



Design Document for: *Thor: The Lost Saga*

A Norse-based Fantasy/Adventure RPG

“NOT a Valkyrie Profile rip-off!”™

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Version 1.0.2

26 February 2007

Thor: The Lost Saga

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Version 1.0.1 – 8 January 2007

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Design History

The design history is simply a chronicle of the many versions of design we've been through, and the major changes that took place in each updated version.

Version 1.0.1

Version 1.0.1 is the original high concept document. The following is what was changed from the initial concept:

1. Expanded on gameplay basics and content.
2. Corrected minor inconsistencies with our resources.

Version 2.0.1

Version 2.00 is the first version of the design in which a major revision has been made now that much more is known about the game. After many hours of design many decisions have been made. Most of these large design decisions are now reflected in this document.

Included in the changes are the following:

1. A complete breakdown of the individual components of the game (such as weaponry and character progression).
2. A first run pass at the abilities and spells system.
3. Story details.
4. World layout and design.

Game Overview

Game Design Goals

Unique Character Development

The main point behind this game is we want it to be fun. We want it to be a unique take on the Norse mythology, but still following some of the fundamentals of the legends and mythos. In following the god, Thor, we allow the player to identify with a popular mythical character, but allow the player to still feel like his/her version is unique to anyone else's, and that he/she had a hand in making Thor that way.

Intuitive Controls

Through multiple focus groups, we look to find the most intuitive control scheme that takes advantage of the unique gameplay features, while having a short learning curve. We are going to design the control according to the most favored setup from the focus groups, but we also will allow a fully customizable control scheme for players with specific tastes.

Common Questions

What is the game?

Thor: The Lost Saga is an adventure/RPG following Thor in his quest to regain godhood and prevent the coming of Ragnarok.

Why create this game?

It's an idea that we both feel strongly passionate about... plus it seems like a feasible idea that we can accomplish for a final grade in this stu- I mean, freakin' awesome class.

Where does the game take place?

The world is Midgard, the realm of mortals. It is similar to the Arthurian age with the added aspect of spells, gods and demons. Think medieval fantasy, complete with swords and monsters.

What do I control?

As the player, you will be in control of a group or "party" of characters, with the fallen god of thunder, Thor, as the protagonist of the story. At the beginning of the game, you will only control Thor, but throughout the game you will come across warriors and valkyries who are willing and eager to join your cause.

How many characters do I control?

At once, you will control up to six characters. Though you will be able to find many more, only six can be active at once. When characters are "active," they will participate in battles and can be used to barter. When characters are "passive," they will stand outside of battle and cannot barter.

In the world navigation, only Thor will be visible. While exploring dungeons or traveling through town, your entire active party will be visible. You control your "lead" character (the character in the first slot on your active roster) with the arrow keys; all secondary characters follow the primary.

In battle, you can command each of your active characters to perform an action (such as "Attack" or "Cast Fireball").

What is the main focus?

Thor and his team of heroes' ultimate goal will be to destroy or overthrow Loki and his minions, and prevent the coming of Ragnarok, the Norse apocalypse.

What's different?

The only other game out there that is comparable is *Valkyrie Profile*© and *Valkyrie Profile 2*© (SquareEnix©), and only in that it is based on Norse mythology as well. But while those games had a female protagonist and concerned a valkyrie and mere mortals trying to stop Ragnarok (in the first game) and defeat Odin (in the second), both of which would seem beyond the abilities of mortals. In *T: TLS*, you are Thor, a fallen god who is regaining his powers. And instead of taking on the Lord of Gods (which would seem evil), you are confronting the god of fire and mischief, Loki, who *is* evil. The idea of Einherjar is not even considered in *Thor*, and the combat system is more intuitive and easier to learn. And the focus will be on depth of play and not fancy graphics.

Feature Set

General Features

Controlled exploration of an immersive continent

Norse heroes

2D graphics

32-bit color

Gameplay

Explorable environment

RPG-style character progression (levels, stats, special abilities, spells, etc)

Upgradable equipment (weaponry, armor, etc)

Intuitive GUI

Recruit and retire various characters in your party

Interchange party members for optimization of skills, spells, and combat ability

Hundreds of different monsters

Thirty+ spells and abilities

Dozens of non-combat challenges

Interact with NPCs, allowing for equipment buying and selling

Expansive world with numerous side quests and bonus challenges

Top-down navigation with side-view combat screens

The Game World

Overview

The game world bears a remarkable resemblance to Scandinavia. This main continent will serve as Midgard. There will be other explorable worlds – in the Norse myths there were nine, though I think we may only have two or three.

Dungeon Crawling

The bulk of the adventures will be within “dungeons,” which are effectively large areas, most often underground, filled with various dangers and monsters, as well as treasure. Each of the main quest items will be at the end of dungeons.

Towns and Shops

There will be many towns within the world of Midgard. Within towns, the player can go shopping (buying and selling equipment), recruiting (for more heroes) and resting (at inns to heal).

The Physical World

Overview

The world of Midgard functions much like our own world, with the added exception of magic spells and mystical creatures.

Key Locations

Towns (such as Augreheim and Falconridge), dungeons (Cave of Loki), and Valhalla.

Travel

Most travel will be the character walking from location to location. For inter-location traveling, the character will move on a large-scale map of the world, and discern terrain features and important locations with visual cues. Dungeon travel will be to scale. There will also be portals or bridges between the realm of Midgard and the other eight worlds.

Scale

One inch is equivalent to 10 miles in the world navigation/map. In dungeons, one inch is equal to 10 feet.

Objects

Describe the different objects that can be found in the world.

See the “Objects Appendix” for a list of all the objects found in the world.

Day and Night

Days will be bright and clear. Nights will have a “darkness” filter that dims all the colors and lighting. In the daytime, it is less likely that your character will be ambushed while resting. Shops are open and people are active. At night, shops are closed, people are in their homes. It is more likely that you will be ambushed at nighttime if resting in the wilderness.

Time

One hour in game-time will be 5 minutes in real-life. Day and night are both 12 hrs long. Thus, day becomes night and night becomes day every 60 minutes. There will be a timer that can be viewed in the pause menu that shows how long the player has actually been playing the game.

Rendering System

Overview

All of *T: TLS*'s graphics will be 2D or mock 3D, and will be created and exported via Photoshop and Illustrator.

Camera

Overview

During normal gameplay, the camera is in a top-down perspective, centered on the lead character.

Camera “Look” Mode

By holding the “L” button and using the arrow keys, a player can pan the camera to see other areas of the map. However, if the character has not been to a location yet, he/she will not be able to see the details of that area.

Side-view Battle Camera

During combat, the camera will switch to a side-view perspective, fixed in its position.

Game Engine

Overview

The game engine used for this project is *Gamemaker 6.1*. It's a sprite-based engine capable of 2D side-scrollers, platform games, and 3D “Doom-like” games.

Controllers

The game engine has “controller-object” capabilities, which allow for individual character control (such as movement) as well as “persistent” world object controllers (such as time, collisions, and loading/unloading areas).

Collision Detection

Our game will handle collision through the use of if/then variables that check for the presence of objects around the current object. Mostly, this will be handled with bounding-box collision borders, rather than precise collision.

The World Layout

Overview

The continent is divided into several different sections, or kingdoms, each with their own look and feel.

The Seven Kingdoms

The continent of Midgard is divided into seven kingdoms: Kingdom 1, Kingdom 2, Kingdom 3, Kingdom 4, Kingdom 5, Kingdom 6, and Kingdom 7. The game will start in Kingdom 1, and end in Kingdom 7. Each kingdom has a different theme to it. I.e. Kingdom 4 is a barren wasteland with Arabic-like tribes of hunters and foragers, while Kingdom 2 is a collection of tropic islands, which is populated by fishermen (more Islander-like).

Underground Exploration

The world of Midgard is riddled with numerous caverns and underground passages, known as Svartalfheim. This is the realm of the Dokkálfar (Dark Elves), a race of violent and corrupt elves. There are a few of the dungeons that the player will journey through that connect to Svartalfheim, which interconnects many different regions of Midgard.

Game Characters

Overview

The characters in this game will have a similar look and feel to *King Arthur* (Touchstone Pictures, 2004) – gritty, dark, yet powerful and full of energy. They are strong, battle-hardened warriors, valkyries, and sorcerers, living in a world of constant strife and war, and never knowing if their next breath will be their last.

See the *Character Appendix* for specific information on the playable characters of the game. See the *Monster Appendix* for specific information on the monsters and enemies within the game.

The Protagonist

Thor is the main character. In this game, every player plays Thor first and foremost. Thor is a fallen deity, or Aesir. Having had his godly powers stolen by Loki, Thor was banished to Midgard to live the remainder of his life as a mere mortal. But Thor, though he may not possess the powers he once did, still possesses the heart and mind of a god. He is not content to merely roll over and play dead for the God of Fire. He swears a vengeance against Loki, and begins a quest to reclaim his equipment and restore his godhood.

Thor looks like a tall human, very muscular and strong. He has a beard and long blonde hair, and prefers hammers over other weapons. He wears heavy armor, and is of the warrior class.

Enemies and Monsters

The climactic encounter against Loki is what the player is ultimately working toward. But there are many monsters in Thor's path. Among them is Jormungand, the evil Midgard Serpent; Hel, the goddess of death; Grendel, the demon; Garm, the hellhound; and Fenrir, the giant wolf, among others. There are also hordes of dark elves and dwarves, serpents, giants, wolves, dragons, ogres, and many more creatures and horrors drawn from Norse myths.

Allies

Thor travels with a group of heroes: valkyries and warriors skilled in combat and of good hearts. They join Thor in order to help the fallen god regain his powers, and to help in the prevention of Ragnarok. Warriors like Sigmond, Gunnar, Helgi, Thioerek, and Volund will lend spear, sword, axe and hammer to the cause. Valkyries such as Brynhild, Signy, Svanhild, and Hjordis will aid Thor with their powerful magic and wisdom.

Thor will also seek the aid of those who cannot join him, but can help him, such as the dwarf brothers Brokk and Eiti, and the peaceful giantess Grid. Thor and his companions will also call on the aid of the gods themselves: Odin, Tyr, Heimdall, and Balder.

During the final battle at Ragnarok, Thor, his companions, and all the gods will fight the battle against Loki, the giants, and the demons of the world.

Non-Player Characters

NPCs are the shopkeepers, townsfolk, and other people that may be wandering around the world and may encounter Thor and his team. NPCs will not have a large part in the story, most likely.

Races/Classes

Overview

There are four playable races in *T: TLS*: Humans, Dwarves, Elves, and Valkyries. There are five playable classes: Warrior, Archer, Runemage, Sorcerer, and Rogue. Any race can be any class, but some races are more likely to become certain classes than others. See the *Races and Classes Appendix* for game information on each of the races and classes.

Human

Humans are the most versatile race on Midgard. They are resourceful, resilient, and ambitious. And because humans are so ambitious, so too are they most likely to be corrupted by dark magic. Most humans of Midgard trust in the will of the gods, and are content with their lives as farmers, merchants, and various other professions. But some are more gifted, and rise from the ranks of their fellows to stand higher, stronger, and greater. These often become Warriors, Archers, or Rogues. Though some have the gift of sorcery, few are able to hone that arcane power. You will likely never encounter a human Runemage, as that type of magic is guarded selfishly by other races.

Dwarf

Dwarves are master craftsmen and artisans, and short, stout, durable warriors. Dwarves live in the mountains and hills, often in massive caverns. They excel in crafting weapons, armor, and magic items. Most dwarves do not have the dexterity for Archery or Roguish pursuits, thus many becoming Warriors or Runemages, as runic lore is deep within their culture. Those that do become Rogues tend to focus on locks and traps more than stealth. The gift of Sorcery is rarely found in dwarven blood, but not unheard of. The evil cousins of dwarves, Gray Dwarves (Duergar), live in the underground realm of Svartalfheim with their allies, the Dark Elves (Dokkalfar).

Elf

Elves are tall, graceful, and frail creatures. An elf is raised to adore nature and music and art, and loves nothing more than to live at one with the wilderness. They are also naturally talented Sorcerers, bending the will of mana to perform good and just deeds in the name of nature. Elves are very agile and quick, and make excellent Archers and Warriors using swords and spears. Many become Sorcerers because of their natural affinity. They also make decent Rogues, and some even become Runemages because of their alliance with the dwarves.

The vile cousin of elves, Dokkalfar (Dark Elves), live in the underground realm of Svartalfheim.

Valkyrie

Valkyries are winged beings resembling female humans or elves, assigned by the gods to be guardians and protectors over the mortals of Midgard. They usually have blue, green, or silver tinted skin, and great feathery wings. Legend claims they used to be mortal, but have since risen to a greater calling. All valkyries seek to protect others and fight the evil that creeps across the realms.

A valkyrie is also known as a “warrior-princess” because she is essentially a tool designed for combat against the dark forces. Valkyrie Warriors tend toward spear use. They make excellent Archers because they can hover above the enemy and rain down death. They are more likely to become Runemages than Sorcerers, but have been known to take on both roles. Valkyries are almost never Rogues; not only do wings make it difficult to hide, but sneaking in the shadows is considered against their Code of Honor.

Warrior

A fighter who wields swords, axes, hammers, maces, or spears in a skilled, strong hand is a warrior. They can use all kinds of armor and shields, and tend to be strong and resilient. Though a warrior who learns to use speed and agility over strength and toughness is a formidable foe indeed.

Archer

Archers are ranged fighters who use bows, crossbows, and javelins to kill the enemy from afar. They wear cloth or light armor and do not use shields, as it becomes a hindrance when using their ranged weapons, and they also need to be fast of foot to avoid closing on the enemy.

Runemage

Runemagic is the art of using runes to perform great magic. A runemage is a master of these runes. Runemagic is focused more on the body: healing, protection, and enhancements to speed, strength, toughness, and intellect. Runemagic can also be infused into weapons and armor to increase the effectiveness of these objects during battle.

Though runemages focus on using the power of runes to blast their foes, they also use daggers, maces and staves at times when they are unable to quickly perform their magic. They can also use cloth and leather armor.

The advantage of a runemage over a sorcerer is the potency of enhancing oneself and ones equipment, and the ability to heal oneself and ones allies of injury.

Sorcerer

Sorcery is considered a dark art by many. But having a sorcerer on your side is something anyone would appreciate. Masters of summoning creatures and energy to perform their magic, sorcerers are arguably the most potent form of spellcaster. They use the power of the elements (fire, air, water, and earth) to blast their foes with things like fireballs and lightning bolts, and can also summon creatures from heaven and hell to do their bidding (hence the frown upon their practice).

Though a sorcerer sometimes needs to use melee combat as a last resort, they are not very good at it. They can use maces and staves, and only cloth armor.

The advantage of sorcerers over runemages is the ability to blast their foes with great spells at higher skill. They are not effective protectors, though, and cannot heal; they make up for this with the ability to summon creatures to protect themselves.

Rogue

A stealthy and resourceful individual, a rogue focuses on using the art of shadow and silence to incapacitate their foes, hopefully before the victim even realizes it. They are also skilled at entering places they are not meant to be in; picking locks, disabling traps and mechanisms, and sneaking past watchful guards are their forte. In combat, they can perform backstabbing and fatal attacks that do massive damage, and can also steal from the enemy. On the downside, they are relatively weak. They can only use daggers or maces, and cloth or leather armor.

Weapons

Overview

Weaponry is steeped in medieval influence and Norse myth. Swords, hammers, axes, maces, spears, daggers, staves, bows, crossbows, and javelins.

Weapon Materials

Weapons in the game can be found made of many different materials. The type of material used can change the strength, speed, and durability of a weapon. For example, a sword could be made of copper, bronze, iron, steel, mithral, or adamantine, copper being the weakest and adamantine being the strongest. There are also special materials that a weapon can be made of, which, in addition to the physical effects, may have strange effects on the wielders. (Energy, silver, bone, and stone are just a few examples.)

Unique Weaponry

There are many weapons in the game which are unlike any other weapon, and are special and unique finds when the player discovers them. For example, you may be able to find hundreds of steel warhammers, and maybe even a few adamantine warhammers, but there is only one Mjollnir (Thor's hammer); one Gram (Sigmund's sword); one Mimung (Volund's sword). Although each type of weapon varies in appearance dependent on the material, these special weapons are truly unique works of art and craftsmanship.

Armor and Shields

Overview

There are three types of armor: cloth, leather, and mail. Cloth can be silk, cotton, padded armor, or satin; Leather includes leather, studded leather, hide, and scale (actual scales, like from a dragon); Mail includes splint, banded, chain, and plate.

There are three types of shields, as well: buckler, small, and large. Shields can be made of wood or metal.

Armor and Shield Materials

Like weapons, armor and shields can come in a variety of materials. The type of material affects the strength, durability, and resistance of the armor or shield.

Unique Armor and Shields

There are also many unique pieces of armor and shields scattered across the realm. They possess special abilities or powers that go beyond simple protection, and in most cases imbue the wearers with strange powers.

Accessories

Overview

Each character can equip up to two “accessories.” An accessory, in this context, can be any equipable item that can’t be classified into one of the other categories (weapon, armor, shield, potion, or expendable item). These can be things like crowns, amulets, rings, boots, belts, gloves, helms, etc.

Accessory Abilities

Most accessories have special abilities that enhance the wielder in different ways. It could be as simple as adding damage to every attack, or something more complicated like being able to throw, and retrieve, your weapon (if it’s not normally throwable). Sometimes, they give boosts to stats; sometimes they give boosts to attack or defense power; and sometimes they have a unique ability. The most powerful accessories have several powers that affect the wielder just by wearing that one item.

Accessory Linking

Some accessories grant even more powerful or different powers if they are “linked.” Linking has to do with symbols or runes that the accessory is marked with. For example, if Thor equips a ring that has the “Earth” rune which grants 10 resistance to earth attacks, and equips a belt with the same rune that grants +2 to strength, the effects would be doubled (or something) when they are both equipped (20 resistance and +4 to strength).

Potions and Expendable Items

Overview

Many items Thor and his companions will find or purchase that disappear after use. This items include things like potions, food, and spell gems that are enchanted with one-time effects.

Restoring Health and Mana

Most commonly, potions of healing or restoration will replenish a character's lost health or mana. There are some items, like foods, that also cause similar effects, though normally the effects are not as powerful as potions.

Other Expendable Items

Mentioned above, there are other items the group may find that disappear after use, such as spell gems (or arcane crystals). These items usually have an effect such as a one-time blast of fire that scorches your enemies or grants a temporary bonus to one of your stats. These items often (but not always) are more effective than spells of similar effects, but are not reusable like spells. On the other hand, they do not require mana to use.

User Interface

Overview

Provide some sort of an overview to your interface and as in all previous sections, break down the components of the following UI.

User Interface Detail #1

User Interface Detail #2

Musical Score and Sound Effects

Overview

This should probably be broken down into two sections but I think you get the point.

Red Book Audio

If you're using Red Book, describe what your plan is here. If not, what are you using?

3D Sound

Talk about what sort of sound APIs you're going to use or not use, as the case may be.

Sound Design

Take a shot at what you're going to do for sound design at this early stage. Hey, good to let your reader know what you're thinking.

Single-Player Game

Overview

Describe the single-player game experience in a few sentences.

Here's a breakdown of the key components of the single-player game.

Single Player Game Detail #1

Single Player Game Detail #2

Story

Describe your story idea here and then refer to an appendix or separate document that provides all the details on the story if it's really big.

Hours of Gameplay

Talk about how long the single-player game experience is supposed to last or what your thoughts are at this point.

Victory Conditions

How does the player win the single-player game?

Extra Miscellaneous Stuff

Overview

Drop anything you're working on and don't have a good home for here.

Junk I am working on...

Crazy Idea #1

Crazy Idea #2

XYZ Appendix

Provide a brief description of what this appendix is for, and then get down to business and provide data to the reader.

Here are a few examples of some of the appendices in my latest design...

- Objects Appendix
- User Interface Appendix
- Networking Appendix
- Character Rendering and Animation Appendix
- Story Appendix