Oneiroi

Children of the Night

Background

Where do dreams come from? Why does it happen that we sometimes delve into the sweetest illusions and other times, the scariest nightmares? People have been asking this question for centuries and millennia and have come up with fascinating stories. The German word for nightmare, "Albtraum" stems from the idea that fairies sit on the sleeping person's chest, causing discomfort (that could be healed with tomatoes, weirdly). In the middle ages, the church believed that dreams were the devil's temptations. But our story dates even further back, to the ancient Greeks: The battle between Morpheus and Phobetor.

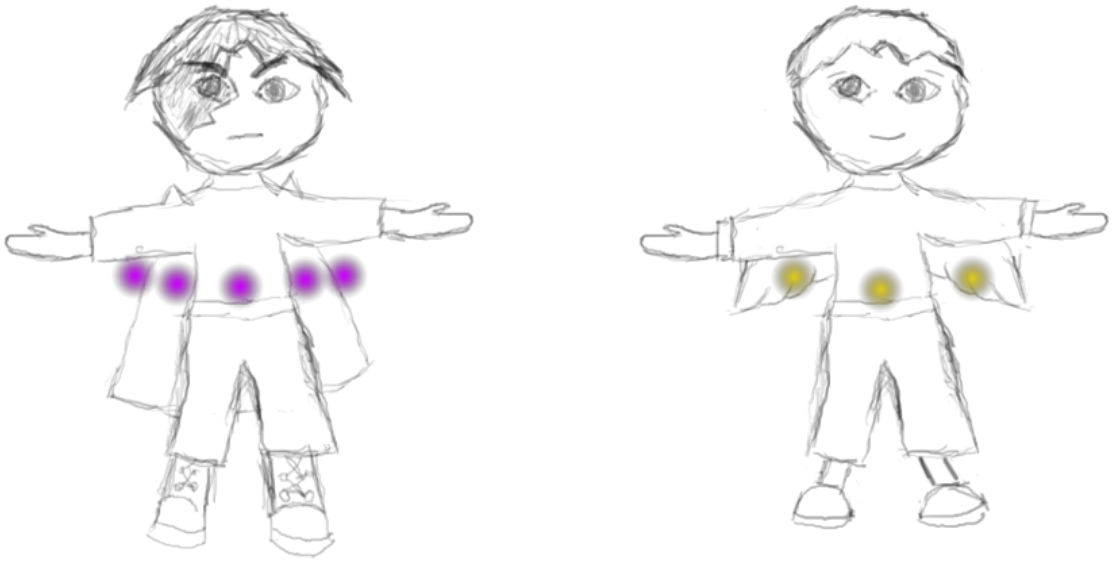
Morpheus and Phobetor are both members of the Oneiroi, children of the night, architects of dreams. Morpheus represents the beautiful dreams, while Phobetor is the personification of nightmares. On the mountain top of the Olymp, Morpheus summons the true dreams, while Phobetor gathers the deceptive ones. Set up against each other, they fight over human control.

Game Mechanics

Our game seeks to bridge action and strategy games while still being accessible to console players. This premise decides most of our options if they are not decided in connection with the theme "Dreams".

Resulting from the story, our game is best played as a two-player game, where all action takes place on one main screen and one map, displayed from a bird's eye perspective. Each player is represented by:

1. Either Morpheus or Phobetor. This is the player character.



Phobetor and Morpheus, the player characters, carrying dreams.

2. Dreams. These are tiny little orbs under the player's command. Each player has his/her own dreams.

Furthermore, there are sleeping humans scattered around the map.
A game is designed to be fast-paced and expected to take about five to ten minutes.

Core Game Mechanic

In one sentence, the core game mechanic is: Strategically capture and defend resources (humans) with dreams, in order to generate more dreams.

Player Actions

A player can issue the following actions:

1. **Rally/Release** - This button attracts nearby dreams in a certain radius or releases them to go their way. Dreams are rallied one by one, closest one first such that the player can control how many dreams to rally. Once rallied, dreams circle around the player character.
2. **Throw** - Morpheus/Phobetor picks up a rallied dream. The player can select the direction and force (up to a certain limit) to throw a single dream somewhere.
3. **Build a wall -** While pressing this button, the player exchanges rallied dreams for a stationary wall. The wall is drawn behind the player while moving. Each piece of wall can

be destroyed again by enemy dreams, but the cost for destroying a piece of wall is higher than constructing it. The player character, who constructs a wall, and his dreams can still move through, but the enemy player character and his dreams can't.

Dreams

When dreams of opposing factions meet, they neutralise each other and both disappear. Dreams are not directly controlled by a player, but can only be directed by rallying/releasing/throwing them.

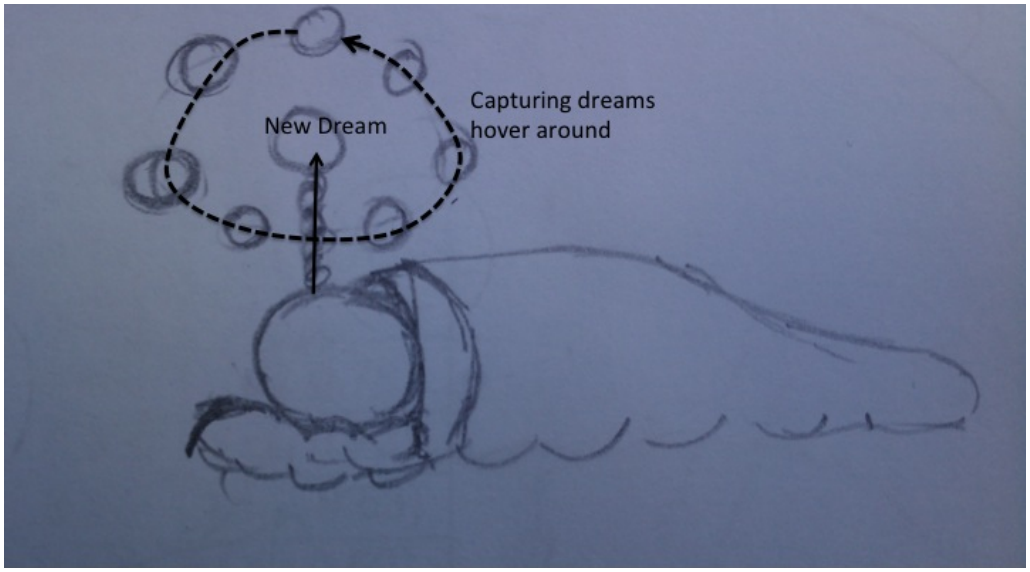
Un-rallied dreams are somewhat autonomous in that they automatically try to act on the thing nearest to them in a certain small radius: If there is an enemy dream, they gravitate towards it (even if that dream is rallied by the other player). If there is a sleeping human, they try to capture it.

The player can override this behavior by rallying the dreams, forcing them to circle around the player figure. A player can walk around with rallied dreams, thereby carrying dreams around. The more dreams he/she carries, the slower he/she moves.

If a dream doesn't find anything to do in its action radius, it sits around idle.

Giving the dreams some autonomous freedom is in line with the popular wisdom that dreams do what they want.

Sleeping Humans, Capturing



Sleeping human producing new dreams

Around the map, there are several sleeping humans. They can be captured by dreams being near them, leading the dreams to circle around them similar to the circling around the player character when rallied. Once a human is captured, it continues to produce dreams for the player, to whom it now belongs. These dreams are produced directly at the sleeping human and also start circling around it. If however a human is surrounded by too many dreams, it might awake and therefore deplete as a resource (disappear from the map) and all assigned dreams also vanish. This imposes a penalty for over-exploitation of the resource. After a while, the human falls asleep again, but in its neutral state, and has to be re-captured.
Once a human is captured by dreams of faction 1, in order to be captured by faction 2 the capturing dreams of faction 1 have to be neutralised first. Neutralising the dreams surrounding a human also disturbs his/her sleep, which might also lead to waking up and depletion. Depending on balancing, we might make it easier to neutralize dreams that are currently capturing in order to favor offensive gameplay.
Whoever manages to capture all humans succeeds at dominating all human dreams and wins the game.

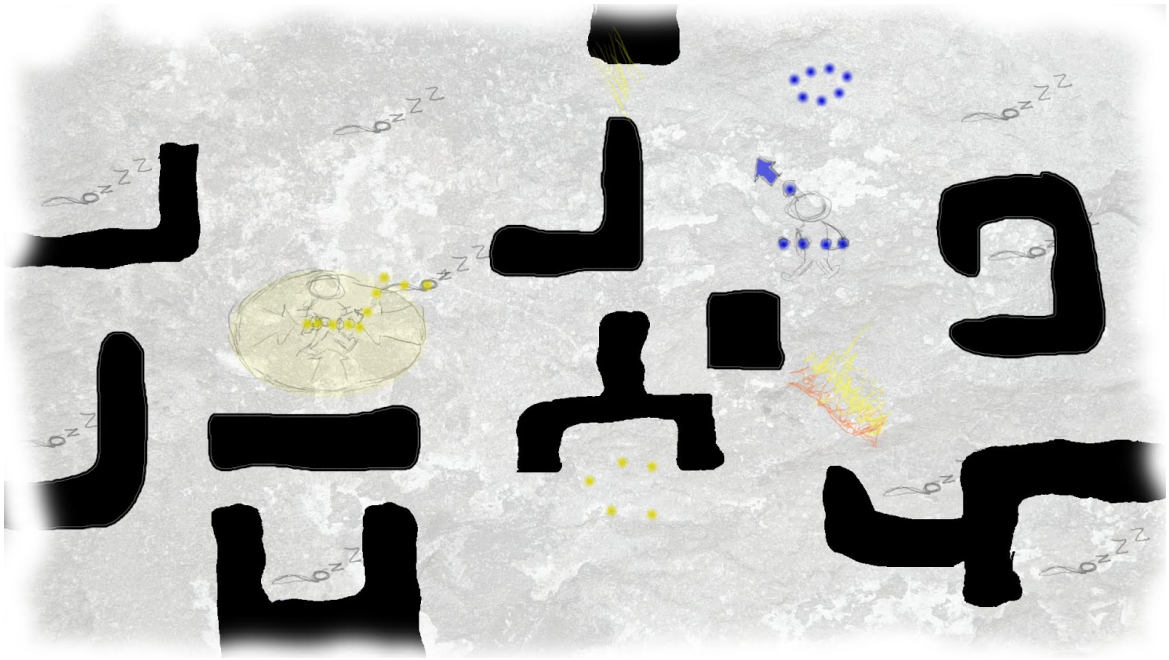
Assessment

Gameplay-wise, our core principles are to

- make a game with strategic depth, but
- keep it short, fast and simple in order to appeal to casual players.

In more detail, this means that our game and all mechanics should be learnable in a single game of about five minutes, and it should be engaging enough to warrant a rematch. It should be clearly the case that the better and more experienced player wins a game, but at the same time a loss should not be discouraging and it should not take long to become the better and more experienced player.
We try to find a good balance between action-oriented gameplay and strategic gameplay and reward quick thinking.
Conflict arises from not having the time to do all the things you want to do, so you need to focus on one thing. For example, in a typical game situation your human x might be under attack - do you defend x? Do you launch a counterattack somewhere else? Do you first harvest dreams from your humans or go with the few dreams you have already rallied and risk a potential

depletion of resource?



Overview of the game scene, in the beginning of the game. Morpheus (yellow) is harvesting dreams by rallying, Phobetor is throwing a dream. Both have already constructed a tiny wall.

Development Schedule: Task Breakdown and Timeline

E: Everyone, A: Aniruddha F: Frederik, T: Tim	Est. Time (hours)	Draft Feb-25	Proposal Mar-4	Prototype Mar-11	Interim Mar-18	Alpha Mar-25	Playtest Apr-1	Demo Apr-8	Apr-15	Apr-22	Apr-29	May-6	May-13	May-20	May-27
Game Idea	4	E													
Game Proposal															
Rough draft	6		E												
Final	3		E	E											
Physical Prototype	10				E										
Basic Game Environment															
XNA Setup	0.5			E											
Learning XNA	8				E										
Map Setup (basic)	4				T										
Camera Setup (basic)	4					T									
Add Players	4					F									
Add obstacles	4					A									
Resource generation	4				A										
Game Menu and Help Screen	4					F									
Functional Minimum															
Map using heightmaps	4						T								
Basic player movements	3						F								
Rally/Release Dreams	5						T								
Spawn Dreams	5						A								
Winning/Losing	5					A									
Low Target															
Collisions	7						A	A							
Dream Attraction+Neutralization	10							T							
Throwing Dreams	7							T							
Obstacles (Fixed)	10							A							
Morpheus and Phobetor 3D models	10							F							
Sleeping Humans: 3D models	7							F							
Animated Players	10								F						

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		Feb-25	Mar-4	Mar-11	Mar-18	Mar-25	Apr-1	Apr-8	Apr-15	Apr-22	Apr-29	May-6	May-13	May-20	May-27
Desired Target															
Effects of carrying Dreams	5							A	A						
Dreams Animation and Shader	5									F					
Walls	15								T						
Map textures	2								F						
Background music	2									F					
Sound Effects	2									F					
High Target															
Obstacles (Random)	10									A	A				
Throwing (parabola)	7									T					
Angled camera	2									T					
Clouds	10											F			
Extra															
Fog of War	10											A	A		
Special Powers for player characters	10												A		
Physical Cloud Simulation	15														
Dreams: particle effects, implosion	10														
Management Overhead															
Proposal Presentation	5			E											
Interim Report Document	10								E						
Interim Report Presentation	5								E						
Alpha Release Document	12											E			
Alpha Release Presentation	7											E			
Playtest Document	10												E		
Playtest Presentation	5												E		
Conclusion Document	10														E
Final Demo	10														E
Final Trailer	12														E