Star★Vaders

Usability / UX Review

April 2023

Agenda

- Introduction
- Findings
- Next Steps

Introduction

Introduction to the study

Star★Vaders is a mecha roguelike-deckbuilding tactical shoot-em-up. It is targeting Early Access on Steam in Q4 2023.

The goal of this review is to identify any potential usability issues so that they can be resolved and help educate the team on usability so that they can design with usability in mind.

Scope of review:
- Prototype 0.35
- 9 hr 40 min gameplay across 14 sessions
- All menus
- All 3 available characters
- All Act bosses
- 27 Invader types
- 22 Component types

What is a usability/UX review?

Usability/UX review is a research method where usability specialists will provide usability feedback based on their own experience playing the game. They will evaluate the game against usability guidelines, principles of other usability-related fields, and their own experience.

These reviews are cheaper and quicker to run than other research methods as they do not involve other users. However, as a result of not including users, there are limitations. Most notably, there is no objective truth in the findings.

The findings are based on general guidelines, principles, and experience. There are scenarios where violating general guidelines and principles is appropriate in the right context.

Any recommendations should be recognized as just suggestions.

Findings

Severity Key

To help assess which issues should be resolved first, the usability issues have been prioritized using the following severity ratings:

- Positive – This worked as expected, and represents a best practice that should be maintained through future updates

- Critical – This usability problem will make some players unwilling or unable to continue playing. Fix urgently.

- Serious - This usability problem will significantly slow down some players when completing a core task. Fix as soon as possible.

- Medium – This usability problem will impact some users experience, causing frustration but will not impact progression.

- Low – This is a quality problem, for example a cosmetic issue or a spelling error. Note: Although this is a minor issue in isolation, too many "lows" will negatively affect credibility and may damage your brand.

Rating	Count
Positive	4
Critical	0
Serious	0
Medium	3
Low	2
Other	4
Total	13

Key definitions from GamesUserResearch.com

Summary

This review looked at all aspects of
Star★Vaders to identify usability and UX
issues. However, some areas may have been
missed due to the inherent randomness of
roguelikes.

In general, the game is in a great state with
very few minor issues discovered. A couple
items that were not necessarily usability
related were also identified.

Severity	Item
Positive	Tutorial teaches the core mechanics
Positive	Flexibility to skip and/or reset tutorial
Positive	In game UI provides contextual help
Positive	Glossary provides helpful information on game elements
Medium	Limited visibility into remaining turns
Medium	Some aspects of Doom are initially unexpected
Medium	Mothership Wing behavior is inconsistent with other behavior
Low	Language in the Options menu is uncommon
Low	No 'Back' in the Glossary for lower-level items
Other	It's unclear how Stars are gained
Other	Rocket Fist description
Other	Tutorial reset impacts more than tutorial
Other	Issues quitting the game

Positive

Positive

Tutorial teaches the core mechanics

- Cause: Progress is gated until player acknowledges the prompt.

- Impact: Players will understand each new mechanic as it is introduced.
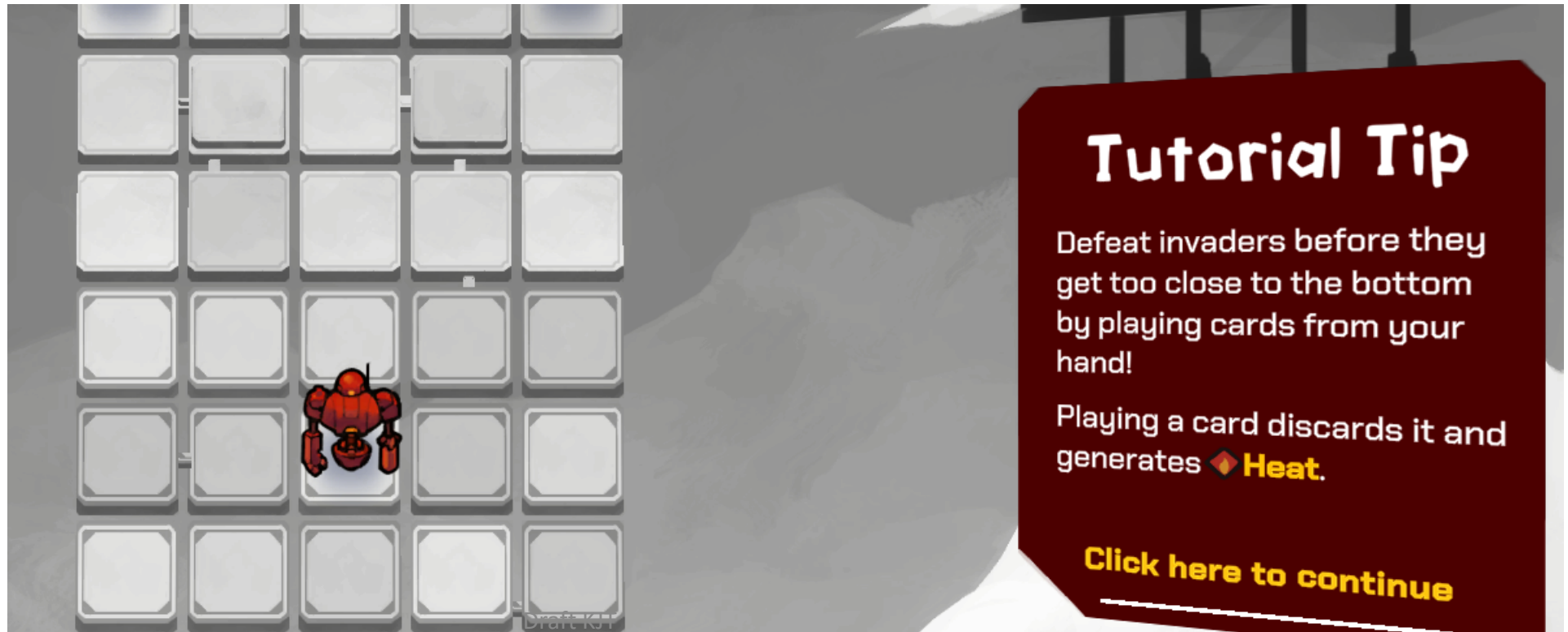
Positive

Flexibility to reset and/or skip tutorial

- Cause: Options menu allows users to reset and/or skip tutorial.

- Impact: Players have flexibility to reset and/or skip tutorial if they choose to.
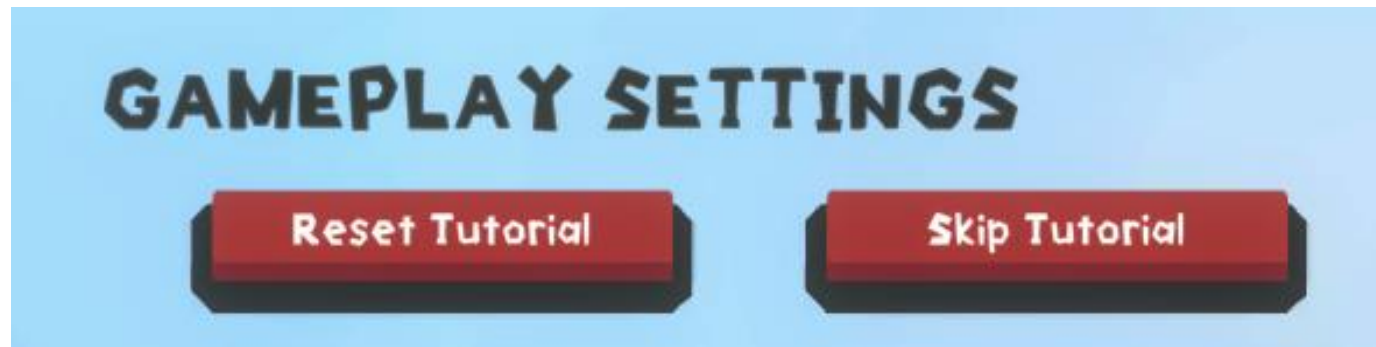
Positive

In game UI provides contextual help

- Cause: Section in UI displays relevant actions, controls to execute that action, and additional details for what is selected.

- Cause: Preview is shown to players prior to committing to actions.

- Impact: Players will be able to access relevant help as needed

Positive

Glossary provides helpful information on game elements

- Cause: Glossary contains descriptions for artifacts, cards, and keywords.

- Impact: Players will be able to review other helpful information as desired.
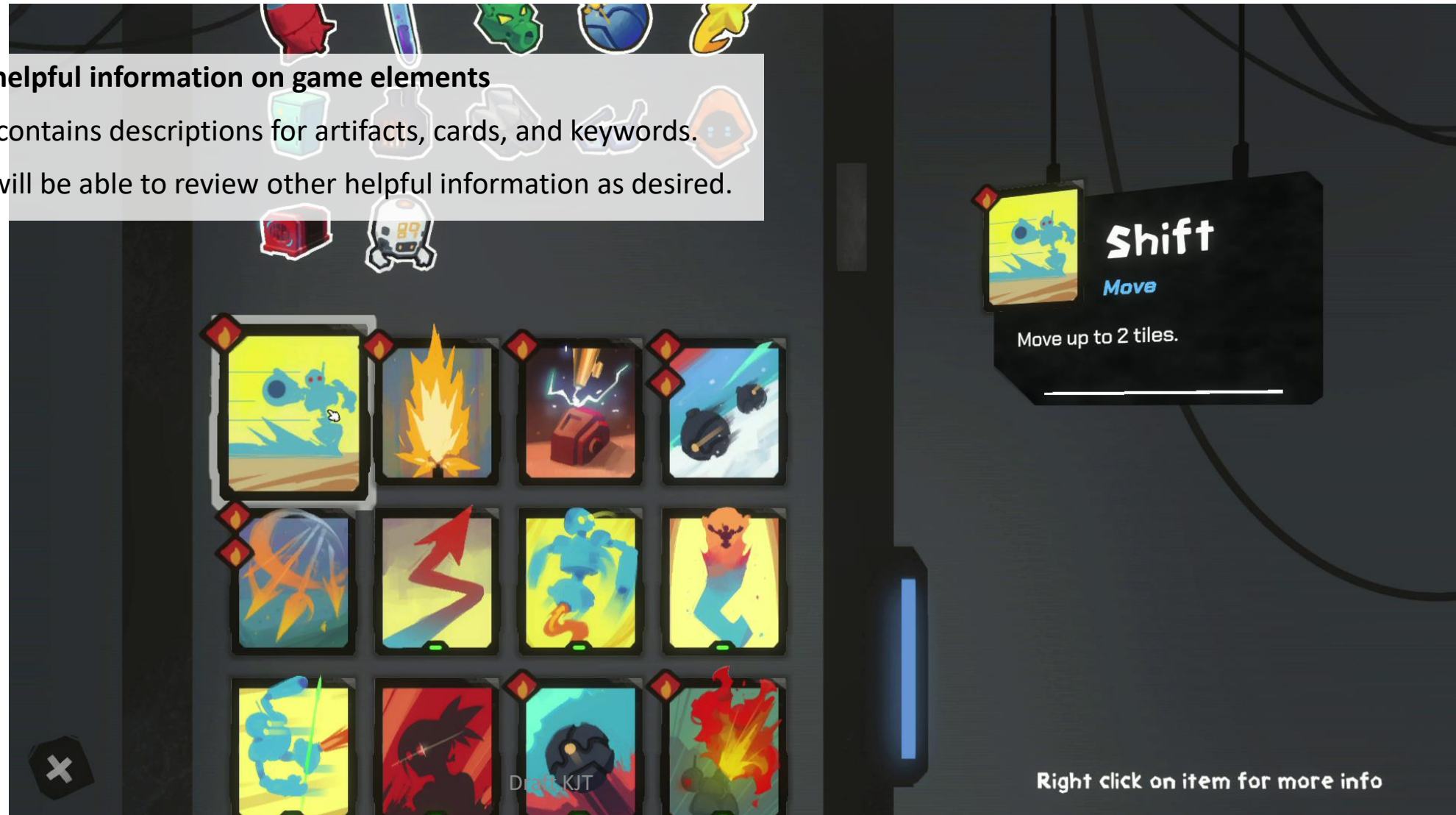
Medium

Medium

Limited visibility into remaining turns

- Cause: There is no indicator to show how many turns are remaining. Players only begin to be informed when there are 3 turns remaining.

- Impact: Players may find it more challenging to manage this resource.

- Note: On the last turn, all remaining enemies will apply Doom regardless of where they are on the map when the turn ends. This information is unknown until the last turn. The reviewer encountered this scenario once.
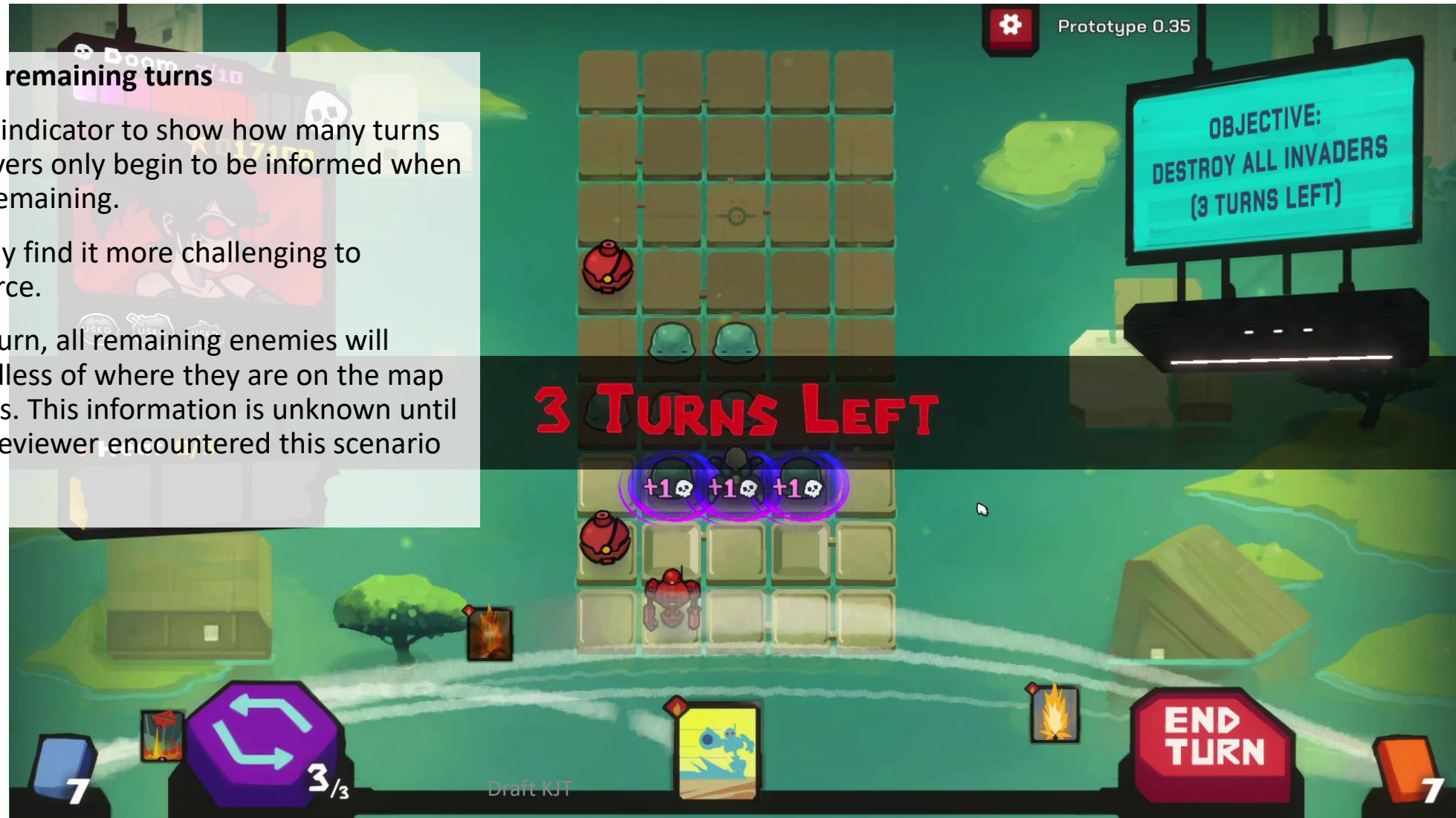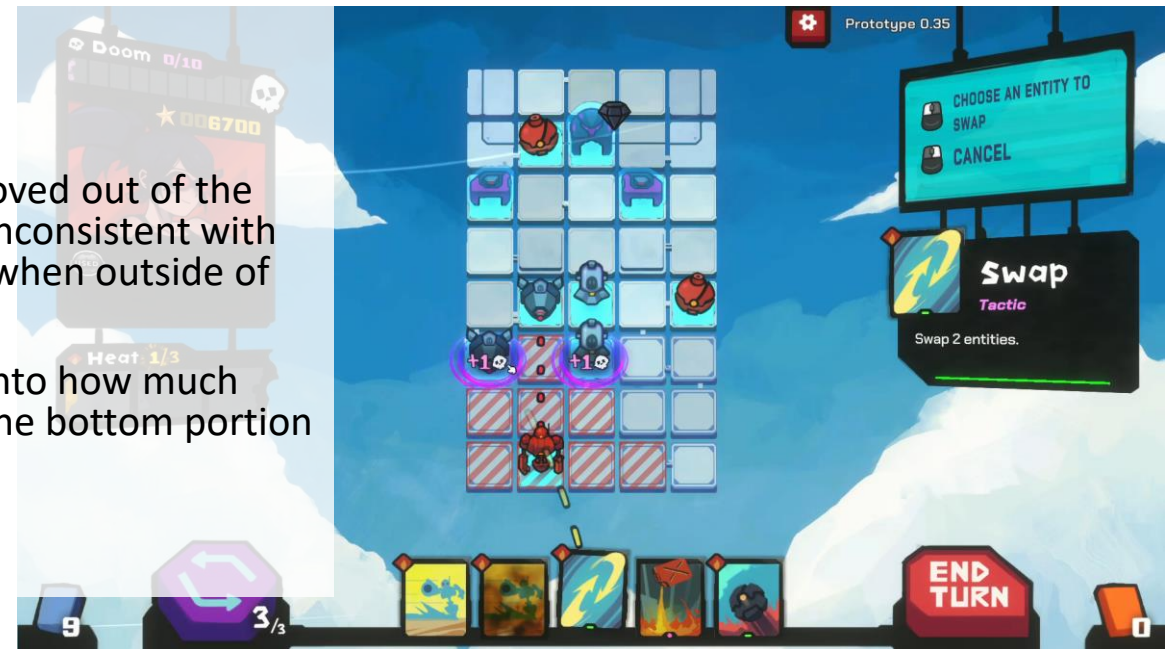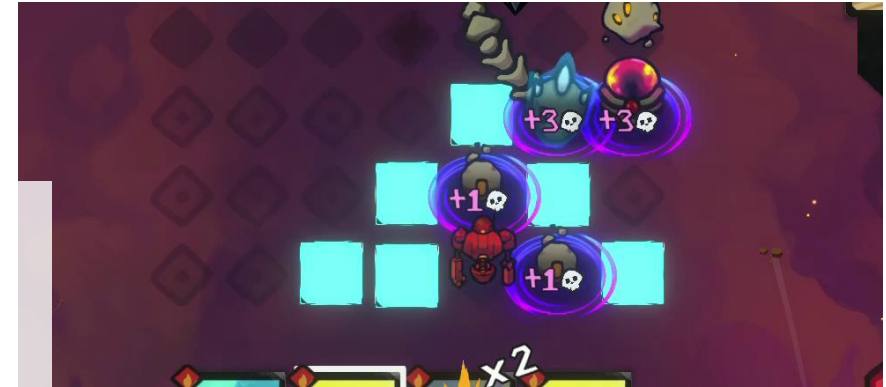
Medium

Some aspects of Doom are initially unexpected

- Cause: Doom is applied once an Invader crosses into the area on the bottom portion of the map and the turn ends, rather than moves off the bottom of the screen. This is inconsistent with 1) Space Invaders, from which this game takes inspiration and 2) Tower defense genre.
  - Tutorial has some helpful language: "Defeat invaders before they get too close to the bottom by playing cards from your hand!"

    However
    - It is unclear what "too close" means.
    - It is unclear what happens if invaders get too close.

- Cause: Doom remains on an Invader even when an Invader is moved out of the bottom portion of the map to another area of the map. This is inconsistent with other games where effects are effective in a zone and removed when outside of the zone. Shown in video.

- Cause: Invaders may apply varying amounts of Doom. Visibility into how much Doom is applied is only visible once Invaders have crossed into the bottom portion of the map.

- Impact: Players may receive more Doom than they expect.

Video

Medium

Mothership Wing behavior is inconsistent with other behavior.

- Cause: Mothership Wing regenerates shields. However, no other enemy type that have shields regenerates shields. Additionally, the shield tooltip does not mention the ability can regenerate. Shown in video.

- Cause: Mothership Wing can teleport. While the Mothership Wing generally moves normally, if it is brought toward the bottom of the screen, it will teleport back to the top. No other enemy type has shown the ability to teleport.

- Impact: Players may find these behaviors surprising.
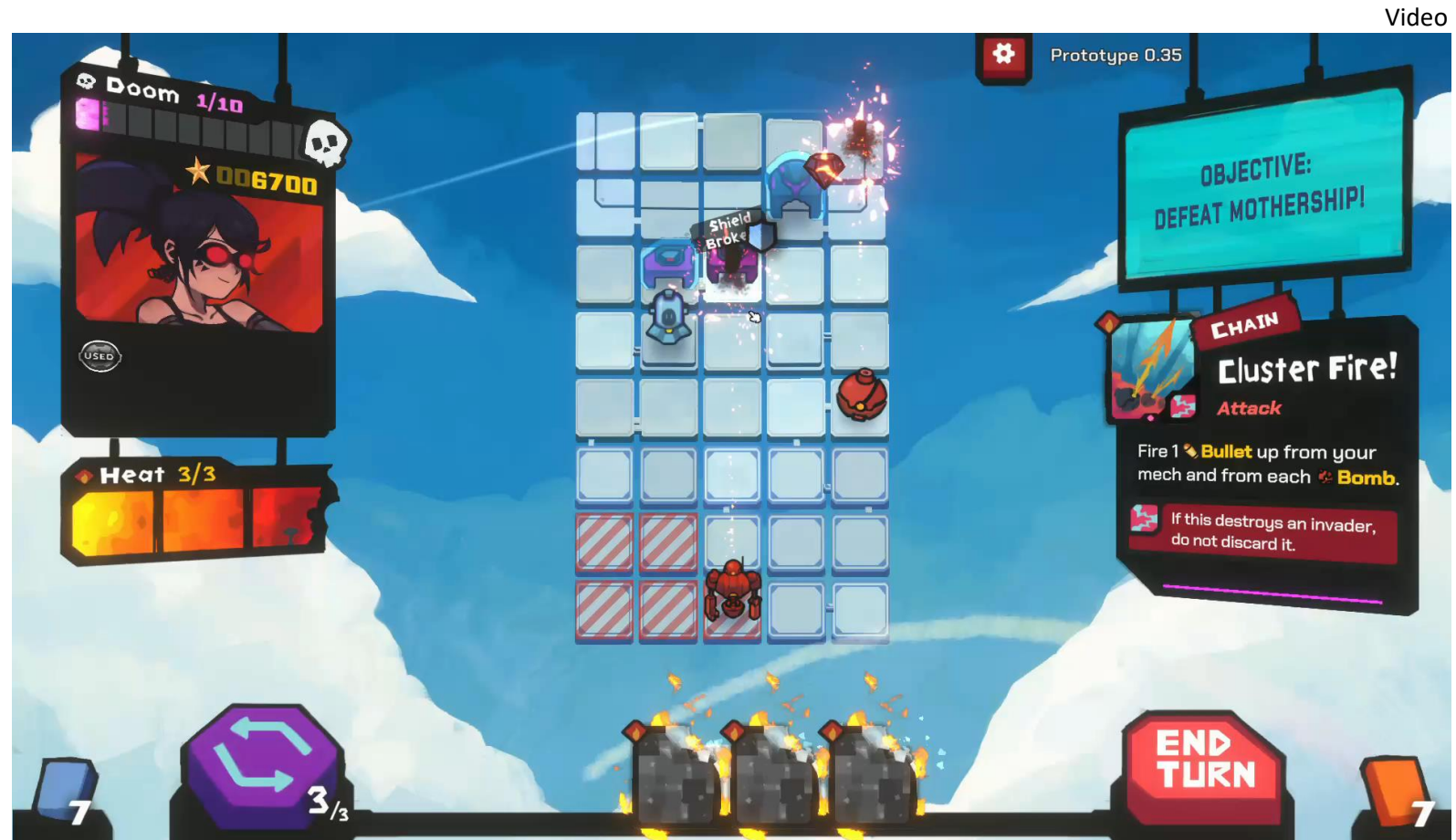
Low

Low

**Language in the Options menu is uncommon**

- Cause: 'Key Prompts' checkbox is used to display keyboard controls on the UI which is unfamiliar language.

- Impact: Players may not know at first glance what this option will do.

- Recommendation: Other words may be more suitable. Ex: Show Hotkeys or Display Keybinds.

Low

No 'Back' in the Glossary for lower-level items

- Cause: In the Glossary, there is no way to go back to the top-level item once you've selected a lower-level item.
    - Example: Within the Care Package artifact page, a user can click on Care Package (item) for more info. In the item page, there is no way to go back to the top-level (Care Package artifact) page. There is an X which takes a user back to the glossary.
    - Right Click performs several different functions including as a 'Back' in some scenarios.
        - When in the Glossary
            - Opens top-level item
            - Returns to the main menu
        - When in a top-level
            - Opens lower-level item (left click does this too)
            - Returns to Glossary
        - When in a lower-level item
            - Returns to Glossary

- Impact: Players may need to take additional steps if they want to go back to the top-level item they were at.

Draft KJT
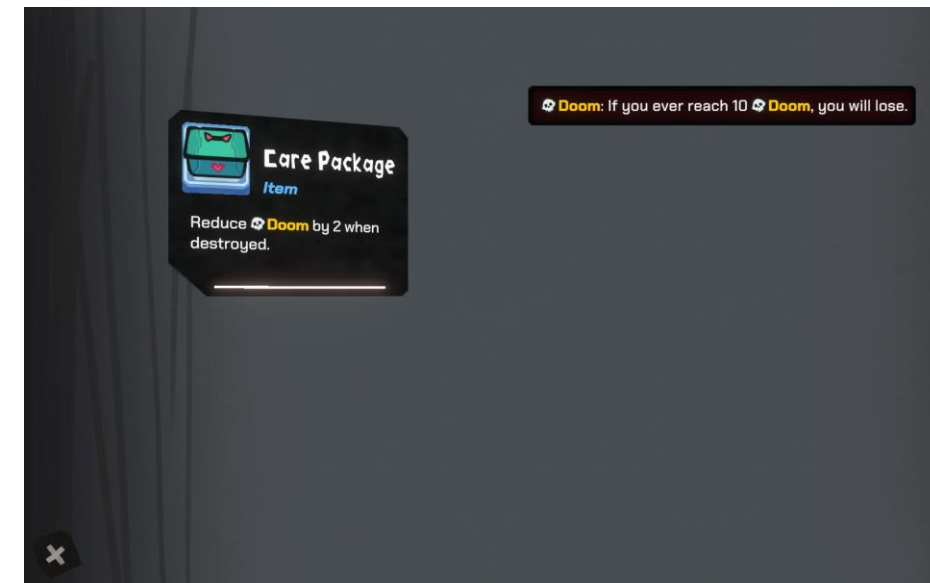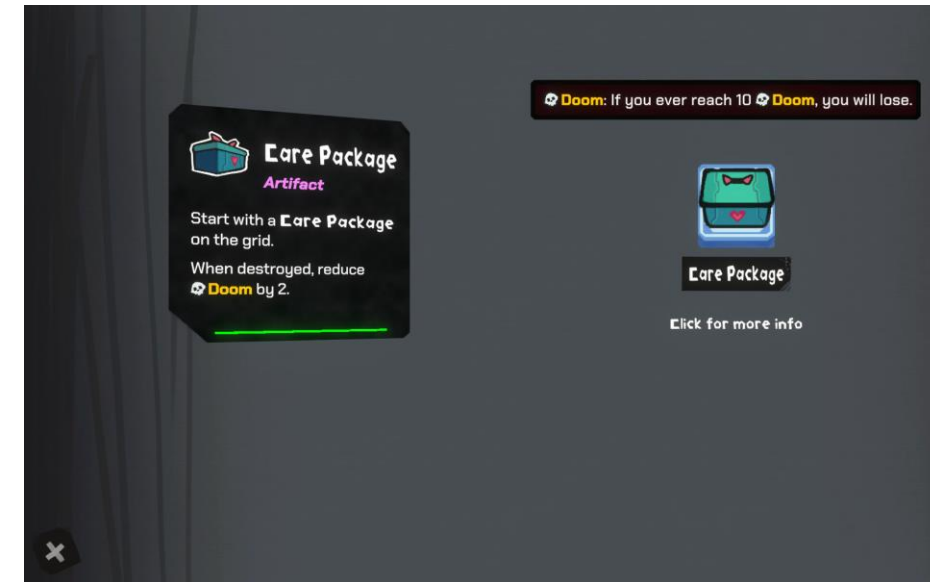
Other

Other



It's unclear how Stars are gained.

- Cause: Enemy types have different values which is only shown when the enemy is defeated.

- Cause: Same enemy types may have different values which is only shown when the enemy is defeated.

- Impact: Players may not have enough information to maximize the use of the Store (Min's Workshop), which may impact player behavior.
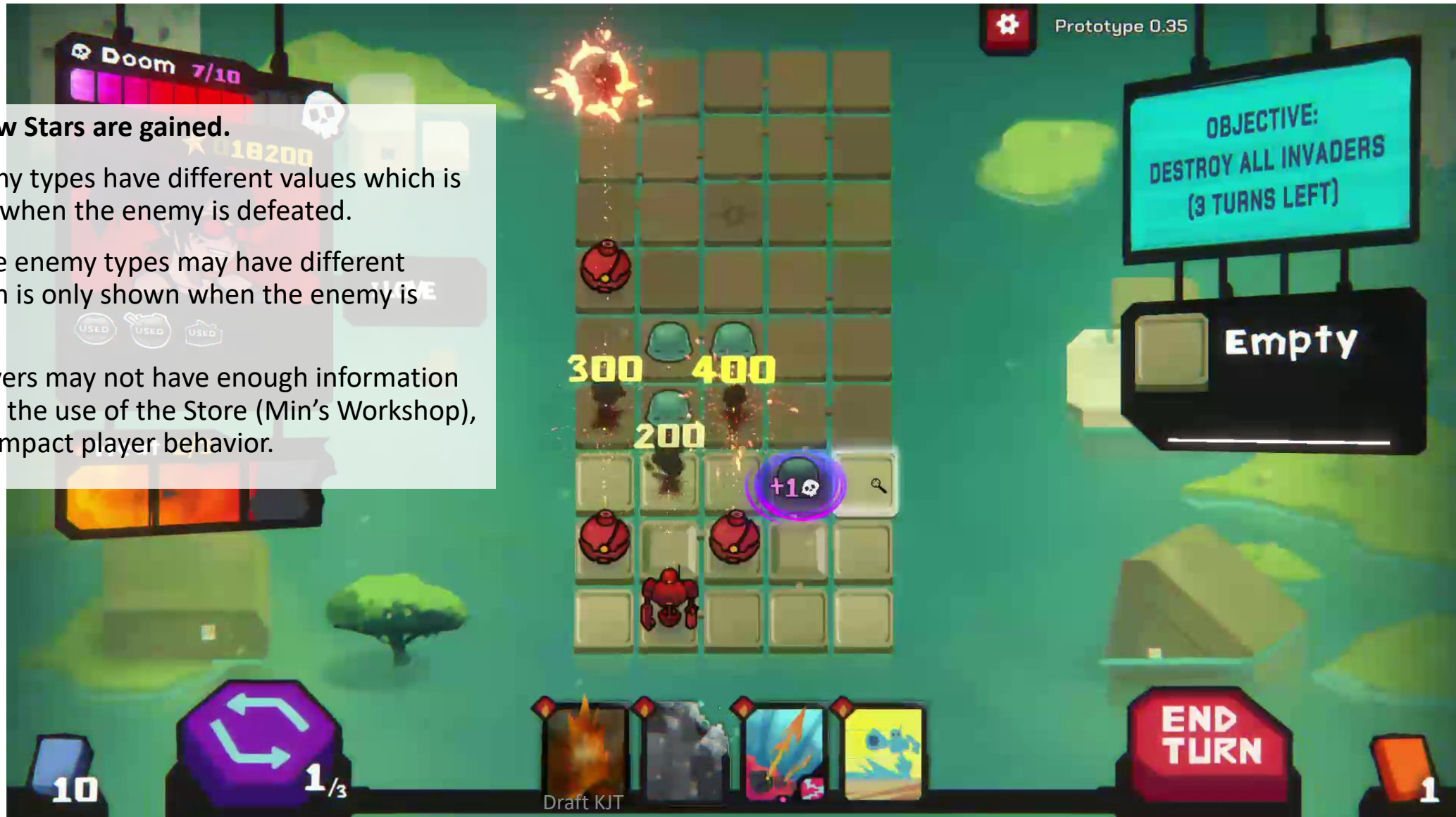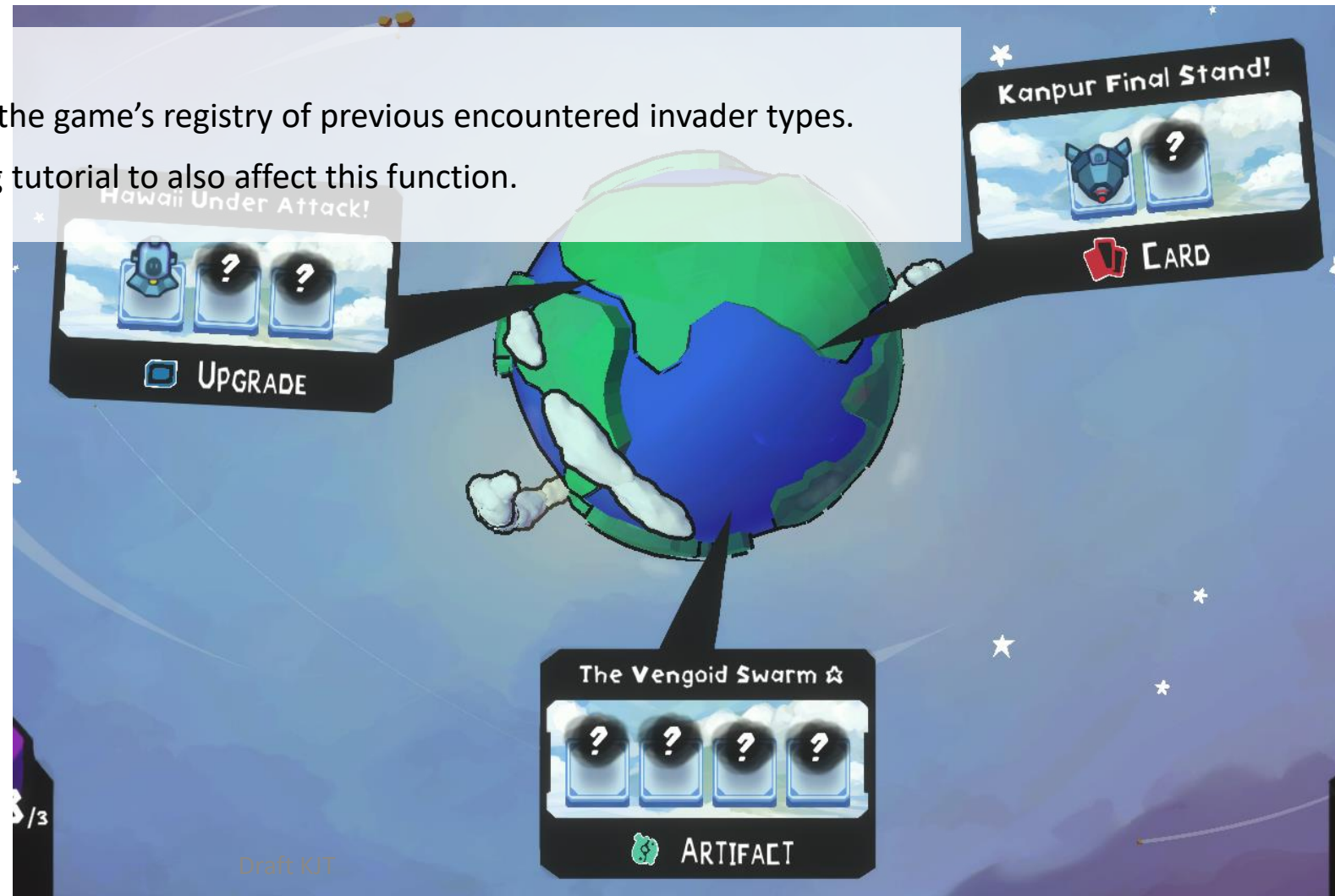
Other

Rocket Fist description

- Cause: The description for Rocket Fist shows as 'Removed'

- Impact: Players may not understand how the card functions until they use it.
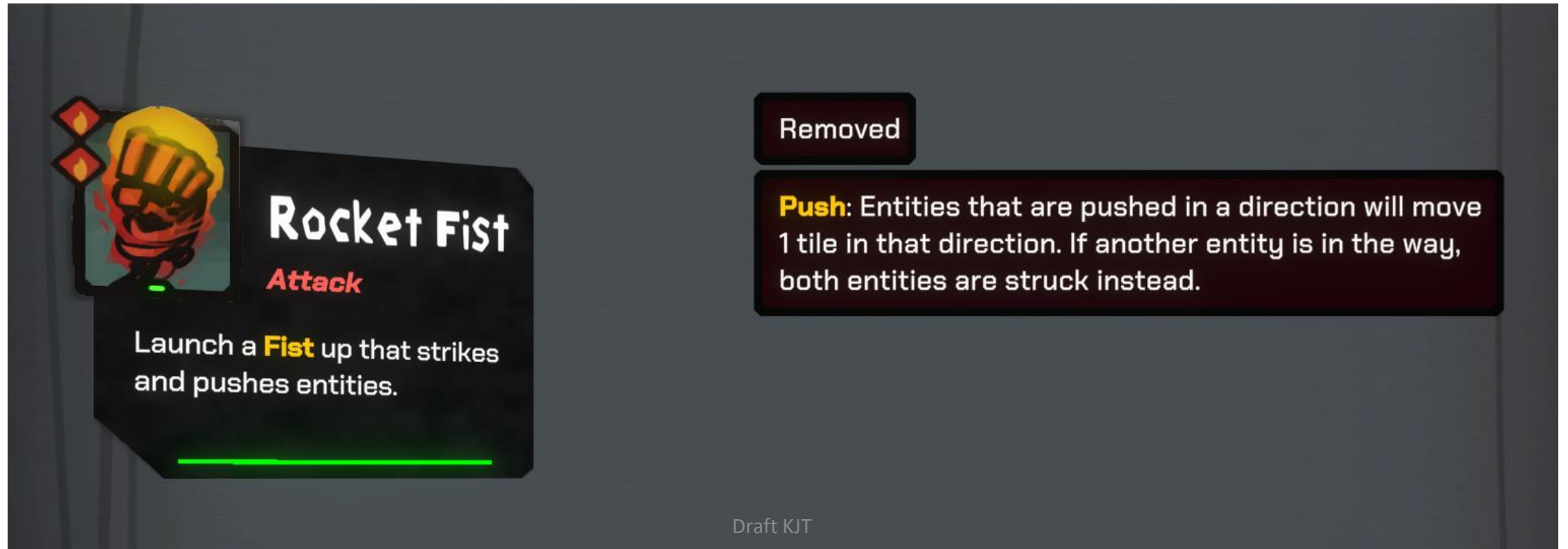
Other

Tutorial reset impacts more than tutorial

- Cause: Resetting the tutorial also resets the game's registry of previous encountered invader types.
- Impact: Players may not expect resetting tutorial to also affect this function.

Other

Issues quitting the game

- Cause: There were 2 of 14 game sessions where the reviewer client crashed attempting exit

- Cause: There were 3 of 14 game sessions where the reviewer client was slow (5+ seconds) to close

Next Steps

Next Steps

- Don't hesitate to reach out to me if you'd like to discuss any of these items or if you have any questions.

- If any items are resolved, I'd be glad to review them again.

- Please provide any feedback you have (on the process, report, etc) to me so that I can improve it moving forward.