

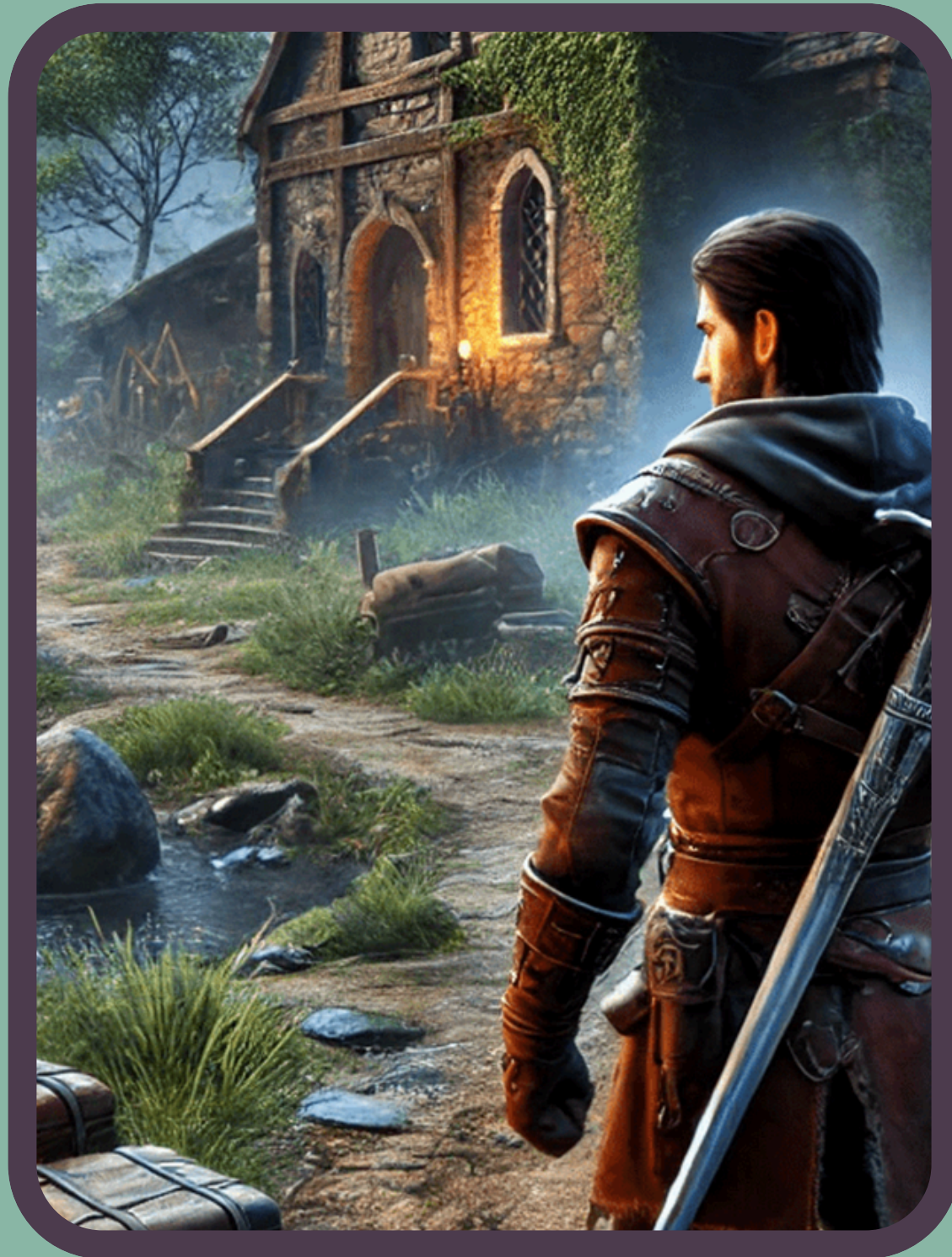
Erica Grusell

# Case Study

## Path of Desire

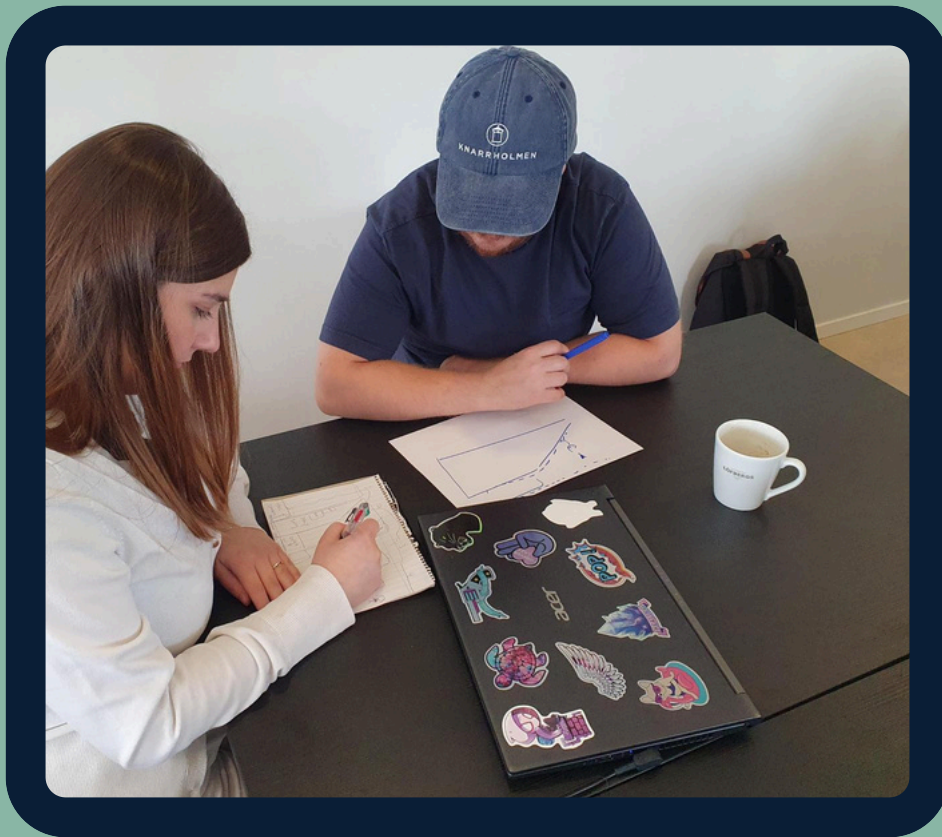
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This case study explores our journey in designing “Path of Desire,” focusing on the discovery and defining phases. We analyzed game mechanics, narrative structures, and emotional impact to craft a compelling plot, characters, and timeline. Our work highlights the importance of thorough research and careful planning in creating a cohesive and immersive game experience.



# Objective

In my second year studying to become an Experience Designer at Changemaker Educations we took a course called “Game Design”. Our mission was to use our UX-knowledge to create a game idea and implement a pre production plan which includes Core concept, storyline, world design, characters and the core game mechanics.



We worked in a team of five UX- designers.

# Overview

“**Path of Desire**” is an **emotion-filled third person narrative adventure game** that mixes **exploration, puzzle-solving, combat, and moral dilemmas** with a hint of **flirtatious danger** which may affect the endgame.

Players' decisions directly influence relationships and gameplay. The inclusion of moral strategic depth sets it apart from traditional action-adventure games.

# UX Design Process

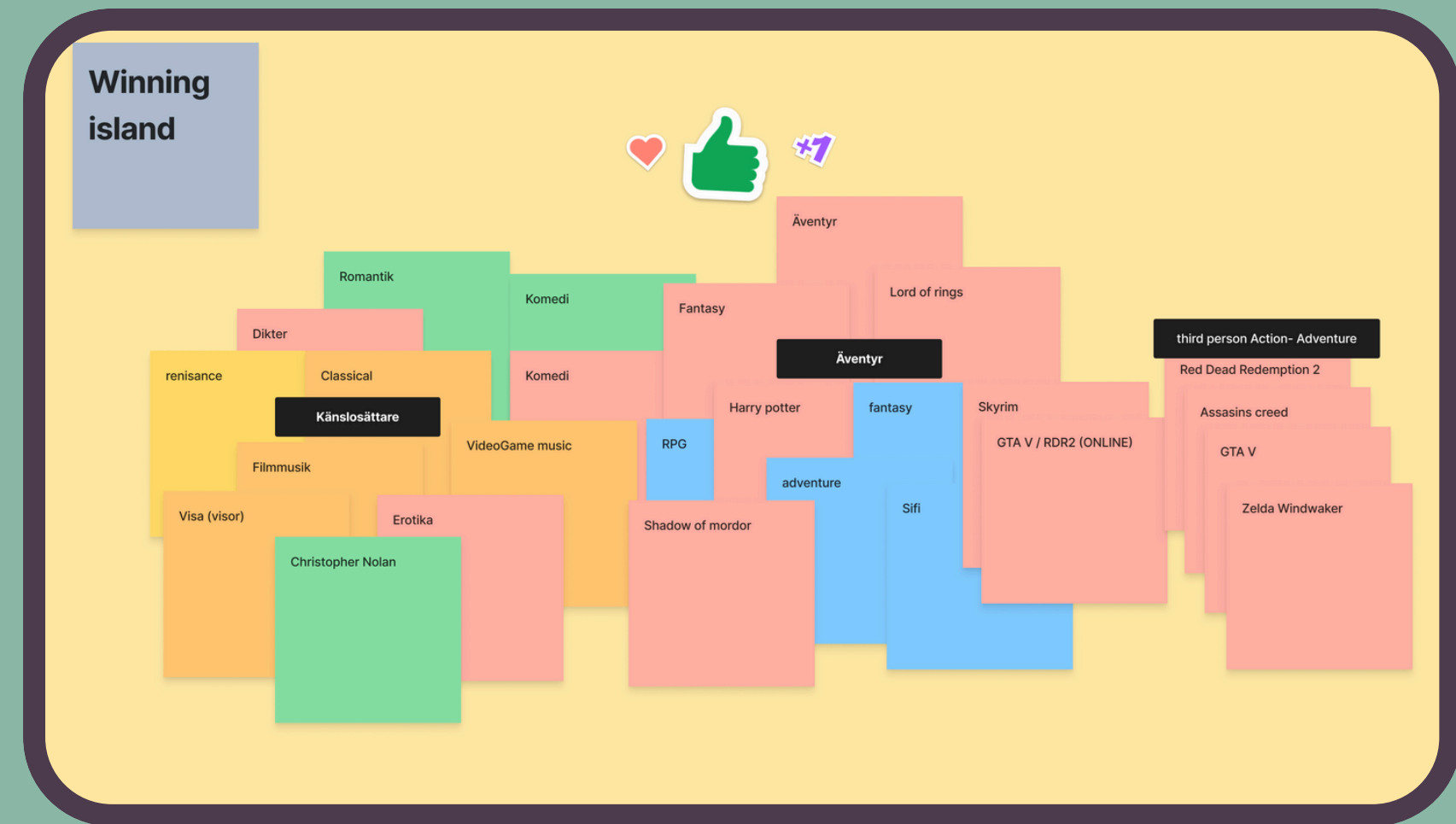
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Discover

# Research

We began our project by exploring and analyzing a variety of existing games, noting both what we liked and disliked. We organized this research in a FigJam document, grouping the games by gameplay style to identify which types resonated most with us. Next, we expanded our focus beyond games to explore different genres across books, music, art, and film. This holistic approach ensured that our game would be something we're not only proud of but also truly passionate about. We then combined the islands of game types and genres to create a winning island.

Our winning game concept became: **emotional third person adventure.**



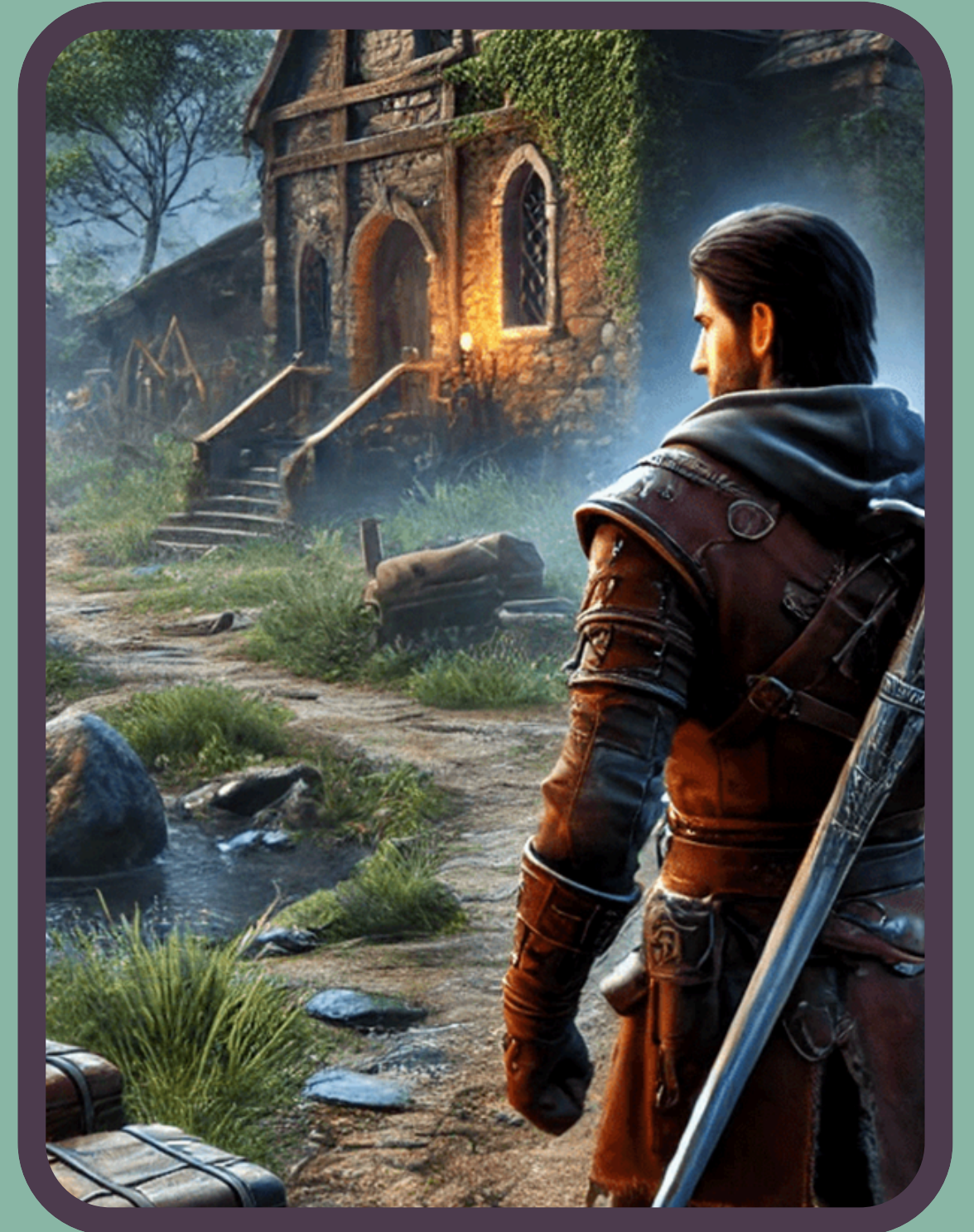
*An image of our winning "island"*

All team members brainstormed a concept for the game and the winning concept was:

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"An adventure game where the character must navigate through the world (various levels) to reach their beloved. Along the way, they must resist temptation and avoid obstacles. The entire world is trying to stop you from reaching your final destination."

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## Objective

Find your way back to your beloved one

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## Rules

Open world, clue gathering, moral dilemmas, quests, defeat enemies and navigate through obstacles.

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## Mechanics

**Faithfulness Meter:** This meter tracks the player's loyalty based on their in-game choices. It increases or decreases depending on how faithful the player is to their goals or relationships.

**Book of Love:** This item introduces the "charm" and "deceive" skills. As players make choices throughout the game, they can level up these skills, unlocking additional dialogue options and strategies.

**Dynamic Storytelling:** The game's narrative adapts based on the player's responses to NPCs. Instant rewards, such as items or side stories, are granted depending on the choices made.

**Melee Combat Skills:** Players engage in melee combat, which adds an action element to the gameplay.

*Note: While player choices influence items and side stories, they do not prevent progress through the main game, ensuring that all players can reach the end regardless of their decisions.*



# Crazy 8' exercise

Each of us participated in a Crazy 8 exercise, a rapid sketching activity where we quickly outlined a start-to-end scenario for our game. Afterward, we used **heat mapping** to highlight the elements we liked most from each sketch, helping us to piece together the core journey of our game.

**1.** Det börjar med en cutscene där karaktären springer genom skogen, smutsig, arg och ledsen, man ser att han tänker på något. En siluette av en flicka visas.

**2.** Karaktären utforskar skogen/landskapet och går runt och letar efter ledtrådar. En ledtråd som är gömd under en sten lysas upp. Du klickar på stenen.

**3.** Du läser ledtråden och måste klura ut svaret för att få ledtråden om vilket håll/område du ska gå till för att nå din destination.

**4.** Du stöter på ett hinder i form av en stark ström du måste ta dig över. Du måste använda dina skills för att hoppa på stenar över strömmen utan att ramlas i.

**5.** Du fortsätter vandra och utforska och stöter på en vacker mö som behöver hjälp för att ta sig hem. Du märker av att hon rör vid din arm lite allt för länge. Vad gör du? Följer du med den förförande flickan? Eller går du förbi och fortsätter på din resa?

**Alternativ 1: Följer med.**  
Du går med henne hem och då visas en kort cutscene. Ni går in i hennes stuga och hon stänger dörren efter henne hårt med ett förförande leende på läpparna. Din faithfulness bar sjunker.  
**Ny Mechanic: Faithfulness**

**Alternativ 2: Ignorerar henne**  
Du ignorerar henne och går därifrån. Hon ser sur och skriker på dig men du känner dig kärleksfull och din Faithfulness bar stiger.

**6.** Till slut når du din slutdestination. Du ser en siluette i bakgrunden som lysas upp och du får se ansiktet på din älskade. Om din faithfulnessbar är tillräckligt hög, springer hon fram till dig och omfamnar dig och du har vunnit spelet. Om din faithfulnessbar är för låg skuter hon en pil i ditt hjärta och det är game over.

**1.** Man ser sig själv utifrån ligga i ett mörkt rum utan att minnas vad som har hänt

**2.** Intro/Film (del 1) Som visar storyn om det kärleksfulla paret.

**3.** Karaktären behöver hitta vart nyckeln passar för att få fler ledtrådar till hur hen hittar sin kärlek.

**4.** Ett moraliskt dilemma dyker upp! En person behöver hjälp. Ska karaktären hjälpa hen eller inte?

**5.** Karaktären trodde att hen hade hittat sin älskade men det var det visst inte...

**6.** Karaktären tjuvlyssnar på ett telefonsamtal för att få mer information/ ledtrådar.

**7.** Karaktären flirtar för att samta på sig mer energi/kraft.

**8.** Slutkampen! Huvudkaraktären boxas med personen som förtrottat kärleken. Huvudkaraktären vinner och bryter förtroendet.

**1.** Man ser sig själv utifrån ligga i ett mörkt rum utan att minnas vad som har hänt

**2.** Spelet berättar för dig vad du kan göra och testa.

**3.** Du ser en mörk varelse komma närmre

**4.** Du ser ett ansikte men kan inte riktigt tyda vem det är

**5.** Du har spelat tillräckligt länge för att få boken "book of love" som ger dig tips och tricks på hur du ska prata med andra potentiella partners och karaktärer i spelet

**6.** Du har följt ledtrådarna du fått längs vägen och hittar slutligen till ett ställe där det står en vacker flicka och energiskt vevar med handen

**7.** Du tar dig fram för att prata med henne... Det är också här man måste utnyttja sina kunskaper och välja rätt bland de olika socialiseringsalternativen

**8.** Kanske är det henne du gifter dig med här eller är det någon annan du funnit längs vägen?

**1.** Du vaknar upp mörbultad. Ditt hem är förstört. Du minns ingenting och vet inte vem du är eller vad som hänt. Du har svårt att röra dig till en början (detta är tutorialen för kontrollerna). Du finner spår och ledtrådar på vad som hänt och vem du kan vara.

**2.** Du beger dig ut på jakt efter fler ledtrådar om vem du är och vad som hänt dig

**3.** På din resa kommer du skaffa väsen och fiender. Döda monster och rövare.

**4.** Ju längre in du kommer i mainstoryn ju mer kommer du komma ihåg från ditt liv i form av cutscenes från. Du kommer ihåg din partner och vad som hänt den där kvällen och du måste hitta hen.

**5.** Under din resa får du en allierad, men vill denna egentligen hjälpa dig? Kan du hålla fokus på ditt uppdrag eller kommer du falla för din förföriska allierade.

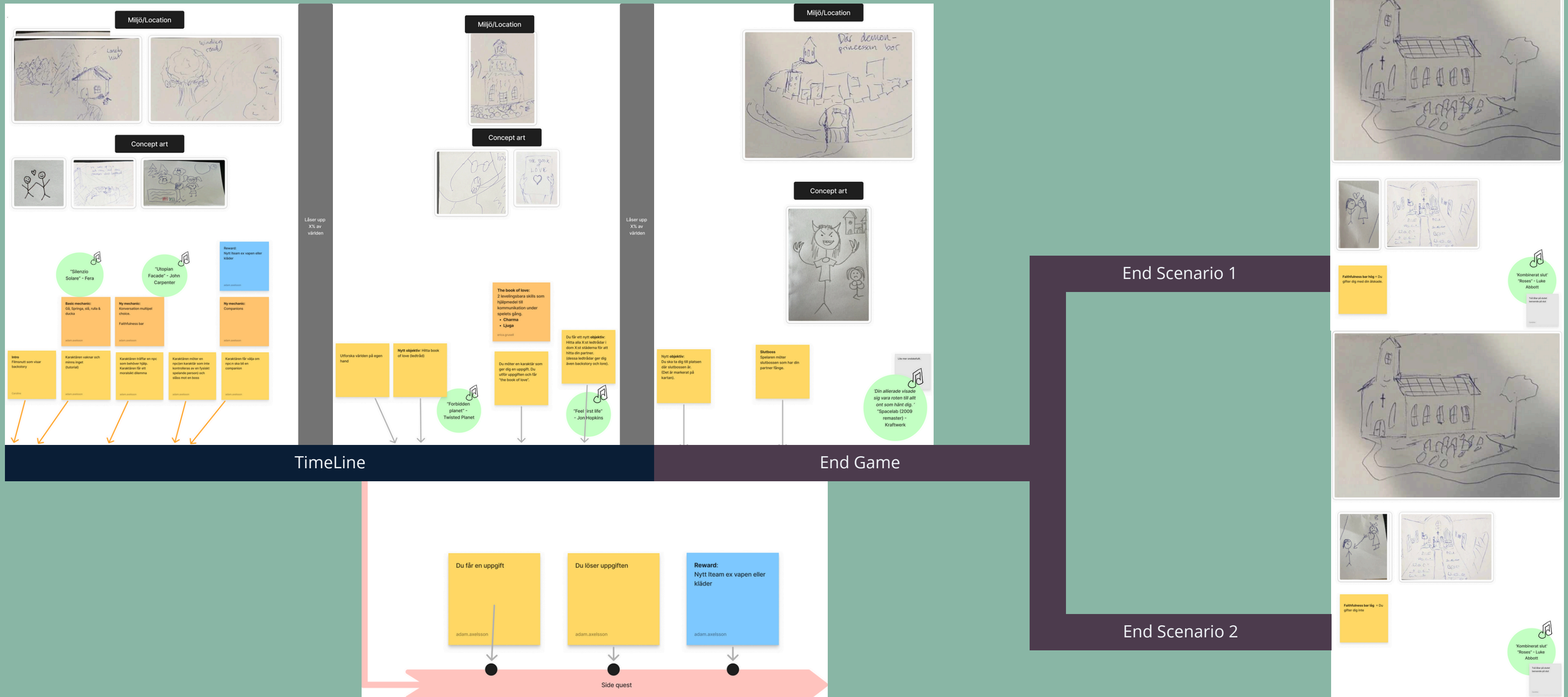
**6.** Du upptäcker att något är fel och dina omoraliska val påverkar dig fysiskt och psykiskt. Dina val har nu ännu större konsekvenser

**7.** Din allierade visade sig vara roten till allt ont som hänt dig. Men försöker göra dig koncept då just du kan bli hennes perfekta demon krigare. Men för att slutföra din förvandling måste du döda din partner

**8.** Ju längre du går den onda vägen och juona din allierade eller har du kvar det goda i dig och räddar din älskade.

# Timeline

After we had decided on which elements were the most important for our game we could put together a timeline for a Path of Desire



# Characters

## Vayne



**Description:** The main character. This character, just like his name, hints at inner conflict representing the duality of his journey. He is plain looking and has dark brown hair.

**Function:** This is the character the player plays as

## NPC 1



**Description:** A beautiful seductive redhead maiden in distress.

**Function:** Introduces multiple choice dialogue and the faithfulness mechanics to the player.

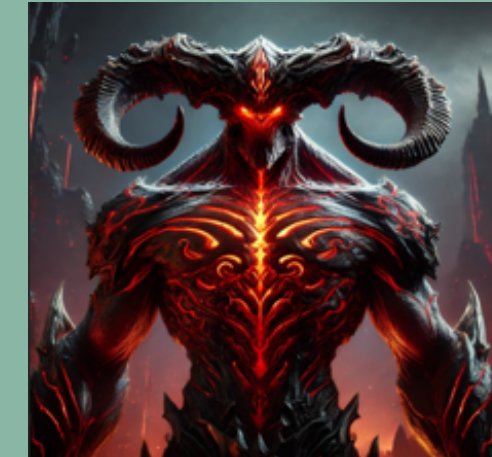
## Strange Man



**Description:** An odd, wise old man with big glasses who smokes a pipe.

**Function:** Introduces the charm and deceit mechanics to the player.

## Final Boss



**Description:** A dark looking evil demon with horns.

**Function:** The final boss the player has to defeat.

• *All images have been AI generated*

## Other NPCs

- **Maidens**
  - Gives multiple choice scenarios to the player.
- **Villagers**
  - Might give you items or clues.
- **Mobs**
  - Enemies the player will have to defeat throughout the game.
- **The beloved one.**
  - Is not included in gameplay, only lore and cinematics.

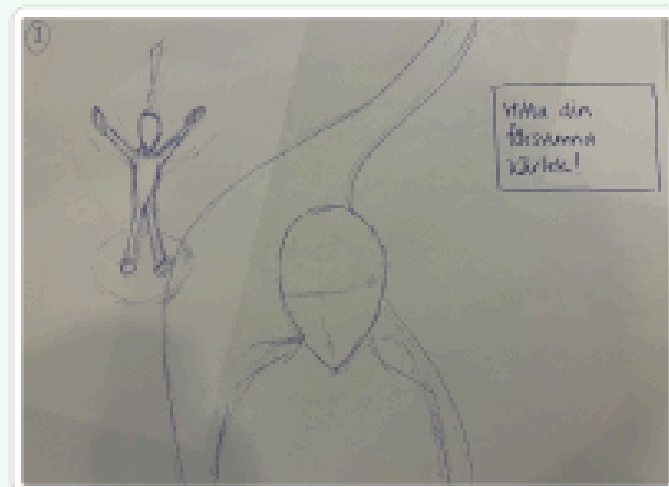
## Setting

The game is set in a medieval world, rich with lush forests and winding rivers. The environment combines a sense of coziness with an adventurous spirit, offering a serene yet dynamic backdrop for exploration.

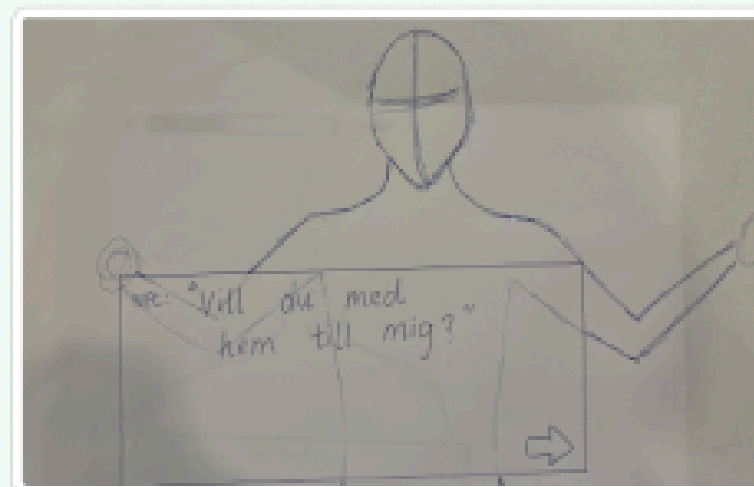


# Prototype 1

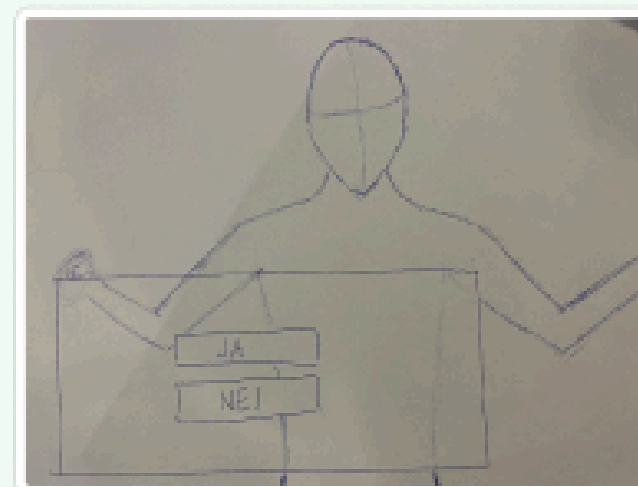
We created a simple prototype that focused on the dialogue mechanics, assembling it in Figma to build an interactive experience. This approach allowed us to visualize the flow and ensure that the player's actions were intuitive and straightforward. After completing the prototype, we tested it thoroughly to confirm that the objectives and interactions were clear to the player. Based on the feedback, we made adjustments to further enhance the user experience and ensure clarity.



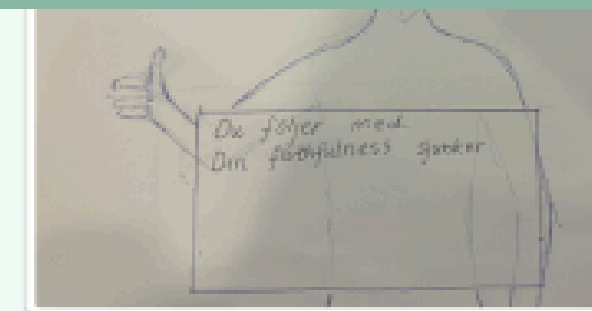
Frame 1



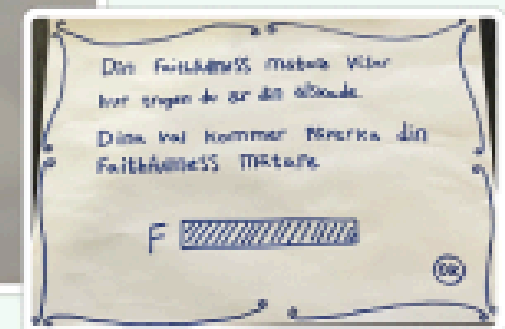
Frame 2



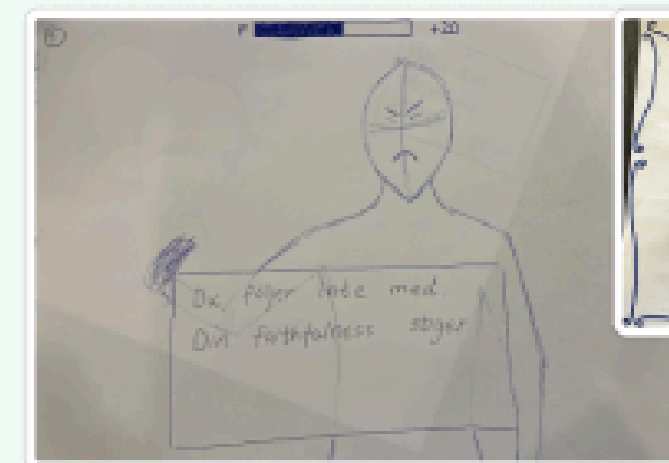
Frame 3



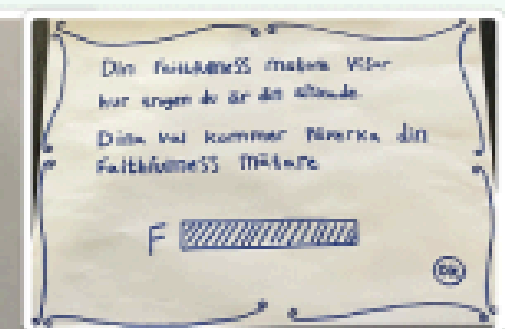
Frame 4



Frame 6



Frame 5



# User tests

## First test:

The first flaw we noticed with our design was when the tester thought that the NPC encountered (Frame 1) was his lost loved since the objective said “find your lost love”. Other than that everything was easily navigated for our test person.

## Second test:

To minimize the previous confusion we gave an introduction of the game to tester 2 where we introduced the character vayne and mentioned he has to wander around the world and face challenges on the way in order to find his lost beloved. The first difficulty our tester had was that he felt that it was confusing that the multiple choice answers were on a separate frame than the questioned (Frame 2 and 3). So he was unsure that if he pressed the arrow he would agree to her question or move on to the next page. So he was unsure that if he pressed the arrow he would agree to her question or move on to the next page. He also said he wanted an instant consequence depending on what he answered.

## Enhancements Based on Testing Feedback

After analyzing the test results, we decided to implement several key improvements. We introduced instant consequences in the game to enhance player engagement and revised the introduction to make it more solid and impactful. We also adjusted the flow by displaying answers immediately after a question is asked. To reach a broader audience, we changed the language to English. Additionally, we added the word 'Next' to the arrow to clarify its function.

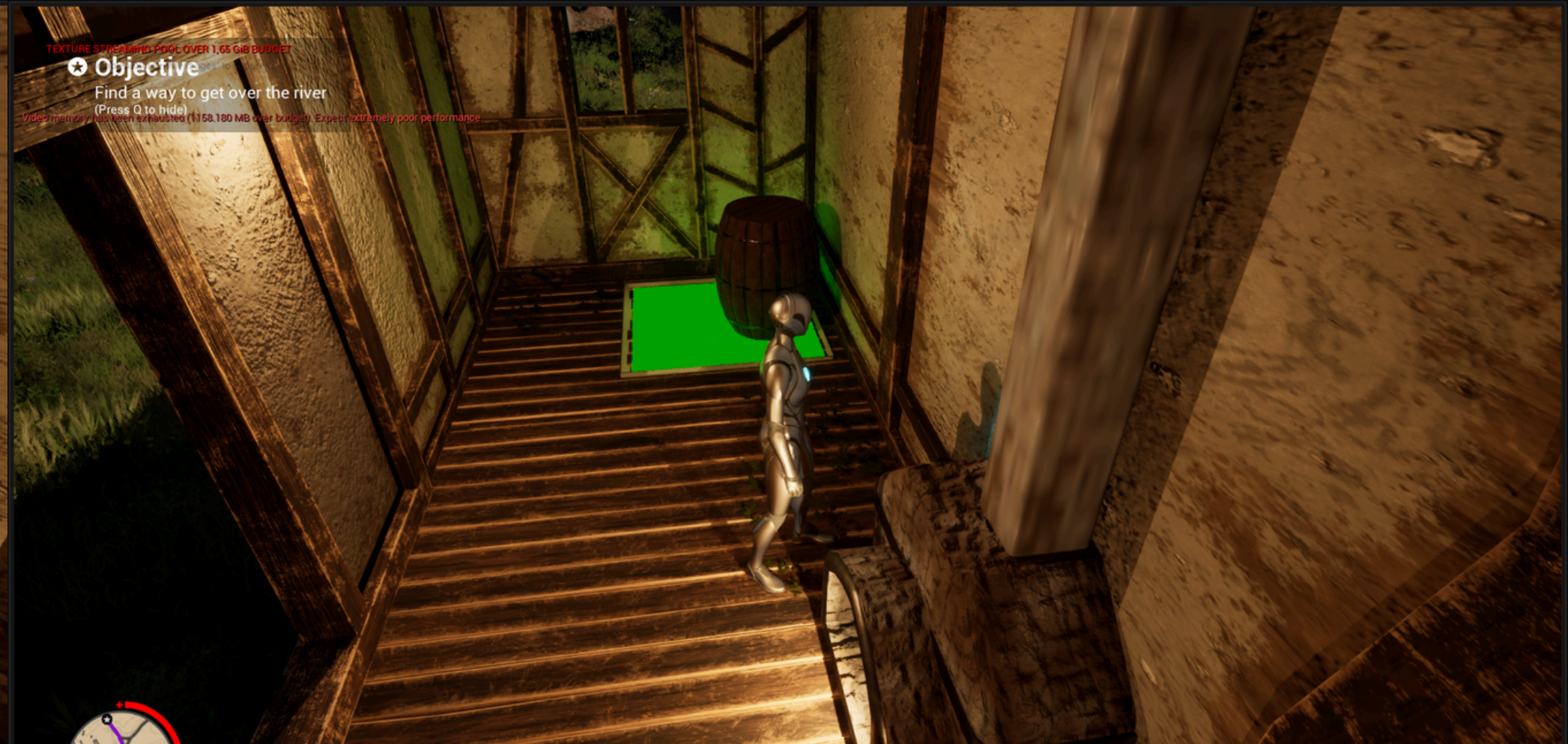
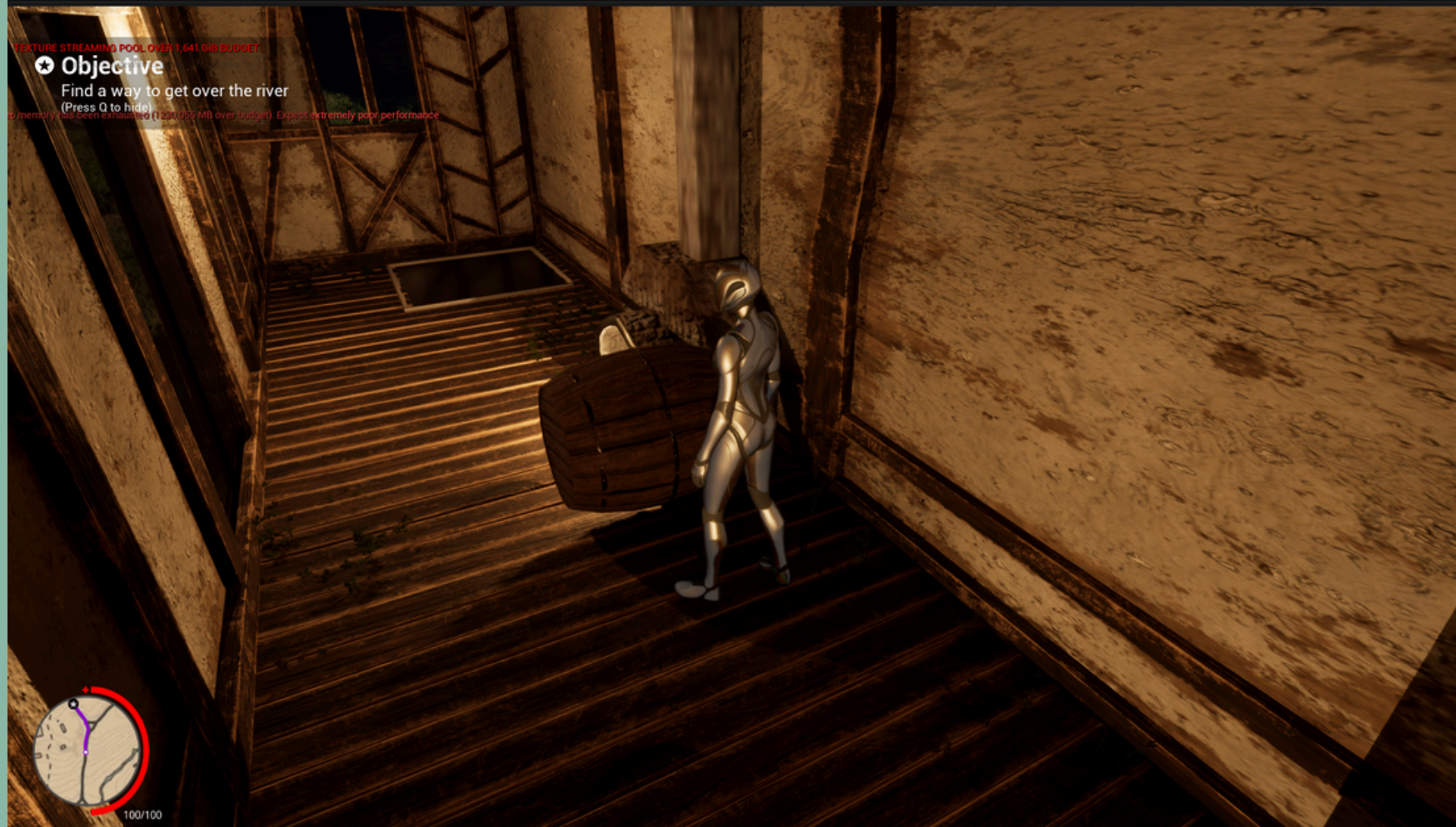
## Prototype 2 - Unreal Engine

We developed a prototype in Unreal Engine, primarily focusing on the types of obstacles players would encounter during the onboarding phase. These obstacles included actions like punching a log, walking over it, jumping on rocks to avoid falling into the water, and solving simple puzzles to open doors and navigate larger obstacles. Alongside these gameplay elements, we experimented with some of the graphical aspects of the game.

In this design, we also began implementing UI elements based on our initial concepts, positioning them strategically within the interface. For instance, we placed a minimap in the bottom left corner, objectives in the top right, and designed a straightforward pause menu. Additionally, we incorporated a 'help' popup that appears when the player reaches a sign instructing them to 'Press F to interact.'

**On the next page are some early images showcasing our progress in Unreal Engine**







# Challenges and Solutions

## **Time Management:**

One of the primary challenges we faced was managing our time effectively, particularly when trying to implement all the changes we wanted after the testing phase. With only two weeks to work on the project and no plans for a final prototype, it was difficult to incorporate every idea we had for improving the game. While our main focus was on refining the story, mechanics, and rules, it was challenging to resist the urge to perfect every aspect of the game within the limited timeframe.

## **Complexity and Scope:**

As we progressed, the game started to become more complex than we initially anticipated. The decision to create a semi-realistic game added layers of difficulty, especially in balancing the narrative and gameplay elements. In hindsight, the project might have been more manageable had we simplified the scope, perhaps by focusing solely on narrative dialogues and choices. Removing the combat components would have allowed us to dedicate more time to polishing the dialogue mechanics, which could have made the narrative even more compelling. However, we recognized that doing so might have narrowed the appeal of the game, as the combat mechanics added a layer of engagement that some players would miss.

## **Coordination and Communication:**

Working in a group project, we also encountered the typical challenges of coordination and communication. Ensuring that everyone was aligned on the project's goals and deadlines required constant communication. Balancing different ideas and approaches within the team was sometimes difficult, especially when it came to prioritizing which features to develop within our time constraints.

## **Adapting to Feedback:**

Another challenge was adapting to the feedback we received during testing. While we were eager to implement the suggestions, it became clear that some changes would be difficult to execute within the time and technical limitations we faced. It required careful consideration to determine which adjustments would have the most significant impact on the player experience without overextending our resources.

## **Conclusion:**

Looking back, these challenges provided valuable learning experiences. Although we didn't have the opportunity to create a final prototype, the process of navigating time constraints, managing complexity, and working collaboratively with the team taught us crucial skills. If we were to undertake a similar project in the future, we would likely adopt a more focused approach, carefully selecting the elements that would have the most meaningful impact on the overall game experience.

# Lessons Learned

## Insights:

This project provided me with valuable insights into the challenges of working as a group, particularly when it comes to integrating diverse ideas into a cohesive product. I learned that not all of my ideas would make it to the final version, and it was important to accept that, adapt, and focus on making the best of what we had. This experience highlighted the necessity of compromise and flexibility when working in a team environment.

## Team Collaboration:

While our team collaborated closely throughout the project, I realized that we could have accomplished even more by dividing tasks more strategically. Assigning specific roles, such as having one person focus on the landscape design, another on character development, and others on different aspects, could have streamlined our workflow and allowed us to make more progress. However, despite this, the journey was exciting and fulfilling, and it reinforced the importance of clear role distribution in team projects.

## Understanding Game Development:

One of the most significant takeaways for me was realizing just how complex game development truly is. It requires much more effort, coordination, and attention to detail than I initially expected. Being part of this process has been incredibly rewarding, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn so much about the various aspects of game design.

## Key Takeaways from the UX Design Process:

Throughout the project, the UX design process taught us valuable lessons. One aspect that worked particularly well was our iterative approach to testing and refining the game mechanics. Regularly gathering feedback and making adjustments based on player interactions helped us improve the clarity and functionality of the game. However, an area for improvement would be the early definition of user personas and clearer mapping of the user journey. This could have provided a stronger foundation for designing the game's interface and interactions, ensuring that the player's experience was as intuitive and engaging as possible from the start.

## Conclusion:

Overall, this project was a significant learning experience. It taught me the importance of collaboration, flexibility, and the value of a well-structured design process. These lessons will undoubtedly inform my future work, both in game design and in other collaborative creative endeavors.