

Camhaoir

Game Design Document

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1. High Concept

You play as Dawn, an adventurous young girl living in a world where the mysterious and haunting is commonplace if you only know where to look for it. Explore a world filled with Irish mythological characters, learn about the dangerous Otherworld, and befriend creepy creatures.

2. Marketing

2.1. Target Audience

Ages 12-15

2.2. Platform

PC

2.3. Category

Story Adventure with Puzzle elements

2.4. Gameplay

3rd Person, 3D

2.5. Genre

Medieval folklore fantasy

2.6. Similar Titles

Moss (Polyarc), Fran Bow (Killmonday Games)

3. Visual References

3.1. Brave

The simultaneously home-y and threatening feeling of the woods in Brave should be reflected in Camhaoir. The design of the trees and the lighting especially should be used as reference.



3.2. Over The Garden Wall

Over The Garden Wall's use of subtle warm and cool colors in their backgrounds and how those hues also overlay with the characters is similar to how warm and cool colors would be used in Camhaoir. The show's use of light and dark in forested environments is also similar.



3.3. The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword

Skyward Sword's painterly texture work in a 3D environment, as well as its lively color scheme, are similar to Camhaoir. The design of the spirit realm, including its faded colors, glowing designs on surfaces, and the fact that it is a reflection of the normal world may also be used as inspiration for Camhaoir's OTHERWORLD.



3.3. The Secret of Kells



4. Locations and Characters

The setting in Camhaoir is based on medieval Ireland, the only major difference from reality being that the myths and legends of the time are an apparant truth.

The characters in Camhaoir are based on stories from Irish mythology, making them a weird and spooky bunch.

#.1. The Village

A quaint little town in the center of the map. The people who live there are quiet and contented, going about their daily lives with a certain comfortable repetition. It consists of small, cosy houses made of stone and wood, and winding cobblestone streets. At the outskirts of town there is a sturdy wall which not only contains those who live inside, but also shields them from what may be lurking beyond its gates.

#.1.1. Dawn

Name: Dawn

Song: The Ramblin' Rover, Wandering Child, A Fairytale Ending

Role: Player Character

Gender: Female

Age: 11

Base Myth: None - Human

Overview:

Dawn is the player character of the game. She is a rebellious eleven year old girl who feels trapped in her everyday life at home with her sister, Dusk, and seeks freedom outside the safety of the town. She is naive, clever, and incredibly playful, allowing her to unwittingly trick and befriend the things that live in the woods. Her interest in cartography is thwarted by her avoidance of structured learning, but that doesn't stop her from sketching out the layout of her surroundings as she explores. Despite her lonesome, wandering nature, she values the friends she makes over almost everything else in her life, and would do anything for them.

Backstory:

Up to the start of the game, she has been living a sheltered life at home. The housework she helps Dusk with daily is painfully boring, the town is suffocatingly small, and the people are frustratingly content to live life as they are. Recently, she has been making attempts to sneak out, that haven't quite been successful yet...

Notes:

- ❖ Draws pictures and maps as she explores
- ❖ Always comes “prepared”
- ❖ She slightly resents Dusk for being “protective” of her

#.1.2. Dusk

Name: Dusk

Song: The Parting Glass, Which Witch, Somewhere Only We Know

Role: NPC

Gender: Female

Age: 24

Base Myth: None - Human

Overview:

Dusk is Dawn’s protective older sister. She is conservative and quiet, but well-read and intelligent. Well trusted in the society of the village, she is happy to spend her days cooking, cleaning, and helping out her neighbors. She worries about Dawn’s restlessness, but doesn’t wish to confront her directly, instead choosing to tell her frightful stories of the outside world ostensibly to frighten her into staying at home. Earnestly, she believes that Dawn will have to come to her own conclusions about her life, and thus chooses to try to preserve their relationship rather than forcing her to remain at home.

Backstory:

Dawn was too young to remember what happened to their parents, but Dusk remembers it well. Maybe some folk creature killed them, or they used to help them the same as Dawn is trying to. Would explain why Dusk knows so many stories.

Notes:

- ❖ Expert chef
- ❖ May actually be trying to encourage Dawn to learn on her own terms by telling stories

#.1.3. Cat

Name:

Song: Two Cats of Kilkenny, Dance In The Graveyards

Role: NPC

Gender: Male

Base Myth: Cat Sidhe

Overview:

The cat is a mysterious and aloof creature from the woods who sneaks into the village in order to steal the soul of a dead townspeople. He loves to play games and sing songs, however, and is easily distracted from his original goal. As a cat, he has nine lives in total, but he has

already used eight of them, and is beginning to fear for his final life. As such, the cat has a unique reverence for life, considering his role as the guard of the afterlife who dooms some to a perpetual purgatory. All this is not to say that he is an unpleasant creature, simply that he is pragmatic.

Backstory:

The cat has roamed much of the land and stolen the souls of many throughout the years. He has lost all but one of his lives in the course of his job, some to angry humans shooing off their fallen friends and some to forces even more sinister. Still, the cat lives a carefree life

Notes:

- ❖ Villagers keep watch to make sure cat doesn't cross the bodies of the dead before they are buried
- ❖ Distracted by games and songs
- ❖ Attempt to prevent the souls of the dead from passing to the Otherworld
- ❖ If the cat does divert the soul of a dead person, they become a ghost
- ❖ Dog-sized black cat with white spot

#.2. Warfront

An open field of near-dead grass, found just beyond the forest. Near the tree wall there is a small camp with a steadily smoking fire and two tents. Outside of that camp is vast emptiness, with nothing but a few rusty, dirt-covered weapons to indicate what once took place there.

#.2.1. Blackbird

Song: If I was a Blackbird, Morrigan, The Morrigan

Role: NPC

Gender: Female

Base Myth: Morrighan

Overview:

Morrighan is the shapeshifter queen of death and war. She is quiet and wise, almost serene in her brutality. She portrays almost nothing about herself to those who encounter her, but will gladly tell of the many battles she has seen won or lost, and of the warriors whose lives she has caused to cease.

Backstory:

Notes:

- ❖ Associated with war and fate, especially with foretelling doom, death, or victory in battle
- ❖ Shapeshifter, seen as a human or a blackbird most often
- ❖ Sometimes seen washing the bloody clothes of those who are going to die soon
- ❖ Called “Phantom Queen”

#.2.2. Leslei

Name Meaning: “Grey Fortress”

Song: Scarborough Fair, My Only My Own, Wanderer’s Lullaby, Catch Me If You Can

Role: NPC

Gender: Female

Base Myth: Aes Sidhe

Overview:

At face value, Leslei is a jaded warrior who has experienced some great loss in her past. Although she is soft at her core, she has been forced to survive many battles and thus acts as though she cares little for anyone. Perpetually tired-seeming, she spends her days trying to protect those whom she can.

Backstory:

Long ago, Leslei was happy. She fought alongside a man whom she loved and trusted with her life. Fate pulled her away from him, however, and when she returned, she found that he had died in battle. She has not been happy since. Now, she spends her days with Alill, guarding the forest’s edge.

Notes:

- ❖ Seasoned warrior, as was her husband
- ❖

#.2.3. Alill

Name Meaning: “Elf”

Song: Rattlin’ Bog, Dance in The Graveyards

Role: NPC

Gender: Female

Base Myth: Aes Sidhe

Overview:

Alill is enthusiastic, hyper, and excited to meet you. She, like Leslei, is a seasoned soldier, but that fact doesn’t wear nearly as heavily on her as it does on Leslei. Instead, Alill prefers to act as though she is still Dawn’s age, retaining her sense of wonder and joy. While she is childlike in nature, she also gives the impression that she holds some remarkable power.

Backstory:

Alill used to be part of a larger group of elves, but she, not unlike Dawn, got bored of them and left. She was drawn to battle and has been fighting ever since, though she always attempts to settle disputes with diplomacy first.

Notes:

- ❖ Has special knowledge of the Otherworld
- ❖

#.3. The Forest

#.3.1. Hound

Song:

Role: NPC

Gender: Male

Base Myth: Cu Sidhe

Overview:**Backstory:****Notes:**

- ❖ black, shaggy, large dog with glowing eyes and a braided or curled tail
- ❖ Harbinger of death, takes souls to the OTHERWORLD
- ❖ Third howl in a row kills all those not in a safe place who hear it
- ❖ Mastered by the faeries, they aid in hunts and other tasks

#.4. The Water

#.5. The Otherworld

#. Story

Chapter 1:

Open with Dusk telling Dawn the story of the cat sidhe over dinner at twilight. Cat sidhe are fae which take the form of large black cats and who “steal” the souls of the recently deceased if they are allowed to cross the body of the dead. Dawn brushes off the tale impatiently, bored of being warned away from the outside world by her protective sister. Dusk emphasizes that there’s a funeral tonight, making the story of the cat sidhe particularly relevant. She then asks Dawn to bring her dinner dishes over to be washed and then tells her that she must leave to go attend the funeral. She does not, however, tell Dawn to remain inside.

After putting her dishes on the table with Dusk’s, Dawn opens the door and creeps out into the night. Once outside, she sees the flash of a black cat’s tail disappearing into the growing darkness, and decides to follow it. She chases the cat through the back streets, until eventually she catches it sitting at the end of a street observing the beginning of the funeral. Dawn talks to the cat, who, to her surprise, talks back. He tells her that funerals are his favorite events, a sentiment which she most certainly does not share. She does admit that they do look impressive, and decides to sketch a little drawing of the torches carried by the grieving villagers. After she finishes, she asks the cat if he wants to play a game, a proposition which he can’t refuse.

Dawn and the cat chase one another up and down the streets, often getting dangerously close to the funeral, until eventually the cat leads Dawn to a hole in the wall around the town. This gives her a way to escape the village as she pleases.

#. Story Progression

#. The Experience

With the Village as the central hub to which the player must return each night, the rest of the areas act as spokes. The player may choose to go to any one of them first after they leave the village. Upon leaving the Village, they will be presented with a clear view of all the different environments and the paths that lead to them. After completing each world, the sun will begin to set, encouraging the player to return to the Village for the night. Once the player does return, they will be rewarded with a bit of background about another mythical creature (unsure if Dusk should explain the one you met today or a random one - a “i know what this is” feeling might be

nice, but I also want Dawn to feel somewhat bumbling, which would be easier to do without making her seem stupid if she has no reason to have known what it was she encountered). If the player has completed all the areas, then they will be taken to the darkly beautiful Otherworld as a final area.

.1. Goal

The Village (Tutorial):

Scene: Dusk warns Dawn to stay inside, explains about cat sidhe

Local: Leave the house (learn to walk/interact)

Local: Catch the cat (learn to run, jump, move obstacles)

Scene: The cat explains his role and the meaning of death (learn to draw)

Local: Pick up a torch to rejoin the funeral (learn to pick-up)

Distant: Escape to the forest.

The Forest:

Local:

Local:

Local:

Distant:

The Warfront:

The Otherworld:

Super-Objective:

.2. Verbs

Walking: To walk forward, hold 'W' down. To walk backwards, hold 'S'. Use 'A' and 'D' to rotate the camera left and right.

Running: To run, hold 'Shift' while walking.

Jumping: To jump, press 'Spacebar'.

Pick-up: To pick up an item, press 'E'.

Draw Picture/Map: To draw something, press 'E' when prompted.

Push/Pull: To push or pull something, press 'E' when prompted.

Talk: To talk, press 'E' when prompted.

.3. Game Mechanics

.4. Items

.5. Progression & Challenge

.6. Losing

There is no loss condition for the game as a whole, nor for its individual scenarios.

#. Freewrite

.1. Dawn

If Dawn goes and befriends mythical creatures and then accidentally ends up in the otherworld, would/should the townspeople regard her like a witch? "what I'm meaning to say is that being seen as a witch could actually have been exactly a sort of 'wary spook but no real danger or fear of trials.' Locals often were quite fond of their witches or changelings until sometime huge went wrong... when Camhaoir initially returns there might be a good deal of confusion and superstition but also respect for the return. She might become a bit of a witch to the locals" I wasn't really thinking of necessarily the pure Christian version of witch, but more a general "you're not one of us anymore because you have been to this magic place and come back so you must not be normal anymore" but that's part of why I'm unsure cause I'm not sure I really want them to react all that strongly. I kinda like the idea that Dawn's pretty sure it'll be bad if people know she knows the creatures in the woods but then when she actually ends up being caught everyone's like "Okay, that's chill. Also we knew you were sneaking out, you're actually terrible at it." Like, Dusk tells stories as these stories are often told, as warnings to keep kids from wandering out, but she doesn't actually stop her. Dawn takes the warning as a call to adventure instead of as a warning, and off we go.

.1. Dusk

Dusk is very normal and takes her role as caretaker very seriously, even though Dawn is quite the handful. Dawn thinks she's boring and overprotective and kinda resents her.

How do we explain why Dusk is always still there to tell a story until the last time? Unless Dusk did the same thing Dawn is doing when she was younger, which would explain why she knows so many stories with such specificity. Not that that's really rare knowledge in this world, I wouldn't think. I do sort of want to make Dusk a more mysterious character than she seems and that might be one way to do it. She tells the stories, but always leaves out the way to

avoid to placate the figures she describes. I might like part of the motif surrounding Dusk to involve cryptic words spoken just after the screen has faded to black. Single lines like “Did you meet him? The cat?” or “What did you find in the woods?” or “You know you should be careful at water’s edge.” I think that’d help with Dusk feeling mysterious and like she knows more than she’s letting on, and we’d also be unsure if Dawn heard Dusk say those things since Dawn doesn’t respond.

.2. The Cat

I was thinking about cat sidhe (as one does) and I know the folklore says that they steal souls before they can reach the afterlife, but what do they do with the souls? Basically what I'm asking is, do cat sidhe create ghosts, in the sense of misguided souls of the dead? The cat sidhe is the first creature Dawn meets and it might be fun if he turns out to be a bit of a mastermind character. I've got some significant dead people who might make fun visitors. “I don’t think the Cat Sidhe specifically is tied to trickster mythos but I know many of the fey are wildly intelligent, prone to tricks (bennie and not so much) and cryptic knowledge so mastermind would make good sense.” Could have the cat be kinda like the white rabbit in Alice in Wonderland, leading Dawn places. Though, I think, “leading” only in the sense that she catches glimpses of him everywhere she goes, occasionally leading her directly into other people instead. Use him as a throughline, he’s the first creature she encounters and possibly the last. If I'm gonna make family a theme, maybe the cat or Morrigan could mention something about dawn's missing parents? I don't think I wanna spend a bunch of time on them, but a little spooky comment might be fun.

.3. Leslei

I could have the ghost of Leslei's lost husband show up? “How would you do the ghosts do you think? How sentient and capable of interacting would they be?” Maybe start off the warfront bit by having the blackbird fly overhead and for a moment Dawn is following both the Cat and the blackbird. As the bird flies off and the cat disappears, a single black feather falls into Dawn’s hands. Later, I could have her give the feather to Leslei as part of the puzzle, which would cause Leslei to remember the death of her husband. Lwilei might just storm off and when Dawn asks “What’s wrong with her?” Alill says something like “Isn’t it obvious?” which to Dawn is isn’t really until she meets Leslei’s husband in the Otherworld and is like “Hey, mister your wife really really misses you.”

.#. Otherworld

Grey forest with a castle standing proudly on a hill above OR maybe a floating island with the castle on it. The shape of the land is the same as it had been in the living world, but the castle had not been present before. Either a hill-fort or an island, realm of everlasting youth, beauty, health, abundance and joy. Maybe if you leave the Otherworld from inside the fort on

the hill, you leave through a tunnel made of the roots of a giant tree which takes its place on the hill.

.#. Plot Generally?

Might be fun to have most of the plots start out with Dusk telling Dawn the story of the creature, in order to try to scare her into staying home where it's safe, but each time Dawn encounters and befriends them instead of being scared of them. Might also try to push it close to the dark, deathly stories coming true each time, but pull it back near the end? I think I'd like for it to have a sort of Gravity Falls sort of feel, where things are weird and wrong and you're well aware that it's dark but it doesn't take it being dark too seriously and Dawn kinda plays both Dipper and Mabel's roles simultaneously by *outsmarting* the creatures WITH FUN! I'd probably also like it to get progressively more spooky and potentially threatening until the end where stakes are higher. I don't think I want to paint anyone as distinctly evil. They all exist in the world and are just trying to do their jobs and live their lives. If we're going for a kids cartoon feel, could have morals come to light with each creature as Dawn helps the creatures deal with whatever they're facing. I'm betting presently that the common threads are gonna wind up being Samhain, Tir na Nog, and Dawn's relationship with her sister.

Maybe the encounter with the cat is the call to adventure, and he tries to lead her out to the woods early but she turns back into town as the people come back from the funeral rather than following the cat. Then Dusk tells her the story about the cat sidhe. That way the call to adventure still feels like a part of the ordinary world cause it's just a cat, but the player realizes after that the cat was more than that and that it probably did actually want her to follow. That would also make Dusk the mentor. Tests, allies and enemies is the time Dawn spends befriendng people in the woods, and approach would probably when she befriends someone who can take her to the otherworld and she goes along with it, thinking it's a game like everything else. Morrigan right before Alill and Leslei, since I think they're supposed to have been fighting in a war that has maybe just ended. Primrose is supposed to be used as proof that a person had been to the Otherworld, so maybe she's part of the journey back and gives Dawn a flower?

Question is, though, should Dawn's journey to the Otherworld be more slow? What if, by helping all of these creatures, she is being gradually ushered into the otherworld (by the cat) and doesn't distinctly notice the difference until the very end (maybe because she encountered a floating island)? Then the question is, do I want to switch telling a more linear story, or keep with a more open "go to any of the places in any order" approach? Could maybe do both, if I have the player go out, do one area, come back to the village, have the village feel a little bit different each time, maybe change the inhabitants of it from normal humans to creatures or just have them disappear gradually to show a change in the state of the world? Dusk needs to still be there to tell the story, though. Also, if I go with this, I could have many primroses growing in Dusk's garden as foreshadowing, I guess? It's also probably worth noting I've been thinking Dawn would come home at twilight every night, at which point Dusk would tell her the story of the people she would meet soon. ~~It could be fun to make it so Dusk actually~~

~~only tells the player, so Dawn never knows exactly what's going on, but players know what's up?~~
“The veils between worlds are thin and a good way to accidentally cross over or combine two worlds is to make yourself known by the other world, as Dawn is doing. By that logic her interacting more and more with the Other being slowly drawn into the otherworld as it becomes familiar with her makes much sense.” I worry it might get a bit messy and I'd have to be very careful what symbols I attached to the Otherworld as a concept to make sure it's clear enough while still being subtle. Samhain might make a good clock, if the last day of the game is Samhain and we know that from the start. “If you wanted Dawn could have an option to mention 'hey there sure didn't seem to be many people in town this evening'” as part of the indication that the normal world is shifting, like the radio that say about the days getting shorter in FFXV. “Even when they would notice hey okay something is definitely up, there would be good reasons for it and it might just be an accurate and cool bit of worldbuilding instead of part of the plot.”

I guess a big part of the dilemma I'm having is if I want part of this story to be about Dawn reconnecting with her sister. “In that case, if you *do want to go the reconciliation or better understanding between siblings with Dusk you could have her keep some things from Dawn (...that she's had her own adventures and why she knows so much) in a parental attempt to keep her safe and naive thus causing distrust from the adventurous child. This doesn't make Dusk evil it makes her actions confusing to a child. (you know [and it's been a while so I forget some but] how Uncle Stan sometimes does things and has hidden parts and you start to wonder if he's not as trustworthy as he seems? Maybe we need to watch out? But he's absolutely fine just looked highly suspicious to the kids) “ That also might be a really interesting character dynamic to juggle, keeping her seeming trustworthy yet you know she's withholding information, which might be an extra fun kinda character to have with Dawn who's overly suspicious of her for entirely the wrong reasons. She thinks she's like this because she wants her to stay in town and be boring, where actually she just wants her to know what she's getting into. I think part of how I want it to be is that the player always feels really different about the situation than Dawn, which that would do. Like, give them both the same information, but set it up so they react in different ways, which will also show a lot about Dawn's mindset in relatively little time. Gotta make sure she isn't frustrating.

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Story Ideas:

Gravity Falls (Dusk, General mood)

Final Fantasy XV (Shorter days subtlety)

Fran Bow (Cat guide, puzzle elements)