skill); Inspire (an ally gets his Attack, Skill and Defense Traits slightly boosted); Sneak-attack (deals extra damage on a surrounded enemy); Guide (nearby allies get a Skill boost).

**Clubs.** Health boost (permanently raises Health); Regeneration (heal 1 Health per turn); Assist (nearby allies get an Attack boost); Resist (blows cannot directly kill the character – he must be lowered to 1 Health and then get damaged again before perishing).

Feats can't be acquired multiple times. Fairy pieces use the same Feats listed above, but in a different combination than regular pieces.

**Dragon.** Whirlwind (as Knight); Sidestep (as Bishop); Bash (as Rook); Raise Hero (as King).

**Cannon.** Jump (as Knight); Sidestep (as Bishop); Shield-breaker (as Rook); Full-attack (as Queen).

**Amazon.** En Passant (as Pawn); Healing (as Bishop); Dash (as Queen); Boost Spirit (as King).

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# LEVELING AND PROMOTION

Traits raise automatically with use. If a character has dealt a lot of damage, attacked many times, has soaked much damage or has taken much damage, he will gain raise Attack, Skill, Defense and Health, respectively, by one point. Only one Trait can be increased per map, and only by one point.

Each class has a hidden Trait called 'Progression', which tells us how many times a character must have a Trait increased before he goes up a level. This is always 1 for Pawns, 2 for Knights, Bishops and Rooks, and 3 for Kings and Queens. (For fairy pieces, Progression is 2 for Dragon and Cannon, and 3 for Amazon.) A lower Progression means the character goes up in level quickly, but at high levels he is still weak. A high Progression means he goes up in level more slowly, but becomes really tough by the last level.

If a character has earned enough Traits (as many as its class' Progression Trait), then after a victorious battle he will go up a level, being allowed to choose a Feat. These are available to him according to his class and suit.

Each character starts at level one and can go up a level four times (selecting four feats). At level 5, the character is considered a 'Master', and is able to Train others (we'll get to that in a minute). Pawns, however, are an exception to this rule.

After reaching level 5 (or by acquiring the necessary Feat), a Pawn may be promoted into a Knight, Bishop, Rook (and in case it is female), a Queen. It will keep its current Traits (including those raised by experience) and will be able to take levels in the new class, raising Traits even further. This makes Pawn-born characters actually stronger than characters that started in their final class, once both have reached their peaks.

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## EXTRA FEATS

There are two ways in which a character may collect more than four Feats. The first is when a Pawn promotes into a new class. In this case he keeps the Pawn Feats as 'extra feats', and may purchase his new class Feats normally.

The second way is by Training. When a character (except a Pawn) reaches level 5 and becomes a Master, there's a chance he will teach one of his Feats to one of his allies. This happens only at the end of a victorious battle, and only the ally who spent most time near the Master (orthogonally) during the combat gets to learn the Feat. In case of a tie, the student is selected randomly.

The chance of him learning a Feat is 50%, minus 5% per 'extra feat' he already possesses (which makes Pawn-born character rather bad at learning new tricks). If he does succeed, which Feat he picks up is selected randomly among those Feats the Master actually used in combat. Feats acquired through training are considered 'extra feats'.

Just a side note. The story has two notable exceptions to the rules above. First, if Gregory demotes to Pawn in the end of the game (the default ending), he will get to amass an enormous amount of feats, having gone through three classes: first King, then Pawn, then whatever the player chooses (he was a level 1 Pawn before the game starts and so did not had any Pawn Feats). Second, Aurelius, his mentor, was previously a Master Rook, but remained a Master even after being demoted, so he starts the game as a level 1 Master Pawn (!). Strangely, he was never a Pawn prior to this adventure and cannot be promoted, even through the Promote Feat (which is blocked to him).

# ACTIONS

On his turn, a player can take 4 actions. These actions may be spent on the same character or on different characters, in any order or proportion a player likes (he can spend two actions on character A, then 1 in character B, than the last back on character A, for example). There are three ways of spending actions: moving, attacking, dropping and using Feats.

**Moving.** Characters can move orthogonally at the cost of 1 action per space and diagonally by the cost of 2 actions per space. They cannot move through allies nor enemies.

**Attacking.** Characters attack by moving into a space occupied by an opponent. Each attack counts as an action, so a single character could attack four times in a turn, if he does not have to move.

**Dropping.** When you lower the Health of an opponent to zero, you capture him. You can then use one action to 'drop' him in the back row of the board. When you do this, that character is healed one Health and is now yours (permanently!).

**Feats.** Most Feats do not require actions to activate – they are either passive or just add modifiers to checks. Some rare feats, like the Rook's Defense and the Pawn's Promote require spending an action to activate.

Sometimes a character may move more quickly than normal. The Pawn's Double Step feat, the Knight's Double Attack and the Bishop's Haste can do that. In these cases, a character would spend half an action to do a particular task. They can even double that effect by combining these Feats. For example if a Hasted Knight uses Double Attack, he can spend only a quarter action per attack – and thus may attack 16 times in a turn. Time cannot be subdivided further than a quarter, though.

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## BATTLE SYSTEM: BASE LAYER

The battle system in Walls of Nevermore is divided in four layers of mechanics. The first layer is a basic tactics game, where pieces move around a grid and attack each other. The precise mechanics for these attacks will be explained below.

When a character attacks a target, they compare the attacker Skill Trait plus 10 dice versus the defender Skill Trait. Actually, to ensure characters hit each other most of the time, and to ensure the Skill Trait is not overly valuable, the attacker gets to add another +2 to his side of the equation.

So the attack formula is: Skill + 2 + 10 dice versus Skill.

The chance of hitting targets are shown in the table below\*.

how much more skilled you are compared to your opponent	6 or more	5	4	3	2	1	0
probability of landing a hit	~100%	99.9%	99.6%	98.4%	95.9%	91.5%	83.3%
how much more skilled your opponent is compared to you	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
probability of landing a hit	72.1%	57.81%	42.4%	28.5%	17.25%	9.4%	4%
	8	9	10				
	1.5%	0.5%	0.1%				

\*This figures were not calculated – instead these are averages from a simulation script.

If the target is hit, it is now time to calculate damage. To do it, we take the character's Attack Trait, plus 10 dice, and subtract from that the target's Defense Trait. In order to make battles quicker, and keep Defense from becoming overly valuable, the attacker adds +2 to his Trait.

So the damage formula is: Attack + 2 + 10 dice – Defense.

That's the amount of damage dealt. The target subtracts that from his current Health and, if it falls to 0 or below, the target is captured.

The tables below show the average number of attack each troop needs in order to take down opponents. It does not take Feats into consideration, and the Traits improved by experience (in the second table) are randomly picked. In spite of these limitations, it is an excellent tool to compare the effectiveness of each class. (These results were not calculated. They were simulated in a small Python program that ran 10000 times each combination of attacker/defender and took averages.)

Average Number of Attacks Necessary to Take Down Opponents (Level 1 Characters)

	Pawn	Knight	Bishop	Rook	Queen	King	Dragon	Cannon	Amazon
Pawn	2.9	5.7	2.8	13.9	5.8	2.6	5.2	1.9	4.4
Knight	3.3	2.4	2.8	24.3	3.7	2.5	5.3	2.0	3.3
Bishop	2.0	3.2	1.9	8.1	3.2	1.9	3.4	1.5	3.0
Rook	4.2	18	4.7	15.9	14.3	4.4	8.9	2.4	8.9
Queen	1.9	1.9	1.6	8.0	2.3	1.6	3.0	1.5	2.3
King	2.6	3.8	2.4	13.5	4.2	4.5	4.5	1.8	3.5
Dragon	2.7	3.7	2.4	13.3	4.2	4.5	4.5	1.8	3.5
Cannon	2.1	7.0	2.3	5.7	5.4	3.9	3.9	1.6	4.3
Amazon	1.6	2.1	1.5	5.3	2.1	2.5	2.5	1.3	2.2

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Average Number of Attacks Necessary to Take Down Opponents (Level 5 Characters)

	Pawn	Knight	Bishop	Rook	Queen	King	Dragon	Cannon	Amazon
Pawn	2.6	22.6	3.8	67.0	30.9	15.4	7.2	3.5	8.9
Knight	1.5	2.4	2.2	64.6	8.7	9.7	5.0	2.5	8.6
Bishop	2.1	3.9	1.6	9.9	6.6	5.6	3.2	1.8	4.6
Rook	1.5	23.8	7.7	32.9	78.9	14.8	11.9	4.4	17.9
Queen	1.3	1.9	1.6	6.5	3.0	2.8	2.8	1.5	2.6
King	2.2	4.8	2.4	27.6	9.7	5.0	5.2	2.3	5.3
Dragon	1.9	13.8	2.4	31.3	11.1	10.6	4.6	2.6	5.6
Cannon	2.3	9.5	2.6	17.2	11.6	6.6	3.9	2.3	5.7
Amazon	1.2	1.8	1.6	4.2	2.9	2.0	7.4	1.5	2.4

We must here make a note about the Pawn. While all other troops cap as they reach level 5, a Pawn would automatically promote on the next victory, allowing him to start a new class and develop even further. Comparing a level 5 Pawn with a level 5 anything else is unfair because the Pawn has not peaked yet. In fact, once the Pawn promotes and peaks on the other class, he will be slightly more powerful (on average) than a unit that started off in that class.

As characters gain levels, it takes more and more turns for opponents to take them down, which means the necessity for more strategies (found in other layers) increases.

# CAPTURE AND DROP

A character's whose Health has dropped below 1 is captured and placed outside the 'board', at his capturer's mercy. He can be 'converted' to his opponent's side by being moved to the back row of his former enemy. We call this move a 'drop', as in it is on Shogi (Japanese chess). The character's Health is automatically set to 1 and he can be used normally to fight against his former allies. Just as Fate had decided.

A character who is left outside the board when the game ends is lost forever.

## BATTLE SYSTEM: CHESS LAYER

The next layer in the battle system relates to Chess. Each character is associated with a chess piece, and can deal extra damage to targets standing in the space his chess piece would capture. For example a Bishop would deal this extra damage to character standing in a diagonal line from him. This 'chess targets' are calculated from the starting position of the pieces in a given turn. For example, all nearby spaces to a King are 'chess targets', but if he moved three spaces forward, he would've left the chess targets behind, and none of the spaces around him now would give extra damage.

Attacking an enemy in a 'chess target' gives the player a bonus of +2 in both Skill and Attack Traits. The tables comparing classes show a considerable reduction in the time required to put down opponents

## BATTLE SYSTEM: FORMATION LAYER

Formation is a critical part of Tactics games, and unfortunately is often underappreciated by designers. The Formation layer sets a few simple rules regarding the relative disposition of troops. These are:

**Line Defense.** A character with allies at both sides gain a defensive advantage. His allies must in opposite sides around him. This gives the defender a +1 bonus to Skill and Defense.

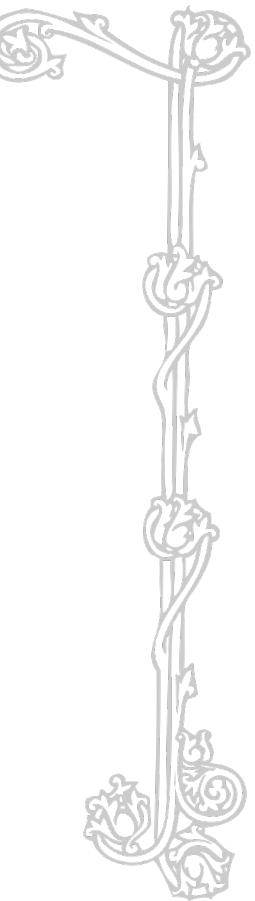
**Sheltering.** A piece that is sheltered by allies recovers 1 Health by the end of the turn. To be considered sheltered, the piece must have three allies near him orthogonally.

**Testudo.** When characters are part of a 4-piece block (2x2 characters), they each can focus on defending one corner. This gives them a +2 Defense bonus. (Testudo do not overlap – if the character is part of two Testudo formations simultaneously, only one bonus is applied).

**Flanking.** A target that is surrounded by two or more opponents orthogonally receives a defensive disadvantage. He gets a -1 penalty to both Skill and Defense per enemy surrounding him.

**Resting.** Characters who do not spend any action in a turn recover 1 Health.

**Escaping.** If a player move all units to the back row, he successfully escapes a battle. This is vitally important in cutting losses. If he has more units than back row squares, he may used the last two rows, and so on. In the campaign mode, not all battles allow escaping.



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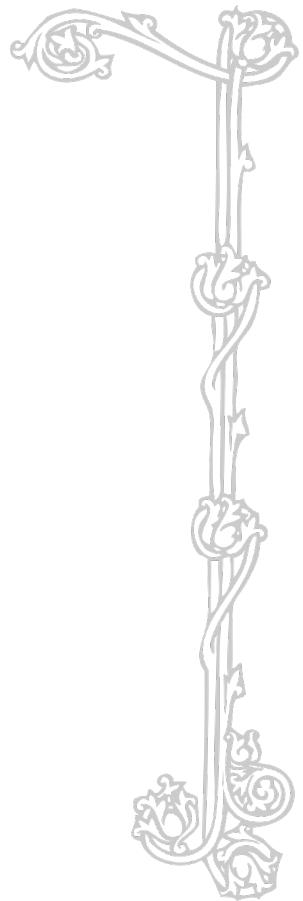
# BATTLE SYSTEM: SUITS LAYER

Suits define a little more than a character's personality, it represent the energy that animates him and flows through him. There are two ways in which Suits are relevant to battle:

**Effectiveness.** Suits work much like a "rock–paper–scissor" game, in which a character gets +2 Attack against his favorite target. Spade beats Clubs, Clubs beat Hearts, Hearts beat Diamonds and Diamonds beat Spade. Or, to put in a more mnemonic way:

Soldiers kill Workers, Workers heckle Poets, Poets cheat  
Leaders and Leaders control Soldiers.

**Synergy.** Characters work together better with like-minded allies. Characters get a +1 bonus to Skill for each ally of the same Suit standing next to him (orthogonally). This bonus is very important to mitigate the Rook's and Cannon's Skill limitation.



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