

Cj Joyner

GDD for Borne Again

Introduction to Game Industries – Fall 2024

O. Gardner

My game is a merger of *Hollow Knight* and *Game of Thrones*.

High Concept / Premise

In a crumbling, ancient kingdom where political factions vie for control, the remnants of an old royal family are forgotten. Once ruled by benevolent monarchs, the land is now fragmented into warring states, each led by ruthless lords and warriors driven by ambition. Amid this chaos, dark, insect-like creatures born from the Hollow, a mysterious realm of forgotten gods rise, threatening to consume everything.

You play as Thoran Valerius, the exiled heir of a fallen royal family. Betrayed and left for dead in the Hollow, you've returned to a kingdom on the brink of destruction. With strange, dark powers from the Hollow flowing through you, you must decide whether to reclaim your birthright, destroy the kingdom that abandoned you, or embrace the chaos of the Hollow to reshape the world in your image.

As factions vie for power, and the Hollow's influence grows, your choices will determine the fate of the kingdom. Will you form alliances, lead armies, and reclaim your throne, or become something far more dangerous than any king?

In a world statement

In a world where the Hollow, a dark and twisted realm claws its way into the human world corrupting all it touches, Thoran Valerius, once trapped in the Hollow, far from his enemies and birthright, now finds himself in a turbulent and collapsed kingdom ruled by those who betrayed him. He discovers he has the power to harness the dark magic of the Hollow and embarks on a journey to reclaim his rightful throne, reap vengeance on the usurpers, and stop the encroaching chaos threatening his kingdom. If he succeeds, he will restore his family's legacy and bring peace to the realm; if he fails, he will succumb to the darkness within him and allow the Hollow to consume the world above.

Where does this take place?

The story takes place in the crumbled crownlands of the once-united Aurelion. Aurelion is now fractured, some crownlands suffer under the militant rule of warmongers and chiefs, and most are united under the brutal rule of the usurper, Blackthorne. The free crownlands vary

from war zones to safe havens. The remaining united crownlands of Aurelion suffer an oppressive regime geared towards stabilizing Blackthorne's rule.

Aurelion is vast and contains differing environments. On the northern front, there are the sprawling red mountains. At dawn and dusk, the mountains are painted in hues of crimson and gold, their rugged surfaces glowing like embers as the sun rises and sets, creating a breathtaking spectacle. To the south lie the thick whispering oak forests. Twisting branches and ancient roots tangle, looming in the dark woods at night. Lumberjacks from nearby villages dare not linger in the forests at night. The west seats the crown in the newly renamed Ravenstone Keep, the Emerald Citadel under House Valerius' rule. The city is the center of power in Aurelion. With uncertainty on the horizon, there is an air of fear even among the wealthy in Aurelion's most densely populated city.

To the east, the Hollow expands in an insatiable manner unnatural to the human realm, bringing winds of its brittle silence, ravaging the cities in its wake. Monsters of insectoid features: beetles with natural armor and sharp bladelike appendages that stand at height with the tallest warriors, arachnids twice the size of cattle, and deformed wraiths of those once thrown through the Black Well, annihilate the pitiful human defenses in the Hollow's avarice spread.

Most of the game will be spent on Thoran's westward quest, fighting factions aligned with Blackthorne, avoiding assassination, and fleeing the Hollow. The level I plan to create in Fortnite will take place in Eastwatch Spire. Thoran seeks out the spire hoping to find allies. A seemingly friendly local leads him into the spire only to lock the door behind him as a storm brews on the horizon. The spire Thoran is trapped in will be taken by the Hollow and Thoran must flee upward to the top of the spire chased by monsters. The spire is in a state of disrepair and Thoran must use his parkour and magic abilities to find ways to traverse the tower.

What does this world sound like?

There is a nervous silence among those left in eastern cities without funds to travel west. Young and untrained boys and girls are forced to take posts on the walls in the absence of the experienced soldiers fighting for their Queen in her quest to unite the crownlands. In the warzones of many free crownlands, you can hear war drums for miles. In lands recently taken by the Hollow, there is a discordant buzz from the invading creatures. Deep within the Hollow, however, there is a silence contrast to the fearful silence of the eastern cities: a silence of respect, and reverence for the ancient beings that reside there. They say that there is always a storm when the Hollow expands, so when the sky cries, families sit in their homes praying after every clap of thunder that their city or village won't become the newest corrupted territory.

Eastwatch Spire is mostly made of crumbling stone and the sounds (footsteps etc.) will reflect that. As the Hollow coalesces upon the tower, the sounds of the storm will swell and distort. The player will hear the clattering of the monsters' feet on stone as well as their discordant cacophony of buzzes as uneasy and increasingly intense music plays throughout the level. The player can parry and knock monsters back with their sword but not kill them, so the sword sounds will not be meaty but instead make clinks of metal on metal as Thoran's sword collides with the monsters' armor or parries an attack.

Character Backstory

Thoran Valerius, the Hollowborn Heir

Appearance:

- **Build:** Thoran is tall and athletic, standing at about 6 feet. His physique reflects years of training and survival, with a lean muscle build that showcases agility and strength.
- **Hair:** He has long, dark hair that falls just past his shoulders, often tied back in a loose ponytail. The hair has a slight wave, giving him a rugged yet regal look.
- **Eyes:** His eyes are a striking emerald green, reflecting both his noble heritage and the depth of his emotions. They can appear warm and inviting or cold and distant, depending on his mood.
- **Clothing:** Thoran dons dark, muted colors deep greens, blacks, and grays embellished with silver accents that hint at his royal lineage. After years in the Hollow, his clothing is tattered and worn. While his colors hint at royalty, he has learned to dress practically.

Backstory:

Thoran was born an only son into a side branch of the Valerius family. The royal house was known for its strength and benevolence. He was groomed from a young age to be a wise and just lord. His childhood was filled with lessons in diplomacy, swordsmanship, and the arts, preparing him to rule a keep or in a disaster, take the throne. Disaster struck: a fire in the castle killed off all heirs of the main Valerius bloodline.

A disastrous situation became worse when Eira Blackthorne, driven by ambition and a desire for power, orchestrated the coup that led to the fall of Thoran's family. Thoran was captured during Eira Blackthorne's rise to power. As the last heir of the Valerius family, he became a target in Eira's campaign to eliminate any threats to her rule. In a show of strength, Eira ordered Thoran's execution, sentencing him to be thrown into The Black Well, a notorious pit where condemned prisoners were sent to meet their doom. Legends spoke of it as a one-way passage, where no one ever returned.

On the day of his execution, Thoran faced his fate with a mixture of defiance and despair. As he was cast into the pit, he plummeted into darkness, bracing himself for death. However, unlike the others before him, Thoran awoke in the Hollow: a twisted and alien realm filled with remnants of lost souls and strange, unfathomable energies.

Upon entering the Hollow, Thoran encountered an ancient entity that had long dwelled within its depths. This being, a fragment of the very essence of the Hollow, recognized Thoran's noble lineage and latent potential. Instead of consuming him, it imbued him with a dark gift, granting him the ability to survive in the Hollow's treacherous environment. This power allowed him to adapt, giving him enhanced physical abilities, heightened senses, and an instinctual understanding of the Hollow's dangers.

For years, Thoran wandered the desolate expanse of the Hollow, learning to navigate its complexities and forging a connection with its dark magic. He encountered other lost souls and

remnants of the past, but the isolation began to take a toll. Despite his newfound abilities, he felt the pull of madness, as the Hollow's chaotic energies threatened to consume his mind and soul.

As time passed, the boundaries between the Hollow and the world above began to blur. Disturbances in the land hinted at the Hollow's influence spilling into the realm, manifesting as strange occurrences, haunting visions, and dark creatures emerging from the shadows. Thoran realized that the chaos he had endured for years was beginning to impact the kingdom he once knew. For the first time in 10 long years, Thoran could feel the presence of the human realm beckoning him home. Finally, Thoran escaped the darkness.

Understanding that his survival in the Hollow had transformed him into something more than human, Thoran faced a critical choice. He could either embrace the eldritch power that sustained him and risk becoming a vessel for the darkness or find a way to harness it for a greater purpose stopping the Hollow from consuming the world above.

Personality:

- **Determined and Resilient:** Thoran is fiercely determined to reclaim his throne and restore his family's honor. His years in exile have made him resilient and adaptable, able to think on his feet and navigate complex situations.
- **Compassionate but Scarred:** Despite his quest for revenge, Thoran retains a sense of compassion for the people of the kingdom. He empathizes with their suffering under Eira's rule but grapples with his trauma, making it difficult for him to fully trust others.
- **Haunted by the Past:** Thoran is deeply affected by the loss of his family and the betrayal he experienced. This pain drives him but also serves as a constant reminder of the stakes involved in his quest for power.

Conflict:

Thoran's primary conflict is both external and internal. Externally, he faces the formidable Eira, who has built a powerful network of fear and manipulation. He must navigate a treacherous political landscape filled with alliances, betrayals, and the ever-present threat of Eira's wrath.

Internally, Thoran struggles with the power of the Hollow. While it grants him incredible abilities, he fears becoming consumed by its darkness. He must learn to balance the Hollow's influence with his own moral compass, fearing that using it might make him no better than Eira. His journey involves not just reclaiming his birthright but also mastering this power without losing himself in the process.

Eira Blackthorne

Appearance

- **Build:** Eira is of average height, with a lithe and graceful figure that commands attention. She carries herself with an air of confidence that demands respect.

- **Hair:** Her hair is long and raven black, often styled in intricate braids or updos that reflect her noble status. It glistens with a hint of dark blue under the light, adding an ethereal quality.
- **Eyes:** Eira's eyes are calculating dark brown, sharp, and focused, often scanning her surroundings for potential threats or opportunities. They can convey warmth when she finds it necessary but are most often filled with steely resolve.
- **Clothing:** Eira favors a more simplistic yet elegant style that speaks to her humbler origins while still hinting at her current status as queen. She often wears fitted dresses made of high-quality fabrics in deep, muted tones—such as rich burgundies, forest greens, and midnight blues that complement her striking features. Eira accessorizes with understated yet tasteful jewelry, a pair of small silver earrings, and a delicate pendant necklace crafted from materials that evoke her past while serving as symbols of her power.

Backstory:

Eira was born the youngest daughter into a minor house yet to reach noble status, but her ambitions knew no bounds. Recognizing the instability in the kingdom following the sudden fall of the main Valerius bloodline, she seized the opportunity to rise to power. In a time of chaos, assassinations and blackmail became her stepping stones. Despite being the cause of her family's success, when her family was elevated to nobility and named Blackthorne, her father and older brothers, threatened by her competency, sought to marry her off, so she may never be Blackthorne of Blackthorne. But backed into a corner, Eira became her most dangerous. Betrayed by her own house, Eira felt morally justified to use any means necessary. A day before the wedding, her father was executed for the murder of Eira's husband-to-be. Her brothers, of course, craved revenge for their innocent father, executed by the crown. Playing both sides, Eira ensured that her brothers and the remaining members of the royal family fell, positioning herself to gain resources and power from the fall of both houses. Through cunning and ruthless tactics, she orchestrated the coup that eliminated her rivals, including Thoran's family. A dynasty had ended and the kingdom fractured. While Eira held the largest portion of the kingdom, she had much work to do to reunite the crownlands.

Eira believes her reign is a necessary evil, a way to bring order to a fractured kingdom. She considers herself the rightful ruler, convinced that only she can protect the kingdom from chaos. However, her rise to power has been marked by a growing paranoia and fear of losing her throne, leading her to isolate herself and trust no one.

Personality:

- **Cunning and Intelligent:** Eira is exceptionally intelligent and strategic. She approaches every situation as a game of chess, always calculating her next move to maintain her power.
- **Ruthless but Righteous:** Eira's ambition knows no limits. She will stop at nothing to crush threats to her rule, often resorting to manipulation and betrayal to secure her position. She is vindicated in her actions by her own betrayal at the hands of her family and the shattered state of the kingdom.

- Proud and Isolated: Her pride in her abilities isolates her from potential allies. She is wary of trusting others, believing that vulnerability is a weakness she cannot afford. This isolation breeds paranoia, as she constantly fears the consequences of her actions.

Conflict

Eira has three external primary conflicts:

- Thoran Valerius embodies the legacy she has tried to erase. As Thoran rises to challenge her rule, Eira must confront her insecurities and the cracks in her carefully constructed facade of power. She fears that Thoran's return could unravel everything she has built and expose her vulnerabilities.
- The free lands that have severed ties with the crown. Eira believes she is the only person capable of reuniting the kingdom and bringing strength during a time of crisis as the Hollow reaches ever further. She seeks to retake the free lands by politics or by force.
- The Hollow and its' insectoid monstrosities threaten her kingdom. The Hollow has reached the edges of the foremost crownlands and already villages have burned in purple blaze.

Her internal conflict revolves around her paranoia and the moral compromises she has made to maintain control. Eira grapples with the consequences of her ruthless actions, questioning whether her reign truly serves the kingdom or merely her ambition. As Thoran's influence grows, Eira must navigate the dangerous waters of power, loyalty, and betrayal, ultimately facing the question of whether she is willing to sacrifice everything to retain her throne.

Hero's Journey

Thoran Valerius' Hero's Journey

Exposition:

- Thoran awakens in the remnants of the Hollow after his long exile. The world around him is twisted and eerie, a stark contrast to the memories of the kingdom he once knew. His thoughts are haunted by visions of his family's demise and the betrayal that led to his execution.

Call to Action:

- As he emerges from the Hollow, Thoran discovers that the realm above is in turmoil due to Eira Blackthorne's rule. Dark creatures and disturbances from the Hollow are invading the land, threatening the lives of the innocent. He feels an inexplicable pull to return and reclaim his rightful place as the heir of the Valerius family.

Refusal:

- Despite the urgent need for action, Thoran hesitates. He questions his ability to confront Eira and fears that the darkness within him might overwhelm his judgment. Memories of his family's fall and his trauma weigh heavily on him, making him doubt his worthiness.

Information:

- In the wake of his escape, Thoran encounters the wandering spirit of a former knight, a remnant of the kingdom's past. The spirit offers guidance and wisdom, urging Thoran to harness his new abilities granted by the Hollow. This mentor reinforces the idea that he is more than just a survivor; he is the key to restoring balance to the kingdom.

Departure:

- With newfound determination, Thoran steps into the realm he once knew, the kingdom now plagued by Eira's oppressive rule. This act marks his commitment to reclaiming his identity and facing the challenges ahead.

Testing:

- Thoran begins to navigate the kingdom, encountering both allies—those who remember his family and wish to support him—and enemies loyal to Eira. He faces challenges that test his combat skills, strategic thinking, and ability to manage the dark powers of the Hollow. Along the way, he learns more about Eira's tactics and the political landscape.

Reward:

- Thoran infiltrates a local town overtaken by Eira's forces, where he discovers the extent of her power and the suffering of the people. He learns of a secret gathering of nobles plotting against Eira, realizing he must unite these factions to stand a chance against her.

Ordeal:

- During a confrontation with Eira's enforcers, Thoran faces a pivotal battle that pushes him to his limits. In the heat of battle, he struggles to control the chaotic energy of the Hollow, risking injury to himself and his allies. This ordeal forces him to confront the darkness within him, questioning whether he can truly control the power that saved him.
- After emerging from the ordeal, Thoran gains a significant ally—a former noble who once opposed Eira. This ally provides him with crucial information about Eira's vulnerabilities and a hidden cache of resources that can aid in their rebellion. Thoran also begins to better understand and control his powers, learning to channel the darkness for good.

Resurrection:

- With renewed resolve, Thoran and his allies plan an attack on one of Eira's strongholds. As they gather forces, he begins to forge bonds of trust with those around him, slowly overcoming his isolation and deep-seated fears.
- In the climactic battle against Eira's forces, Thoran faces her directly. As the two clash, he must confront the full weight of his past and the temptations of the Hollow's power. This battle serves as a resurrection for Thoran, as he ultimately chooses to fight not just for revenge, but for the future of his people.

Return:

- After defeating Eira but sparing her life, Thoran emerges as a changed man, ready to take on the mantle of leadership. He returns to the kingdom, not just as the Hollowborn

Heir, but as a wise and compassionate leader. He seeks to heal the wounds of the past, unite the fractured kingdom, and ensure that the darkness of the Hollow is kept at bay.

Why/what is the bad guy or antagonist in the story? What do they want?

There are two main antagonists in the story.

One is Eira Blackthorne. Eira wants to solidify her rule, unite the crownlands of Aurelion, and go down in history as the queen who defeated the hollow and protected the realm. To achieve this she must deal with Thoran, who is the heir to the throne and would very much like to see her dead.

The other is the Hollow. The Hollow is a powerful force of nature from another realm entirely. It has consumed one realm, but its hunger is unsated. Though not entirely sentient, the Hollow expands with a will of its own. It is a threat to Aurelion and all of humanity. Its only goal: feed.

What are the goals of the level? List three goals.

- The central goal of the level will be to survive and escape Eastwatch Spire. The flood of monsters will invade the tower from the bottom, so the goal will be to go up the tower.
- On the player's journey upward, they will encounter movement/platforming-based puzzles where their goal is to apply movement abilities and timing skillfully to progress.
- There will also be times when the player must search for something they need to progress while avoiding enemies. For example, the player may need a key or a ladder, and their goal would be to find it while splitting their focus between parrying and avoiding attacks and searching.

What type of mechanic would you need to make this game fun?

- In order for this game to succeed the movement must feel good. The movement abilities have to be interesting and fun. For example one of the Hollow magics Thoran has access to will allow him to double his speed in any direction. This would pair well with parrying an attack from above an enemy, which propels the player upwards a little if the player times the ability well because it can allow them to use the ability in an interesting way and gain airtime.

- Parrying should also be challenging enough to be satisfying, but easy enough for the player to learn to perform somewhat consistently.
- The parkour should be fun and avoid being repetitive.