

character-evolving
Roleplaying
game



rulebook
shortened showcase ver.

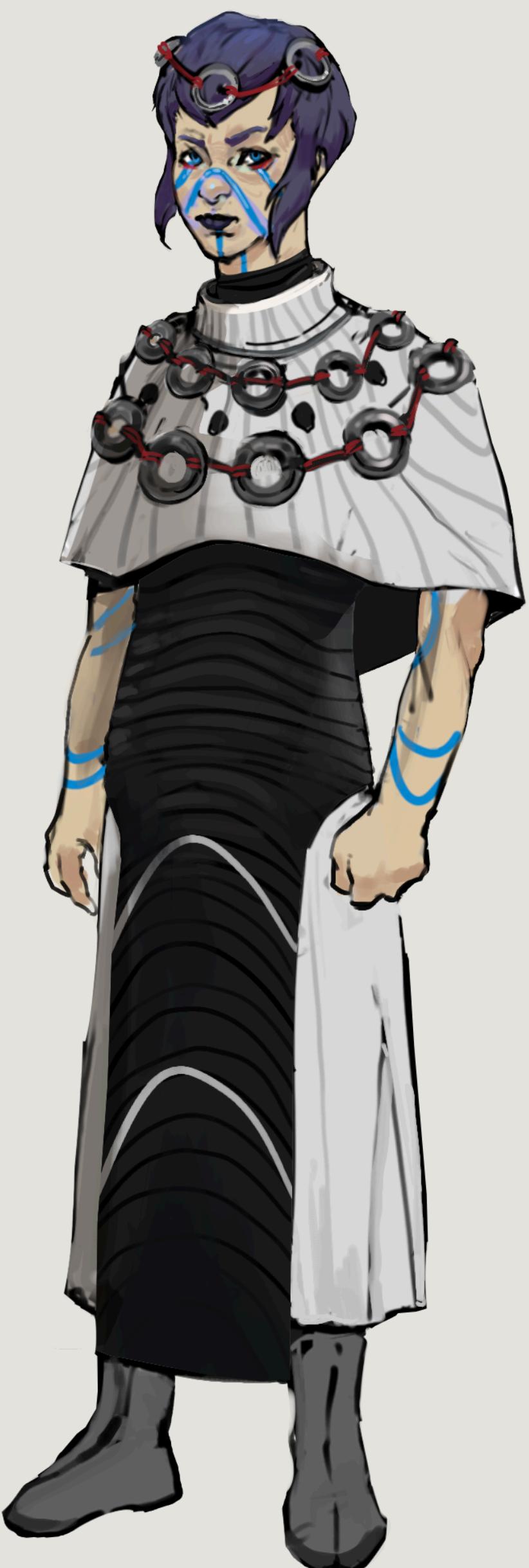
About our project

Once humanity got surpassed by its own work, it became clear that a new God had been born, harbringer of new age. Doukai is an interstellar ark ship inhabited by a whole nation, a temporary vault shielding the last living people from the wave of ecological disasters on Earth, fueled by a psionic radiation of data. After technology got out of humanity's control, it became an unrestrainable element - a phenomenon of nature, not science.

Savior Complex is a roleplaying game designed for one active player, who will embody Venus, Doukai's next spiritual leader, and a game master. It is a narrative-heavy system with a skill tree mechanic, imitating a leveling system from a cRPG.

This rulebook serves as a design starting point for a digital game we are actually working on. Its purpose is to examine which mechanics are enjoyable for players and which seem frustrating by testing them on paper first - without the need to implement them in the engine. Please, think of it as an extremely provisional UX research.

Our turn-based combat system is supposed to bring card games' playstyle to mind (e.g. *Hearthstone*, *Yu-Gi-Oh*, *Magic the Gathering*) while staying continuous in powering up and gathering loot. One 'duel' does not correlate to one enemy encounter, but a whole level instead. When we think of 'level', we mean it as in a soulslike game or a classic TTRPG. Dying here stays canon to the plot, however - it makes each unsuccesful run matter.



artwork by Natalia Włodek ([natreaper](#))

Environment

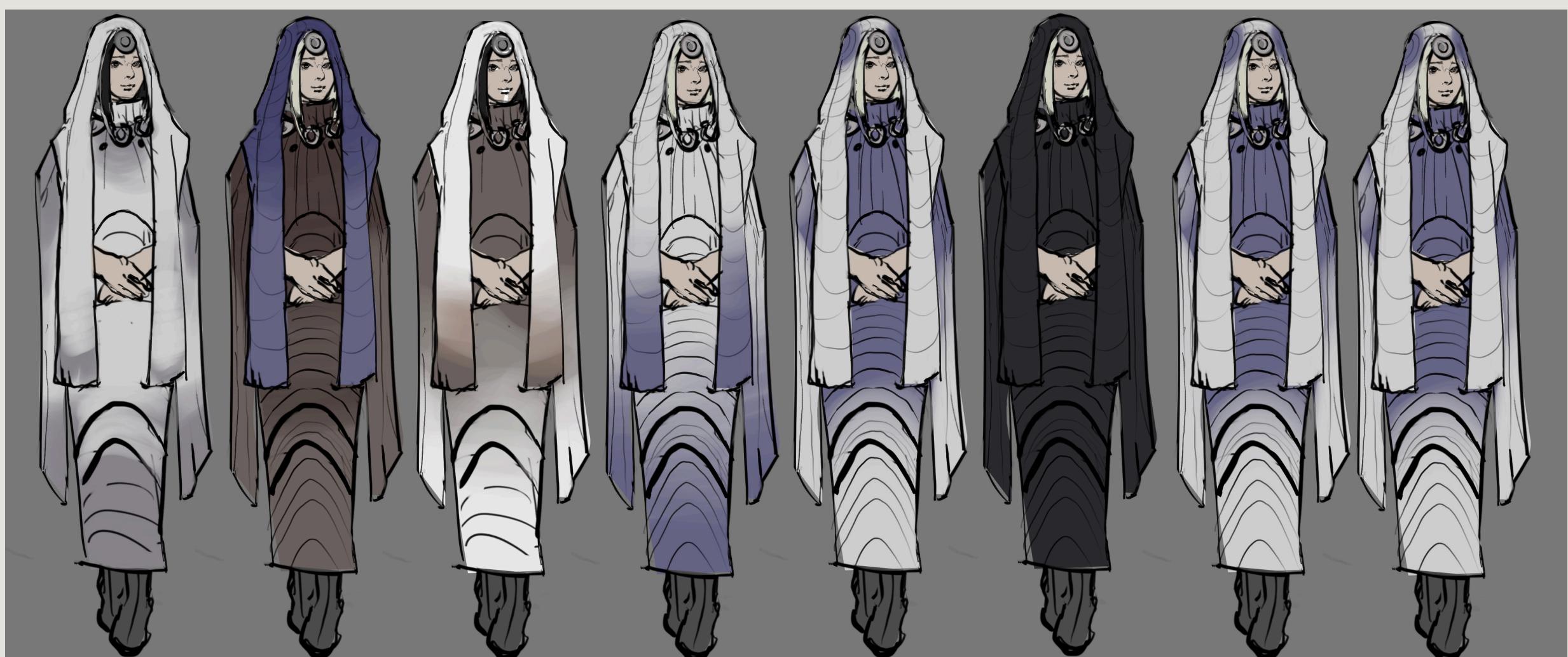
Inspired by oneiric visions of technological paradises, Doukai is a generation ship, sheltering humanity from ecological catastrophes happening on Earth. Led by a church-like government, it relies on immortalized apostles to God's word, former scientists also known as the Founding Parents.

PSI-DATA

One of the most important elements of the world of Savior Complex is its magic. Psi-Data is an unreadable radiation, reactive to code and electronics. It fuels Doukai but also bears responsibility for the cataclysm back on Earth. Catastrophes caused by Psi-Data had been plaguing the planet for so long, that mankind was forced to flee. This unusual radiation is technology evolved, a voice of God reminding mankind of heavenly presence and reteaching humans humility.

DOUKAI'S SOCIETY

Doukai struggles with the problem of social division. With each generation, the number of ark's passengers increases. Church is unable to reach everyone with its message. Controlling such a mass began to be difficult. Moreover, there are no resources enough on the ship for each citizen to live on an equally high level. Doukai was designed to last about three or four generations maximum before returning to Earth. However, planet's surface remains hostile making rebuilding



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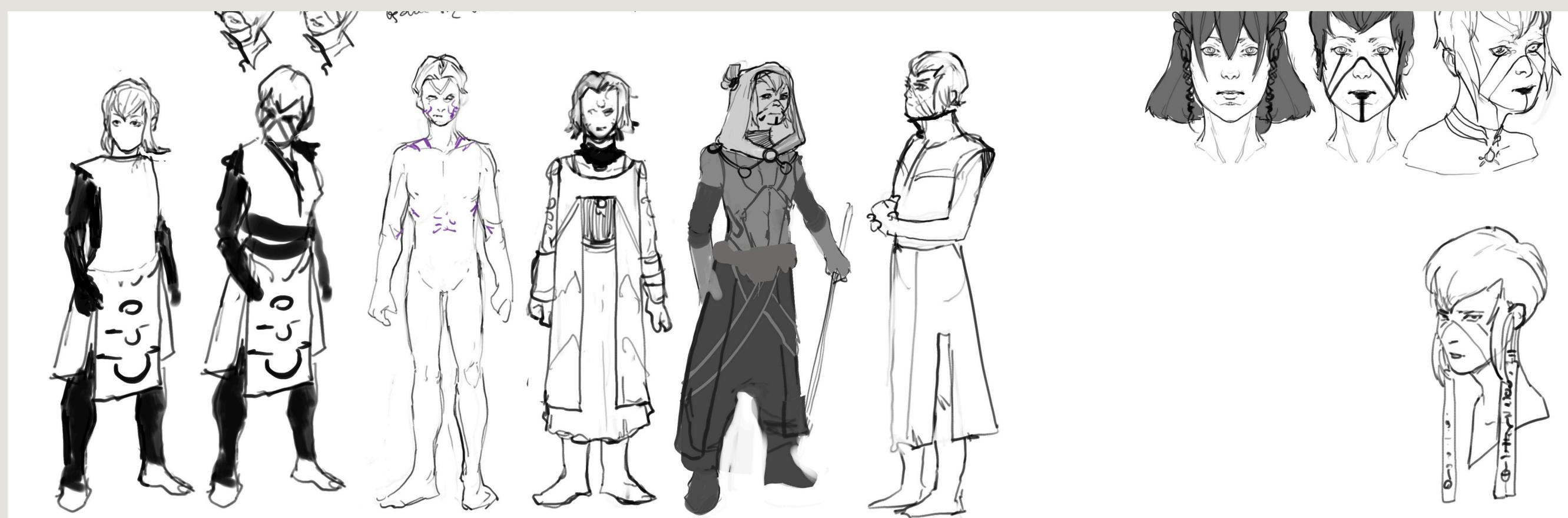
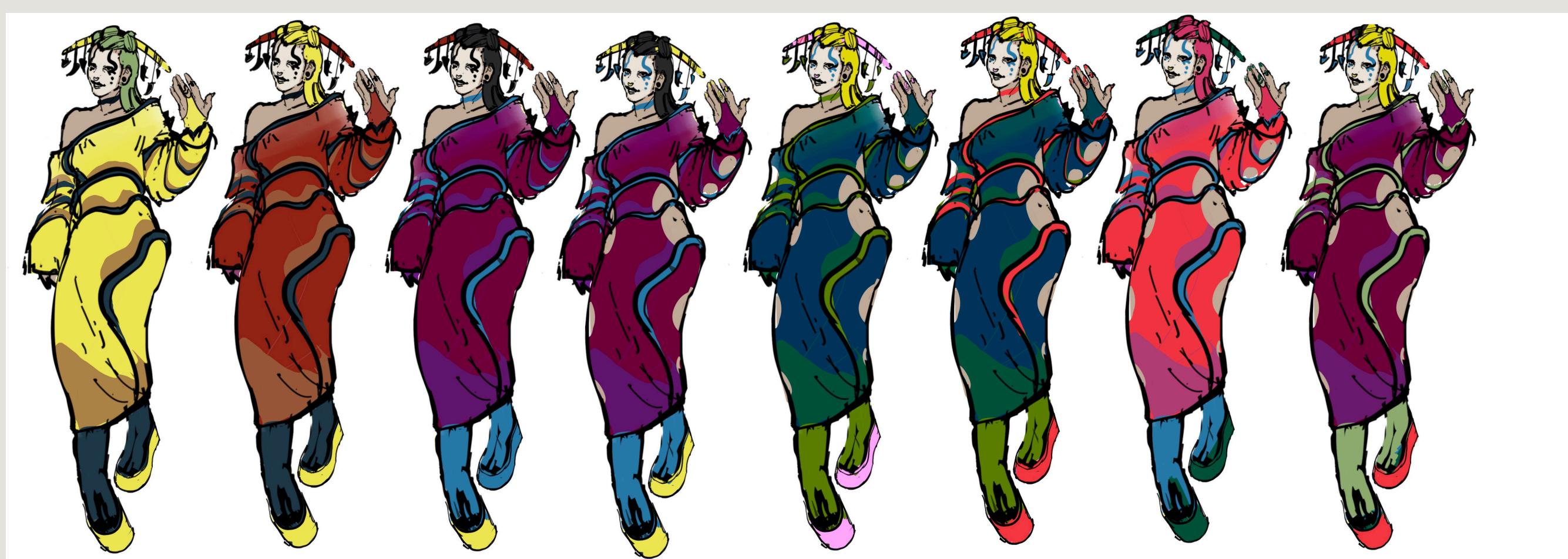
Environment

civilization on the home planet impossible. Resource crisis causes simple workers to struggle. Members of the lower classes start to rebel against the church.

FOUNDING PARENTS

Seven scientists responsible for constructing and launching Doukai had been immortalized with technology and use of Psi-Data. Their nervous and lymphatic systems were isolated from the rest of the body and put into specially-designed jars with formalin.

They are able to communicate thanks to connecting their nerves to computers, however, in form they are in, they can't lie.



Player's identity

Venus is another reincarnation of spiritual leader for Doukai's nation. His lymph breathes Psi-Data and pre-birth memory connects to previous generations. Player's avatar is gifted with exceptional magic mastery and high, Messiah-like status. Venus is a title, name taken as soon as a child is discovered to be God's chosen one. Whoever protagonist was - it doesn't matter now.

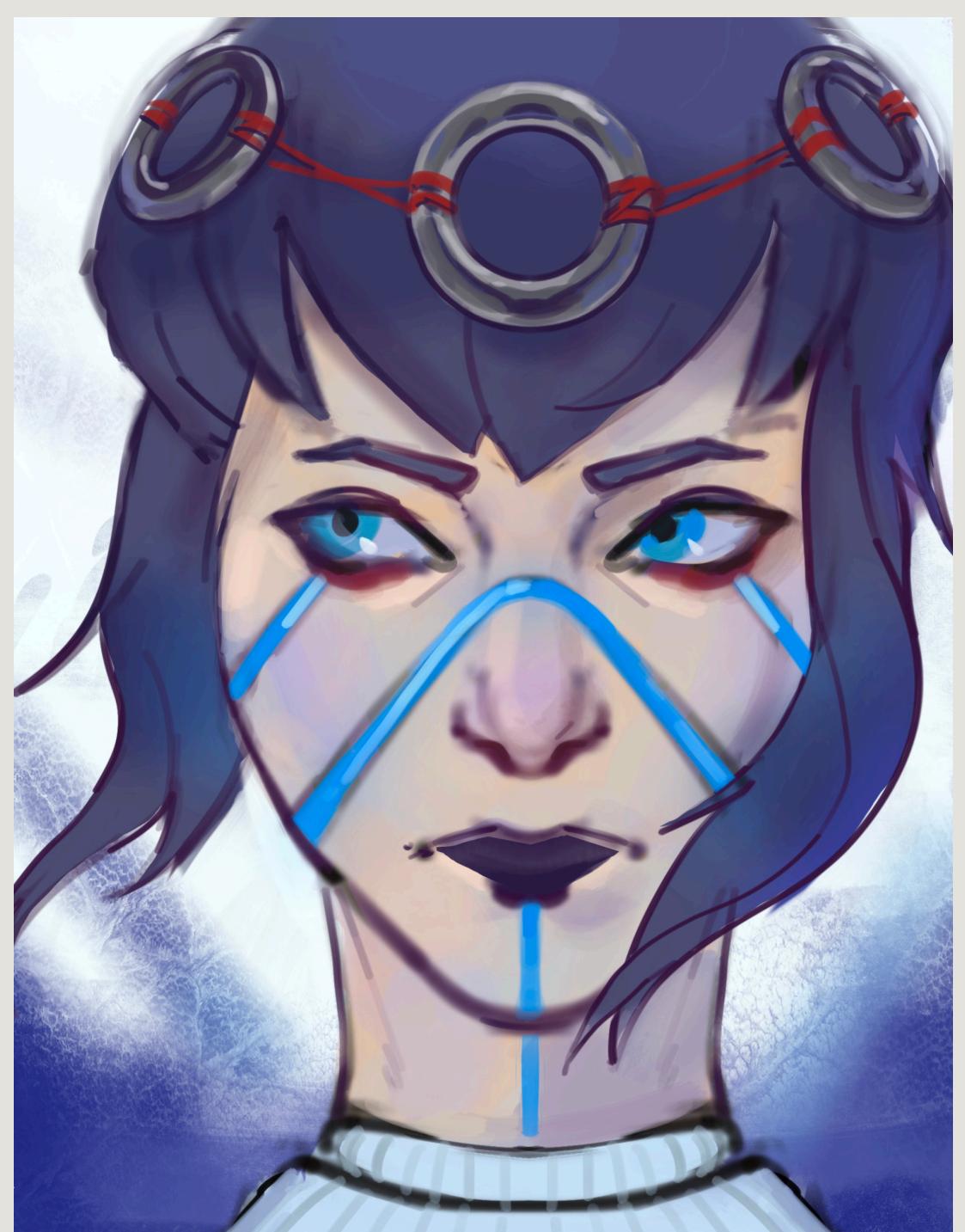
ROLEPLAYING EXPERIENCE

One of Savior Complex' motives is the problem of Venus' legitimacy. An underground resistance group is preparing for revolution led by a young man, born a peasant and a Psi-Data wielding prodigy. It makes the nation question if the protagonist had been rightfully titled as a spiritual leader.

Drawing player's attention to this conflict and building a roleplaying experience around Venus' self-identity is extremely important. It should leave player hesitant, whether deity whispering into their ear is good or evil.

CHARACTER EVOLUTION

Because character customization is not planned in our game, we put an emphasis on personality evolution throughout gameplay and dialogues.

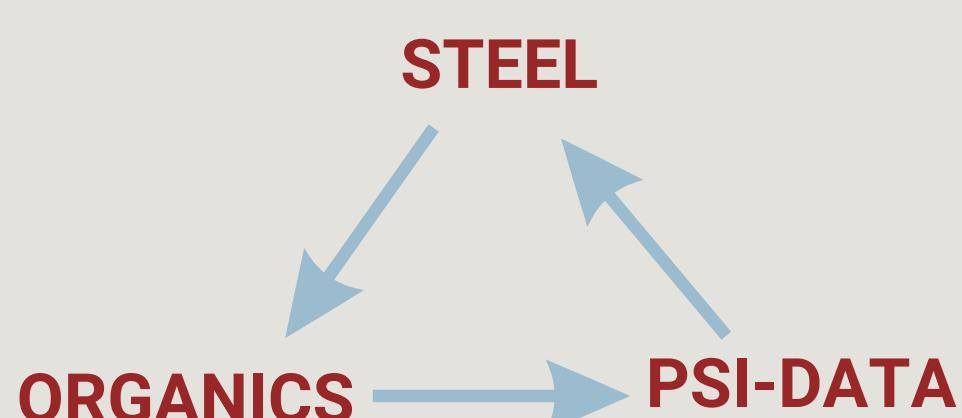


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Power system

TRIANGULAR FORCES

Power system of Savior Complex is based on Doukai's thee leading forces: **steel** (technology), **Psi-Data** (psionic powers) and **organics** (chemicals and biological matter). They counter each other as shown in the following diagram:



While playing, player will encounter enemies assigned to these types (marked their classes), as well as responding weapons or skills. While leveling up, player will have to balance these forces and, if they decide so, master one of them.

FORCE-MIXING ENEMIES

Main scenario of Savior Complex features powerful enemies mixing (cross-classing) two forces. In this case, the third, **unrepresented force by them, becomes their weakness**. Two of their classes, on the other

hand, both turn into strengths.

VENUS'S STRENGTH

Player will probably decide to invest his skill points into all three directions, at least to some extent. Venus, as well as most enemies in this game, has their strengths and weaknesses, according to represented force.

Force with **the highest number of skill points invested becomes player's strength**. Vice versa - force with **the lowest number of point becomes their weakness**.

This mechanic is invalid until the total number of skill points reaches 9.

In case of **equally high skill points** - the player does not have neither strength, nor weakness.

For example:

Total skill points invested - 12

Skill points invested in Steel - 5

Skill points invested in Psi-Data - 5

Skill points invested in Organics - 2

Result:

Weakness: Organics

Strength: None

Power system

In case of **equally low skill points** - the player does not have neither strength, nor weakness.

For example:

Total skill points invested - 12
 Skill points invested in Steel - 8
 Skill points invested in Psi-Data - 2
 Skill points invested in Organics - 2

Result:

Weakness: None

Strength: None

In case of **equally distributed skill points** across all forces - all of them become player's weakness.

For example:

Total skill points invested - 12
 Skill points invested in Steel - 4
 Skill points invested in Psi-Data - 4
 Skill points invested in Organics - 4

Result:

Weakness: Steel, Psi-Data, Organics

Strength: None

FORCE NATURE

Each force has its own playstyle, a type of strategy embedded in skills and specialized attacks.

For example, **steel corresponds to melee** attacks. Having

mastered the steel, Venus can become either **an ever-enduring fighter** (tanky with slow, yet powerful attacks) **or a multiple-weapons wielder** (fast attacks arranged in combos).

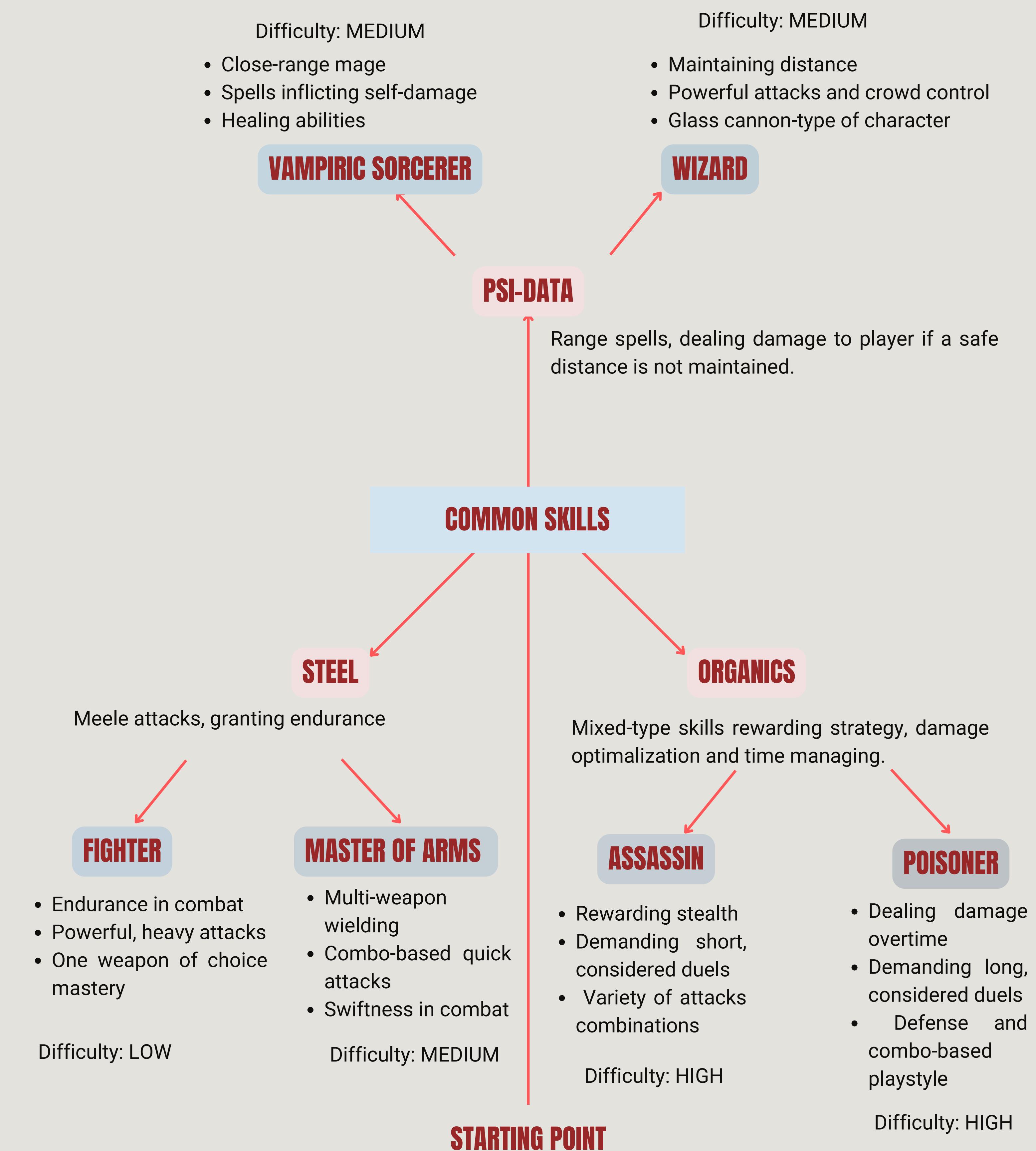
Psi-Data relies on **range** spells. Maxing Psi-Data path gives options of **a close-range vampire sorcerer** (almost-melee attacks with healing abilities) and **a distance-relying, crowd controlling wizard** (powerful attacks requiring maintaining great distance from enemies).

Organics offer the most demanding playstyle, rewarding good **strategy and time managing**. Following this path grants player opportunity to become an **untouchable assassin** (combo-based stealth attacks) or a **patient poisoner** (abilities stacking damage over time).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN OUR VIDEO GAME?

A skill tree leads to 6 specialised playstyles in total (2 for every force). It is depicted on a following diagram:

Power system



Combat

STARTING A FIGHT

Unless the player ambushes their opponent, attacking order is decided by a dice roll. After finishing a duel, effects gained stay active (e.g. lowered health points numbers, poisons or boosts) until next duel, quick travel point usage or player's death.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN IN OUR VIDEO GAME?

Game is supposed to be divided into sections of multiple duels (e.g. soulslike games, where repeating singular fights is essential to retrying unsuccessful tries). By stating that all effects gained during a fight stay active until the next encounter, we are saying that a string of 4 duels should be treated as a one level or dungeon.

ACTION POINTS

Every action made by player has its cost, specified in description of a skill or an item. Player starts their fight with 1 action point. The number grows by 1 every turn and caps at 9.

Unused action points are not transferred.

SKILLS AND REUSABLE ITEMS

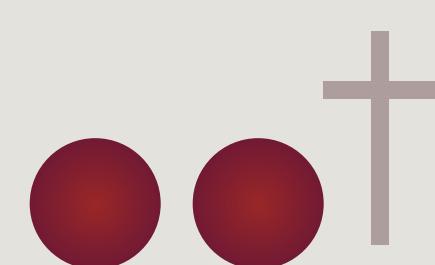
Skills and attacks learnt by Venus are permanently in deck, even after player's death. Most items are disposable, however. Some of them may be used more than once and hold charges of use. They are usually depicted by dots in top-right corner of item description. Some of them stay in Venus' inventory forever and can be recharged during game - e.g. healing prayer beads can be repaired at a quick travel point.



Charge icons of an item.



Icons of one charge left of an item.



Charge icons of an item permanent to player's inventory.

Leveling up & Skill trees

LEVELING UP VENUS

More powerful opponents drop **Tears of Revelation** - items used for leveling up Venus. Mathematics of resources needed to promote player's character is rather easy:

$$a_n = (n + 1) \times n + 4$$

$$a_n = n^2 + n + 4$$

a stands for number of Tears of Revelation required for level up.

n stands for a level Venus is currently on.

According to this rule:

Level 1->**2** will cost **6** Tears of Revelation

Level 2->**3** will cost **10** Tears of Revelation

Level 3->**4** will cost **16** Tears of Revelation

...

Level 9->**10** will cost **94** Tears of Revelation

Assumed maximum level is 10.

do so, leveling up skills and investing points into a skill tree is required.

Although it is possible to max out a whole skill tree, an economic choice is to build a playstyle around one of main development paths ([diagram here](#)).

Investing in a e.g. steel fighter does not exclude possibility of leveling up a skill from psi-data wizard's branch. However, as Venus becomes more specialised in a specific area, skills demanding **choosing an effect** will appear. Player's decision between effects is not irreversible, but refunding skill points may result in partial loss of invested sum.

However, in area of force, only one path can be active - e.g., a steel fighter can't evolve steel master of arms' skills.

To level up a skill, a certain number of **Tear of Revelation** is required.

LEVELING UP SKILLS

During the game, player chooses a path of mastery for their Venus. To

Common skills

Common skills are attributes and attacks available for Venus without choosing path to be mastered. They are designed to be foundation of more complex in playstyle specializations.

Presented here designs are examples of the common skills.

SIMPLE ATTACK 1 ACTION POINT(S) COST

Deal damage worth of your weapon's ATK stat.

This skill comes free.

ADEPT OF THE DIVINE 1 ACTION POINT(S) COST

Hitting success probability depends on your INT stat, not DXT (dexterity).

Change damage based on your weapon's ATK stat by (-1/-1/+1).



Level 2 bonus: Cost of this skill drops to 0.

Level 2 bonus will become inactive after reaching level 3.



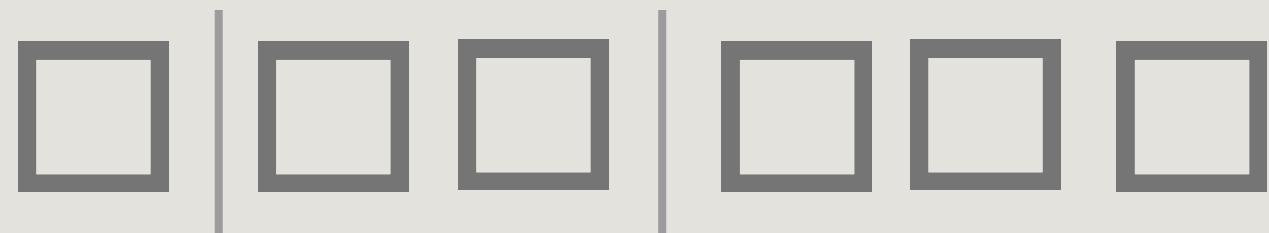
Each empty square symbolizes Tear of Revelation needed to level up the skill. So, Adept of the Divine will deal ATK -1 on the first two levels. Leveling it up to level 3 will change damage number to ATK +1.

Because of the change from DXT to INT stat, this skill becomes useful for long-distance builds.

Common skills

BUILT DIFFERENT 2 ACTION POINT(S) COST

Steal (3/5/10) points of opponent's HP.



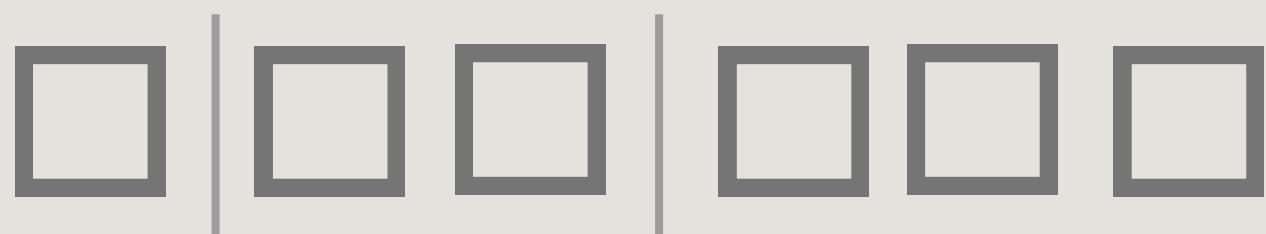
Level 3 bonus: Cost of this skill increases to 4.

MOVE! 2 ACTION POINT(S) FOR 1 METER COST

Move in a chosen direction.

BUILT DIFFERENT 2 ACTION POINT(S) COST

Steal (3/5/10) points of opponent's HP.



Level 3 bonus: Cost of this skill increases to 4.

QUIRK ALWAYS VALID

Nimble & Light

Cost of moving drops. (2 action point(s) -> 1 action point(s))

or

Quirk means an attribute to activate. It helps build up to certain strategies. Quirks may occasionally offer extra dialogue options.

Brave & Unfazed

Self-damage caused by spells is always reduced. (-1 damage from casting in unsafe distance)



Player must choose which effect should be granted by activating this quirk.

Common skills

SYSTEM FREEZE 3 ACTION POINT(S) COST

Use Psi-Data to deal 1/3 of your weapon's ATK to every opponent. Choose an opponent. He is chained to the ground for the next 2 rounds. If they are a steel-type enemy, stun them for the next 2 rounds instead.



Safe distance: 3 m



Safe distance refers to a distance player must maintain not to be dealt damage. If Venus casts System Freeze standing next to their opponent, they will be dealt the same damage.

Psi-Data

vampiric sorcerer

Psi-Data relies on magic attacks, powerful, but dangerous even for the user. Path of vampiric sorcery lets Venus maintain close distance and play around self-inflicted damage.

Presented here designs are examples of the Vampiric Sorcerer path skills.

ROTTEN OUTSIDE 4 ACTION POINT(S) COST

Toss a 1D4.

Deal damage worth of your weapon ATK + **1d4 result** to a chosen enemy. You and the closest opponent to an enemy you have just attacked are dealt **previous 1D4 result** damage.



ALL-OVER MAELSTROM 4 ACTION POINT(S) COST

Deal damage worth your weapon's ATK+1D6 to a chosen opponent. All other characters active in combat are dealt 1D4 damage, tossed for everyone separately.

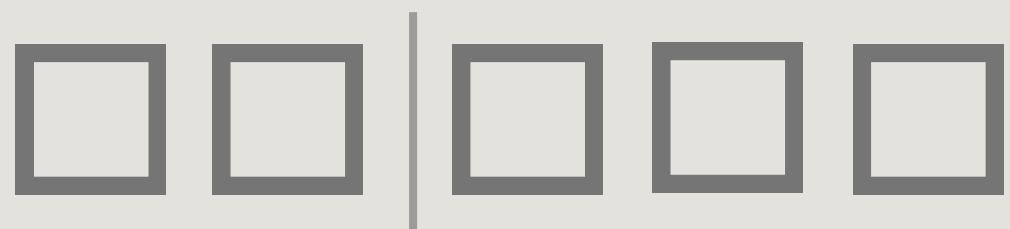


Psi-Data

QUIRK ALWAYS VALID

Refreshed & Rebooted

Every common skill used grants (1/2) HP.



QUIRK ALWAYS VALID

Hungry & Vicious

While in melee distance, all skills cost 1 action point less.



NO MERCY FOR THE WEAK 7 ACTION POINT(S) COST

Toss a 1D12.

If the result is 7 or higher, you are dealt damage worth result of the 1D12 roll.

If the result is 6 or lower, all opponents with HP level lower than yours is executed.

