

KANDRIA

A GAME BY SHINMERA



ABOUT KANDRIA

In the not too distant future, an accidental discovery leads humanity to reach the singularity: the creation of fully sentient androids that can act and think on their own. However, not long after the first few androids are deployed across the world, calamity strikes. In an instant, the surface world is obliterated. Cities, entire countries wiped from the face of the earth.

Some decades later, small settlements of survivors have started to emerge. Some of them try to reclaim and rebuild the ruins of former cities, fighting off the blazing sunlight and harsh sandstorms. Others take their chances underground, living in the vast catacombs and tunnels left over from the old world. Rabid animals, hostile robots, and looters make traversing unknown territory risky, and few manage survive in these harsh conditions.

You wake up in a pile of rubble, somewhere deep underground. A bright flashlight blinding your eyes amidst the darkness. As your eyes adjust you can make out two figures standing over you. One of them shouts "Cath, I think I got it working!"

Kandria is a 2D hack and slash platformer, set in a dreary post apocalyptic environment. You take on the role of a lone android and join a small group of survivors. In order to help them out you are sent on a variety of missions to explore, gather, and fight. Along this journey you are confronted with various ethical questions about transhumanism and the treatment of androids.

Kandria features a solid platforming experience to make exploration challenging and fun, and intermixes this with fast hack and slash action segments to break up the flow. A complex dialogue system allows for deep story delivery, characterisation, and player expression. The world and characters are illustrated with hand drawn and animated pixel art.

CURRENT STATUS

Proper development on the game started in Summer of 2019. The game is built upon a custom in-house engine called [Trial](#). This gives large productivity boosts in some areas, since complete knowledge of the engine allows very fast, targeted development. However, in other areas development has been very slow, since solutions need to be built from the ground up. Being a one-man team at the moment also means that every part of the game takes away time from others.

Engine Features

At the time of writing, the game has the following features fully implemented:

- **2D Platformer Mechanics** The player has full 2D movement on sloped terrain, including wall jumps, climbing, crawling, dashing, and moving platforms.
- **Dynamic Lighting System** A dynamic lighting system with shadows and a day/night cycle has been implemented to paint the proper mood in various environments.
- **Efficient Tilemap Rendering** The game implements a technique to render tilemaps of arbitrary size at constant overhead, allowing for very big maps for the player to explore.
- **In-Game Editor** The in-game editor allows creating and editing maps directly while the game is running, making for a very quick feedback loop.
- **Platform Traversal AI** The engine is able to automatically move characters across arbitrary 2D terrain just as the player would, making it possible to conveniently script characters to move around.
- **Dialogue System** A custom markup language was implemented to allow writing dynamic dialogue trees quickly and efficiently. The system is even capable of scripting cutscenes.

This sets a solid precedent for building most of the game. There are a few important features that are still missing, which are discussed in the [next section](#).

Visuals

In terms of visuals most of the work has been on the player character's design and animations. These are now mostly complete for the currently planned scope. Please see a few of the animations [included below](#).



Running



Climbing



Crawling



Forward evade



Light ground attack



Heavy ground attack

Figure 1: Player character animation set. Please click the image to view.

The design of the player character has evolved quite a bit throughout the development of the game. A lot of variations were produced to try and find the proper fit for the character, setting, and overall tone of the story. See [the below figure](#) for a summary of the protagonist's design process.

Finally, some simple tilesets were made as well, though none of them are complete or fit into any specific areas of the story. An example scene of the most developed tileset is shown in the trailer and demo. A screenshot for completeness is included below.



Figure 3: The “tundra” tileset.

Story and World

The broad world building is mostly complete. The separation of the world into underground and above ground sections allows for very different visuals, but also for very different gameplay environments, with the surface areas focusing more on exploration and the underground areas focusing more on combat. The overall history of the world to explain the setting is based on common traits from science fiction, cyberpunk, and post-apocalypse genres, which easily lends itself to many interesting scenarios and character traits. This should also help a lot to expand on the world outside of the scope of the game via flavour text and side conversations with NPCs.

The dry, hot, and mostly devoid of life areas of the surface should make it easy to focus on the platforming angles and allow for far-ranging exploration and narrative delivery with various relics that the player can discover among the ruins. Certain parts of the surface could also be gated off by untraversable desert sections, and can only be reached via underground routes, giving certain quests the possibility of diving between the two sections.

The underground will have a stronger focus on very moody, dark, and bleak environments. Since the surface area is mostly uninhabitable almost all of the wildlife will also be found here, along with malfunctioning robots and human looters, giving way for a very different pacing focused much more on combat than on platforming. This is also where most of the resources for the above ground settlement’s survival need to be found, or people can be rescued to join the group. Since the underground

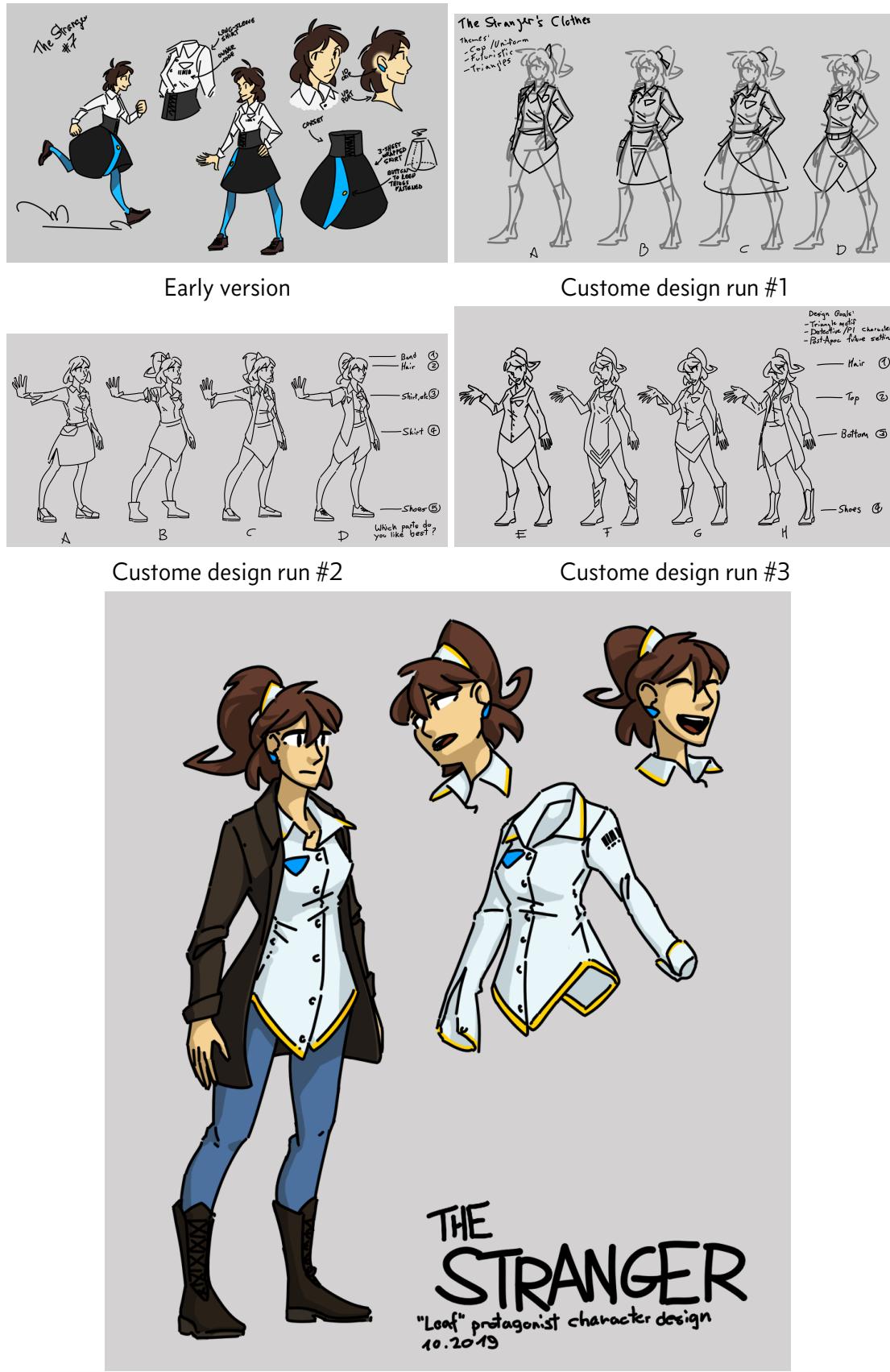


Figure 2: Design evolution of "The Stranger" player character.

tunnels can grow rather unrestricted in both dimensions, movement will also focus a lot more on verticality than in the surface sections.

While this setting easily gets the creative ideas flowing, knowing what to cut and how to restrict the scope to remain manageable has been a problem, and will probably continue to be. The main areas to cut in would be in enemy types and interactable characters. Tilesets can be expanded rather quickly and repurposed a lot, and dialogue and flavour text can be created without too much overhead. Enemies and characters on the other hand require a lot of animation, which is rather time intensive.

At the time of writing the story has not been worked out to a great extent. The current idea is to try and fit a story about finding a lost link between the player character and the old world into a standard hero's journey framework. Along this journey the player should have to deal with several key questions surrounding living machines and the ethics of survival.

One of the ideas for this link would be a memory of an old-world research facility or bunker, which is obviously of great value to the survivors. A key question built around that would be whether it is objectionable to forcefully pry the information out of an android, even if it would potentially incur damage. Another question is whether it would be moral to disassemble an uncooperative android and repurpose the parts for human augmentation instead.

Another angle to androids in general that would be interesting to explore in writing is the idea of segregation and phobia. People of certain backgrounds would be predisposed to distrusting androids, or even being violently opposed to their existence.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Since Kandria is still in its early stages there is naturally a lot that's left to be done. Currently in progress is a much more elaborate animation system to support the hack and slash mechanics, as well as a dedicated editor to fine tune the animation and attack parameters. Once that is complete, an NPC behaviour system needs to be implemented to allow for interesting enemies. When these features are worked out, the core mechanics for the game should all be in place. From there the engine work would mostly include quality of life improvements to speed up the content pipeline.

For the visuals most of the work is left in designing the various enemy types and support characters, as well as ultimately animating all necessary moves. Currently at least three main cast characters, three supporting characters, and four types of enemies are planned, though this might have to expand even further depending on the story development. Several new tilesets for the areas covered by the story also need to be made, once it is clearer what the overall story will be like.

As mentioned, the story and overall writing will require a lot of attention quite soon. The decisions made for that will also greatly influence the amount of work left in other areas. Certain narrative moments could require additional mechanics to be implemented, as well.

Grant Use

The money for the grant would primarily be used to support myself, as I can cover a large set of roles required for the game already. However, with enough funding the development speed could be increased tremendously by distributing the animation, environment art, and writing work onto additional people. Whatever the case, I will definitely need to hire people to handle the music and sound design, as these are areas where I lack sufficient experience.

BUDGET & PLANNING

The following budget is for the entire game production. Pre-production is planned to take another 3-4 months, with production starting sometime in Summer 2020. After that the expected production time is one year.

Expenses

Preproduction

Core developer & artist	8'000
Steam publishing	100

Production

Core developer & artist	24'000
Additional artist	6'000
Music & SFX	10'000
Writing	1'000
Marketing	10'000

Total

59'100

Contributions

Funding

Personal investment	10'000
Pro Helvetia grant	15'000

Release

Steam Sales	50'000
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Total

75'000

Cumulative Total

15'900

Market Research and Projected Sales

The game will primarily target medium to experienced players with interest in a 2D pixel art style, and the platforming and hack and slash gameplay genres. The primary storefront will be Steam, which already features many similar games, though very few with an explicit focus on exploration and narrative delivery, which should help Kandria stand out.

The estimated sales of similar games in these genres vary greatly between lesser known titles such as The Moonstone Equation selling about 500 units, and bigger hits such as ICEY selling around 500'000 units. Based on these and other games found on Steam, the estimated sales number lies somewhere between 2'000 and 10'000 units. With a standard price tag of 10.-, this should result in anywhere between 13'000 to 66'000 in revenue after the storefront cut and taxes.

Thank you for reading!