

Zinder – Post-Apocalyptic Cultist Dating Simulator

The Challenge: Local Multiplayer. Create a prototype of a 4-player game, in which only one player loses every round.

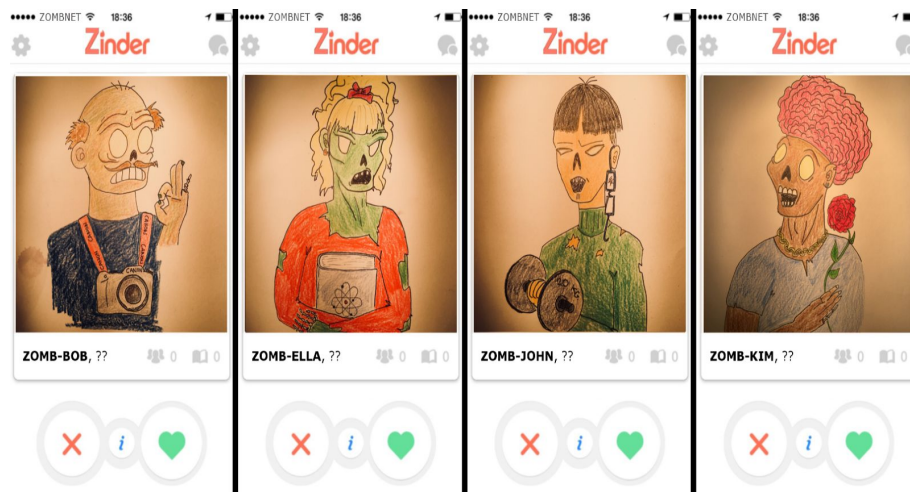
The idea: The world as we know it is ending. Zombies are on the rise, sweeping over the land like a tidal wave, turning everyone into the undead. A small cult of scientists has sheltered themselves in a cabin, where philosophical musings on the next stage of humanity brought upon the following notion:

Becoming zombies is the next stage of human evolution!

Inviting in (read: abducting) 4 zombies from the outside chaos, the cultist scientists take it upon themselves to choose a zombie to court with luxurious gifts. The ultimate goal being to receive the “**KISS OF ZOMBIFICATION™**”, and thusly turning, before living the undead life with the zombie partner of their dreams. The only downside turns out to be that the cultist scientist, which woos their zombies the slowest, will VERY LIKELY (read: absolutely!!) be the first meal of the newly-gathered zombie family. Speed is of the essence, in this courting-with-death business.

Players: 4

Time: ~ 5 minutes



How to Play: Using a controller you first choose a zombie to court. Then, you move your scientist around the cabin to gather courting-presents for your chosen zombie. You can carry a maximum of 3 presents, but can drop anything at any time. When your chosen zombie approves of your courting gift their approval of you rises, as indicated by the heart-meter next to the player's inventory.



Design Considerations: When we had first been given the assignment, we started a brainstorm of possible 4-player games (digital and analog) which had only 1 loser. We acknowledged that we did not want a game where the loser, in the end, felt like they had been ostracized by the other players. Thus, we initially proposed to have a game where the loser was not revealed until the very end - or, alternatively, have the status of the winners/loser be less visible during gameplay. We had to include a game economy to the play experience, and the idea of trading items in the game was a large part of the consideration progress.

We returned to the idea of having a 4-player zombie apocalypse game time and again, discussing ideas of how we could turn the zombie-survivor genre on its head. The goal should be becoming a zombie, and somehow the last person to accomplish this is the loser. We toyed with the zombies' roles in this: NPCs to trade items with, NPCs to exchange knowledge about how to turn undead with, or NPCs to befriend. We settled for a game where the zombies should be "wooed" by the players, with gifts scattered around an environment, which the players can trade with (or keep away from) the other players.

As of right now, there are many elements that still are being fine-tuned and reconsidered. But the zombie-courting and item trading is working.

