

This Wonderful World

Creation Document

Creating This Wonderful World was both exciting and difficult because not many people have done something like this and it's not a medium that has been explored a lot. Because of this, my goal for this experience was to test the waters and see what sort of things I can do and what is most engaging for people. In this document, I'll explain the creation and running of the experience.

Concept

The first thing I needed to know was what the experience as a whole would be about. I started working on this soon after watching Dispatches from Elsewhere, so inspired by that I thought it would be interesting to have a story about two groups that players could side with. I thought it would be interesting to have one website that displays art and another that displays tragedies in the world through articles and thought a conflict could arise between the two groups. In the end, I couldn't come up with any plots using this conflict that felt good to me, but instead of dropping the idea entirely, I started to think of how I could still use this concept in a new way. What I settled on was to start out with the conflict between the groups, but slowly reveal that the conflict was all to trick an intelligent robot that was hunting for them. I also decided to use this as an opportunity to use the concept of "anomalies" that I had been toying with, as I thought it would work well with the story concept I already had.

Outline

From there, the general story fell into place. I was going to be running this experience through The Multiverse Experiment, a platform for hosting experiences like these that then cross over at designated points in time. Because multiple people would be running their own experiences, we were all told to make our content in "pods", or a week of content that could be run whenever there was availability. Because of this, I decided to make each pod have its own unique type of content and be a discernible chapter of the story. This both helped with seeing how engaging different types of content was and allowed for breaks without interrupting the flow of the story.

My rough outline for how each week would go was:

Week 1: Introduce the Wonderful World and Ruined World organizations and build the mystery. Get players interested in the experience. Puzzles are messages hidden in art.

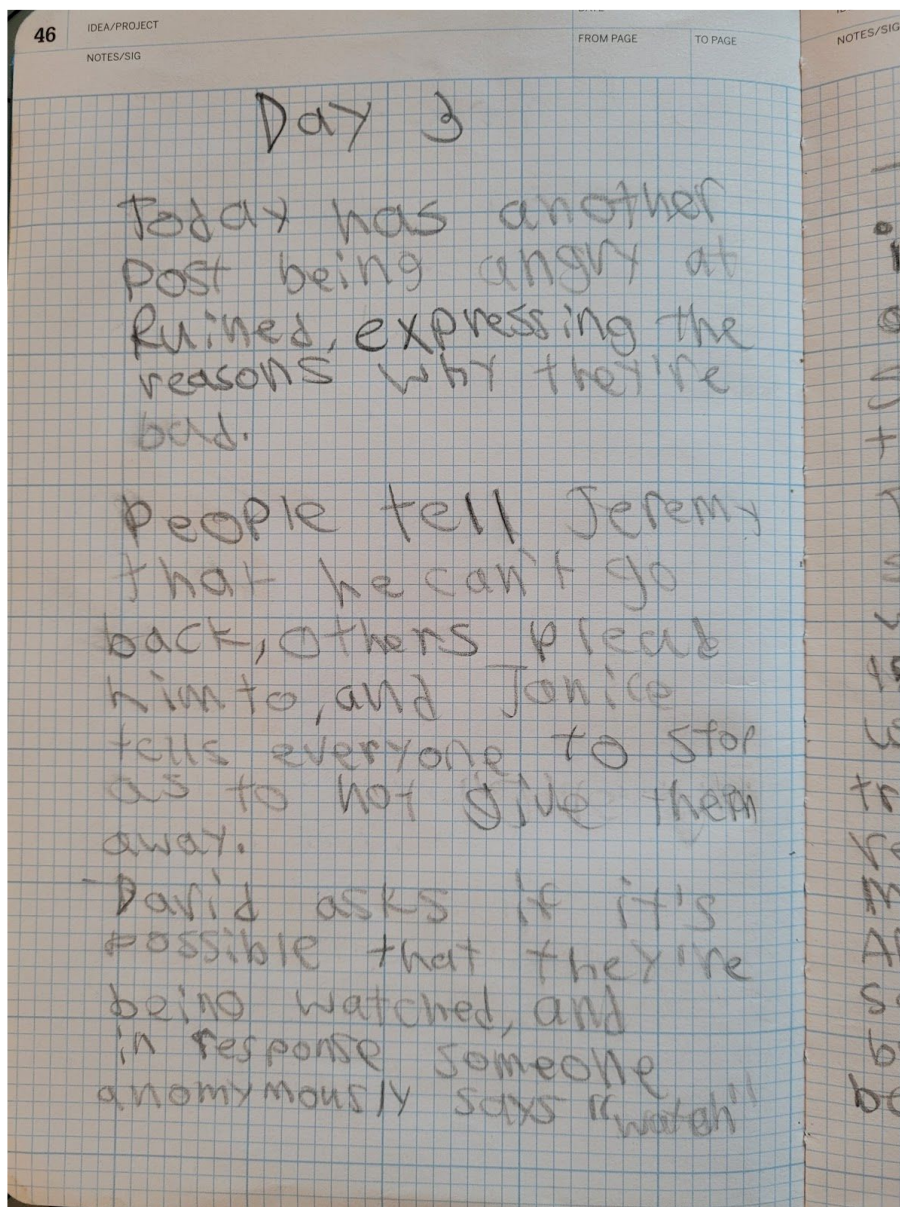
Week 2: Audio recordings of Jeremy on his journey. Reveal the whole mystery. Research puzzles.

Crossover week (The weeks had been planned up to the crossover at this point so I knew when it would be): Introduce TISA. Make the crossover week fun, but don't have too much of the story take place here because some people might not want to take part.

Week 3: Videos made by TISA with messages hidden inside. Build up the conflict between TISA and Jeremy until the reveal that KAT was the villain.

Week 4: What would happen in week 4 was always hard for me to figure out until the story started running, but I wanted to build up to a big finale that people would remember. However, I did know that I wanted Jeremy to take down the villain and escape during this week.

Then I started to narrow down the story to a day-by-day basis, writing down everything that would happen in each day in my notebook. These were detailed enough so I knew everything that should happen, but vague enough that I could change things if something went wrong and I needed to improvise, and very messy.

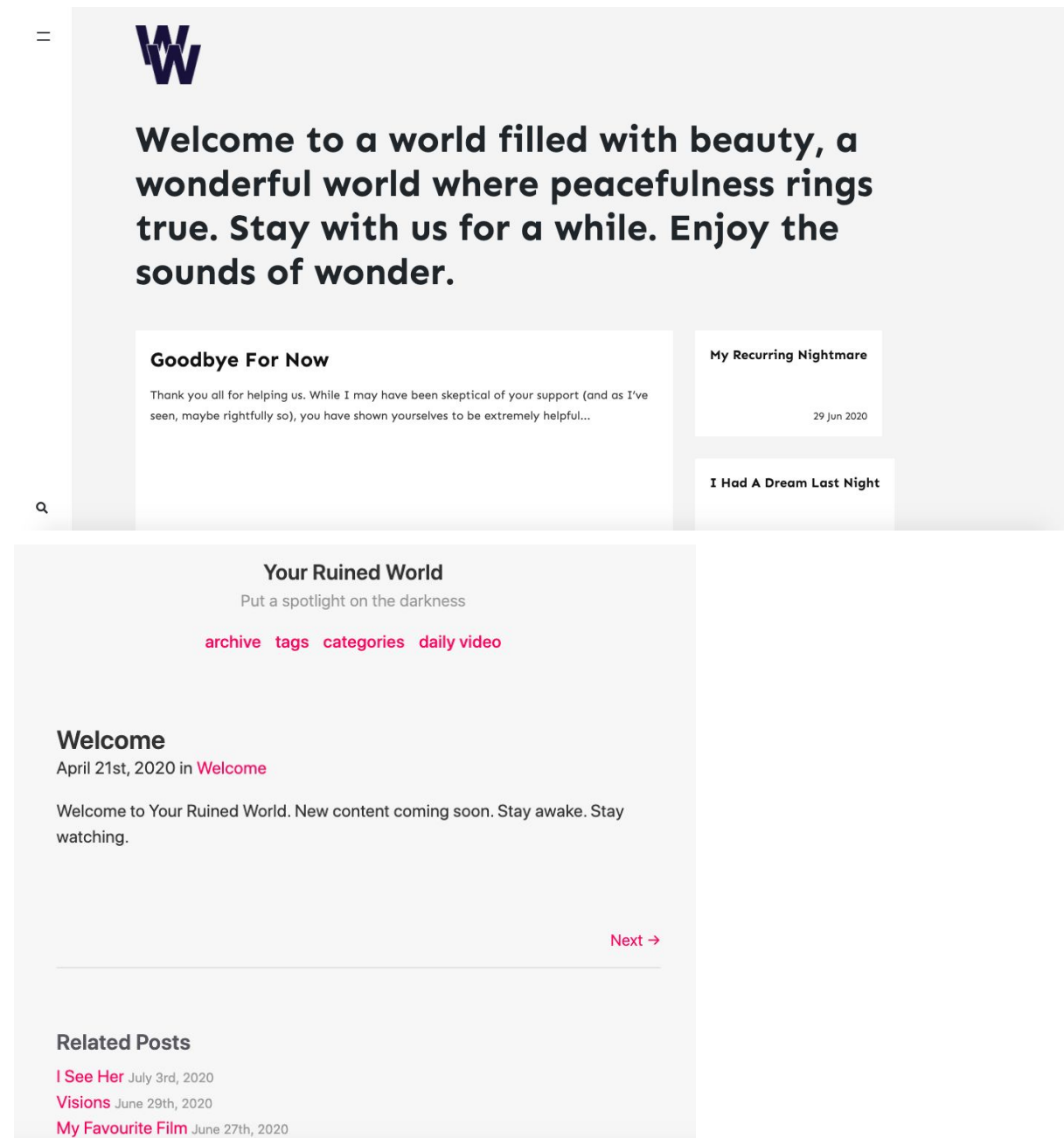


one of these descriptions.

Here's an example of

Website

After I had outlined everything that had to happen for the first two weeks (development for later weeks started once the experience began), I started building the two websites I needed. I needed a way to upload the blog posts, have it look nice and professional, be customizable enough that I could do anything I needed, and be very cheap. I chose to use Github Pages to host the website for cheap and Jekyll to make it act and look like a blog. I knew how to use Github Pages, but I did not know how to use Jekyll, so it took a few weeks of wrangling until I got these website themes.

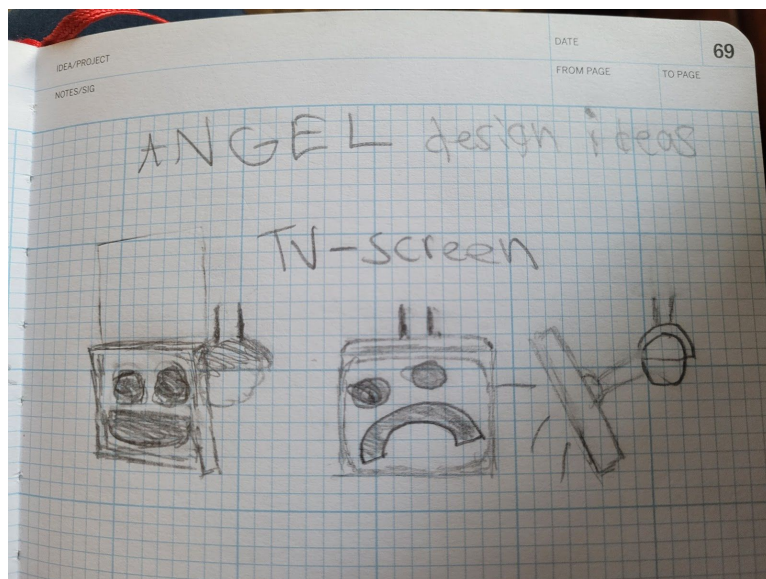


I also bought the domains hearourwonderfulworld.com, seeyourruinedworld.com, and scientificanomalies.com. I had originally intended to create a website for TISA too, but I thought it didn't work with the fact that they were supposed to be hidden, so that domain was unused.

Preparing for launch

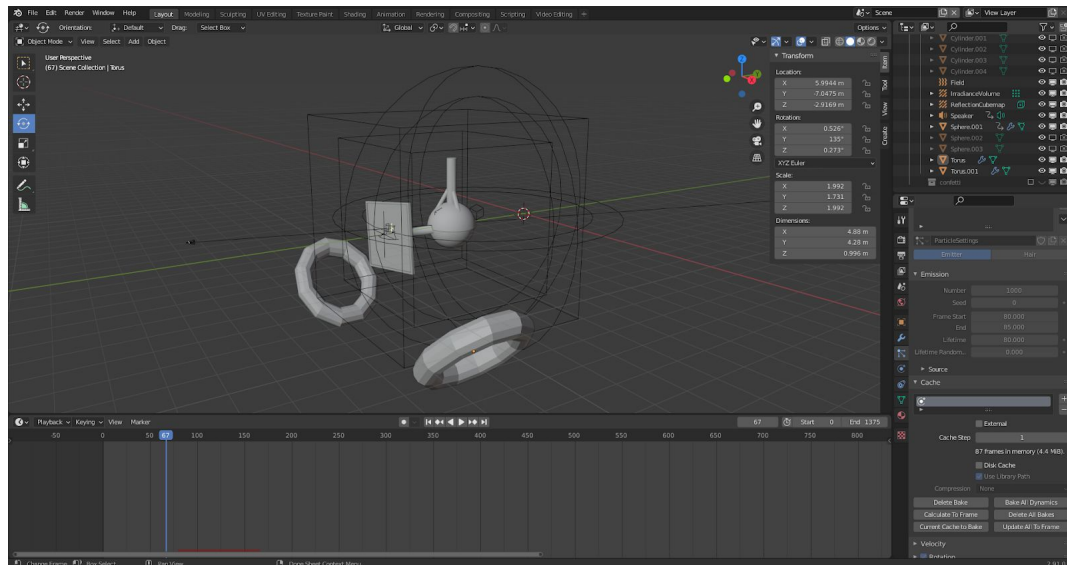
After creating the puzzles for the first two weeks (which are discussed in the interactivity document), I began preparing for the start of the experience.

I started trying to figure out ways to kick off the experience in an interesting way but couldn't come up with anything good. At the same time, I was working on designs for the main villain, ANGEL. My first design was this tv screen on a ball joint that extended from the ceiling. I loved the idea and started working on creating a model for a character test. While working on it I couldn't help but feel that it was way too cute and friendly looking for the villain of the story and eventually got the idea to have it be a separate character that introduces the experience. My original intention was to have "myself" introduce the experience as a game and then reveal that it was actually ANGEL creating an "experience" to trick people into finding the scientists it's searching for. Replacing myself with this new character, KAT, removed me from the story, added a cute side character that players could talk to, hooked players into the experience before it began, and made the reveal that KAT was tricking them more impactful. I made a character test for KAT using the 3d model and voicing it myself, and then uploaded it as KAT introducing herself to players.



The design for ANGEL that inspired the creation of KAT

After having all the content ready for the next week as well as the blog posts for the second, I started preparing everything I needed for launch. First was the launch video, which I scripted, recorded, animated, and set up to premiere on the start day. Then, I began talking to potential players through discord as KAT to get them interested in the experience, which I covered in the interactivity document.



My blender layout for the kickoff video.

Week 1

This week went very smoothly, with a lot of puzzles to keep players busy while the story started to get going. Unlike many other mediums, an unfiction experience requires players to keep coming back every week, and my experience required players to be there to move forward. By having plenty of puzzles while the story was being introduced and the mystery was being built, players could come in each day and have something interesting to do while still engaging with the story.

The first week went very smoothly, with all the blog posts and character interactions going well and lots of people liking the experience early on. There were, however, plenty of small things that happened that I wasn't expecting.

1. Around halfway through the week players gained access to Wonderful World's email address. This created the opportunity to ask questions (with a limit on much I would reveal of course). Being the only person working on the experience, this meant I had to reply to all the emails myself. I didn't expect so many people to be emailing at the same time, which resulted in me having to reply to my conversations at once.
2. Later in the week players gained access to the Ruined World website. Since there wasn't much on there yet, some players decided to look into the code and found the sitemap, which outlined every possible link on the website. Using this they were able to find the creator of the website's name (Which weren't mine. Just in case I set it up as the actual character who made it) a week before they were supposed to. They also got his email two whole weeks before they were supposed to, which not only meant I had to manage people asking questions on two emails but had to reformat things a little to deal with them finding the email early. I had no idea that a sitemap even existed, so this moment served as a reminder that anything could happen and change my plans for the experience.

3. At the end of the week I had one last puzzle for players that was supposed to take quite a long time. Instead, they solved it in just a few minutes. Since this was the last of the blender puzzles and some players didn't have the chance to solve one yet, I quickly made another puzzle for them to solve.

During this week I was also working on week 2's audio recordings. Since I wanted the audio recordings to be visually interesting, I created a template where I could put in an audio file and it would display it's waveform and volume levels in an interesting way. This is shown in the video uploaded for that week. I recorded these on my phone in a similar location to where it was recording in the story to try to give a realistic feel.

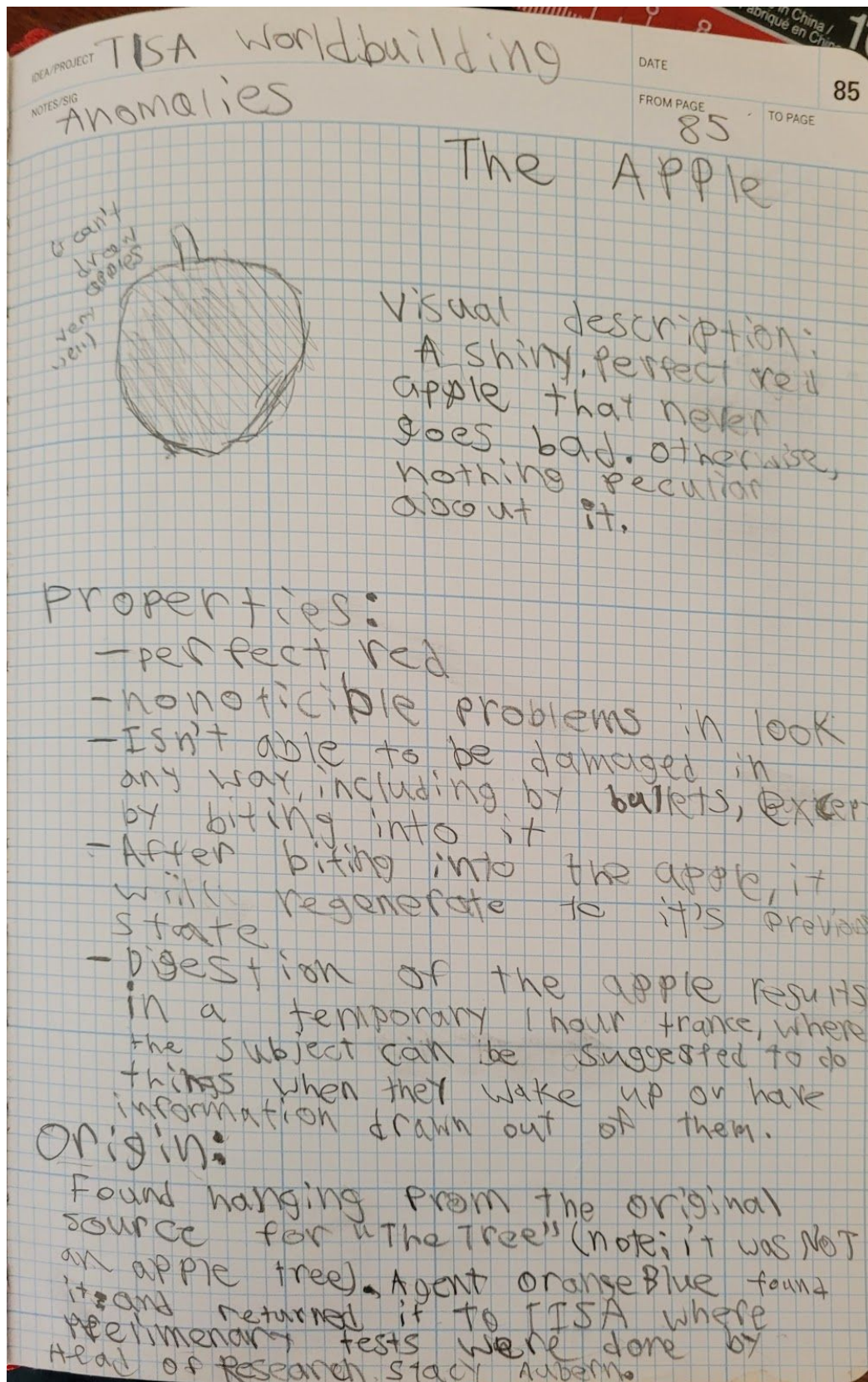


Screenshot of the template I made for the audio recordings. One of the files is missing, but I've submitted one of the completed videos with it there.

Week 2

This week ran a bit more smoothly than the last, with less unexpected scenarios. The main one, which I covered in the interactivity document, was when players submitted a ducky script for a puzzle to also download the downloads folder. Since this was beyond what the character was asking for, I ensured that this was referenced later when this code was used.

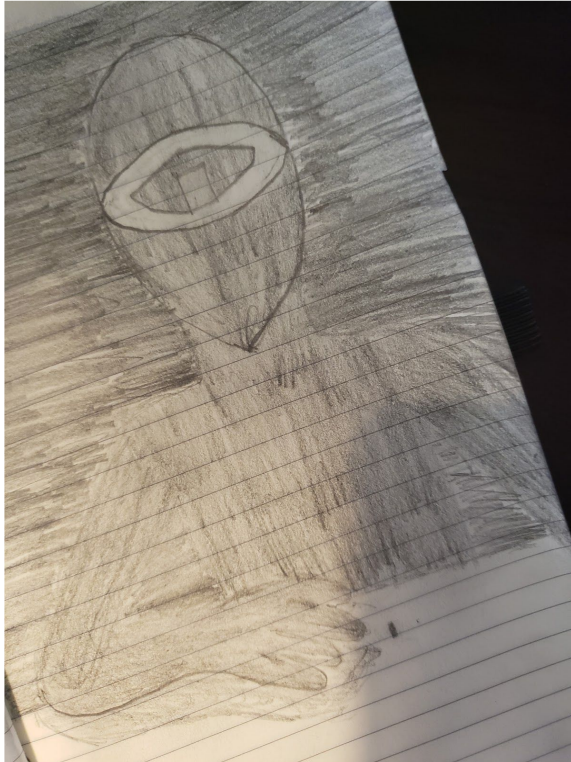
During this week I was also working on content for week 3 (the crossover wasn't really planned out). This week consisted of fully animated videos explaining some of the parts of TISA. I first wrote information about each "anomaly", a strange science-defying object that TISA is containing, that would be shown in these videos. After writing the scripts for these videos and detailing what the puzzles in them would be, I worked on animating and doing the voice-over for all of them.



A description of one of the anomalies that I made to help the creation of the videos.

Crossover Week

The crossover week was a mostly collaborative effort, with many people working on experiences coming up with the main idea of what would happen each day. However, we were all left to sort of do our own thing for the actual content. For this week I made a form so people could apply to be a part of TISA, and used that to decide who would be a part of the “mission” that TISA would run during the crossover. I also had creatures appear in some of the character’s dreams to show that something strange was about to occur early on in the week.



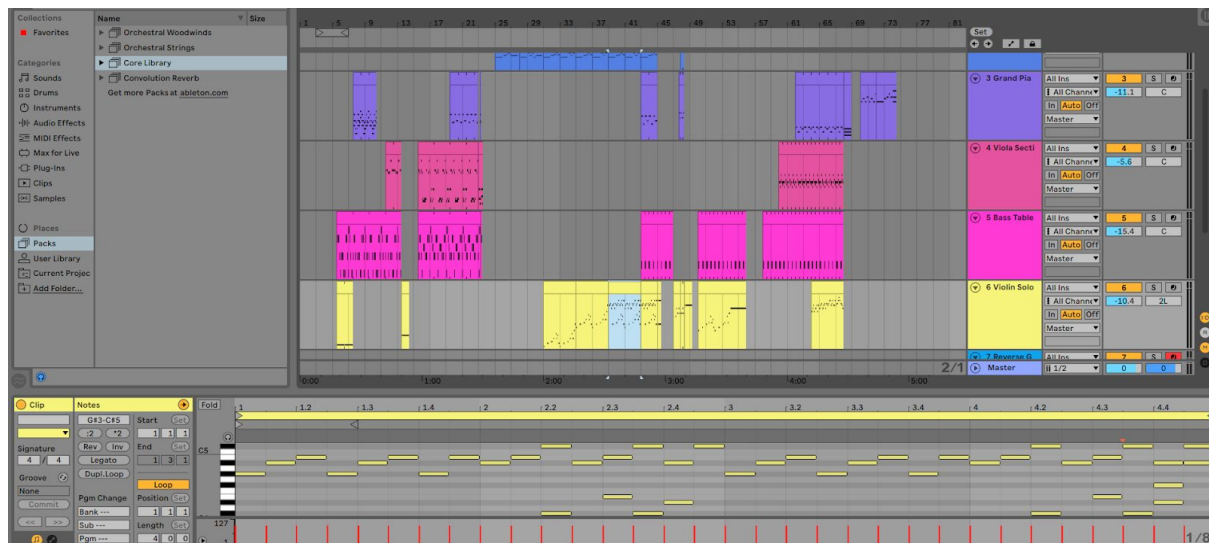
Here’s one of the creatures that showed up in a character’s dreams on the first day. This was meant to be something quickly scribbled out by the character after waking up to show what he saw.

Week 3

A lot of week 3 was interacting with players, which meant I had to operate 3 different character discord accounts at once. All of this is outlined in the interactivity document.

During this week I started to work on week 4’s content, which luckily wasn’t as much as week 3. For this I did more audio recordings, similar to week 2’s, but this time with sound effects. Since this week took place inside a mechanical facility instead of just outside, I had to use a lot more of sound effects like button presses, mechanical doors, and drones flying. I created these sounds using objects around my house, like the mechanical door, which I made by scraping a soldering iron stand on wood and hitting it into a piece of metal.

After this week had ended I moved from Canada to the US. This meant I couldn't run the experience for a while, but I also had a lot of free time. I was wondering if it would be possible for me to make a score for the entirety of week 4's recordings, but I wasn't sure if I had time, so this gave the opportunity to do so. I started playing around with some sounds using an Adafruit Neotrellis m4 as an midi controller, and decided on computer-generated instruments to represent TISA and ANGEL, and real instruments, mostly strings, for Jeremy and the scientists. I made all the music in Ableton Live and added to the audio recording template I made to include a soundtrack representation.



My setup for the finale's music.

Week 4

With everything complete for week 4, I really didn't have anything else to make, so I just carried out everything I had planned for this week and did character interaction of discord. Towards the end of the week people sent in images which would decide what ending they got (which I talked about in the interactivity document). For this I put all the images at the beginning of the finale video and made some music that fitted a build-up to the finale.

Epilogue

After the experience had ended, I revealed myself to be the creator and talked with players for a bit. This was the first time I had stepped out from behind the curtains, so it was great for both of us to talk about the experience together and bond for a bit. After letting both them and myself wind down after such a big finale, I started tying up loose threads in blog posts and messages from the characters, letting players know what they were all up to now.

As a conclusion to the long side-plot to bring back the fan-favourite character KAT in her normal form and as a final thank you, I created a song as KAT, which I covered in the interactivity document. After this stream, I had a Q&A with fans of the experience, where they asked questions about it's creation, things they might have missed, and my reactions to some of the things they did.

