

Heroes of Vatalyr

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This project is dedicated to the life-long relationships built from sitting across the table.

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ABSTRACT

Games have been a part of the Earth since the beginning of time. Animals and humans alike bond over playing games with one another. We use games as entertainment, learning devices, and for relationship building from the moment we are born. Board games and video games each have unique characteristics that allow individuals to learn strategic thinking, develop response time, improve hand-eye coordination, and build lasting relationships. The objective of this project is to incorporate characteristics from these styles of games to create a unique experience for players while remaining strategic, competitive, and enjoyable.

Keywords: bond, relationships, unique, experience, games, enjoyable

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Games play a role in peoples' lives from the day they are born. They are used as forms of teaching, an outlet for releasing competitive energy, building careers, entertainment, and for building relationships. As we progress through the twenty-first century, the prevalence of games in an individual's life is growing rapidly. In a report from Limelight networks, they found that individuals are spending more than 6 hours each week playing video games alone. This number has increased greatly since the rise

| Country | Less than 1 hour a week | 1-2 hours a week | 2-4 hours a week | 4-7 hours a week | 7-12 hours a week | 12-20 hours a week | More than 20 hours a week | Average Hours Each Week |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| France | 14.7% | 13.9% | 19.7% | 20.9% | 14.7% | 10.5% | 5.6% | 6.22 |
| Germany | 10.8% | 16.8% | 15.0% | 21.0% | 16.4% | 13.0% | 6.8% | 6.92 |
| India | 12.4% | 17.2% | 21.2% | 16.6% | 15.0% | 11.6% | 6.0% | 6.35 |
| Italy | 10.0% | 18.4% | 20.2% | 19.8% | 16.2% | 9.4% | 6.0% | 6.26 |
| Japan | 22.0% | 12.6% | 15.6% | 17.4% | 11.6% | 8.6% | 12.2% | 6.64 |
| South Korea | 19.8% | 20.2% | 19.4% | 18.6% | 10.4% | 6.8% | 4.8% | 5.04 |
| Singapore | 15.5% | 16.6% | 19.8% | 19.0% | 16.0% | 6.1% | 7.0% | 5.85 |
| United Kingdom | 11.4% | 17.0% | 19.6% | 16.0% | 16.2% | 9.8% | 10.0% | 6.89 |
| United States | 13.6% | 15.2% | 17.4% | 18.2% | 16.4% | 11.4% | 7.8% | 6.76 |
| Global | 14.5% | 16.4% | 18.7% | 18.6% | 14.8% | 9.7% | 7.4% | 6.33 |

(Figure 1, Hours per week of playing video games.)

of mobile gaming has surfaced in the last few years. The study also revealed that individuals are starting to play games at a younger age. The game players who fall under this age group are also watching other players play games on streaming services such as YouTube and Twitch more than ever. This study does not even consider the board game industry. Board games have been around for centuries. The creation of the first board game, Backgammon, sparked the start of an industry that would soon impact everyone's

lives. Tabletop games such as Chess, Checkers, Monopoly, Risk, and Poker have been played, and continue to be played, by most Americans today. Both board games and video games play a role in a staggering amount of lives today, and it is vital to acknowledge their importance.

Careers have been made from competitive tabletop games such as Poker and Chess for years. I had the pleasure to work with an individual who played professional Poker and won the World Series of Poker championship and obtained a bracelet. Players invest years of time, practice, and knowledge to become the most talented competitors. These tabletop experiences were formed early on, and, as of recently, there has been a rise in the competitive scene of video games. With the creation of Starcraft II, a birth of a new generation of games called E-sports was formed. E-sports, or electronic sports, are video games that are so immensely intricate and competitive that they are considered a sport. Games such as League of Legends, Dota 2, Counterstrike, Starcraft II, Call of Duty, and many others are careers for many.

Although the board game and video games industries belong to the same family, they have certain unique characteristics that make them differ from one another. Take Chess and Checkers for instance, arguably the most acknowledged board games-they share many common attributes. Chess and Checkers are both turn-based, meaning one individual takes their turn while the other individual watches. Each player must also take their turn reacting to what their opponent did the turn prior, while setting up for what their opponent will potentially do during their following turn. This is a genre-defining attribute for strategic board games. Another major component of a board game is having

to manage your physical pieces. During Chess and Checkers, players must protect certain pieces while attempting to attack their opponent's pieces to gain a strategic advantage.

Video games also have specific genre-defining characteristics. One major component of these games is that most games happen in real time, this means that you and your opponents are making plays and decisions simultaneously. Two of the most popular games, *League of Legends* and *Starcraft II*, have many genre-defining attributes within them. For example, in *League of Legends* the map is almost identically mirrored for each team. This allows for the fairest real time decision making and strategic planning for each team. Another common attribute that many video games share is map interaction and adaptation. The map, as well as one or both players, will be immediately affected with interacted with. In *Starcraft II*, resource and army management are the two main components of the game. Both players predict their opponent's next move, gathering, and managing resources, setting up an attack or defense, and creating their own strategic plan all in real time.

It is vital to know the major characteristics that have traditionally been seen in board games and video games to properly analyze how *Heroes of Vatalyr* is merging the two genres. Players manage their army, gather resources, engage in combat, interact with the world of *Vatalyr*, and use their armies special characteristics and abilities to overpower their opponent. *Heroes of Vatalyr* has genre-defining characteristics from both board games and video games.

CHAPTER 2

PERSONAL IMPORTANCE OF GAMES

Games have been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. As a child, I would make up games to play with the kids in my neighborhood. These games would involve anything and everything surrounding us. I was constantly thinking of new games to play with everyone. Fast forward a few years and I was introduced to my first board games. I was shown a standard deck of cards, Dominos, Checkers, and Chess. I introduced these games to my friends and we all quickly fell in love. During the third grade, I began to experiment with games on the computer. I played simple flash games and pinball for the most part. Until one day, I found a website that had a collection of hundreds of games. This site was called Miniclip which was essentially an online arcade. From that day forth, video games played a major role in my life and continued to do so for the next fifteen years. I have played competitive video games since middle school, and even had the pleasure to play on the Middle Tennessee State University League of Legends E-sports team in the North American League of Legends University scene. While video games have been ever prevalent in my life, board games have played just as significant of a role.

I was introduced to a game called *Magic: the Gathering* during my sophomore year of high school. This is a strategic card game where you play as a wizard while engaging in duels with other wizards by summoning mythical creatures and casting spells. A friend came over to my house and brought some of his cards and he began to teach me how to play. I started to play during lunch every day with a group of friends,

and I also began to compete in Friday Night Magic, an event at a local game store, each week. My love for *Magic: the Gathering* only grew stronger the more I played. I began traveling across the state to compete in major tournaments with some of my close friends who also played. Some of my most fond memories of my late high school and early college years involve *Magic: the Gathering*. My goal is for *Heroes of Vatalyr* to be as influential to a friend group as *Magic: the Gathering* was to mine.

CHAPTER 3

THE EARLY STAGES

During the early stages of *Heroes of Vatalyr*, there were a few characteristics that needed to be included. There needed to be map interaction, turn-based gameplay, resource management, and army management. As one can tell, this is not enough information to build a complete strategic board game. There was still no win condition or game state by which one player could declare victory, what the resources would be used for, how the map would be laid out, what the “army” pieces represented, and how the game would be physically produced. In order to find the answers to these questions, a break down of each category of the game was imperative.

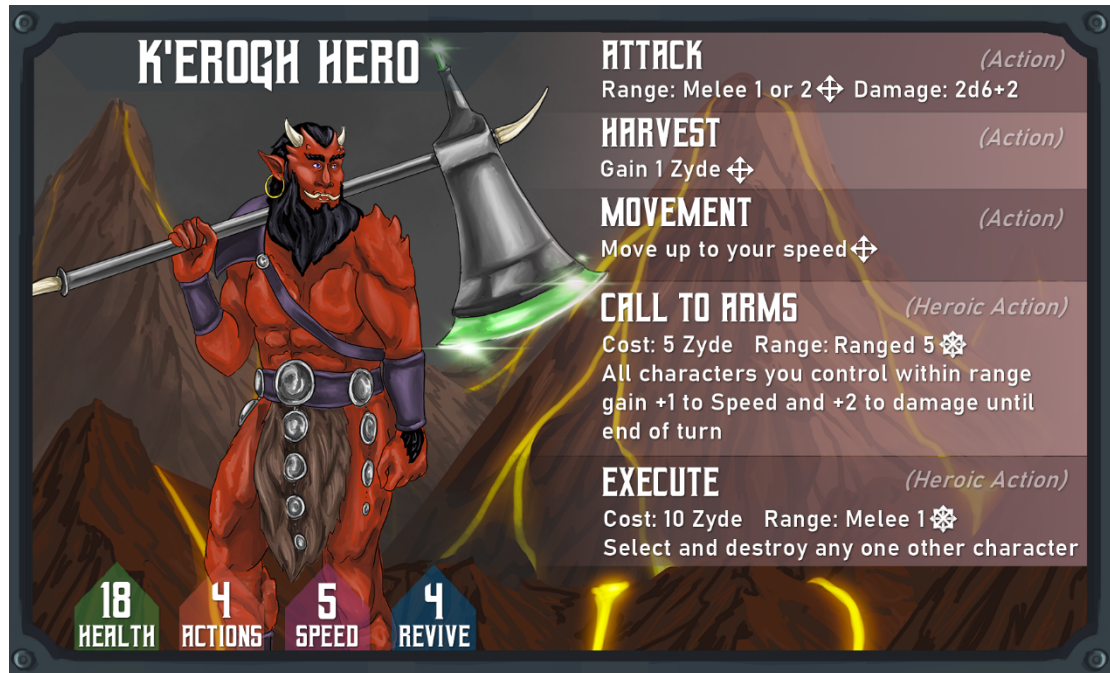
Vatalyr needed to be a rich world full of different regions, terrains, and life forms. The different regions needed to be inhabited by unique races that have evolved and adapted to thrive in their respective environments. These races needed to have specialized skill sets that set them apart from the other races. A clear purpose for why these races inhabited *Vatalyr* needed to be determined, as well as how the races interact with one another. It was decided that the races inhabited *Vatalyr* for the conquest over its most precious resource, Zyde. This Zyde can be used for unlocking the nexus that sits in the center of *Vatalyr*. This nexus is a portal that enables teleportation across any planet in the galaxy. This would allow the victorious race to spread their influence to other planets. With clear direction in mind, *Heroes of Vatalyr* began to coalesce.

CHAPTER 4

THE CHARACTERS OF VATALYR

Vatalyr needed to have four main races that inhabited the four unique regions that spanned across the world. These races needed to have unique characteristics that gave them a competitive advantage over the other races. Each race needed to excel in one of the following: combat, gathering, area control, and versatility. This led to the creation of the K'eroth (*Key-ear-aug*), Dharmiak (*Dhar-me-ack*), Vizenai (*Vis-in-ai*), and O'ine (*Oh-eye-in*). Within these races, there to be different class roles. These roles would allow certain characters to be combat focused, healing focused, and gathering focused while still maintaining the races overall unique attributes. This led to the development of racial abilities, which can be used by any character of the given race. The races each have a designated hero character that is powerful and has unique abilities in which players can spend Zyda to activate.

The K'eroth are beasts made of rock-like skin and stand over seven feet tall. They excel in close combat using their sheer strength and great battle axes. They travel from settlement to settlement, pillaging through the regions that the other races inhabit to steal their Zyde and resources.



(Figure 2: K'eroqh hero character card)

The Dharmiak are hardworking creatures and use their quick movements and wings to gather vast amounts of Zyde. They are a harmonious and beautiful race, standing over six feet tall with beak and wide-stretched wings. For centuries they have traveled across *Vatalyr*, mastering the art of Zyde gathering while bribing their foes to avoid unnecessary conflict.



(Figure 3: Dharmiak hero character card)

The Vizenai are intelligent and powerful creatures who are masters of the arcane arts. They strike fear into their opponent's eyes with their lizard-like appearance. They are known for their powerful spells, teleportation abilities, and their skills at fighting from a distance. For centuries, the Vizenai stayed locked away in their temple studying and training the ancient magics that were passed down from their ancestors.



(Figure 4: Vizenai Hero character)

The O'ine are mysterious creatures. Since the beginning of their time, they have studied the other races in secret. No one has ever seen the true face of an O'ine, only their figure. The O'ine remain the most hidden race, never revealing their identity. They traveled across *Vatalyr* duplicating skills from each of the other races at a slightly lower efficiency.



(Figure 5: O'ine Hero character)

CHAPTER 5

THE REGIONS OF VATALYR

Further development of the regions that these races inhabited needed to be established to further form the world of *Vatalyr*. There are four main regions of *Vatalyr*: Bourgh (*Boar-guh*), Adir (*Ah-deer*), Elhmog (*El-mog*), and Dust. It was vital that these regions resembled the race that inhabited it, and that their respective region clearly influenced their traits.

Bourgh, the lava pits of *Vatalyr*, are home to the K'erogh. This wasteland is home to only rocks, lava, and ash. Mountainous volcanoes surround the land, keeping most natural life outside these walls. This led to the K'erogh pillaging and war for survival. Found in the center of Bourgh is Mount Grah (*Grr-ah*). This colossal peak is where the pillaged loot is stored. Found atop the peak of the mountain is an ancient statue that displays the K'erogh hero as a symbol of strength for the K'erogh warriors.

Adir, the great plains of *Vatalyr*, is inhabited by the Dharmiak. Some of the most beautiful wildlife of *Vatalyr* lives within this realm. Rabbits, birds, fish, and insects roam the tall grasses and crystal waters of this land. The Dharmiak live in harmony with the surrounding wildlife. The land is also rich with bountiful deposits of Zyde. The Dharmiak reside in Astella (*Ah-st-el-uh*), the Tree of Life, that is found in the center of the land. Astella's canopy reaches far above the cloud scape of Adir and spans over a thousand feet in width. It is filled with stairwells, storage rooms, fountains, rest areas, and packed with Zyde from the Dharmiak's gathering hauls.

Elhmog, the eerie marshes that spill over *Vatalyr*, are inhabited by the Vizenai. There is an incessant fog that fills the space in between the dreary trees. The muddy and constantly wet terrain makes for strenuous traversing. Only snails, slugs, toads, small insects, and the Vizenai inhabit these marshes. The Vizenai have lived in Elhmog for generations, training their ancient magics and learning from their ancestors. The Vizenai's magic is so powerful that remnants of it can be found illuminating the thick fog. For centuries, the Vizenai have studied in the Ikor (*Eye-core*), an ancient temple buried beneath the eerie trees in the center of Elhmog.

Dust, the fog covered hills that none venture near. A lone cobblestone road is seen disappearing into the hills. No one knows what truly occupies Dust. Only rumors traverse across *Vatalyr* of spotting the ancient O'ine disappearing with the road into the fog.

CHAPTER 6

DETERMING ATTRIBUTES & ABILITIES

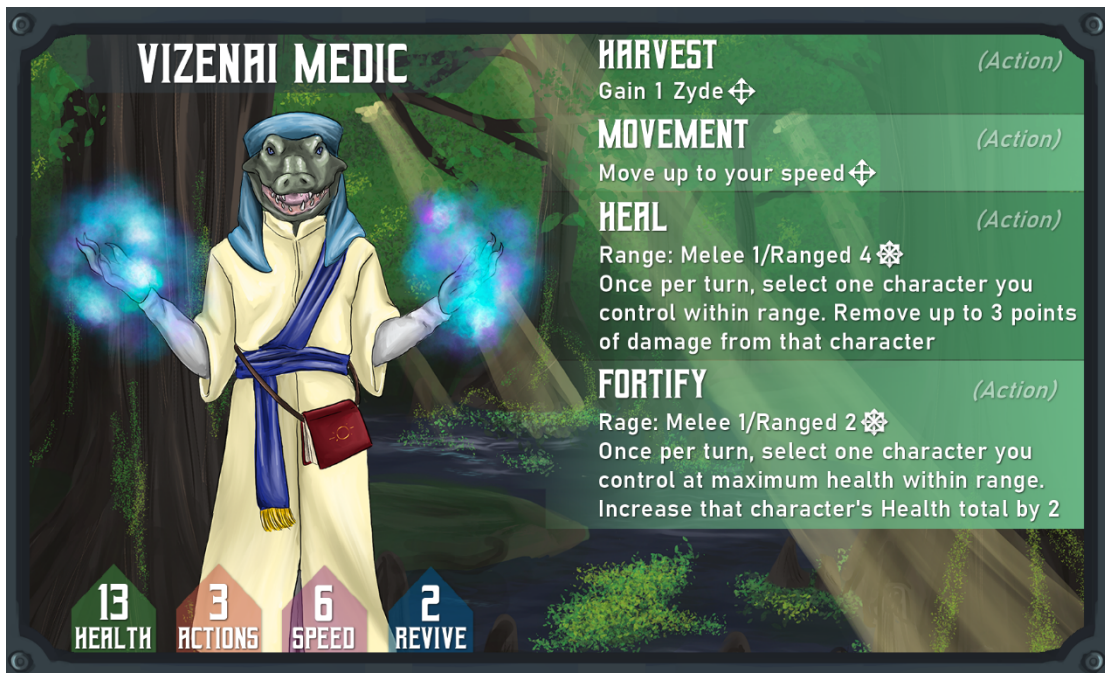
Each character has unique values for their health, movement speed, damage, attack range, Zyde gathering capability, and healing. These values needed to correlate directly to each race. The K'erogh, a combat focused race, need to have higher damage than the Dharmiak, a gathering focused race. The Dharmiak would clearly need to be able to gather Zyde faster than the K'erogh, so their movement speed and Zyde gathering capabilities needed to represent this.

Determining the attributes of each individual character was the most intricate part of the creation of *Heroes of Vatalyr*. No race should be objectively superior to another race based on quantitative attributes. There needed to be balance between the races, allowing for each to have their spotlight in certain aspects of the game. After speculating, play testing and tweaking numbers, the attributes of each character directly represent their race's uniqueness. Not only did each set of numbers need to coincide with each race, but those numbers needed to represent each class as well. Within each race is a hero, medic, worker, and soldier class. These classes perform different functions, and through extensive trial and error, the

numbers and attributes for each class were further fine-tuned.



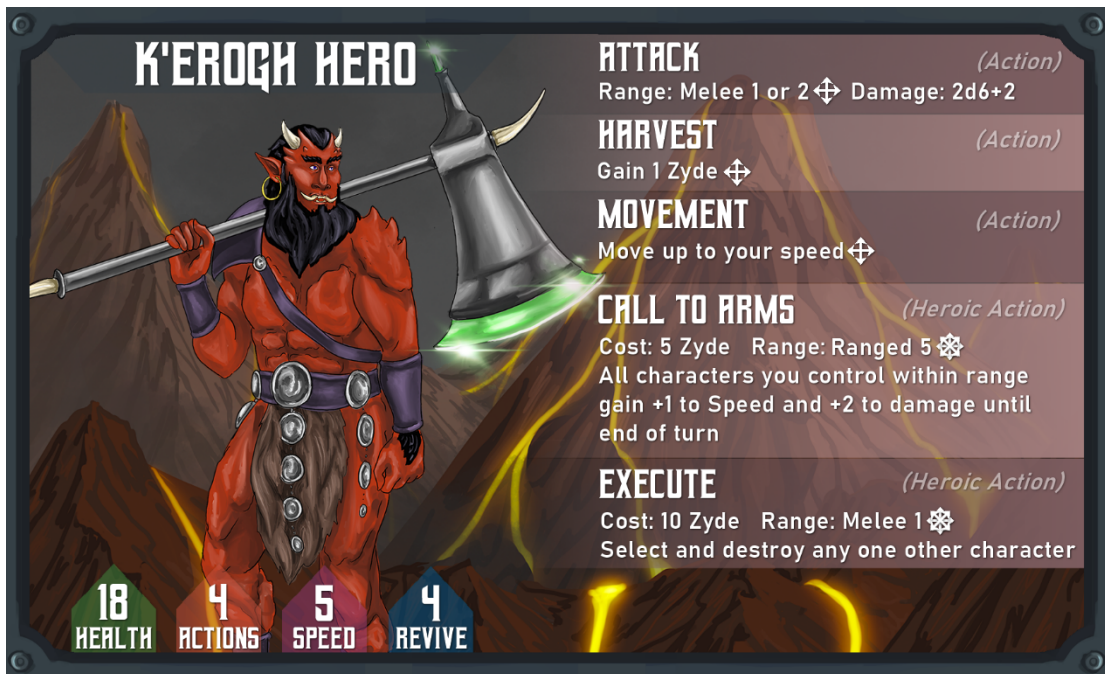
(Figure 6: Dharmaik Soldier Character Card)



(Figure 7: Vizenai medic character card)



(Figure 8: O'ne worker character card)



(Figure 9: K'eroqh hero character card)



(Figure 10: Back of character card)

CHAPTER 7

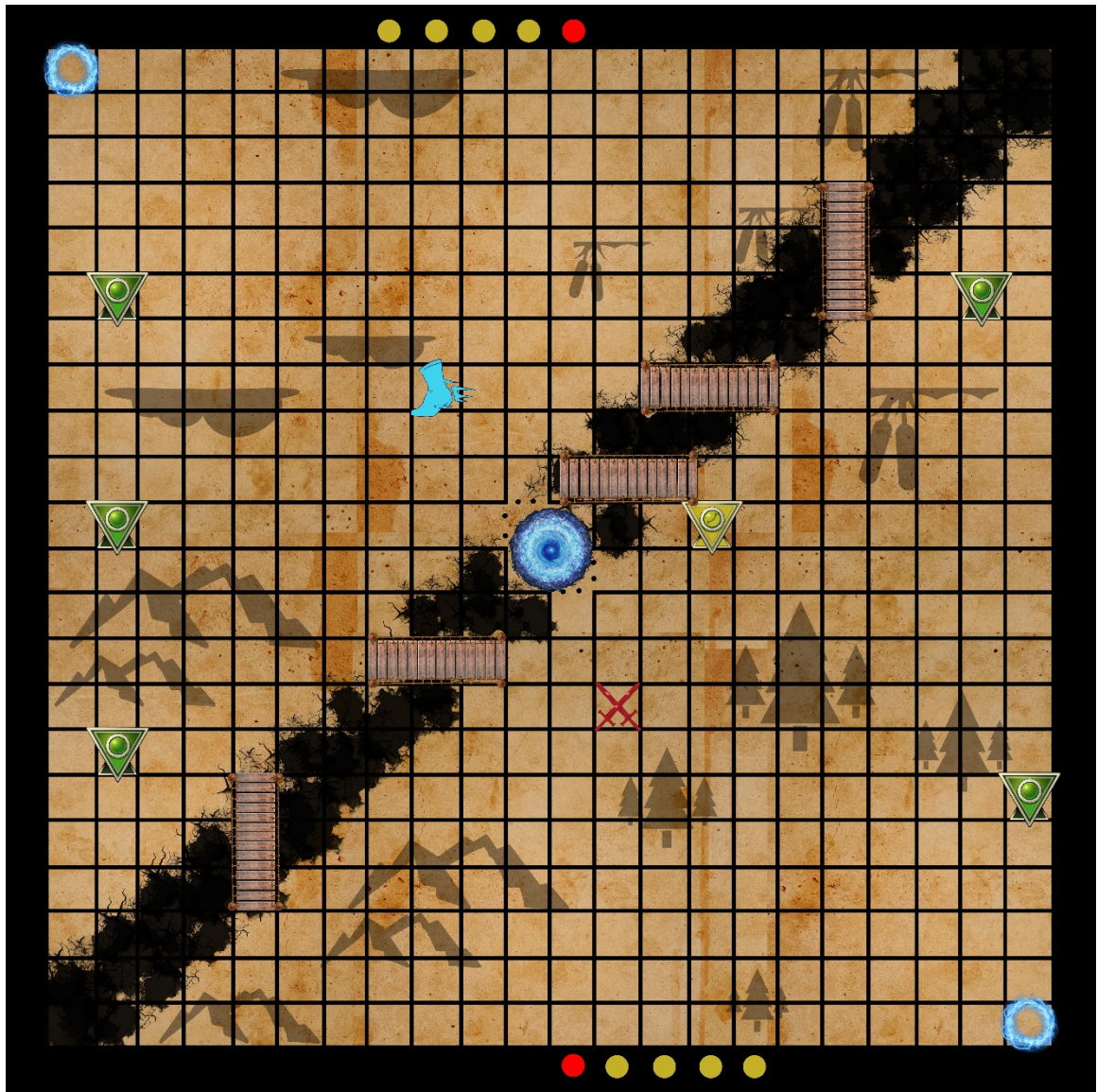
CREATION OF THE MAP

The physical map of *Vatalyr* needed to incorporate aspects from board games as well as video games. It was determined that the best approach was to create the board based on a grid format, similar to Chess or Checkers. This would reinforce the feel of a traditional board game. The regions of *Vatalyr* needed to be incorporated into the backdrop of the board so that players can immerse themselves deeper into the fantasy world setting. One aspect from video games that I wanted to incorporate into the map was the mirror effect utilized by games such as *League of Legends* and *Dota II*. This way, no matter what side of the map you are playing on it, it gives a similar experience for each player. The map is split diagonally by a gaping chasm that can be crossed by use of one of the many bridges spaced across the board. With the grid like format, incorporation of regions, and split effect the base of the map was complete.

The next part of the map that needed consideration was interaction. To begin, Zyde nodes were set across the map in strategic locations. Through play testing, a decision was made to add one special Zyde node on the board. This Zyde node provides double the amount of Zyde your character would normally receive when gathering. This adds complexity to the game mechanics and creates a competitive hotspot for players to obtain and retain control given that gathering Zyde is one of the main objectives of the game. The success of this node during playtesting led to the creation of two power ups, one for movement speed and one for strength. When a specific character interacts with these tiles, that character gains a special benefit. This drives more strategic planning,

competition, and adds a manageable complexity to the game. The last part of map interaction incorporated two teleportation portals that allowed characters to travel across large distances of the map. This ensures that players will not always feel safe if they remain at the back of the board; it forces them to remain aware that their opponent can reach them.

Finally, the size of the physical game board needed to be determined. The tiles are each one inch by one inch, and the board is twenty-three inches by twenty-three inches. The starting locations for each player's character are located in the center-back of the board. Play testing other industry leading games helped determine the size and style for *Heroes of Vatalyr*.



(Figure 11: Board design)

CHAPTER 8

DEVELOPING WIN CONDITIONS

One of the main objectives of most games is to become victorious over your opponent. *Heroes of Vatalyr* incorporates multiple ways for a player to win. The main way to win is to obtain five banners and fifteen Zyde, followed by the hero entering the nexus located in the center of the map.

Banners are primarily collected through combat, although the Dharmiak can obtain banners through spending Zyde. When a character is killed by an opponent, that opponent will then receive one banner. If a player's hero is killed by an opponent, that opponent will then receive two banners. A player can revive their hero or other characters they control by spending the revive cost in Zyde indicated on each character card.

Zyde can be obtained by interacting with one of the various Zyde nodes located across the map. The amount of Zyde obtained by the node is indicated by the gathering (harvest) number indicated on the character's card. Once a player has obtained at least five banners and has at least fifteen Zyde in their possession, their hero can enter the nexus to win the game. Other non-traditional win conditions can be achieved as well. Any player may choose to concede at any point in the game, which ends play immediately and the opposing player is declared the winner. Lastly, if a player has run out of active characters on the board and does not have the required amount of Zyde to revive any of those characters, then their opponent immediately becomes victorious.

CHAPTER 9

ESTABLISHING THE RULES

Like most board and video games, *Heroes of Vatalyr* has a rulebook explaining the do's and don'ts of the game. After extensive playtesting, many questions about play arose. "Can I do this?" "What happens if I do that?" "I didn't realize you can do that." Along with the rulebook that is provided with *Heroes of Vatalyr*, many of the questions can be answered by reading the character cards. These cards state all the attributes about each specific character as well as special abilities, if any.

To begin play, players each roll two six-sided dice and calculate the total rolled. The player who rolled the greater value will then decide whether they will go first or second during each round. Each round begins with the player who took the first turn of the game and the round ends when the opposing player has completed their turn. During a player's turn, that player controls each of their characters one at a time, and completes actions such as moving, gathering, attacking, and any others that are indicated on the character card. It is important to note that when a Zyde node has been gathered, it can no longer be gathered by any other character for the remainder of the round. Once both players have completed their turn, a new round begins, the Zyde nodes reset, and play continues.

CHAPTER 10

PHYSICAL PRODUCTION

The physical production of the game is of utmost importance. A poor-quality production would turn individuals away. Through careful examination of potential manufactures, it was determined the website Board Game Makers was to be the manufacturer for *Heroes of Vatalyr*. All components from the box, cards, tokens, board, and rulebook are produced by this company. *Heroes of Vatalyr* comes with all the necessary components needed to play out of the box.



(Figure 12: Box cover design)

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION

Heroes of Vatalyr encompasses all of the gaming aspects that I had envisioned. It utilizes characteristics from board, card, and video games to create a unique experience for each player. The game structure allows for a casual, competitive, and enjoyable nature and interactions with friends both old and new. The world of *Vatalyr* is both rich and immersive. Players can dive into the background of each race and region to be able to identify with their individual playstyles. This level of connection enables players to develop strong ties to specific races. In conclusion, *Heroes of Vatalyr* is an incredible board game that players will be able to enjoy for countless hours.

CHAPTER 12

THE FUTURE OF VATALYR

When designing Heroes of Vatalyr, there was a strategically clear goal in mind. There needed to be room to build onto the world of Vatalyr and offer dedicated players more ways to enjoy the game. The first way that this was ensured was by leaving room for expansions. There are already a few expansions in the making. These include a new race, new characters within each race, and a new map to play on. There is also plans for an expansion that will turn the game into a four-player variant. While these expansions allow players to enjoy Heroes of Vatalyr for longer, they also increase the customer lifetime value. This is the monetary value that one individual customer can offer you. If Heroes of Vatalyr is released for \$99 USD, with no expansions or add-ons in mind, then the customer lifetime value will always be \$99. If there are expansions ranging from \$20 to \$50, then the customer lifetime value has the potential to be more than just \$99. This creates a win-win scenario for both Heroes of Vatalyr and the players.

Another realm of expansions is that Heroes of Vatalyr has potential to enter the digital world. By working with game design studios and starting a web development team, Heroes of Vatalyr has a real shot at becoming a virtual game. This digital version would not only bring in additional revenue, but players would be able to play with each other from across the world.

With these ideas in mind, Heroes of Vatalyr will continue to grow as time goes on. There is immense room for world building, more add-ons, and a digital version to play on.

APPENDIX

All Heroes of Vatalyr material can be found on the website. This includes all of the original artwork, rule book, board design, cards, and everything else Heroes of Vatalyr.

<https://nicholaslynn98.wixsite.com/hovgame>

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