Concept Document: Tell No Tales

A Strategy RPG of Piracy on the High Seas

Tell No Tales is a top-down strategy RPG in which the player controls a merry band of pirates on board their ship, the Black Raven. On the high seas, the pirates aboard the Black Raven encounter hostile maritime lawmen and other greedy pirates hoping to pilfer their loot, and thus, they must fight for their lives, their booty, and their ale.

In *Tell No Tales*, players will engage in a series of combat encounters with enemy boats of varying size, armament, and crew. Players will have to engage with, kill, and loot these vessels by engaging in ship-to-ship combat, as well as by boarding enemy vessels with their own pirates.

Selling Points:
- Engaging gameplay based on deep strategy gameplay, unit management, and fighting on two levels: ship-to-ship, and interpersonal
- Fun, whimsical pirate theme
- Unique units with which to construct a merry crew to go to battle with
- Class-based gameplay reminiscent of *Fire Emblem*

Gameplay:
The gameplay of *Tell No Tales* consists of encounters between the Black Raven (the player's vessel), and other enemy ships, as well as the preparatory period prior to those fights.

In between fights, players will be docked at port, thus allowing them to purchase new weapons and gear for both their pirate crew and the Black Raven using the loot they have accumulated during their adventure. This will include cannons, sails, and armor for the Black Raven, as well as swords, guns, and ale for the pirates, as well as other consumables.

They will also be able to hire new crewmen from the local Tavern, as well as choose which crewmen they want currently aboard the Black Raven. Unused crewmen will be more than content with remaining at port while the Black Raven gets itself into trouble. In fact, some might even take up some odd jobs, allowing them to come back to the Raven a better man than before.

Crewmen will also have a chance to spend time with one another in pairs, usually involving going out drinking, but what the crewmen do depends on the pairing. Depending on what crewmen are paired with each other during downtime, these crewmen will obtain special perks unique to that particular relationship which affect their combat performance.

All of these preparatory actions take place through a simple, menu-based interface.

When the Black Raven sets out to sea from port, it will end up in an encounter with an enemy vessel. When an encounter begins, the game shifts to a top-down view over a gridded game space, where the player's crew is located on the Black Raven, the enemy crew is located on their ship, and the two ships are apart from one another on the open sea.

At this point, the turn-based combat begins, with the player going first. During the player's turn, they can move any, all, or none of their units. By default, a player's crew will begin an encounter manning their respective stations on board the ship (the captain will be at the wheel, gunners at the cannons, etc.).

When the player selects a crew member to act with, that crew member can do two things in a single turn: **Move** and **Take an Action**.

To Move, a crew member may simply be moved to any empty tile which is a distance less than or equal to that crew member's Speed. Unless otherwise stated, crew members can only move to tiles on a ship, not into the water.

When it's a crew member's opportunity to Take an Action, there is a variety of actions they may take. One of the most notable Actions that can be taken is that the Captain (a character class), if next to the ship's Wheel, may take a Ship Move Action, which allows the Black Raven to move through the water, similar to the way an individual character moves.

On top of this, all characters can make a variety of attacks. Crew members may attack with their ranged gun, or engage a foe with their sword or other melee weapons. On top of this, crew members near the cannons on board the Black Crow can load and fire them, allowing them to damage not only the enemy crew but the enemy ship itself. All of these attacks take place over the course of extremely short, extremely simple cutscenes.

Alongside this suite of actions, there are other, more situational actions which crew members can take. Looters (another character class), can sneak into an enemy ship to try and steal some extra loot. Medics can heal an adjacent ally. Everyone can use an item from their inventory to try and gain some sort of advantage in battle.

Once a player has acted with all of their crew members, or has manually ended their turn, the AI then takes a turn, with the same ability to move any, all, or none of its crew members as it sees fit. This turn procedure continues until one of the two boats is sunk, or one side's crew is completely eliminated. If the player wins a fight, they will receive experience, a bit of treasure on top of whatever they looted, and perhaps a bit of story, depending on the circumstances of the fight.

The intricacies of these actions will largely be dependent on the stats of the crew members themselves and those of their gear. For instance, in the case of attacking with a gun or a cannon, the range at which the weapon can fire, the damage it does, and what ammunition it takes are dependent on the weapon itself, while the probability of hitting depends on the user's Gunnery or Artillery skill (respectively), as well as the target's Dodge stat. A target, especially ships, might also have armor capable of absorbing some of an attack's damage.

Scope
For this rendition of *Tell No Tales*, the game will consist of three encounters, as well as the planning phases in between them. The first encounter will be a simple tutorial fight against an enemy band of pirates. The second will be a fight against a tougher band, one with better gear and stats, that will also attempt to use Looters to steal the player's gear. The final fight will be against a British Royal Navy ship, featuring ruthless opponents and a "boss" in the form of a British Admiral.

In between these fights, the player will be able to buy from a limited shop offering some basic variety of weapons and gear (mostly providing simple tradeoffs of speed vs. armor, range vs. damage, etc.). As far as the player's crew is concerned, there will be 8 crew members who the player begins the game with, and 3 introduced throughout the course of the game.

Visuals/Art Style

The visual style of *Tell No Tales* will be extremely colorful, with exaggerated features and excessive ornamentation, leaning towards the more playful, charismatic, mythical side of the pirate mythology. Much as how the game itself leans away from the darker, more grisly reality of piracy, so too will the game's visual style. The art style will stray away from the (probably realistic) use browns and earth tones, and instead show preference for heavy use of bright pastels.
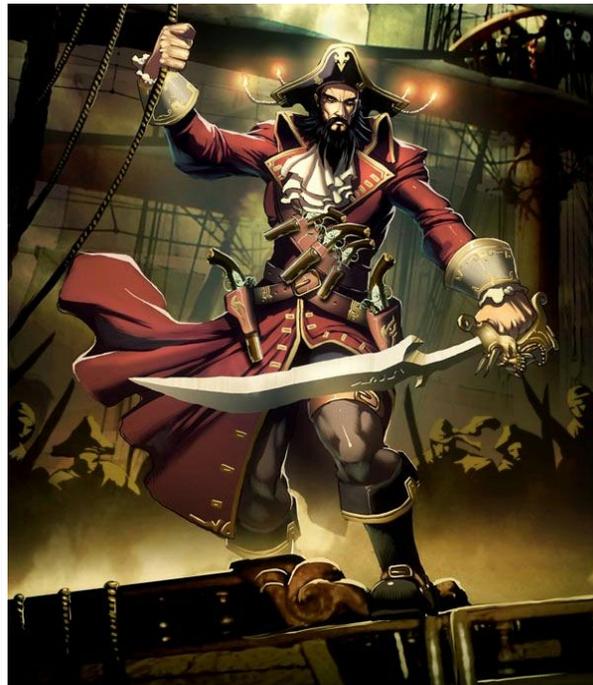
The game will use these strong colors to emphasize elements of the game itself. Treasure, and lootable areas, will be marked gold. The sea, and things associated with it, will be light blue. Characters will be easily distinguishable by their characteristic color, and enemies will tend towards more unified palettes which will be exclusive to enemies (dark browns for enemy pirates, navy blue for the British Navy).

Narrative and Story
The story of this rendition of *Tell No Tales* will be relatively simple: it will be the story of the Black Raven's crew as they sail to find treasure, only at the end to be stopped by a Grand Admiral of the British Fleet.

The main area of narrative exploration for this game, then, will be in trying to develop a web of character relationships between the crew members. In between encounters, characters will have the ability to go to the bar with one another and have a short conversation between themselves, consisting of a simple cutscene and dialog boxes.

The conversation will not only explore the characters and their relationships, but it will also bestow a buff to both people involved, meaning that determining what characters hang out in their off hours. The buff will have something to do with the conversation (for example, two characters who have been doing a lot of drinking will have extra damage resistance, but will suffer a small amount of damage when they are near a firing cannon, from their hangover).