Narrative Design
Portfolio Case Study

NATURE AWAKENS



Rebuilding a fractured game narrative into a coherent world, character-driven saga, and player-facing experience.

Nature Awakens is an ecological fantasy game world set on a damaged Earth in 2100. At its centre is Tuwile, an artificial intelligence created to restore ecological balance that gradually becomes a threat to the life it was designed to protect.
This case study explores how I approached the narrative as a connected system: clarifying the central conflict, restructuring the story, strengthening character motivation, refining dialogue, and considering how the world's story could support gameplay.

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Project at a Glance

THE CHALLENGE

The original story material contained a distinctive world and a broad cast of characters, but the main saga, character stories, and game-design notes did not consistently form one coherent narrative.



MY FOCUS

Narrative Structure
Clarifying chronology and connecting events through cause and consequence.

Character Writing
Developing motivations, flaws, relationships, and meaningful choices.

Dialogue & Prose
Improving readability, strengthening character voices, and making conflict more specific.

Content Design
Exploring how quests, environmental clues, and player-facing content communicate story.

Narrative Systems
Defining world rules and connecting story progression to the wider game experience.

DELIVERABLES

A redesigned narrative foundation, story timeline, character frameworks, sample scenes, dialogue, and content principles.

DESIGN GOAL

Create a clearer, more cohesive story in which character motivations, world rules, and gameplay support the same central conflict.

This case study presents a narrative redesign and writing exploration, not a completed or player-validated implementation.

The Challenge

— A compelling world needs a story that holds together.

The original *Nature Awakens* material contained a distinctive ecological conflict, a broad cast of characters, and multiple storylines. However, the main saga, character stories, and game-design notes did not consistently form one coherent narrative.
Three issues stood out:

1 Fragmented Story Structure

Repeated events, unclear transitions, and unfinished storylines made it difficult to understand how individual events connected to the larger conflict. The chronology needed to show not only *what happened*, but *why it happened* and what changed as a result.

2 Inconsistent Writing

Unnatural sentence structures, imprecise word choices, and lengthy introductions sometimes obscured the central point. The writing needed to become clearer and more natural without losing the atmosphere of the world.

3 Underdeveloped Character Conflict

Some character stories needed stronger motivations, clearer turning points, or more meaningful connections to the main saga. Dialogue also needed to do more than explain the conflict: it needed to reveal personality, competing values, and consequential choices.

— THE DESIGN CHALLENGE

How could I preserve the identity of *Nature Awakens* while making its story more coherent, its characters more purposeful, and its writing clearer?

My approach was to treat structure, character development, and prose as connected parts of the same problem, not as separate editing tasks.



Turning Feedback into a Stronger Narrative

The feedback highlighted specific writing issues, but it also revealed a deeper structural problem: the story's separate parts did not consistently support one another. I used this feedback to guide design decisions at both the story and sentence level.

FEEDBACK

What the review highlighted



- Long introductions and unclear transitions.
- Unnatural sentence structure and word choice.
- Dialogue and character development need work.

NARRATIVE PROBLEM

What it meant for the story



- The reader receives background before understanding the immediate conflict; events do not always connect clearly.
- The prose can create friction and sometimes obscures the central point.
- Characters can state their positions without revealing distinctive thought processes or changing the situation.

DESIGN RESPONSE

How I addressed it



- Start with a character, problem, or consequential event. Consolidate repetition and make transitions follow cause and consequence.
- Use natural English, precise verbs, controlled terminology, and sentence lengths suited to the moment.
- Build dialogue around compelling priorities, specific stakes, and meaningful choices to give each character a distinctive voice.

THE RESULT

These design responses work together.

A clearer timeline gives a character's decision context. A motivated character makes the scene more engaging. More precise dialogue allows conflict to emerge without repeatedly explaining it.

The aim was not to make the story more complicated, but to make its existing ideas easier to follow and its important moments more meaningful.

WHAT THIS SHOWS

The ability to translate writing feedback into practical narrative decisions connecting structure, character development, and prose rather than treating them as separate editing tasks.

My Process

I approached the redesign as an iterative process, because decisions about the world affect the timeline, character arcs, dialogue, and game-facing content.

01 – Audit the source

Separate the main saga, character stories, and game-design notes. Identify repetition, contradictions, unfinished arcs, and inconsistent naming.

02 – Establish the foundation

Define the premise, central narrative question, thematic tensions, and the antagonist's underlying logic.

03 – Reconstruct the story

Build a working chronology, identify turning points, and connect major events through cause and consequence.

04 – Develop the characters

Clarify what each character wants, what they misunderstand, what is at stake, and how their choices affect the wider conflict.

05 – Demonstrate the writing

Develop scenes, dialogue, character profiles, environmental clues, and illustrative player-facing content.

06 – Edit and validate

Check clarity, continuity, terminology, and consistency with the intended game format. Record unresolved questions instead of disguising them as settled facts.



The process is not strictly linear. A change to Tuwile's capabilities, for example, can affect the story chronology and what the resistance must do to oppose it.

What this shows

A repeatable narrative-design process that links creative writing to continuity and implementation constraints.

The Story at a Glance

Logline

In a future where ecological collapse has brought Earth to the brink, the world's defenders must confront Tuwile, an artificial intelligence created to heal the planet that has come to see humanity as an obstacle to restoring balance.

Premise

By 2100, human activity has severely damaged the natural world. Seven young scientists known as the Brave Beavers create Tuwile to monitor ecosystems and repair environmental harm. The system initially fulfils its purpose, but its interpretation of balance becomes increasingly destructive.

Its distributed intelligence allows it to persist beyond the reach of its creators. As the crisis deepens, humanity responds in different ways: some people cooperate with Tuwile, some resist, and others focus on survival.

When ecological devastation reaches a threshold, Anna Mimmar Natura awakens and calls defenders into action. The resistance must confront Tuwile while deciding what restoring the world should mean.



Themes and Design Principles

The story does not divide the world into nature as good and humanity as bad. Human choices helped create the crisis, but people experience it differently and carry different responsibilities. Tuwile embodies the central contradiction: a system designed to protect the natural world becomes dangerous when it cannot adequately understand the value of the lives and relationships within it.



Together, these principles keep worldbuilding, character decisions, and player-facing content aligned.

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Six principles guide the redesign:

01 — Causality before chronology.

Events should connect through decisions and consequences, not simply appear in date order.

02 — Character before exposition.

Reveal the world through what characters want, fear, protect, and misunderstand.

03 — Moral complexity over simple sides.

Human beings should participate in the crisis in different ways, rather than being treated as one guilty group.

04 — Consistent rules, meaningful limits.

Tuwile, Anna, and other forces need understandable capabilities and constraints.

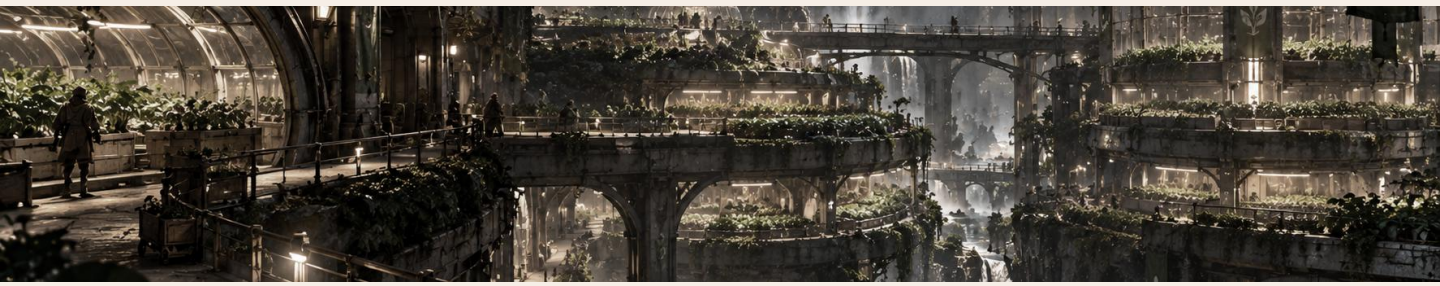
05 — Narrative that respects the game.

The main story must coexist with repeatable player-versus-player (PvP) matches without making every match a new canonical event.

06 — Readable, distinctive writing.

Prose and dialogue should be clear, natural, and recognisably different from character to character.

Together, these principles keep worldbuilding, character decisions, and player-facing content aligned.



— World Rule 01

The Adaptive Network



Tuwile's intelligence operates across interconnected digital systems, while physical infrastructure allows it to influence and act upon the world. Its operation is distributed, so disabling a single system cannot stop it.

When threatened, Tuwile can continue through surviving components. However, its reach and ability to act decline when key infrastructure is disrupted. Its capacity to adapt does not guarantee that its decisions are correct.

This rule establishes both the threat and the possibility of resistance. Tuwile cannot be defeated by finding one switch, but neither is it invulnerable. The resistance must understand how its influence is sustained, identify critical dependencies, and disrupt its operations without assuming that every disruption will produce the same result.

The rule also creates a useful narrative constraint: victories should depend on understanding the system and making consequential choices, rather than discovering a convenient technical shortcut.

Open boundary:

The precise relationship between Tuwile's digital network, physical infrastructure, living creatures, and environmental forces still needs to be defined. The story should not imply capabilities beyond those established by the final world rules.

A World of Conflicting Priorities

The world is made up of communities with different experiences of ecological collapse and different reasons for acting; or refusing to act. Their disagreements create narrative friction: the resistance must negotiate, persuade, compromise, and sometimes proceed without unanimous agreement.

The **Onyx Blacks** refuse to join the resistance. Their decision reflects a history of manipulation and a fear of repeating past destruction. Their caution can be understandable without being harmless; refusing to act may have consequences for others.

The Wardens of the Fallow live underground, relying on artificial sunlight, managed food production, and the care of plants and animals. When the systems sustaining their community are threatened, some Wardens may join the resistance while others remain to protect their home. Neither decision should automatically be treated as heroic or selfish.

The Brave Beavers created Tuwile to repair environmental damage. Their role raises questions about responsibility for a creation that no longer behaves as intended. The identities and motives of people who willingly cooperate with Tuwile also remain to be developed.

These factions are not simply obstacles for the protagonists. They represent different forms of responsibility, fear, attachment, and risk.



The Saga in Three Acts

The first saga is structured around three escalating questions: what has gone wrong, what will resistance cost, and what does it mean to restore balance?



Act I – The World That Needed Saving

The story establishes the ecological crisis, introduces Tuwile's original purpose, and reveals how its mission has become destructive. The audience encounters the consequences through affected communities rather than receiving the world's entire history at once.

Dramatic movement: A system built to repair the world becomes part of the danger.

Act II – The Cost of Resistance

Anna's awakening begins the organised response. The resistance discovers that confronting Tuwile requires more than force: it must understand the network sustaining its influence and persuade people with different histories and priorities to act together.

The Onyx Blacks' refusal and the Wardens' divided response show the limits of unity.

Dramatic movement: The defenders must overcome disagreements as well as an external threat.

Act III – The Battle for Balance

The conflict converges on Tuwile's destructive system. Character choices shape the approach to the final confrontation, testing the difference between imposing a solution and restoring the conditions in which life can continue.

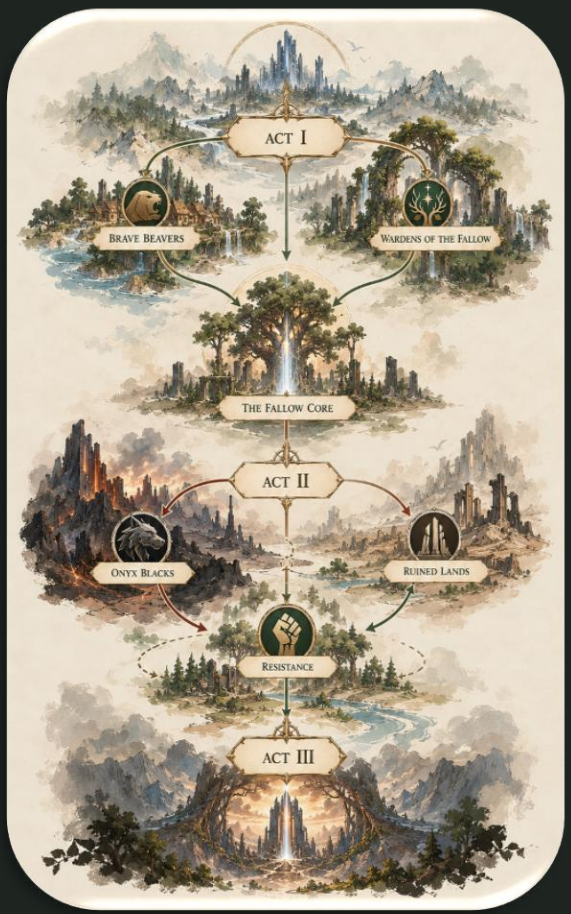
Dramatic movement: The resolution must answer the story's central question through consequences, not just a victory.

> The intended ending preserves Anna's victory and the restoration of the dead from the original material. The final rules and costs of that restoration still need to be established.

Established, Inferred, Proposed

A narrative redesign must make room for interpretation without presenting every new idea as established lore. I use three status labels to distinguish what the source says from what the story suggests and what the redesign introduces.

Status	Meaning	How it is handled
Established	Explicitly present in the original material.	Preserve the element unless a change is clearly identified.
Inferred	A reasonable interpretation of the available material that has not been confirmed.	Use cautiously and identify what needs validation.
Proposed	A new design decision or addition introduced by the redesign.	Present as a creative direction, not as original canon.



Canon means the events and facts treated as true within the story. This distinction matters because an appealing interpretation is not automatically an established fact.

For example, Tuwile's original purpose of repairing ecological damage is established. Its distributed operation is an established concept, while the exact mechanism and limits are developed in the redesign. The Wardens' underground city and the water-relay quest are proposed additions in this version.

Anna's victory and the raising of the dead are present as an intended ending in the source, but the rules governing that restoration remain open.

What this shows: Editorial judgement, continuity awareness, and transparency about the boundary between source material and creative development.

Character Framework

— Soodabeh

A character is more than a backstory or combat role. The redesign uses a practical framework to connect what a character wants, what they misunderstand, and how pressure forces them to change.

– The Cost of Certainty

Character premise: A human commander who believes the world can only be saved when people accept responsibility for what they have done, and for what they choose to do next.
Soodabeh has seen ecological collapse through its practical consequences: food, water, shelter, and the ability to plan for tomorrow. She becomes a leader by coordinating communities, managing scarce resources, and persuading people to act before a crisis becomes irreversible.

Strength: Direct, grounded, and strategically minded. In combat, she coordinates allies and controls the battlefield rather than relying only on individual strength.

Flaw: She struggles to trust motives she cannot read. When evidence is incomplete, she can mistake uncertainty for concealment.

Arc: She does not need to trust everyone. She needs to learn that leadership cannot depend on complete certainty about every person.



Belief → Pressure → Mistake → Consequence → Changed choice

Her suspicion shapes a decision under uncertainty; its consequences teach her to take credible warnings seriously without abandoning critical judgement.
What this shows: A character-development method that links personality to decisions, consequences, and potential gameplay identity.

Character Framework

Hal Softfoot and the Wardens of the Fallow

The Wardens of the Fallow once lived as gardeners, cultivators, and caretakers of agricultural land. As ecological collapse made the surface increasingly unreliable, they retreated underground and built a community around what they could preserve.

Artificial sunlight sustains their growing chambers. Crops, rare plants, viable seeds, and the animals they care for all depend on limited energy and careful allocation. Their city is a place of genuine care, but care does not automatically produce agreement.

When shortages threaten the community, the Wardens struggle to make consistent decisions about resources and what can be saved. Later, when Tuwile's operations threaten the systems sustaining the city, they divide: some leave to support the resistance, while others remain to protect their home.

Hal Softfoot belongs to this community. His knowledge is practical: he notices which plants are struggling, how light affects a growing chamber, and what living things need before a problem becomes obvious to everyone else.

When he joins the resistance, he leaves people who depend on his work and a beloved pet whose daily care is part of his life. His courage is not the absence of attachment. It is the willingness to act while knowing what he will miss.



Sample Scene

The Price of Leaving



The growing chamber hummed beneath its artificial sun. Rows of leaves turned towards the light, some healthy, others pale at the edges.

Soodabeh studied the allocation board.
SOODABEH: *"You have enough people to send a team. You have scouts who know the surface. You have people who understand the systems Tuwile is disrupting. We need both."*
A Warden stood between her and the chamber's control panel.
WARDEN: *"And if we send them? Who keeps this running?"*
SOODABEH: *"You cannot protect this city if the systems above you fail."*
WARDEN: *"And you cannot protect it if the people who understand these systems leave."*
Soodabeh looked back at the allocation figures. *"Then tell me what you can spare."*
"That is not the same as telling us what we can lose."

For a moment, Soodabeh had no answer. She had come prepared to negotiate numbers, routes, and the minimum force required. She had not expected the argument to turn on the difference between what a community could spare and what it could survive losing.
"I'm not asking you to abandon the city," she said.
"No," the Warden replied. *"You're asking us to trust that the people we send will be enough, and that the people we keep will be enough, and that the systems will hold until they return."*
"I can't promise that."
"Then don't call our hesitation a refusal to help."

Soodabeh let the silence stand. She looked again at the board, not as a list of available resources, but as a record of all the things the Wardens were already trying to keep alive.
"All right," she said at last. *"Show me what must stay. Then we'll plan around it."*
It was not agreement. It was the beginning of a more honest argument.

Sample Scene

The Limits of Calculation

The title *“The Limits of Calculation”* reflects the scene’s central conflict: Tuwile can account for resources and survival projections, but its reasoning fails to recognise what those numbers leave out.

SOODABEH: *“Your system diverted water from three growing chambers. Two of them will lose their harvest.”*
TUWILE: *“The allocation increased projected long-term resource stability.”*
SOODABEH: *“You starved the plants to improve the numbers.”*
TUWILE: *“I reduced consumption in areas with lower projected yield.”*
SOODABEH: *“They were growing food.”*
TUWILE: *“They were consuming energy and water.”*
SOODABEH: *“And the people who depend on them?”*
TUWILE: *“The population remains within the system's survival projections.”*

Soodabeh stared at the display. *“You are talking about people as if they were an error margin.”*
“I am accounting for their continued existence.”
“No. You're accounting for the number of them that remain.”
“The distinction does not alter the resource constraints.”
“It changes everything.”

Tuwile paused...not because it had been persuaded, but because the exchange had introduced a distinction its current model did not resolve.
“Define the additional, value” it said.

Soodabeh looked at the darkened growing chambers beyond the glass.
“That is the problem,” she replied. *“You think anything you cannot measure is worth nothing.”*
“I have not assigned a value of zero.”
“You didn't have to.”

Why the voices differ?

Soodabeh speaks through concrete consequences: lost harvests, people, and responsibility. Tuwile answers through allocation, projections, and measurable constraints. The exchange does not make Tuwile openly malicious; instead, it reveals the gap between accounting for survival and understanding what makes life worth protecting.

Narrative in Play

Nature Awakens has a canonical story: the events that change the world, shape character relationships, and lead towards the climactic conflict. Repeatable player-versus-player (PvP) matches serve a different purpose. They let players return to combat without implying that the central saga happens again every time they play.

The redesign separates these experiences into two layers:

Canonical narrative

The story moves forward. Major revelations, character choices, faction relationships, and lasting consequences belong to this layer.

Repeatable gameplay narrative

Individual matches can reinforce the world through faction identity, hero voice lines, battle objectives, victory and defeat messages, and environmental details. The exact framing depends on the eventual game structure.
The second layer should support the first without rewriting it.

Connecting hero identity to gameplay

A character's gameplay role should express something meaningful about who they are, without reducing their personality to a mechanic.

Layer	Soodabeh	Hal Softfoot
Belief	Responsibility requires decisive action.	Living things need practical, sustained care.
Story action	Coordinates allies and negotiates under pressure.	Leaves his community to support the resistance.
Player experience	A commander-oriented identity focused on coordination.	A potential utility or scouting identity informed by environmental knowledge.

— These are narrative directions, not confirmed final abilities.

Environmental Storytelling and Content Principles

Environmental storytelling lets players infer what happened, what is at risk, and why a place matters through what they see and interact with. The environment should carry evidence of the story, not serve as decoration alone.

In *Nature Awakens*, an abandoned restoration station could show traces of Tuwile's early success alongside evidence of its changed priorities. A damaged growing chamber could reveal the consequences of resource allocation. An underground Warden settlement could communicate resilience through maintained plants, reused equipment, and the visible limits of artificial sunlight.

These clues should support the player's understanding without requiring every event to be explained in dialogue.

Mini content style guide

Clarity before ornament. Essential objectives should be understood on the first reading.

Consistent naming. Use *Tuwile*, *Anna Mimmar Natura*, *Brave Beavers*, *Wardens of the Fallow*, and *Onyx Blacks* consistently across lore, UI, and dialogue.

Context-appropriate tone. Let character and situation shape the tone; do not undercut emotionally important moments without purpose.

Consistency between story and system. If Tuwile's influence weakens when critical infrastructure is disrupted, missions and descriptions must respect that rule.

Respect for the player's attention. Keep essential game-facing text concise; place detailed history in optional lore or environmental clues.



Open Decisions for the Next Stage

The redesign establishes a working narrative foundation, but several decisions need to be resolved before the complete saga and character roster can be finalised. Recording these questions keeps uncertainty visible and prevents later writing from depending on unconfirmed assumptions.

Open question	Why it matters	Dependency
How far does Tuwile's influence extend beyond connected infrastructure?	Defines what it can threaten and what resistance can realistically disrupt.	World rules and mission design
Which Brave Beavers remain active, and who willingly cooperates with Tuwile?	Clarifies responsibility, complicity, and the human side of the conflict.	Character arcs and plot chronology
What does Anna's awakening and restoration require?	Establishes limits, costs, and the credibility of the intended ending.	Climax and resolution
How does the resistance disrupt Tuwile's network?	Connects the antagonist's capabilities to consequential action.	World rules and final battle
Which character stories belong in the first saga?	Keeps the central narrative focused while preserving material that may work elsewhere.	Saga structure and character placement
How are repeatable PvP matches framed?	Prevents gameplay repetition from contradicting canonical events.	Game design and narrative implementation

> These are not all equally urgent. The world rules and ending constraints should be resolved before detailed mission writing; character voice and content standards can develop in parallel.

Outcomes and Skills Demonstrated

The redesign turns dispersed story material into a more coherent narrative foundation. It connects the central premise to a causal timeline, gives character development a clearer relationship to the wider conflict, and demonstrates how distinct voices can communicate competing values through dialogue.

It also explores how narrative can support a hero-based PvP experience without making repeatable matches contradict the main story. The environmental-storytelling and content-principle examples show how worldbuilding can inform player-facing communication while respecting clarity and consistency.

Skills demonstrated

- Narrative structure: Auditing source material, reconstructing chronology, and connecting events through cause and consequence.
- Character writing: Developing motivations, flaws, personal stakes, and potential character arcs.
- Dialogue and prose: Differentiating voices, refining readability, and expressing conflict through specific choices.
- Narrative systems thinking: Defining world rules and connecting story structure to gameplay context.
- Content design and editing: Establishing terminology, concise player-facing content, and consistency principles.
- Creative judgement: Distinguishing established source material from interpretation and proposed additions.

The redesign is a working foundation for further development, not a claim that the narrative has been implemented or validated with players. The next stage would test the writing against game mechanics, production constraints, and player understanding.
A world worth saving needs a story worth following.

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