

Game Design Document: Feral Dawn

General Information

Platform:

PS3

Genre:

Fighting

Players:

1-2

Rating:

Design overview

The entire game is very much on the grim and dark side, leaning just off center of the grey scale towards black. There are lighthearted moments and lighthearted characters, but the overall atmosphere is relatively grim and a bit foreboding; emotionally heavy. There is also a focus on realism; within limits. If it were completely realistic, fights would likely be over in seconds, and things would easily get frustrating. Realism will be mildly exaggerated for entertainment purposes, so that the untrained eye would see it and believe it is possible. Human morality will be a focal element in the story.

Story:

Background Story:

In the year 2012, much of the human genome has been mapped out. Even the genomes of several animal species have been mapped, though much of this has been kept secret. The pioneer of this research, one Dr. Quinton Mazer, dedicated his life to the project. The United States government, seeing his amazing work, requested his assistance. The project was to find a way to graft various forms of animal DNA into human DNA, making an elite combat force. Early testing was less than ideal, with many subjects dying soon after testing. After two years, Dr. Mazer found a way to keep the human body from rejecting the implantation. The test was a success, but not in the way the scientists had expected. Instead of having animal senses, the process gave the test subject the ability to transform into a combination of the animal and human. Since the test subject lived, they continued on this line. Though the transformed humans often looked bizarre, none were grotesque and the transformations were never permanent. The

scientists were thrilled at this discovery, and many were considering the extent of transformational powers in other facets of science.

An explosion went off in the lab (accident/negligence), as protocol became forgotten in the excitement. One of the experimental processes (finding a safer and less painful form of application) was released. A recent discovery found that when working similar to a virus, there was a far less chance of death due to rejection, with the “treatment” changing the white blood cells, and “repairing” the body from there. When released however, it was an airborne virus. When Special Forces went to investigate after contact had not been made for several months, they found only bodies; many transformed, and had hardly any idea what to think of it. A few bodies were missing however, including that of Dr. Quinton Mazer.

The virus was one that took time to incubate, but once it started it hit the U.S. in a wave. Hospitals became flooded, hysteria was rampant, and the government was powerless, as the virus quickly surpassed any form of quarantine. The same was repeated worldwide, as the virus had spread from travelers. The virus had an estimated 95% mortality rate. Though few knew the true facts, the death toll was enough to make anyone believe nearly anything, including divine retribution. Within months, government had collapsed with the deaths of leaders and officials, order collapsed with the deaths of military and peacekeepers, and nearly 80% of the world's population was dead. In under a year the virus had run its course, and it was time for the survivors to figure out how to stay alive.

25 years later... (Time of story)

Most regions have stabilized, creating city states and self governed communities. No one can hold any kind of power of any kind of large area, for there simply isn't enough people to support the rule. Most of the human race has accepted what they are, as their offspring were born with the same abilities. Some still deny it, trying desperately to find a cure or something. Others embrace it so fully, it was as though they are no longer human, but an evolution of the species; they even see themselves as such. Though, some will say that those individuals are more likely a de-evolution, and are looked upon with distaste. It is believed that the transformation also affected the longevity of humans, but nobody is absolutely sure. Some form of stability has finally been established.

Game Story:

Violence has been spreading at an alarming rate, with no clear and reasonable cause. Many have sought its source; many of them never seen again. The searchers have found only that something is guiding this new and disturbing trend. While a few have found this, there are those who have stumbled upon it by chance, or simple chain of events. Once involved, all are dragged into the ensuing chaos, racing against the clock and fighting for their lives. Willing or not, all must see this to the end, and save the world as they know it. One way or another, a chapter of history will end.

Characters

Playable Characters

(Characters will have two outfits based off of origins, and one outfit for each season that the standards do not cover.)

Damian Crescent

Physical Appearance:

Height: 6'1"

Weight: 158 lbs.

Eye color: hazel

Age: 22

Damian seems more or less average in many regards. His extensive and regular exercise has given him strength and endurance that shows in his muscles. While they don't look like a bodybuilder's, it's clear that there is plenty of strength there. Damian keeps his hair long, not bothering to trim it unless it gets too long or in his eyes. His hair is straight, which is a bit unusual for half wolves. Not unusually, his hair is black. Normally, all he wears is a black sleeveless shirt, black sunglasses, blue jean shorts, and no shoes, the clothing being hand-made (though not by him). Often, he will wear modified black knuckle gloves, as he often uses his fists. The gloves are as much to protect his hands as they are to increase the damage to opponents who stand in his way. Alternatively, he'll wear a basic grey t-shirt with black jeans and low black boots. The rest stays the same.

Background:

Damian was born and raised changed, part wolf like everyone in their community. He belonged to a community of wolves, with packs ranging the Midwest of what used to be America and much of Canada. They had some of the most reliable communication networks in the world with their howls. The community was often seen as strange, as the degree to which they embraced the change as well as how, was far different than anybody else. They often lived their lives as much transformed as human, would live among wolves, and even mated transformed, an action thought sheer taboo by many. However, they were easily one of the largest coherent groups of people in the world, and are much better off than many.

Damian fully embraced what he was, never having known anything different. As many wolves, he was very social, but had an independent streak. He believes that if you can't take care of yourself, you can't take care of others. Self conscious yet world conscious. He never saw his father much, but he knew that travel was a necessity. Whenever his father was around, he showed his love.

When news came of his father's death, he took it hard. Though he had plenty of support, the fact that his father had been murdered angered him. Against the wishes, and threats, of the pack, Damian struck out alone to find his father's killer.

Play style:

Damian's fighting is closest to what one would consider street fighting. He has had little formal training, other than the survival lessons his father taught him. Most of it

is improvising, taking opportunities as they arise. Damian is a well balanced character, with good strength and speed, but slightly lower defense.

Story:

Damian is battling himself as much as he is battling opponents. His drive in the chaos is to find his father's killer. What he will do then, he is not quite sure. This goal drives him deeper and deeper into the plot. As he travels, he questions the lengths he is willing to go to achieve his goal. It is unclear until the end just what will become of him.

Vincent Avers

Physical Appearance:

Height: 6'3"

Weight 184 lbs.

Eye color: blue

Age: 47

Vincent is a man who always looks serious, and rarely relaxes. He keeps his hair as short as possible with his combat knife, as he can't use a shaver to buzz it. Still, it more or less looks buzzed. Many of his features seem streamlined, a potential side effect of becoming a hawk hybrid. While his torso has the muscle one would expect of a man in the armed forces, his legs almost seem to have too much muscle. This is from years of extensive training. This allows him to leap into the air, transform, and still have just enough room for the first down stroke. While he still has his old, beat up uniform (alternate outfit), he now wears a uniform of his own design, designed around his transformation.

Background:

Vincent was a young air force pilot when the outbreak occurred. He was one of the "lucky" ones, a survivor. Even through his illness, he saw his friends and family die one by one, slowly and painfully. Had he fallen in love and had to see her die as well, he would have snapped.

Instead, he found he could transform into a half hawk, a fitting change in his opinion. With the collapse of government, justice virtually collapsed as well. Still wearing his uniform, modified for use of wings, he became law enforcement, a vigilante. Since there was no law enforcement, he became it. Vincent became something of a local hero, keeping as much order as he could, where he could. He was judge, jury, and when necessary, executioner. Though he hated the last part, he knew that at times it was necessary.

Years passed, and justice became his life. In time, he met Dimitri's father, who had a very similar sense of justice. They hit it off easily, and worked together on occasion. When Vincent learned of his murder, he investigated, quickly learning that there was far more to the man's death than he had imagined possible. (Has Native American in his lineage)

Play style:

Vincent uses self defense techniques taught to those in armed forces, slightly adapted to be more aggressive. Vincent has many aerial maneuvers and will often knock his opponent into the air. His power and defense are a bit above average, but his speed is a bit below average.

Story:

Much of Vincent's story revolves around his investigation, and likely traveling with Dimitri (affected by player choices). Eventually, he discovers the main plot and attempts to become a one man army. Instead, he is found by a secret standing army and joins their ranks. Vincent leads an assault near the end.

Ayria Breeze

Physical Appearance:

Height: 5'5"

Weight: 131

Eye Color: light blue

Age: 18

Ayria is not quite petite, but she is a bit on the small side. If she didn't have as much muscle as she did, she would be petite. Her clothing is always minimal when she can get away with it, or even nonexistent. Her parents still hold on to some old traditions, otherwise she might likely go naked in all but the cold. As it is, she wears her bra and a small button up, leaving her mid drift bare, and short shorts. She wears only the clothes that are needed for the weather. Ayria is a bit fidgety, hating to stand still, and is very energetic.

Background:

Ayria was born after the outbreak, as healthy a child as one could see. Her parents, though they held on as much as they could to the past, did not speak of it to their daughter. In the outback of Australia, that was easy enough to do, and the children were raised as though life had always been that way. Ayria was one who embraced the wilderness, though some thought that at times she went a little too far. She loved exploring, and would often spend days out alone.

When she turned eighteen, Ayria packed up for traveling. Her parents, knowing there would be nothing they could do to keep her there once her mind was set, helped her pack and wished her luck. Though she loved them, she wanted to see the world. She'd learned how to fight, as everyone was required to learn, and was sure she could take care of herself. Abroad, she runs into the villains lackeys in the middle of trying to kill someone. She beats them off. Learning tidbits of the scheme, she decides to track it to its source to learn what's going on.

Play Style:

Ayria lacks power, as well as defense. Her main abilities are her speed, evasive maneuvers, and stuns. She is very athletic, and has a few counters as well.

Story:

While serious at parts, Ayria's story is largely lighthearted. It's not quite comical, but it is a bit less serious than the other characters. She does not have much of a personal stake as the others, so she goes where events lead her.

Non-Playable Characters

Dr. Quinton Mazer

Backstory:

Dr. Mazer grew up always wanting to know how things worked. If it were not for his love of animals and the advancements already made in technology, he likely would have become an engineer. However, he soon learned that what he really wanted to know was how living things worked. In college, he excels in biology and bio chemistry. Once out, he dedicates his life to his work, becoming his passion and perhaps even his obsession. Within a matter of years, he builds upon the work of his predecessors and begins mapping the human genome at an astonishing rate. Eventually, his research has supplied knowledge that could even give the ability of manufacturing specific human beings, though the government covered that up and dismissed such notions.

But the government had other ideas. The doctor had also been looking at animals as well, and was approached for a project on combining human and animal DNA to increase the capabilities of soldiers. These experiments had unexpected, but successful results. After the accident, Mazer left the wrecked facility. Because he had used his own DNA as a base for the experiments, he was not as affected by the virus as the others. At realizing the horror he had unleashed, he began to wander.

Story:

Dr. Quinton Mazer works almost exclusively behind the scenes. He does different things at different times depending on the character's story. This comes through hints, clues, or assistance, without ever revealing himself. He remains a shadow character; you know he's there, but never see him.

Environments

Environments will be large, often multi-leveled. The environment will have an effect on combat tactics, as throwing an opponent into a concrete wall will cause more damage than through a wooden door. Also, depending on the material, a character may be thrown through it.

Projected arenas/environments:

Abandoned city streets:

This city has been all but abandoned, with perhaps only a few scroungers and scavengers populating it. Being so large, it is not called a ghost town, but a dead city. Between panic riots, disrepair, and Mother Nature, the city is in shambles. Most buildings are intact, but there are crumbled bits and plants growing here and there. There are few vehicles in the streets, as most were salvageable and were taken just in case they could later be used.

The terrain is mostly flat, with several breakable walls and enclosed areas for scenery change. The arena takes place mostly on one main road, with several offshoots.

Forest (with river/stream):

A forest in the newly wild Americas. Without the same logging as once before, the forests have thrived. The trees are thick, as is the forest itself. A shallow stream runs nearby.

The forest is only slightly uneven, moderately rolling hills. Trees break up the battlefield quite a bit and can be run into and used as part of attacks

Snowy Mountain pass (may be snowing):

A mountain trail somewhere in Europe. In the high altitudes, it gets extremely cold, and only those adapted to the climate even try to live there. It is these conditions that often make travel difficult, but still there are those who make the journey. Because of the often low visibility, altitude can be a very real danger.

On the mountain, terrain can be compact and confrontational to wide open. There are a few areas that one can see from a distance, but there are no fatal falls.

Old oil rig:

The oil rig was abandoned at the time of the outbreak, as not even far out in the ocean was safe. Once the workers died, no one tried to get it running again. As of late, there has been work on repairing it, though at a distance it is hard to see. The oil rig still does not seem to be used for oil, so who repaired much of the equipment, and why?

Because there are a lot of walkways, there is not a lot of room for maneuverability, making fights very confrontational. There are two more open areas, one being a helicopter landing pad, but they are separated by distance and a degree of altitude.

Cave system:

An underground catacomb of caves. At one point in history, these caves were fully mapped and charted. Where these charts went after the virus is unknown, but few have had thought for them. More than one culture of people live in such caves, even these, specifically those who are either nocturnal or simply photosensitive. However, there seems to be more occupants than those who call this place their home.

This level functions differently in single and multiplayer. In single player game-play, how well the player can see is determined by their character choice. Some characters have greater night sight than others, which is further enhanced when transformed. While no character will be blind, some will have an easier time than others. In multiplayer, both players see at an equal level, determined after stage selection.

Game play modes

Single Player Story Mode

The system is set up similar to the design of Soul Caliber III. After most fights, on the world map, the player is given a choice of some sorts, either destination or action, but no more than four options at once. However, the player is not the only one making choices. The computer generates choices as well for the other characters involved in the story, based partially off the characters choices and a random factor. This allows a different experience every time, as the computer makes different choices, and those choices often affect the options available to the player. While there are many places that scenarios overlap for characters, there are several scenes exclusive to each character.

There will also be short scenes before and after fights, where the player can make choices as well. Such choices will include initiating the fight, talking to the “opponent”, interrogation, or perhaps even killing them. These choices will have meaningful consequences later on or perhaps immediately, with killing often having very negative effects, though not always. Talking may end up being futile, but perhaps not. These choices will alter the path of the story. With all of the choices, it is statistically impossible to have the same adventure twice. These scenes, because it is not simply pressing the right buttons at the right times, will function much like mini-games. A list of available options with corresponding buttons (no more than four at a time) will be displayed in the lower right-hand portion of the screen. They will follow a pattern, with aggressive action, passive action, aggressive speech and passive speech corresponding to the same buttons (X, O, Square and Triangle, respectively). The first choice will affect the second choice options, if there is a second prompt, and rarely will there be three or more. One scene will have all four buttons corresponding to different attacks, as the scene would not have the same impact played out one full fight at a time.

The short cut scenes will give meaning to every fight, but are short enough to not bog down the player, normally thirty seconds to a minute. The choices will also make the player pay attention, as they are an active participant instead of simple observer. If the player does not make a choice (they are given a reasonable amount of time), a choice will be selected for them. Failure in a fight leads to choices as well, not a retry, potentially lengthening the experience. If the player loses too often, they will be forcefully guided to a training session (varying depending on character selection), at which they can practice as much as they want before continuing, or adjust the difficulty.

Exhibition:

In this mode, the game is broken down into its most simple elements. You choose a character, choose an opponent character, choose an arena, choose the match parameters (Round time, rounds per match, computer difficulty, and other options), and the match begins. At the end of the match, players can choose to change parameters, change arena, change characters, or simply replay the match. (Also available as a multi-player mode.)

Arcade:

A series of ten matches, the tenth being the main boss from the story mode (character yet to be determined). The nine opponents before are randomly chosen from all the playable characters except the one the player chose. Simple, classic arcade style.

Survival:

There are several options available to make the mode as difficult as players wish. Options include: set CPU difficulty, ramping difficulty, CPU selection, random opponent, restore health (all, partial, and none), set location, no transformation, only transformed.

Multi-player Options

Two-Player Story Mode:

Two players can go through the story together. While they do not fight exactly side by side, they are both affecting the story. Depending on the characters chosen and the choices made, the two players may end up traveling together, such as Dimitri and Vincent. In such cases there will be special two player cut-scenes, where both characters have options that affect the other player as well as their own responses. In these times, each character alternates the rounds fought in. For example, player 1 fights the opponent in round one; if he/she loses, player 2 fights in the next round. A loss there ends the match. However, if player 2 wins the round, player 1 will fight in the next round. The players may also happen upon scenarios where there are two enemies, and the back and forth setup will work the same for both sides. When separate, the mode is more turn based, with each player making a move in the story, keeping both characters chronologically in the same place. For the ending, the situation depends on the characters chosen and the decisions made. They may fight each other, winner fights boss; one fights the boss, then the other; the tag-team format listed above; and other scenarios.

Exhibition:

Same as single player, except with human player instead of CPU.

Online:

Online support will be available, with a ranking system in place. Tournaments will be held from time to time.

Mechanics

Fighting Mechanics:

The goal is to keep the layout simple, yet the process difficult to master. Players can get by with the basics, but will need more to truly advance. Buttons will not correspond to one specific attack, but generalities. Attacks will vary depending on the position of the character, the position of the opponent, and at times the previous action taken. That way, fights flow in a realistic looking manner, feeling right as well.

Because specific maneuvers are rarely thought of in real fights, that translates partially into the game as well. Timing as well as conditions will determine what is done. So, if a player finds a particular maneuver effective, they have to be in the right position at the right time and remember the right sequence of attacks, not just know a specific button combination that can be repeated (and in other games, abused). There will be a few moves that are preset, but not many.

Animation positions will be categorized into positions from which all movements will transition into and out of. These positions include standing (facing forward), standing with back turned, crouching, on their back, and various positions in physical contact with the opponent (such as grabbing the arm). These positions mildly overlap so that the player does not start from rest for every attack. The combination of positions decides the animation and attack executed, along with a mild random factor. Players will need to think on their feet and think fast to succeed. Controls have yet to be finalized, but the major actions that drive the fight are: punches, kicks, grapples, jumps, evasions and blocks.

This goal also plays into non-offensive maneuvers. Every character will have evasive abilities, various ways to block, and situational based abilities. Different characters will have different skills in each category. Some characters are very athletic, but lack the strength to outright block an incoming attack. Others will not be so limber, but will be able to block heavy blows and perhaps deflect them, creating openings for attacks. As to special abilities, these are most often determined by the animal that is in the characters genes. A more mundane example is if a character comes into contact with a solid barrier while airborne, whether or not they did it purposefully, the character may be able to connect with their legs and leap off. Less athletic characters can do similar things, though instead of jumping back they will more often simply absorb the impact, negating all but perhaps the smallest amount of damage. On the more exotic side, some bestial forms may allow the character to stick to walls by pressing jump when airborne close to a wall (if such character wish to jump back as in the example earlier, they would have to press jump a second time quickly after connecting with the wall). Such characters are likely to be insects or certain lizards. Vincent Avers is the hawk, and is capable of flight by holding jump after jumping while he is in beast form. This ability can lead to offensive moves through flybys and dive-bombs, with momentum increasing damage and often knocking characters off their feet. This damage increase works both ways however, and if a character can strike him first during such a maneuver, it will increase the damage of the strike and send Vincent to the ground, stunning him.

Though it may tax some animation budget, a great deal of depth could be added but altering some maneuvers based on the relative size of the combatants: Small/large, medium/large, and small/medium. For instance, a small character could dodge between the legs of a larger opponent, quickly getting behind them. But the larger combatant would have advantages as well; some maneuvers that would normally require the

opponent to be stunned/crouched/bent over to use wound no longer have the requirement, for the height differential in the downward maneuvers is already present.

Many matches will have time limits. In such cases, the player with the most health at the end of the round/match is declared the winner; in certain conditions. With the maneuverability of some characters, this facet could be abused. So, in order to win, the player must be within five-eight feet from the opponent when time expires. If this condition is met, the winner subdues the loser. If at a further distance, the opponent escapes and the match is considered a loss. If it is the end of a round, the round is a draw, despite any health differences (the one with lower health is considered to have caught their breath and is ready to continue fighting) and the match goes on as though the round had not happened. While a player can use this to prolong a match (which is reasonable) or lose, they can not win by mere evasion.

Along with health, there will also be stamina. While this has been a feature in many boxing games, it has not seen much use in more traditional fighters. Stamina is not something that needs to be micromanaged. Indeed, there may be times when it will never be an issue. However, it is in the back of the players mind. While every character has a great deal of stamina, if you attempt to do too much for too long, the character will begin to slow down, lose power, and be unable to perform certain maneuvers. All actions take stamina, some being negligible to the point that the stamina is instantly regenerated to larger amounts. Maneuvers such as flying will take stamina, so an aerial character such as Vincent Avers will not be able to stay in the air indefinitely. Taking damage will also reduce stamina so getting caught exhausted can be a crippling experience. Again, it will not be a worry except for more extreme conditions and can be recovered from in a short period of time. During that time, they are at a disadvantage and the opposing player (or the player character potentially) can easily take advantage of the situation. The player has the option of turning this option off in all modes except the story mode.

Human vs. Beast form: The choice of which form to use during a fight is more a tactical choice than a power choice, often affected by the environment. While the beast form is often substantially more powerful than being human, with both improved strength and natural weapons, it may not always help. Vincent Avers, mentioned in the character section, has his arms become wings when he transforms and is capable of some degree of flight. However, in areas of limited space, such as the caves or inside a building, flight may be severely limited or even impossible. In such cases he is more effective as a human, as having arms will give him more options. A large transformation (such as a Kodiak bear) may be able to temporarily trap an opponent in a corner or dead end, as their bulk blocks the easiest escape routes. In wide open areas, while powerful, their lack of speed because of their bulk will more likely be a hindrance. The player will have to decide if that power is really worth it. Other characters, such as Dimitri, are better rounded. Their beast forms may not have the dramatic individual statistical increases (though they are still stronger than being human), but they are also harder to take advantage of, as they will lack a real exploitable weakness. The choice is often a trade off. A specialist will excel in one situation, but all but flounder in another, and while a well rounded character will not usually have huge tactical advantages in their favor, neither will they find themselves at a distinct disadvantage. It is a matter of cost/benefit, and personal playing style.

Art

Art and graphic direction:

The art direction will focus heavily on realism. For the transformation conditions, the characters will be as anatomically correct as possible. There may be times when a design in truth is not anatomically possible, and the design will be changed and/or be presented in a fashion that will seem as feasible as possible. Realism with a bit of stretching. Being a future science fiction piece, true realism will need to be sacrificed from time to time, but the design will stay as realistic as we can possibly make it.

This applies to in-game physics as well, with movement being anatomically possible. This can potentially alter fighter's abilities in a large way, but it will not be a handicap. The environment will also be interactive. This will involve some pre-made animations, such as a character grabbing a railing or landing on a lower level after a jump or fall. Objects will have individual values that determine how they react to a character. A character will never be thrown straight through a concrete wall, as no character is that strong and such an event will kill a character instantly, but bits may come off at the impact and leave a visible mark. A character can be thrown through different types of wood; thicker wood, like 2X4s, having a greater impact than a thinner wood, such as plywood, as well as being harder to crash through. Metals will also have such properties, denting at impact depending on the force of the impact. Depending on computer power and coding, grass may be matted down and snow may be parted on the ground by characters.

Blood is an option as well, though also portrayed with realism within reason. There are some blows with claws and teeth that would disable or kill the character in life that will not in the game, and in cases where gore or heavy blood would be involved, those situations would be downplayed. Otherwise, blood is proportionate. If computing power allows, minor wounds would remain, as well as some blood. Blood loss will not be a situation in the game.

Also, the art in all forms will have a darker tone to it, as alluded to in the design overview.

User interface

The health bar will be displayed in the upper corners of the screen, though the condition of the fighter may prove indication enough of the player's current condition. The bar transitions in the classic green to yellow, orange and red. There will be an option to not display this bar. Below that is the stamina bar, currently blue. The camera set-up stays at the classic side angle. During certain sequences, the camera may adjust to more cinematic angles.

More often than not, degree of damage is difficult to inventory while the game is in progress, and so that may not be a good indication of character health. UFC Undisputed does not use any interface references for health, but given the nature of the style, being more "cinematic realism", such a display I believe is counterproductive. However, the classic "health bar" does not well within the style either.

A concept to test and explore is that of two health indicators: persistent injury and pain threshold. Pain threshold recovers over time, persistent injuries do not. Most attacks will damage pain threshold, while a larger number of “beast form” attacks damage persistent injury due to claws and fangs

During the story mode, the computer player’s health bar will not be displayed, though the player’s is.