

Malice in Murderland

Y3 FMP ADD – Josie-Lea Hood

Brief

A 2D horror open-world game reimagining of the classic *Alice in Wonderland* story.

Alice, a young girl, has always been ostracised by her peers due to her unapproachable look, deemed “creepy” by others. One day she struggles to cope and closes her eyes wishing to disappear only to suddenly find herself in strange surroundings. A white rabbit guides her to Wonderland, an unsettling place filled with many dangerous individuals. On her journey she must defend herself, kill or be killed, in order to survive and move forward. At the end of her adventure she returns from her journey through her mind to find that the inhabitants of Wonderland weren't purely her imagination; a number of people in her life have been killed, the blood on her hands.

Project Overview

- Character Designs
 1. Alice
 2. Mad Hatter
 3. Hare
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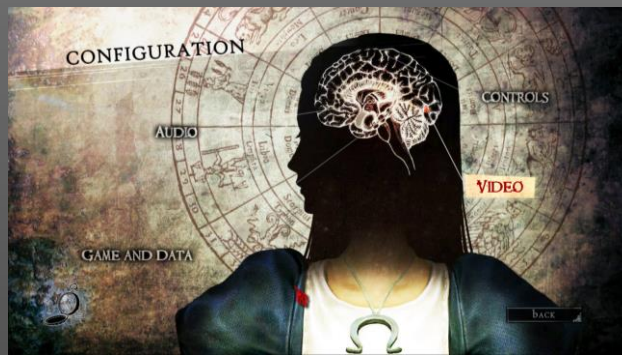
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Inspirations

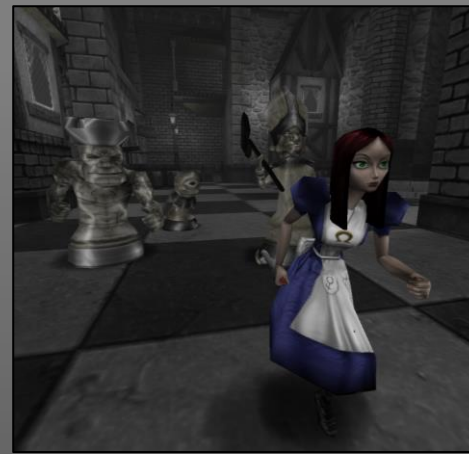
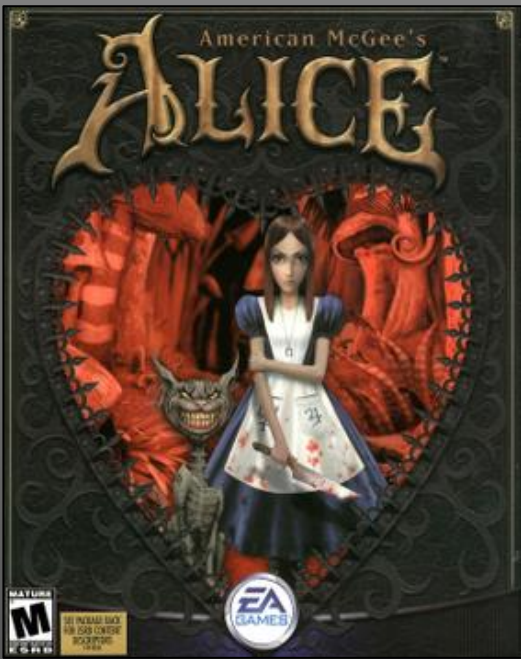
Games



I took a lot of inspiration from the American McGee's Alice Games,

particularly the second one; Alice madness returns, as this one is much more fleshed out than the original. It has a very interesting take on a horror style Alice game, and was not only great for inspiration, but also to help me know what I could do to make my concepts feel unique. In particular, I really like its diversity in weapons and clothing, as well as the storybook style cutscenes. I also love the UI and Menu designs as they feel uniquely beautiful as well as thematic to the story in a way that I'd love to emulate.





The original game, American McGee's Alice, is a lot simpler as it was made 11 years prior and had much more limited resources. It is however the originator for a lot of the things that inspire me in the sequel and therefore a great reference in combination. I also much prefer the weapon variety in this game as it is much more vast, though it lacks the upgrade system that the sequel has. The cutscenes are also more simple rendered scenes instead of the storybook style. I also find it interesting to compare these character designs with the newer ones and use both of them as references when designing my own. The two games also have vastly



different environments and so they both have unique references that can be taken from them



HOLLOW KNIGHT



Hollow Knight is the biggest inspiration gameplay wise as it has most of the basic elements of the 2D open world game I'd like to create. Its map is a great example of what I'd ideally want to make and its simplistic art style is also very similar to what I'd like to go for. I also really love the feel of the combat, however I wouldn't want to create a souls-like game. I'm also a big fan of how monochromatic the backgrounds are, as they help tie each area together by conforming to a very distinct colour scheme, however I would want to forego some of the detail, as these backgrounds are very rendered and painterly.



Fable is a less direct inspiration, and more simply my favourite example of an open world game. Fable 3 in particular also has the closest aesthetical similarities to what I'm going for which is why it was chosen despite not necessarily being the best example of the franchise. Fable in general has a great balance of mature topics whilst still maintaining a humorous feel that keeps it interesting and enjoyable to play. When creating an open world game I would love to be able to create a similar balance and just as enjoyable gameplay. One of my favourite features of fable games as well is the players ability to choose between playing a good or evil character, and how there are a wide array of actions in the game that alter the appearance of your character. I think it is a great way for a character to feel personalised to the player without needing explicit customization. It's something I'd love to implement if I ever created the game.



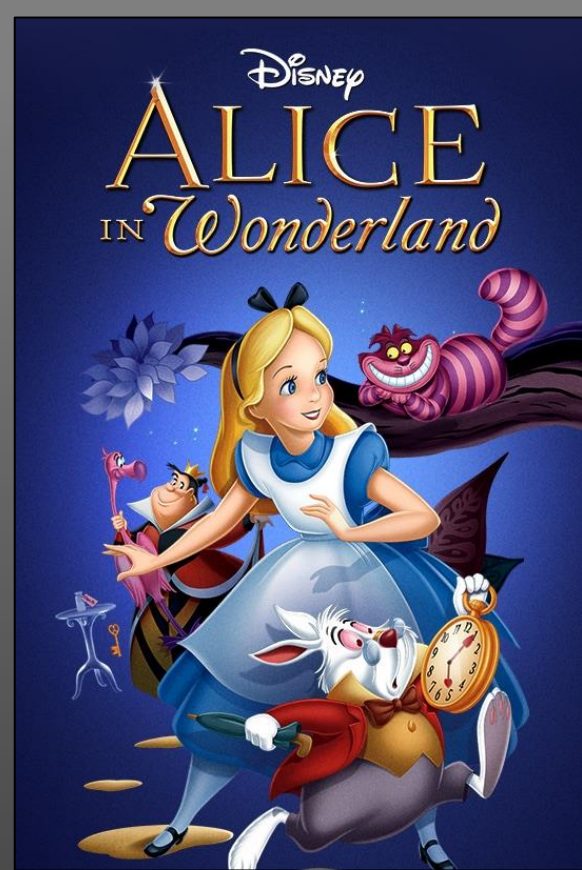
Inspirations

Other Media



Fran Bow is a big inspiration for the feel I want the game to have. I like how it revolves around an innocent seeming main character and then contrasts with very dark horror visuals and themes. Some people who have heard my story idea have also commented that it reminds them of Fran Bow and so I am also trying to make sure it doesn't stray too close to it. I really love the grotesque close-ups it has for certain scenes and that is something I'd very much like to implement were I ever to make the game.





The Disney animation of Alice in Wonderland is thematically very different from my project, however I think its important to look at all of the source material, not only to be familiar with the story, but also to know what has been done before in order to help create something unique. It also helps to analyse what makes certain Characters recognisable. This interpretation of the story is arguable the most popular and recognisable, and so it in particular feels important to look at in order to attempt to create something just as memorable and likeable. This animation was created to take the original novel and make it more digestible and child-friendly, which is why it is very bright and colourful and has cut out some of the more strange and slightly disturbing aspects of the original. When reimagining it for a more mature audience it therefore seems important to bring back those parts and possibly even push them to be more horrific.

ALICE IN WONDERLAND

The Original 1865 Edition With Complete Illustrations
By Sir John Tenniel (A Classic Novel of Lewis Carroll)



LEWIS CARROLL



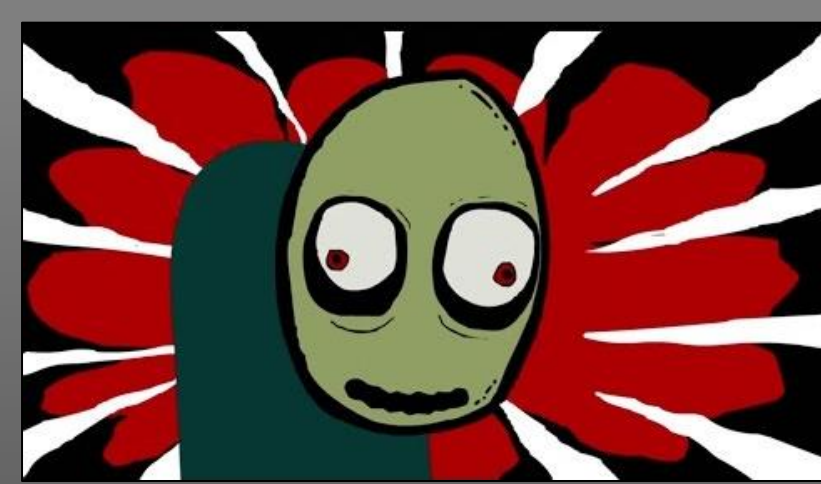
Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland is the original story of Alice and therefore probably the most important piece of reference. Taking inspiration from this is crucial in order to assure that my project accurately captures the spirit of Alice in Wonderland. What is also interesting about this book is that there are several scenes that I feel have been forgotten about by the general public due to being omitted from the Disney animation.





The Tim Burton movie of Alice in Wonderland is another slightly more mature take on the story, but without straying into a horror genre. Like the 1951 animation it is very colourful and bright, however it takes some turns into darker grungier aesthetic during heavier themes. This film has some great character designs and very likeable and memorable personalities. I would really like to attempt to recreate this same energy in my designs.

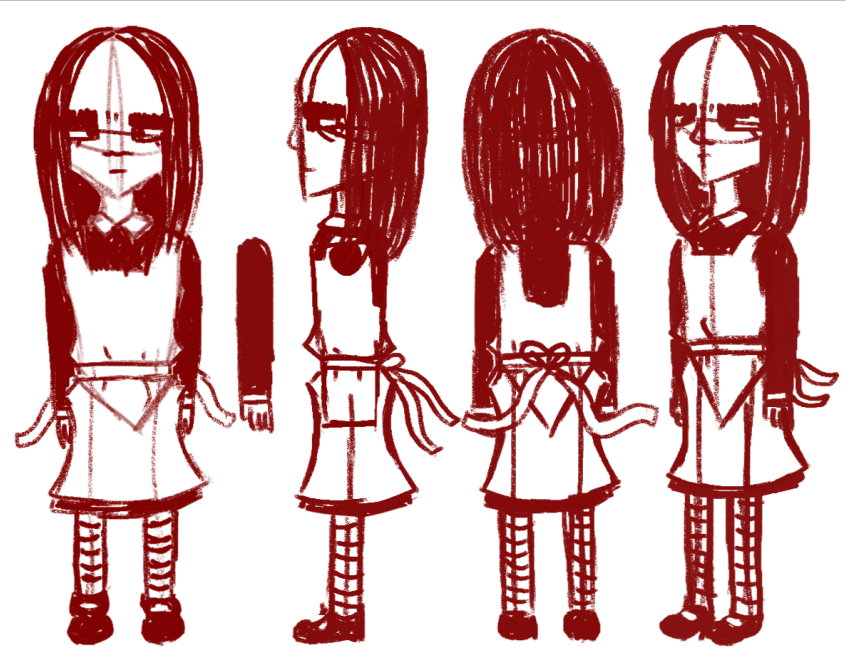




Salad Fingers is thematically very different to what I am going for, but what I really appreciate about it is the disturbing imagery and the unsettling tone. It is very simplistic in its design and surface level story-telling, but the hidden narratives and horror scenes have really great sinister detail and depth. I really want to analyse the pacing and the art of the show to try and recreate some of these aspects in order to be able to create the right horror ambience I'm looking for.


Character design

Alice



Alice
A.K.A. Malice
A twisted girl who struggles to fit into her own world, but went on an unexpected journey of self-discovery in the strange place of Murderland.


- traits:
- emotionless personality
 - murderous tendencies
 - occasional death-wish



Alice
A.K.A: Malice
A twisted girl who struggles to fit into her own world, but found unexpected solace in the strange place of Murderland.

traits:

- emotionless personality
- murderous tendencies
- occasional death-wish



School Uniform

PJ's



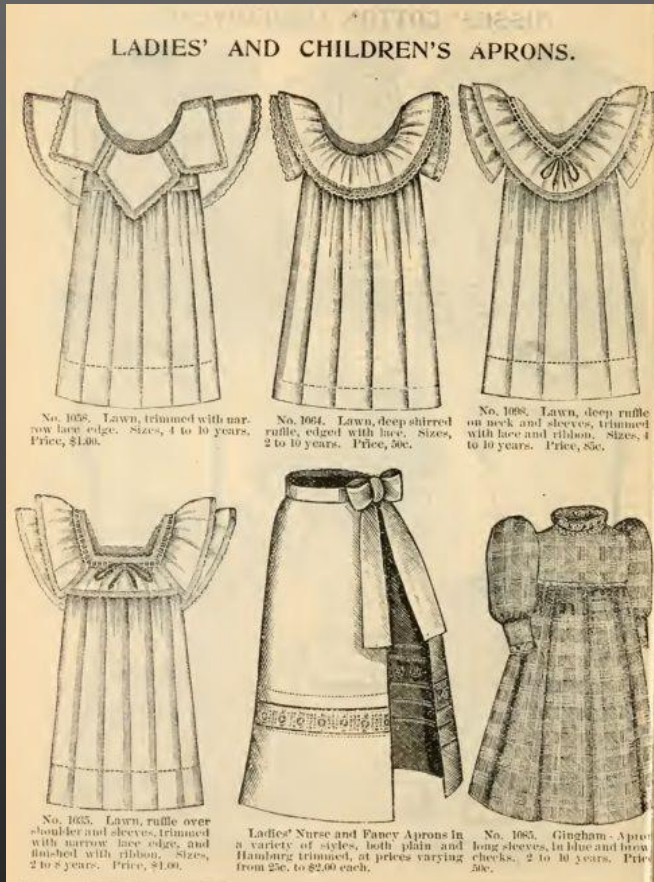
The first design I worked on was Alice, and I started off by creating 3 variations. The two original features I wanted to keep were her apron and her strong eyebrows, as both of these felt like they were important to both her character and her design. One of the variations I created was inspired by the classic Disney look, one by my 2020 design, and the third was an attempt at finding the middle ground between the two. There were a few elements that I liked from these, however the biggest one was that I realised I did want to keep her dress black, or at the very least a very dark blue. From there I continued making a number of designs just to see what would stick.



Design variations



Once I felt like I had a good variety of iterations drawn out, I marked which parts I liked and which ones were an absolute no for me. I found that I really liked the high-neck and short hair combo as it not only looked great, but was also vastly different to any Alice designs I've seen. I also really liked the frilly apron design, but it gives her a more high-class look, which I hadn't fully settled on yet. For the variations I took inspiration from old Victorian aprons as well as existent Alice designs to create a variety of different design ideas. I also tried out a bunch of different hairstyles to try and find something that still felt like Alice but was uniquely different from past designs.



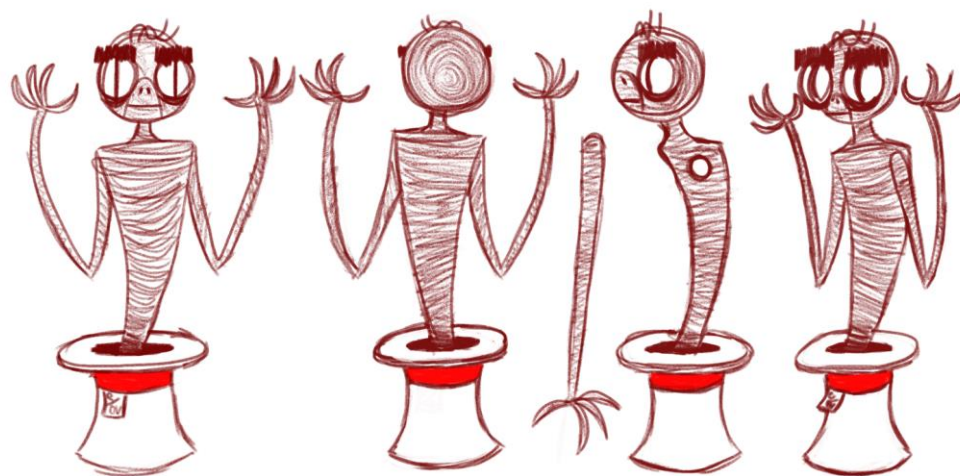


I drew out how I wanted to combine these features I had marked out and since I was happy with the design I decided to settle on it. At this point I also made some decisions on her facial appearance. According to the narrative she is supposed to be an outcast who is ridiculed by her peers. The primary reason for this is supposed to be that she looks intimidating to them, which in the original design I indicated by giving her strong furrowed brows. This was a feature that I wanted to keep in this new design, however to hone in on the idea of her being bullied for her looks, I decided I also wanted her to have a convex nose. It's a feature that is heavily stigmatised but doesn't in any way take away from the appeal of the design. By now I had settled on the style I wanted and so to finalise I rendered the sketch I made and was left with a semi-final sprite of the Character.



Character design

Mad Hatter

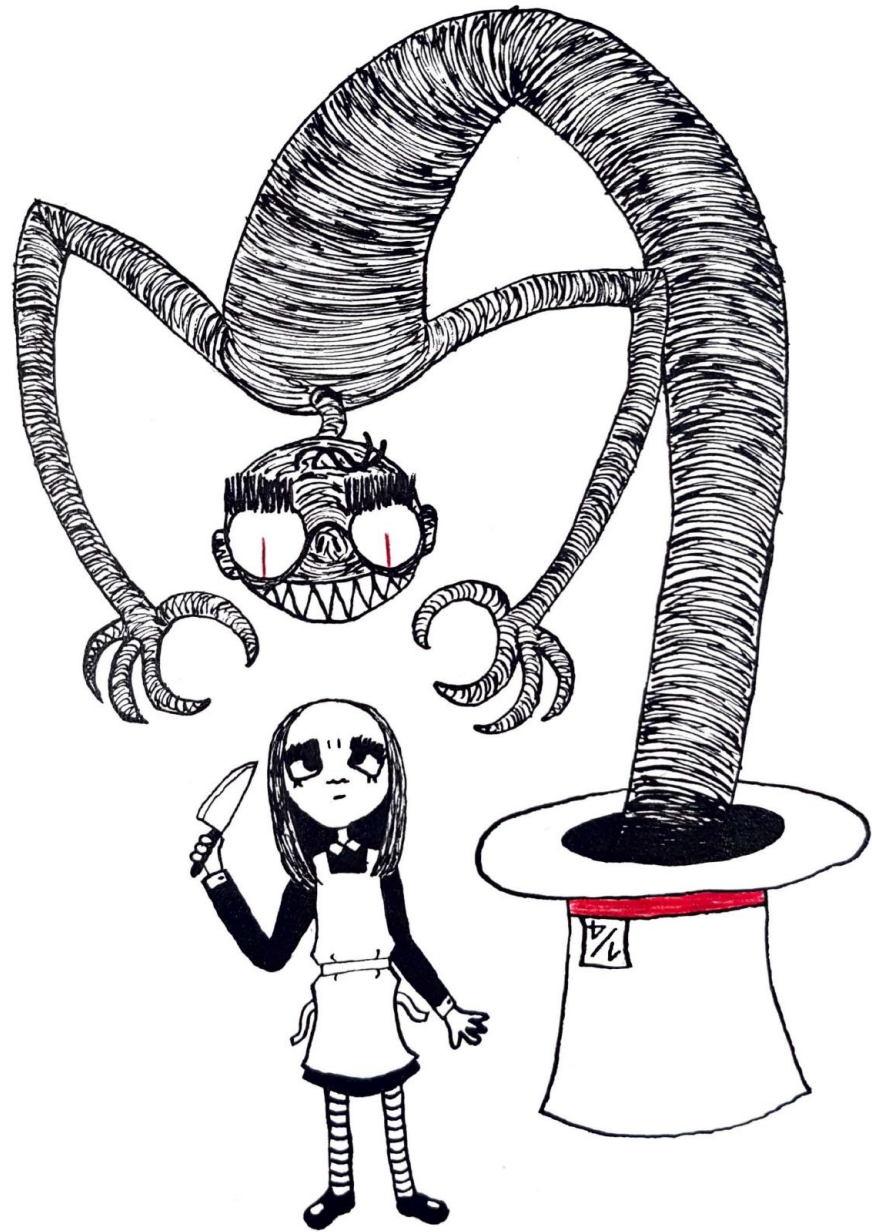
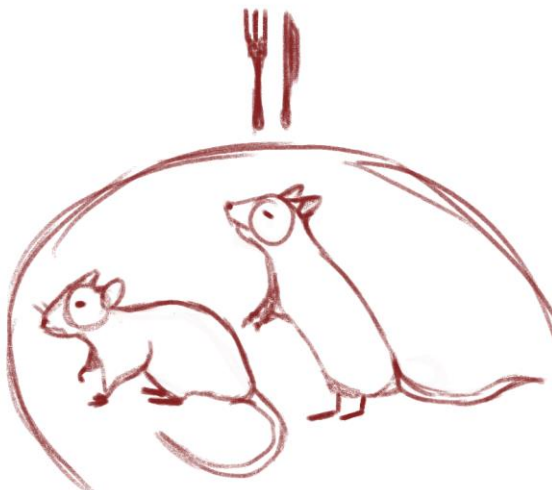
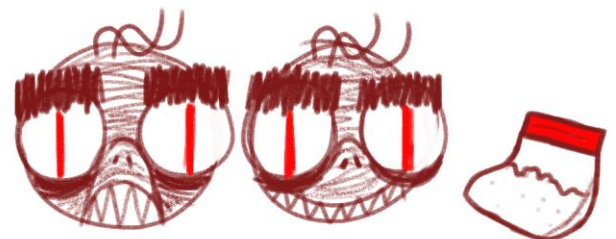


Mad Hatter

A strange creature who creates and inhabits hats of all kind. When this started, noone knows, but it is said he went mad inside his own creations and hasn't left since.

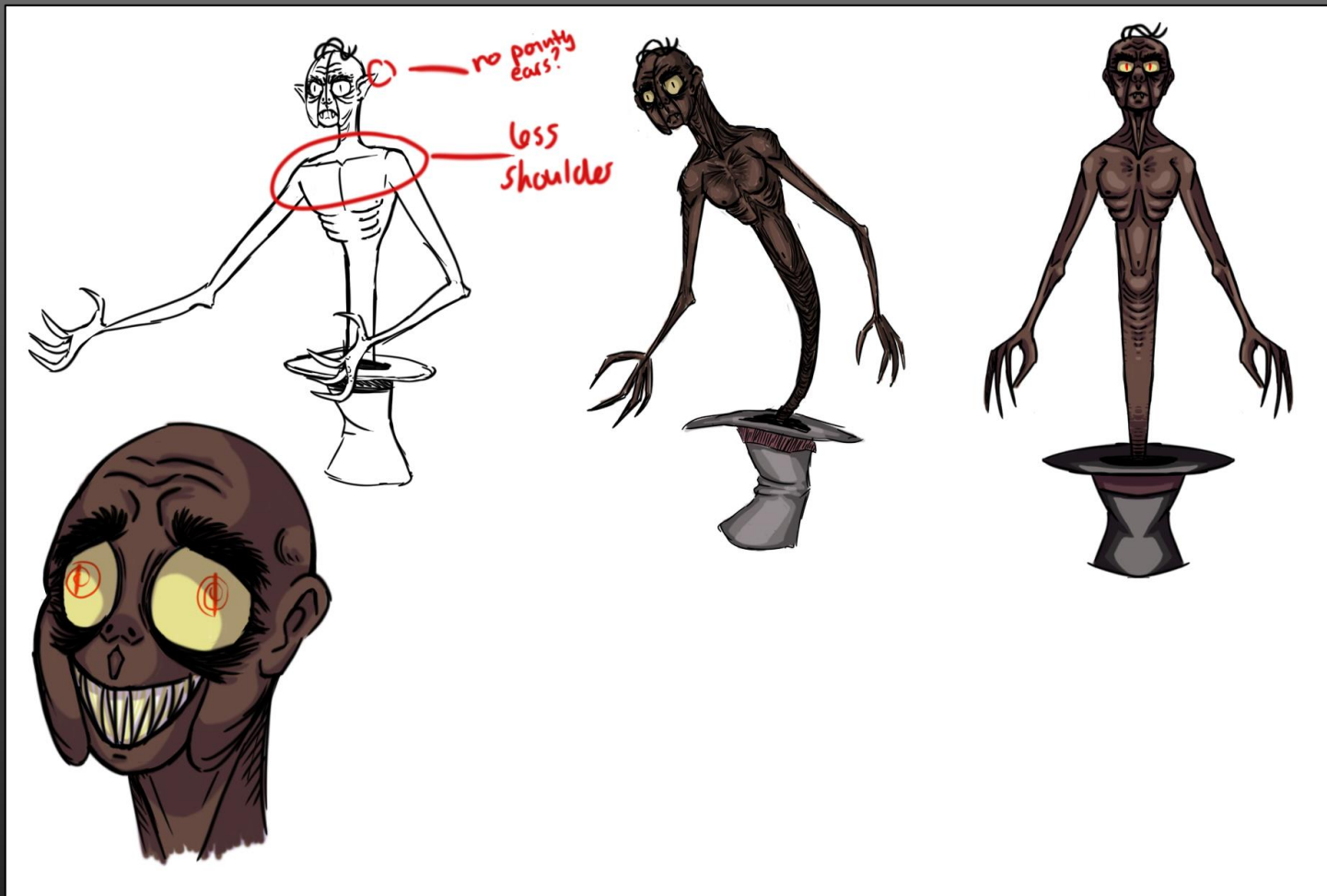
traits:

- can make the most marvelous headgear
- sees in the dark
- fits in small spaces
- stretches to incredible lengths



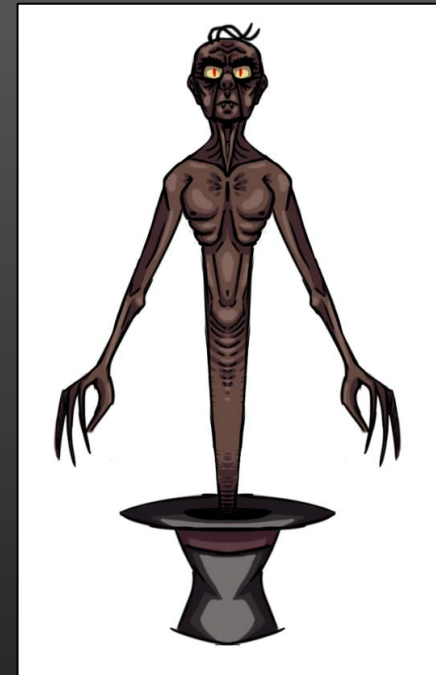


When it came to the mad hatter, I was quite happy with the overall concept of him already, I simply needed to find a more updated way of drawing him. When originally coming up with the concept, I thought about how the mad hatter is often exaggerating this by making him a scrawny creature that lives within a giant hat. So when drawing him now I paid attention to the actual anatomy of malnourished old men in order to really sell how scrawny he should be.



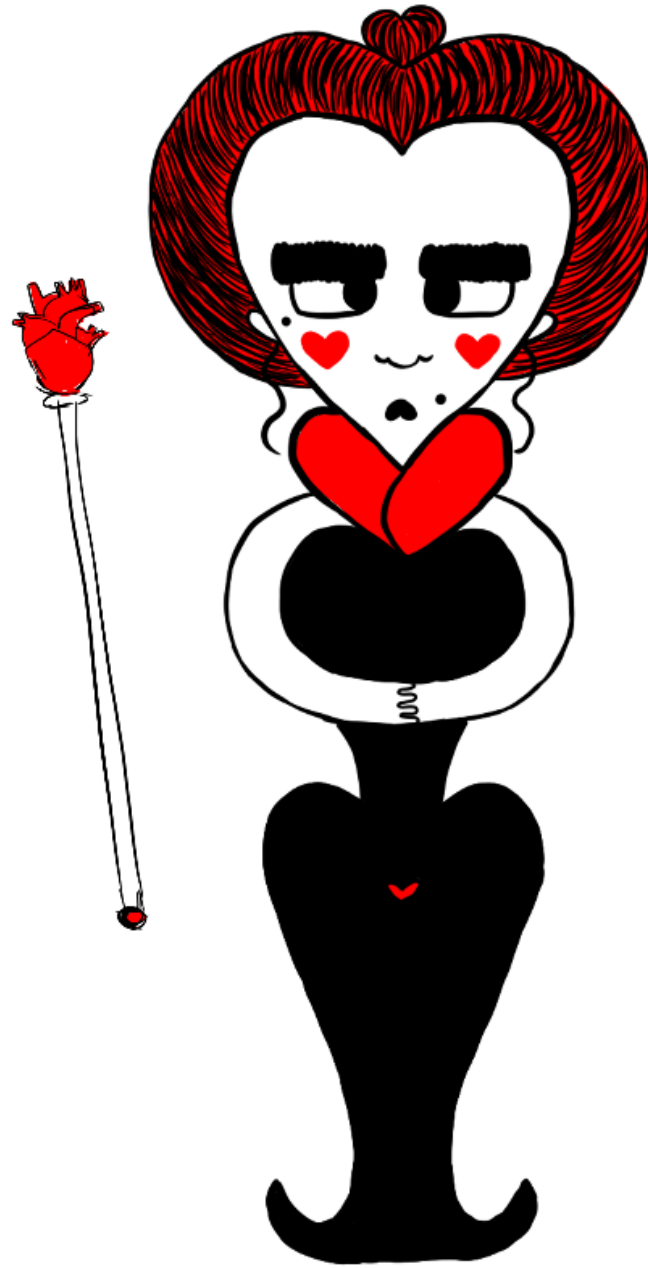


When I finished my sketches I was fairly happy with how the updated design overall looked, however I needed him to look more insane and I also didn't like his colours just yet, as they seemed too human to me. I decided to work on translating him to the games style and work on those issues during that. I much preferred how his body looked in this drawing and I managed to bring across an insane look on his face. The only issue I had with that was that since the style is supposed to have no pupils I didn't know how to stop him from just looking like he is smiling, but I settled on giving him some blurry blown out pupils for the sake of his expression. I made his skin colour more grey to not only fit the games colour scheme better but also to give him a less humanoid appearance. This is by far my favourite variation of this character I've done and I finally felt like I was at a point where I could call this design settled.



Character design

Red Queen



Red queen

A cruel and merciless leader with all of murderland under her wicked thumb

traits:

- has a fondness for decapitations
- despises anyone who challenges her cruelty
- has an obsession with beauty



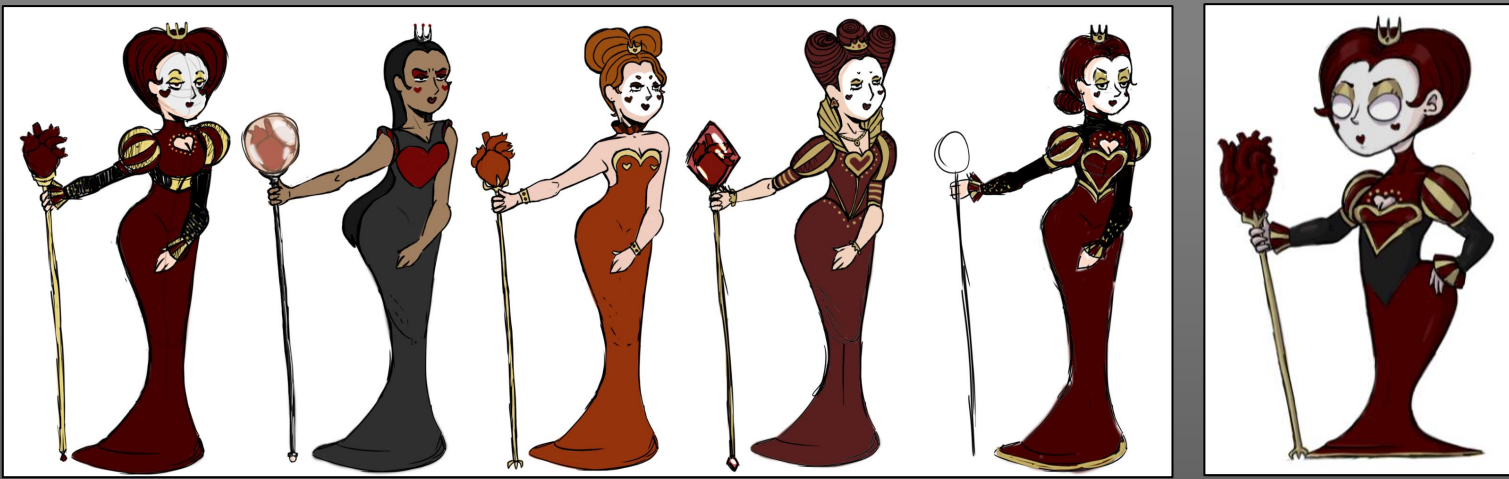
Design Variations



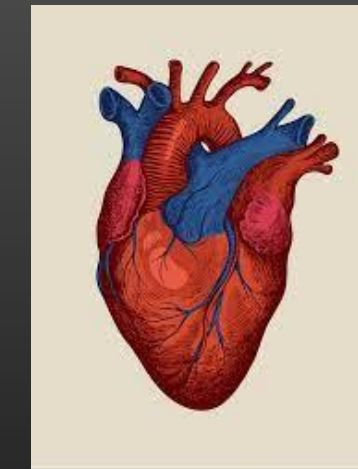


The Red Queens design had a lot of elements I really liked in theory, however I felt like they desperately needed to be executed better. Specifically, I like her heart cheeks, her realistic heart staff and her form-fitting dress. Not only do I think that they are great ways of implementing heart symbolism in her design, but I also find that they help bring across the idea of her being very beautiful. In my sketches I simply gave her more realistic proportions and tried out a few different ideas for how she could look. I pretty quickly realised that I liked her design resembling Queen Elizabeth I the most, and tried sticking to that idea more.





Once I had an idea for the direction I wanted to go in I mainly tried to find some alternatives to the vibe of the design I liked, and ended up with a mesh of a few features I was a fan of. I then moved to realising them in the games style. I made sure to give her a stern expression and referenced a real heart for the staff. I also dimmed the colour of the gold a bit as it seemed too bright for the dark theme I wanted. When I finished this illustration, I thought I would have the final stylisation of this character, however something didn't feel right. I compared this drawing with the original sketches of the design and tried to find what it was that was missing. I realised that I'd made her look of shorter stature and that her head seemed too oversized for a mature woman. I also didn't like that I seemed to have drawn her with thinner line-art than any of the others and that her colours still looked too bright. I created a second draft where I mended these things and finally reached a stylisation I was happy with.



Character design

Cheshire Cat

(TW body parts)



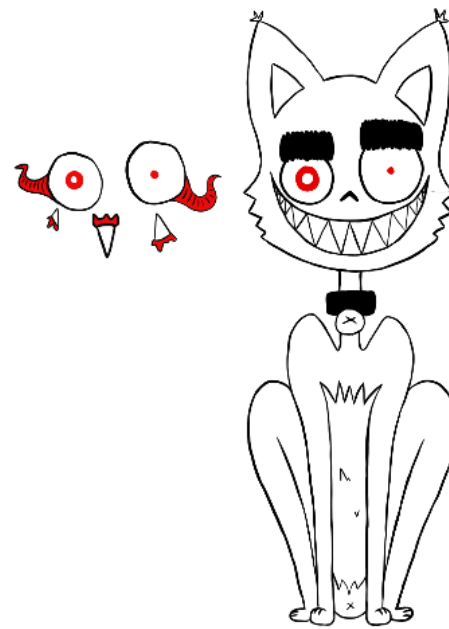
Cheshire Cat

Strange and mystical creature who seems to have died a long time ago, but has the mysterious ability to appear to Alice in a much more appealing form. He says he is her guide, however it is not quite known what his true intentions are.

traits:

- can see your mind
- likes to scare people with what is left of his original body
- manifestation of Alice's subconscious

Cheshire Cat



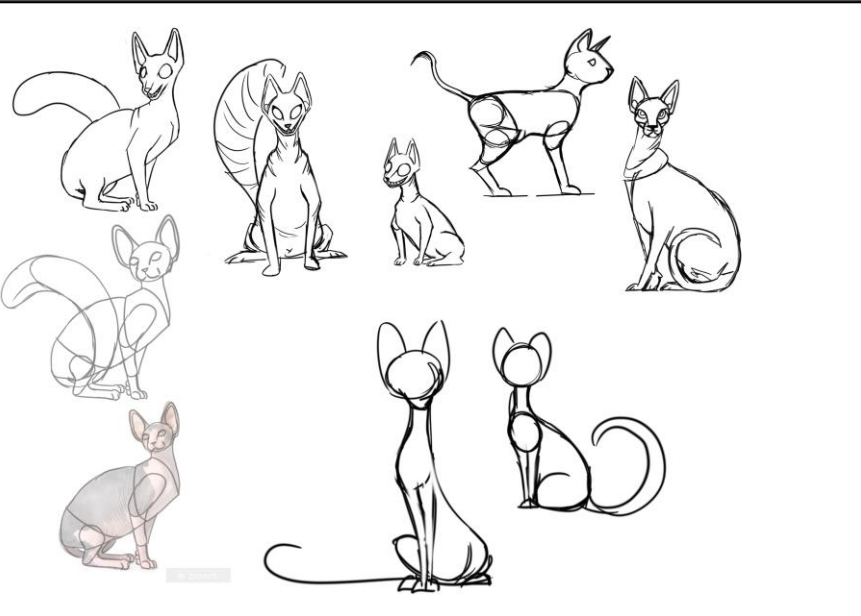
Strange, mystical creature who seems to have died a long time ago, but has the mysterious ability to appear to Alice in a much more appealing form

- traits:
- can see into your mind
 - likes to scare people with what is left of his original body





When designing the Cheshire cat I had to take a different approach than usual. I wasn't happy with any of his original design, other than the floating parts concept, and so I was essentially starting from zero. I knew however I wanted him to be based more off of sphynx cats and so I first started with some studies of cats and then tried to stylise that, however I had a hard time with this. Nothing seemed to look right and I couldn't figure out how to get it to look the way I wanted. Particularly his signature smile was giving me a lot of trouble. So I decided to look at how other people have stylised cats and do studies of this as well. This helped me a great deal as I was finally able to pin down how to draw a stylised cat and what features were actually necessary to make it look like a cat. From here I was finally able to move forward with creating a design that I would be happy with.





Although he is supposed to be a naked cat, I still wanted him to have a bushy tail, similar to that of a lemur. I felt like this helped bring back a bit of the classic and recognisable Cheshire cat design. Once I had the general shape I wanted I needed to figure out what details I wanted him to have. I decided to try and evoke the sphynx cat feel with a pattern that I based on the general shape and form of their wrinkles.

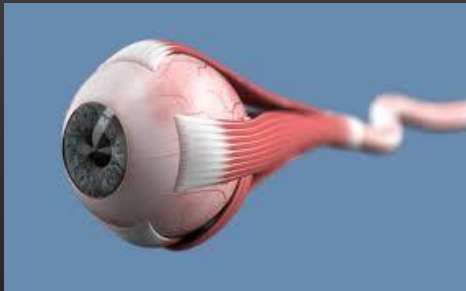
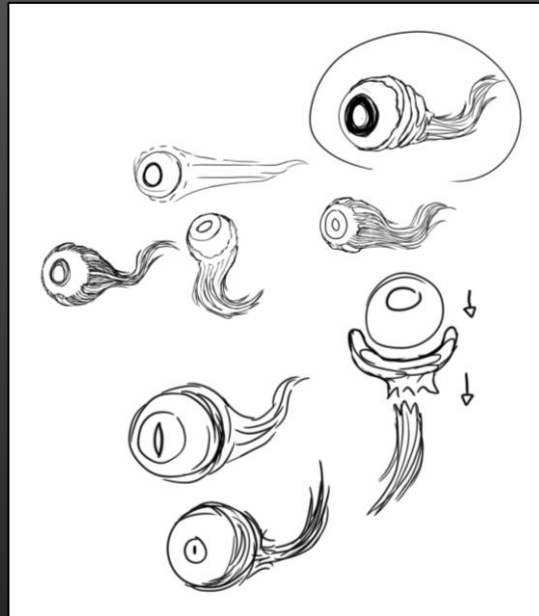


Colour-wise, I didn't want him to be pink, since this was too close to red which is reserved as an accent colour, so I decided on a blueish grey which also helped him look quite dark. I also once again decided to give him some pupils to help myself later.

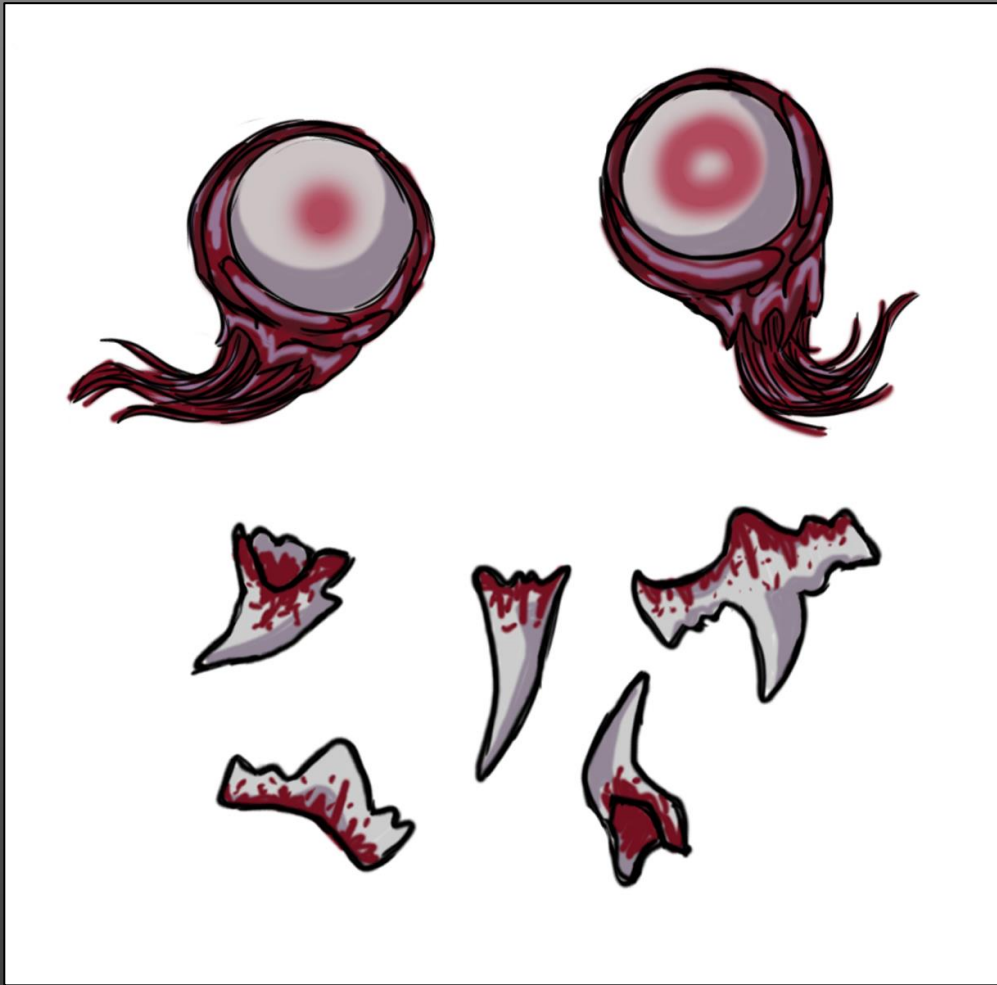
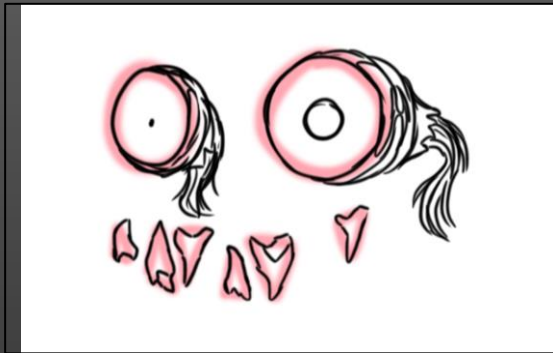




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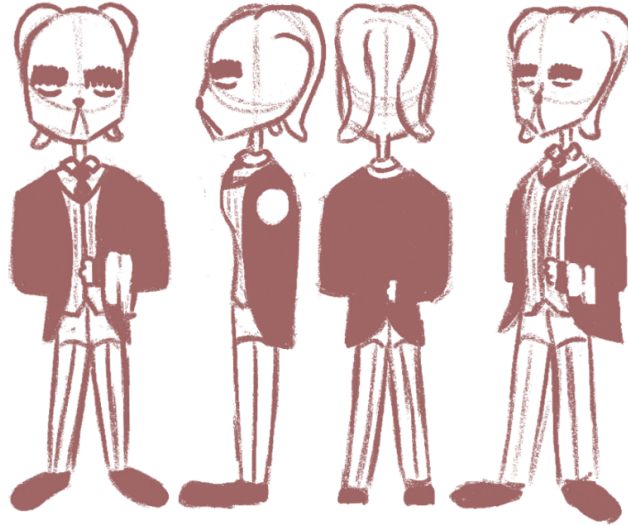
The work on the Cheshire cat didn't end there though. A key feature of his design is that his body is simply an illusion and that he actually only consist of a pair of eyeballs and teeth. As such, I also had to design those. I experimented with a few methods of making the eyeballs look right. One of my references showed the way that the optic nerve is connected to the eyeball and so I tried to emulate that effect with my sketches. I realised fairly quickly though that this just didn't look right and references some other pictures. I noticed that the eyeball actually seems to have this sort of wrap of flesh around it that then leads to the optic nerve. Once I drew this, my sketches immediately started to look more accurate. I also experimented with giving the eye a slit pupil more similar to how a cat eye is, I scrapped this though as I preferred the way the airbrushed and differentiating pupils looked. I also liked the idea that this way the Cheshire cats identity would be less obvious when you first meet him in this form. Then, his teeth, were simply a matter of recreating the shape of cat teeth from reference.



I felt like studying these shapes gave me a much better idea of how to draw these. From here I created some mock-ups of all these features together, and from the same angle as the stylised illustration.

Character design

Here



Hare

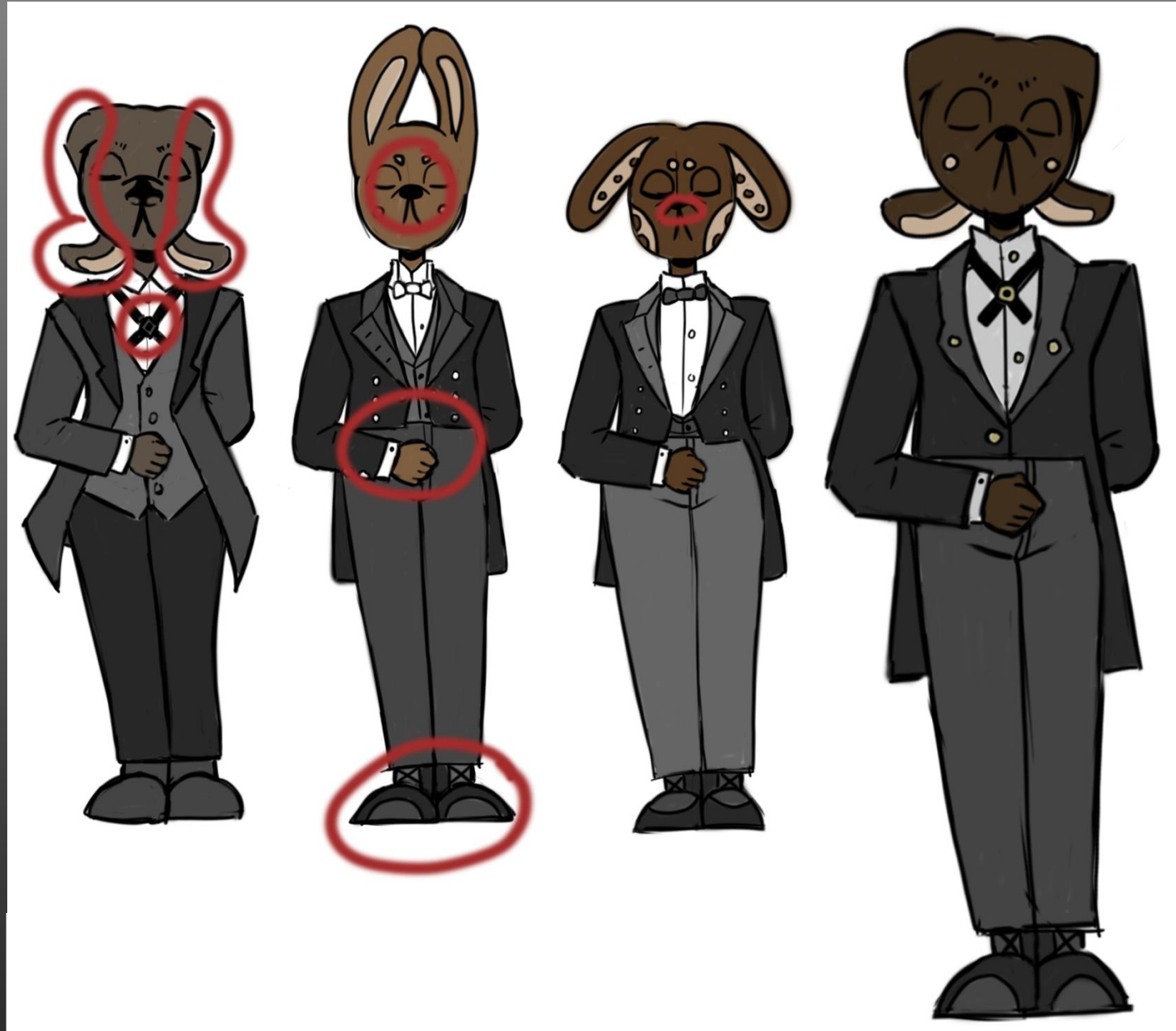
A silent and stoic servant, who acts as waiter and bodyguard to the Mad Hatter.

traits:

- good at blending into the background
- secretly a demon

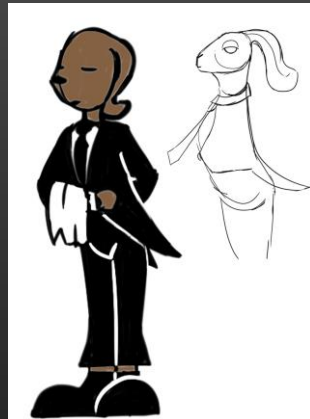
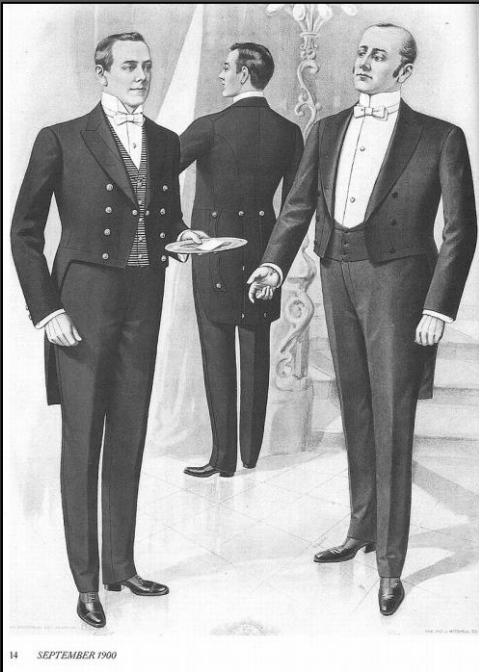


Design Variations

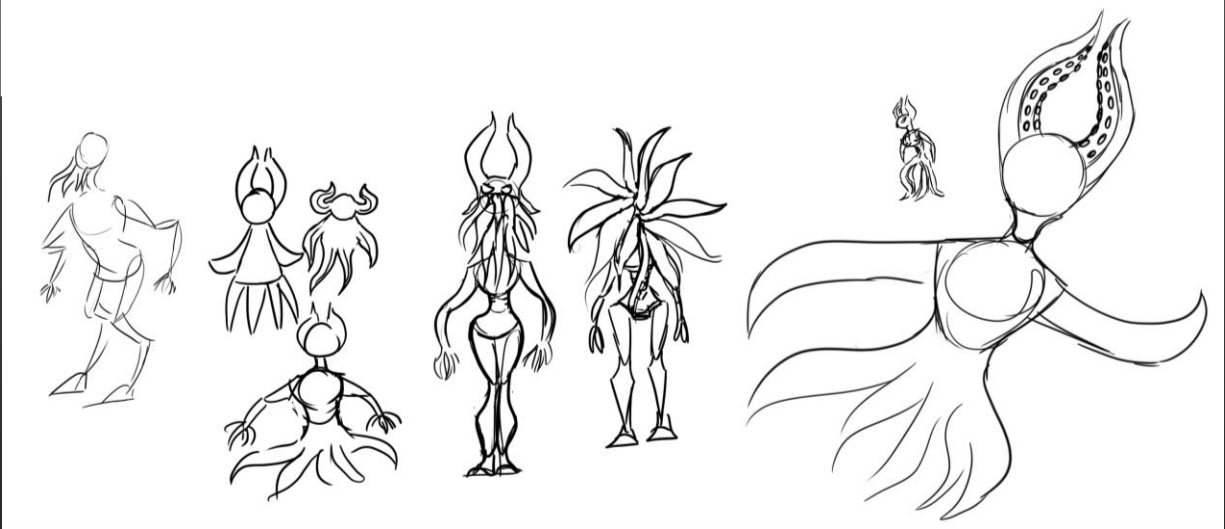
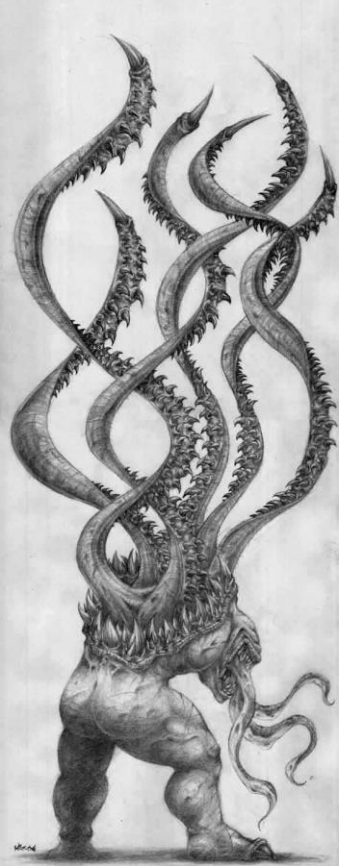




The Hares design felt fundamentally alright but I wanted to add more detail and ground it in more time appropriate fashion. When Looking at Hares for reference, they usually have significantly raised ears, however I wanted him to have slick back ears to mirror the very clean and kept look of a Butler as he is supposed to be the Mad Hatters servant and bodyguard. I wanted him to look very stoic and silent so I gave him a very neutral expression with eyes that are always closed.



After Alice threatens the Mad Hatter, the Hare steps in and transforms into a tentacle demon. I wanted him to become a tentacle demon as I felt that tentacles very nicely mirrored the ears of a hare. I went through a few ideas but finally settled on a design where each tentacle represents one limb and he is covered in beady red eyes.



Character design

Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum

Tweedle-dum

AKA.: Tweedle-dumb

Big, dumb and naive, the idiot twin is blissfully unaware of his brother's resentment

traits: • does whatever his brother says

• as heavy as a boulder

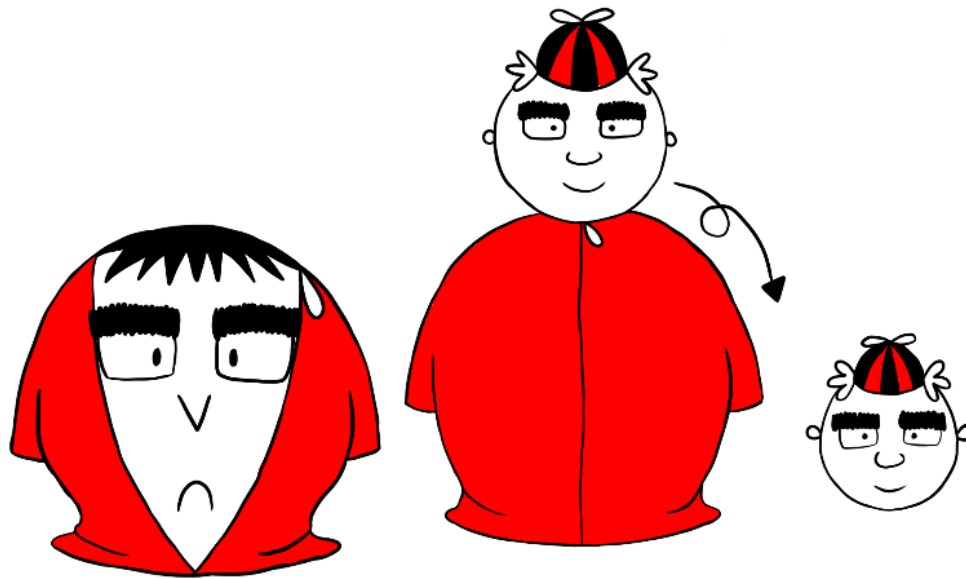
• essentially resistant to insults



Tweedle twins

A.k.A.: Dick and Dumb

Roly-poly twins with a knack for mischief and a hand for trouble



Tweedle-dee

AKA.: Tweedle-dick

The smarter of the twins and also the ruder one. Likes to hide his brother and pretend he's his own person

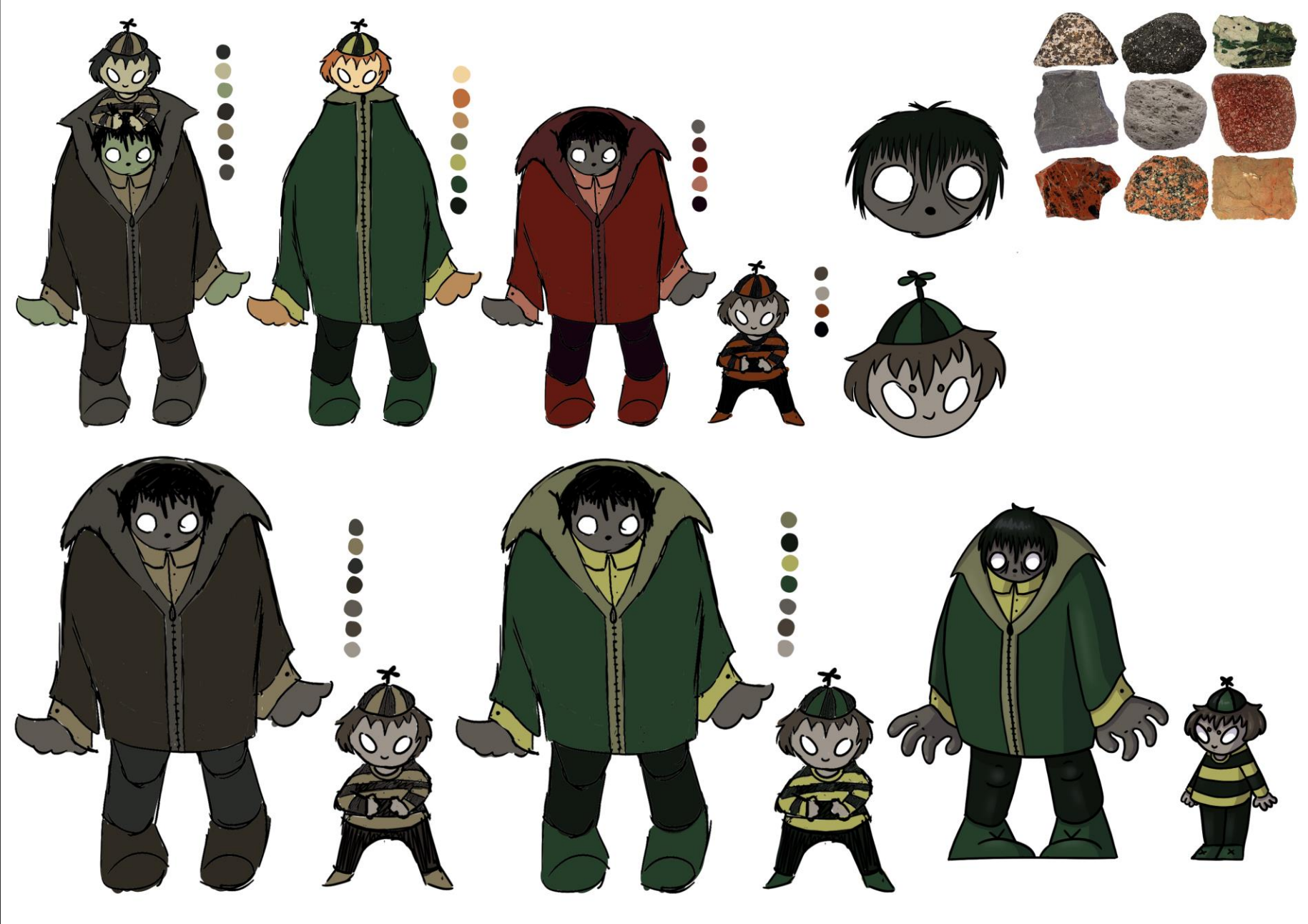
traits: • smart but arrogant

• ashamed of his brother

• self-conscious of his size



Design Variations



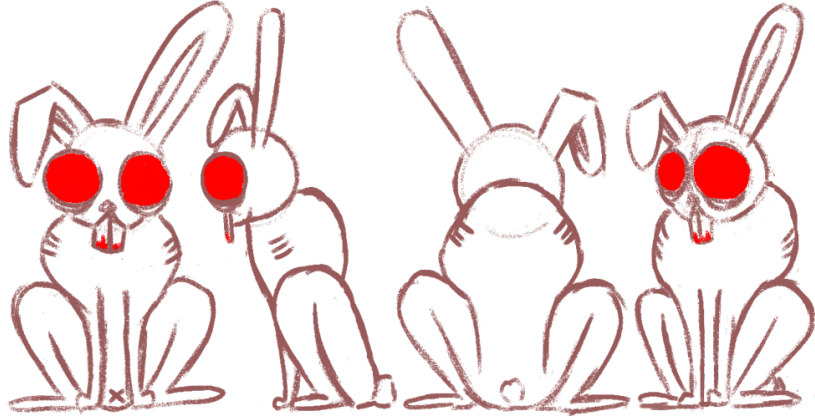


Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum had a very weak design originally but I did still like the concept of them stacking on top of each other. I referenced the *Alice: Madness returns* and really liked how their features related to each other and this helped me create a sketch I was very happy with. This time however I went for more of a two kids in a trench coat design since this simply made more sense. I did a few colour variations based on rocks since the idea was based on stacking stones but ultimately realised I liked the grey and green as it reminded me of a classic rock covered in moss.



Character design

Rabbit

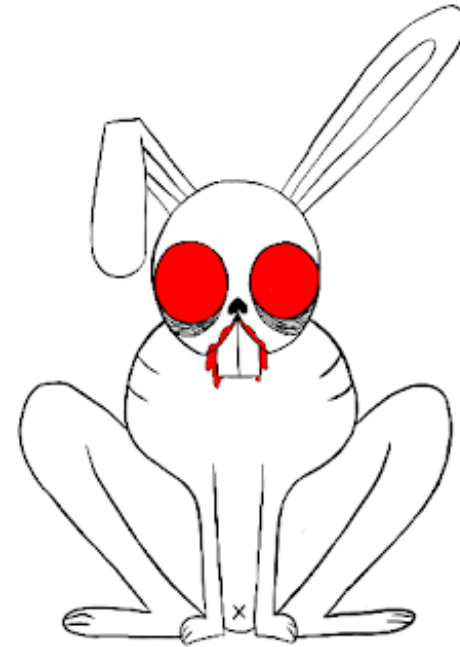
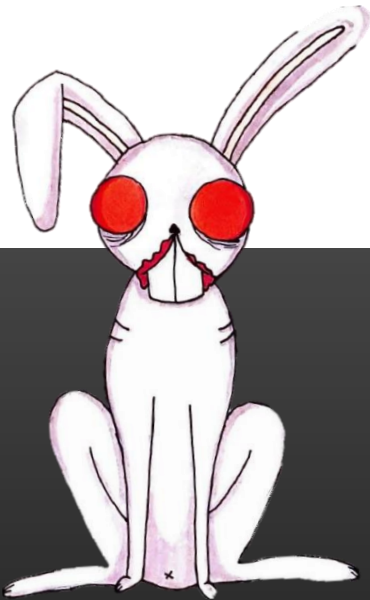


Rabbit

A mysterious figure that acts as the doorway to and from Murderland. He will always appear when Alice feels particularly low, however it is her choice whether she enter Murderland or not.

traits:

- has a direct link to Alice's emotions
- not many people know that he is a similar creature to the hare



Rabbit

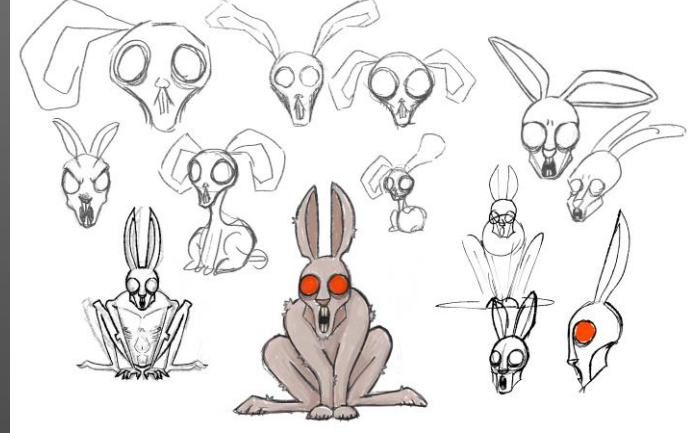
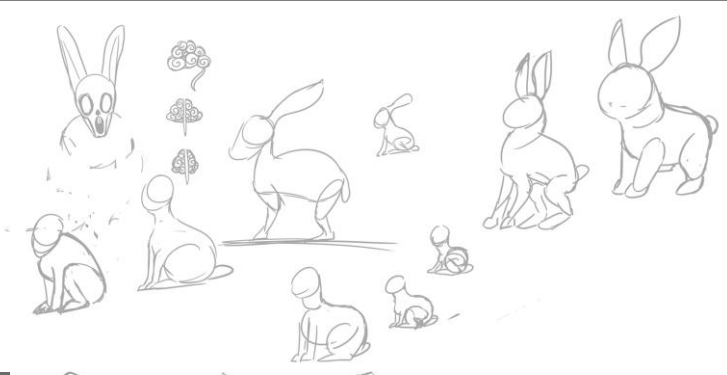
A mysterious and unsettling guide who always seems to appear just in time to show Alice the way

traits:

- speaks confusingly



- always knows where Alice needs to go
- doorway to Murderland



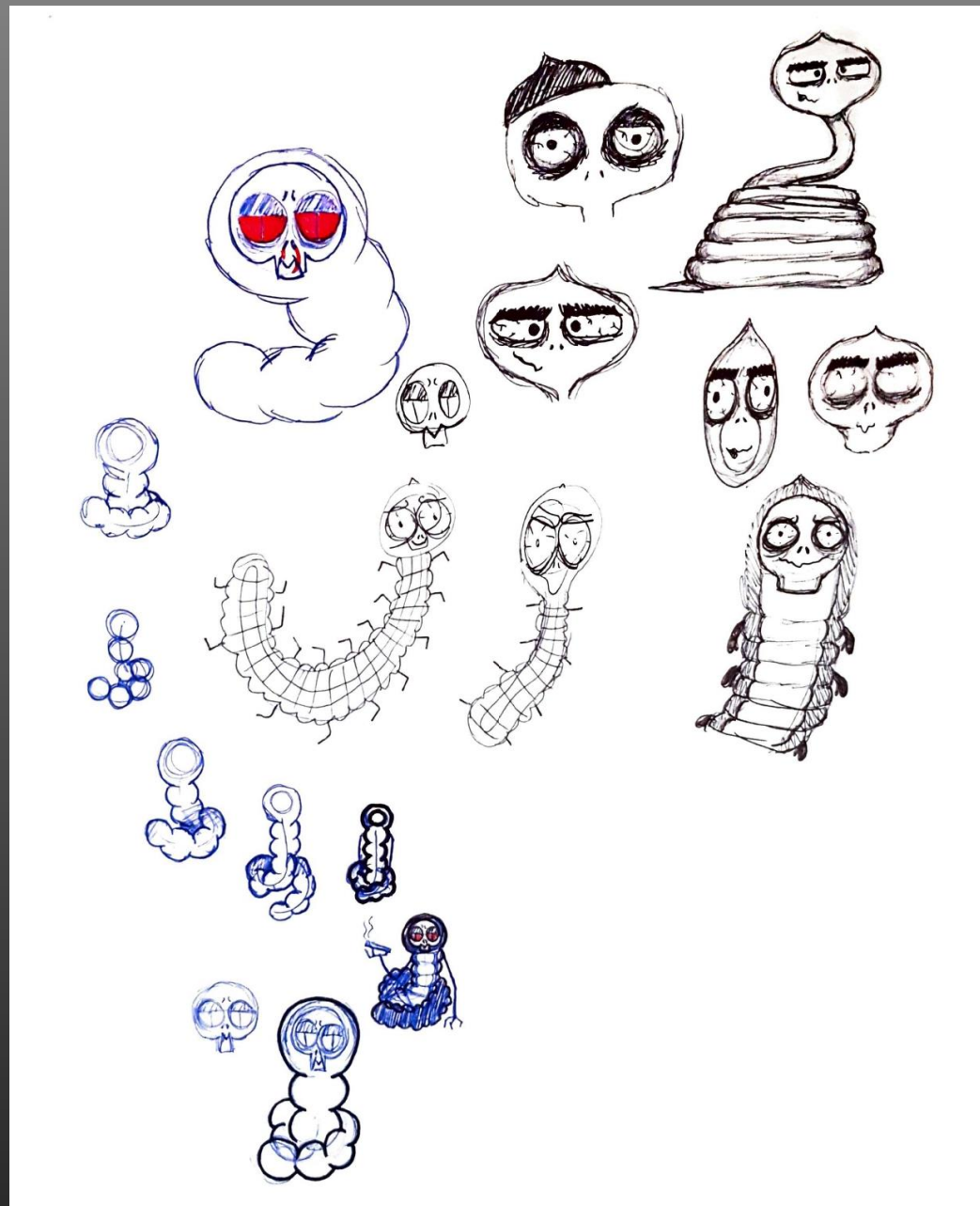
The Rabbit, though quite unsettling, was very anatomically weak and I wanted to try and fix that. I first made some sketches of the face and found that I really like the bulky and angular look. To match that I gave him a bulkier frame and found something I quite liked. His open mouth and blank eyes felt like something that would be very unsettling in the dark. I then did some rabbit studies and rushed to get a sprite done for the deadline, however I will make sure to create something more similar to my first variation during production as I much prefer it.

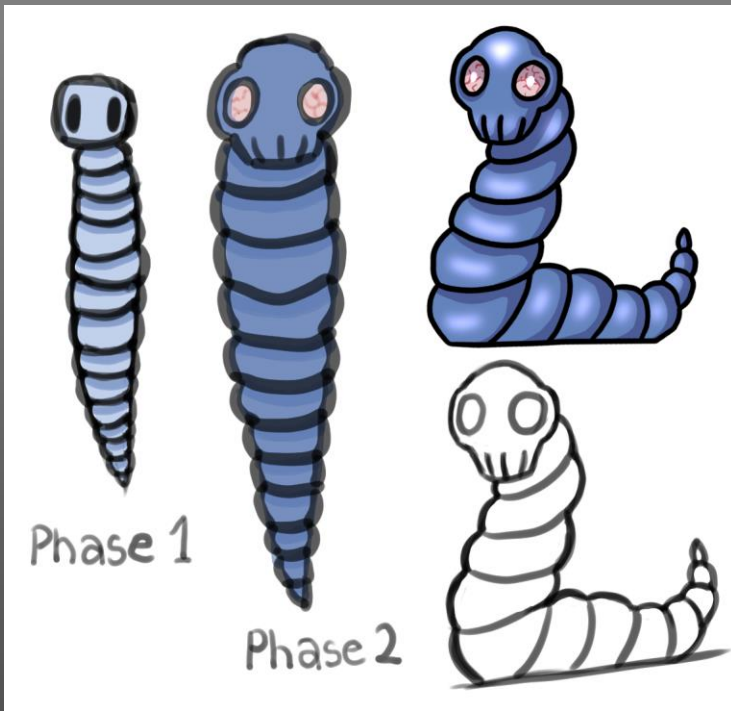


Character design

Caterpillar

2020 Design

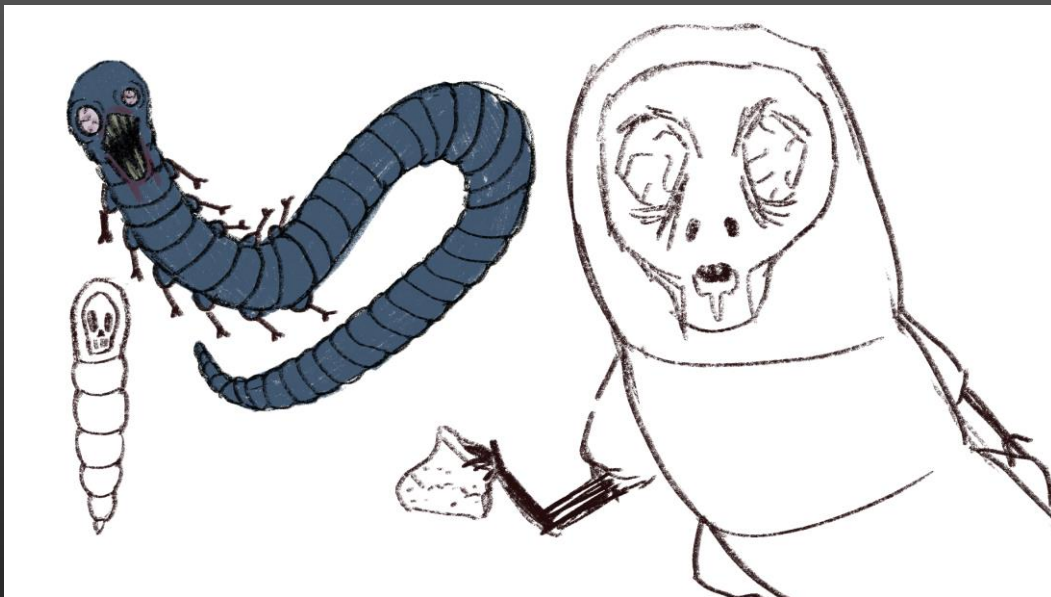




The Caterpillar was difficult to design as I never finalised anything back in 2020 and therefore had no previous designs or ideas to go off. The only thing I did know I wanted was for him to be a cokehead to put a darker and more adult twist on the classic “hookah-smoking caterpillar” concept. To bring this across I gave him bloodshot eyes. I thought about giving him a more detailed and humanoid design but ended up settling on a very simple worm figure as I felt like it solidified him more as the parasite of the big tree. And since he will hatch from his cocoon and immediately engage in combat there is no need for



him to be able to hold in dialogue. I gave him a simple skull shaped head since I felt it gave him an antagonistic look. For colouring I naturally made him entirely blue so that he would still be recognisable. I've designed a smaller version of him to serve as a phase one of the boss fight so that he can then transform into his true form



Character design

Final design tweaks

Once I had all the design somewhat finalised I put them all on one sheet together to lay out how tall they would be in relation to each other. I used Alice as the point of reference as I felt that for gameplay purposes it was most important to make sure that the sizes made sense when interacting with the player.

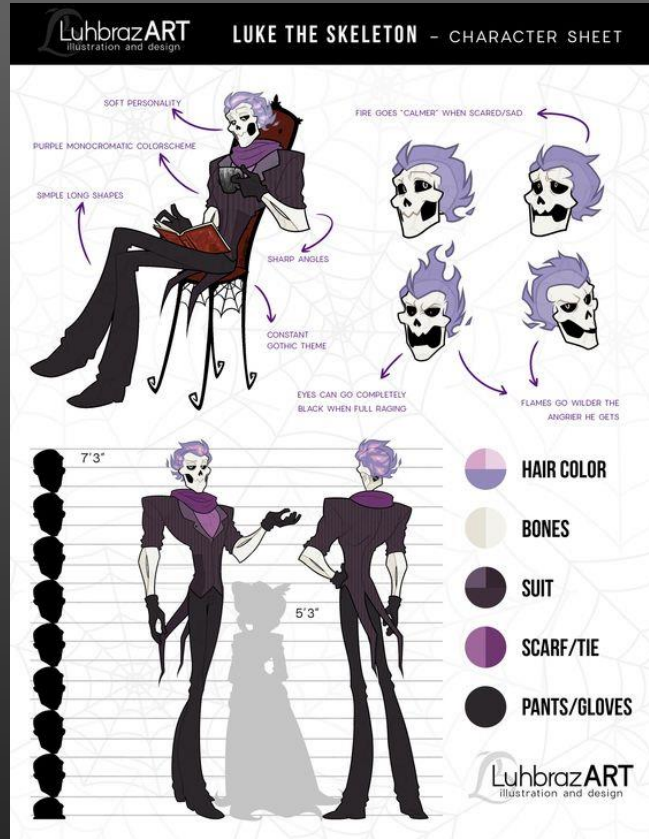
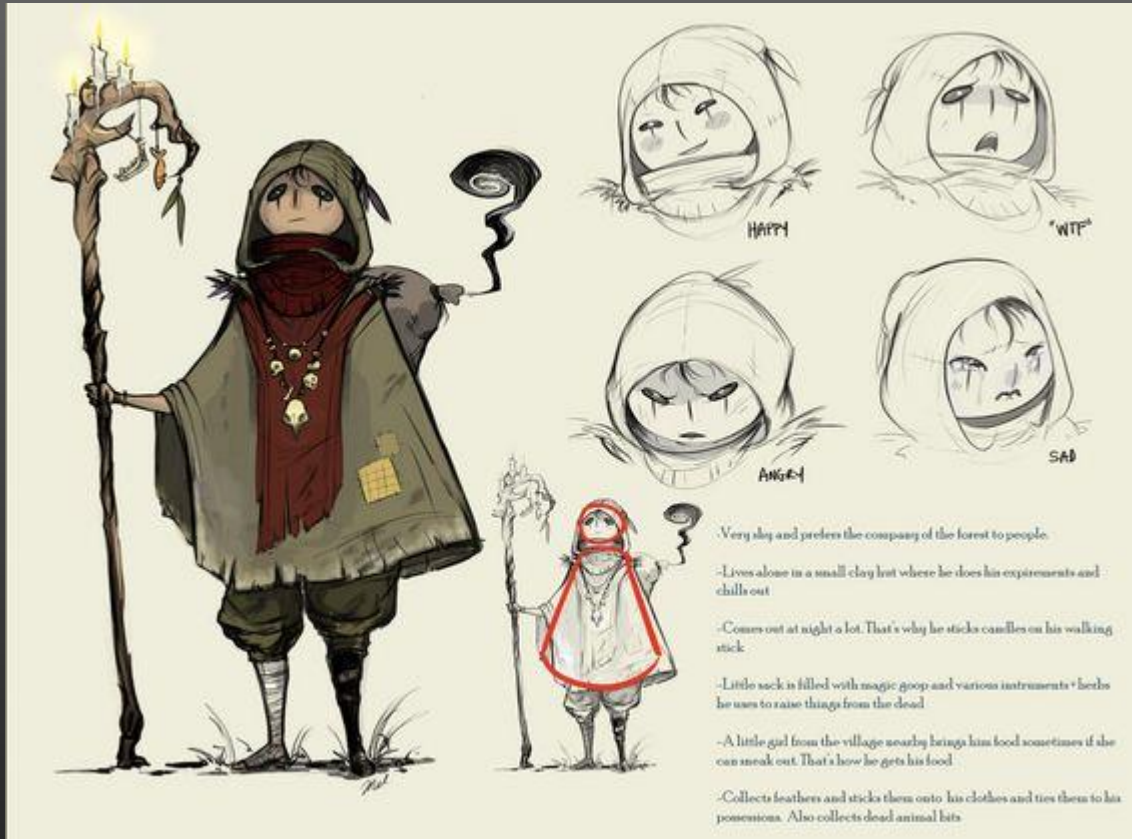


After this I used this same sheet to do some colour grading to try and unify the colour scheme a bit more. I also received some notes that the art style needed unifying, and so there are some design details I will tweak during production.



Character Sheets

Inspiration





I looked at a lot of examples of character sheets on Pinterest to get a better idea of not only what a professional standard looks like but also to get ideas for an interesting and also aesthetically pleasing layout and design. For example, I found that a lot of them had a border, often on the bottom and top of the page, this provides space for both the name of the character but also various other professional information related to the game. Most sheets also included a turnaround to better provide an exact look at all the important details of the design. Another important feature is adding some head or bust drawings of different expressions for the character. This helps not only clarify how different motions should be drawn but can also showcase some of their personality. Something I didn't see a lot of but that seemed nonetheless important to me was to include some swatches of the base colours. Lastly, took note to include a short character description as I plan to create an artbook with these and want to therefore add context for reader clarity.

Character Sheets

Alice

Alice



I created a sketch of the general layout I wanted and was pretty happy with it and so I continued on to some more detailed sketches. Since this is for a simple 2d sidescroller I surmised I would not need a full turnaround but simply the angles that would be present during general gameplay. In the original sketch I had also included a spot for a character prop and 2 alternate outfits but I ultimately removed these and did some rearranging later on since I deemed them unnecessary. I made the background very dark as I felt that that matched the tone of the game and gave it ornate detailing that fits the Victorian setting.

MA Alice

Malice in Murderland - Josie-Lea Hood

A twisted girl who struggles to fit into her own world, but found unexpected solace in the strange place of Wonderland. She often comes across as almost emotionless and consistently battles both her murderous and borderline suicidal tendencies.



When moving on to the final, I made some necessary tweaks to the layout of the sheet. I adjusted Alices size in order to use the lined background as an accurate measure of height between the characters and also moved some elements around in order to account for how it would be printed in the artbook. Lastly I made sure to use the corrected colours from my colour sheet rather than the ones present on the reference I used in my sketch and added a small watermark.



Character Sheets

Mad Hatter

Mad Hatter



A strange creature who creates and inhabits hats of all kind. When this started nobody knows but it is said he went mad inside his own creations and hasn't left since. His large bulbous eyes let him see surprisingly well in the dark and it would be best not to underestimate how far he can stretch or how tight he can fit.



I moved on to the Mad Hatter where I had initially realised that I should make sure to adjust all the characters heights according to the lined background, this is where I then backtracked and adjusted Alice's scale. The Mad Hatter is the tallest of all the characters as he can stretch essentially endlessly from his hat which I wanted to be represented in his idle form, as such he took up much more space on the sheet and I had to adjust the layout a bit. I therefore could only fit 2 expressions on the side, however I think this will do fine as he generally will hold a constant smile and will only change expression when angry.



Mad Hatter

Malice in Murderland - Josie-Lea Hood

A strange creature who creates and inhabits hats of all kind. When this started nobody knows but it is said he went mad inside his own creations and hasn't left since. His large bulbous eyes let him see surprisingly well in the dark and it would be best not to underestimate how far he can stretch or how tight he can fit.



Moving on to his final sheet, the only adjustments I needed to make were simple layout tweaks, making sure to use the correct colours and adding the watermark. Other than this, the sheet remained largely the same.

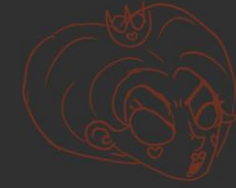


Character Sheets

Red Queen

Hare

A silent and stoic servant who acts as servant and bodyguard to the Mad Hatter. He has a surprisingly effective ability to blend into the Background and harbours a demonic secret that only reveals itself in dire circumstances. His demonic form sees his limbs transform into slender tentacles that will grab you viciously if you are not quick enough to react.

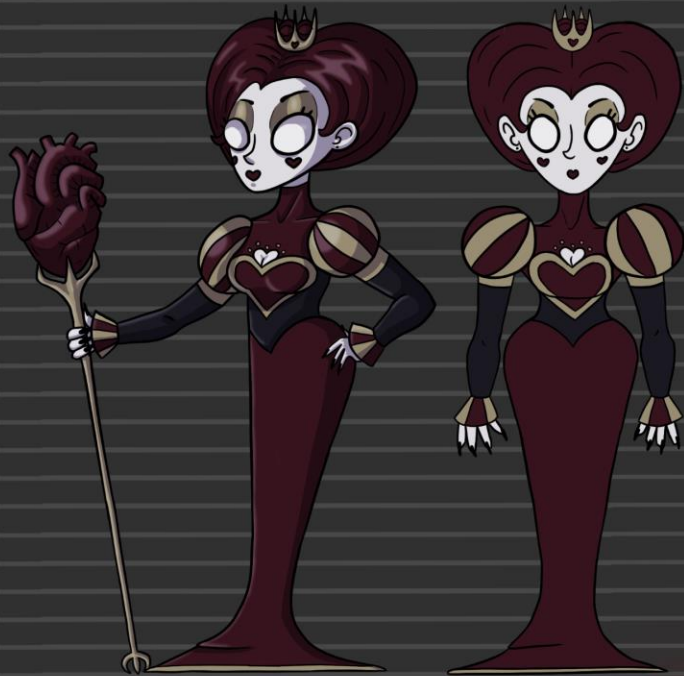


The Red Queen could once again fit 4 expressions and so I made sure to include all of those alongside another sketch of her sceptre as she is supposed to hold this at all times. Her expressions are primarily expressions she will be showing during her boss battle such as shock or anger and are not so varied, I did not include any happy expressions (other than a malicious grin) as she will be solely an antagonist in the game.

Red Queen

Malice in Murderland - Josie-Lea Hood

A cruel and merciless leader with all of Wonderland under her wicked thumb. She viciously despises anyone who dares to challenge her cruelty and has a fondness for punishing these miscreants with a decapitation. She also has an unhealthy obsession with beauty and will not tolerate anyone who tries to insult her seductive look. Some have said her bloodlust is what gave Wonderland its nickname.



Once again, the sheet remained mostly the same as the sketch, with simple layout and colour tweaks being the majority of the adjustments. I also made sure to add the watermark.

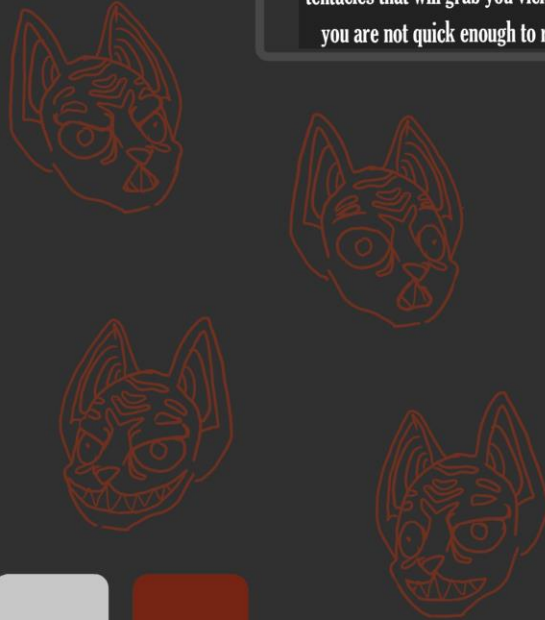


Character Sheets

Cheshire Cat

Hare

A silent and stoic servant who acts as servant and bodyguard to the Mad Hatter. He has a surprisingly effective ability to blend into the Background and harbours a demonic secret that only reveals itself in dire circumstances. His demonic form sees his limbs transform into slender tentacles that will grab you viciously if you are not quick enough to react.



The Cheshire Cat was a bit tricky to figure out as I had used another artists drawing as reference for the original $\frac{3}{4}$ sketch, however I do believe that following that pose to create the front view helped me understand how to draw cats a bit better. I also included a separated straight drawing of the tail as a scale reference as it would be covered by the front view. Once again I could fit 4 expressions.



Cheshire Cat

Malice in Murderland - Josie-Lea Hood

A strange and mystical creature who seems to have died a long time ago but has the mysterious ability to appear to Alice in a much more appealing form. He says he is her guide, however it is not quite known what his true intentions are. He seems to be able to see into your mind and enjoys scaring people with what is left of his original body.



Though this sheet also mostly remained the same as the sketch, one significant change was that I added in a drawing of his true form, as I realised later on that this was an important feature of his character.

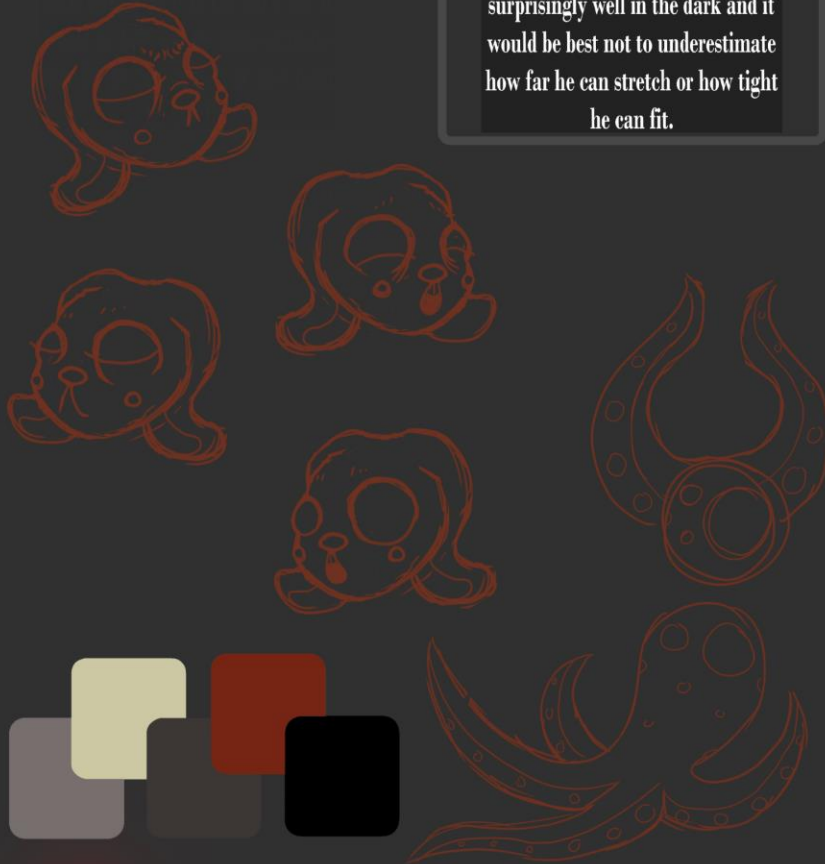
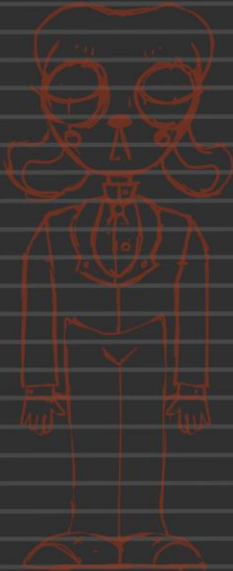


Character Sheets

Here

Mad Hatter

A strange creature who creates and inhabits hats of all kind. When this started nobody knows but it is said he went mad inside his own creations and hasn't left since. His large bulbous eyes let him see surprisingly well in the dark and it would be best not to underestimate how far he can stretch or how tight he can fit.



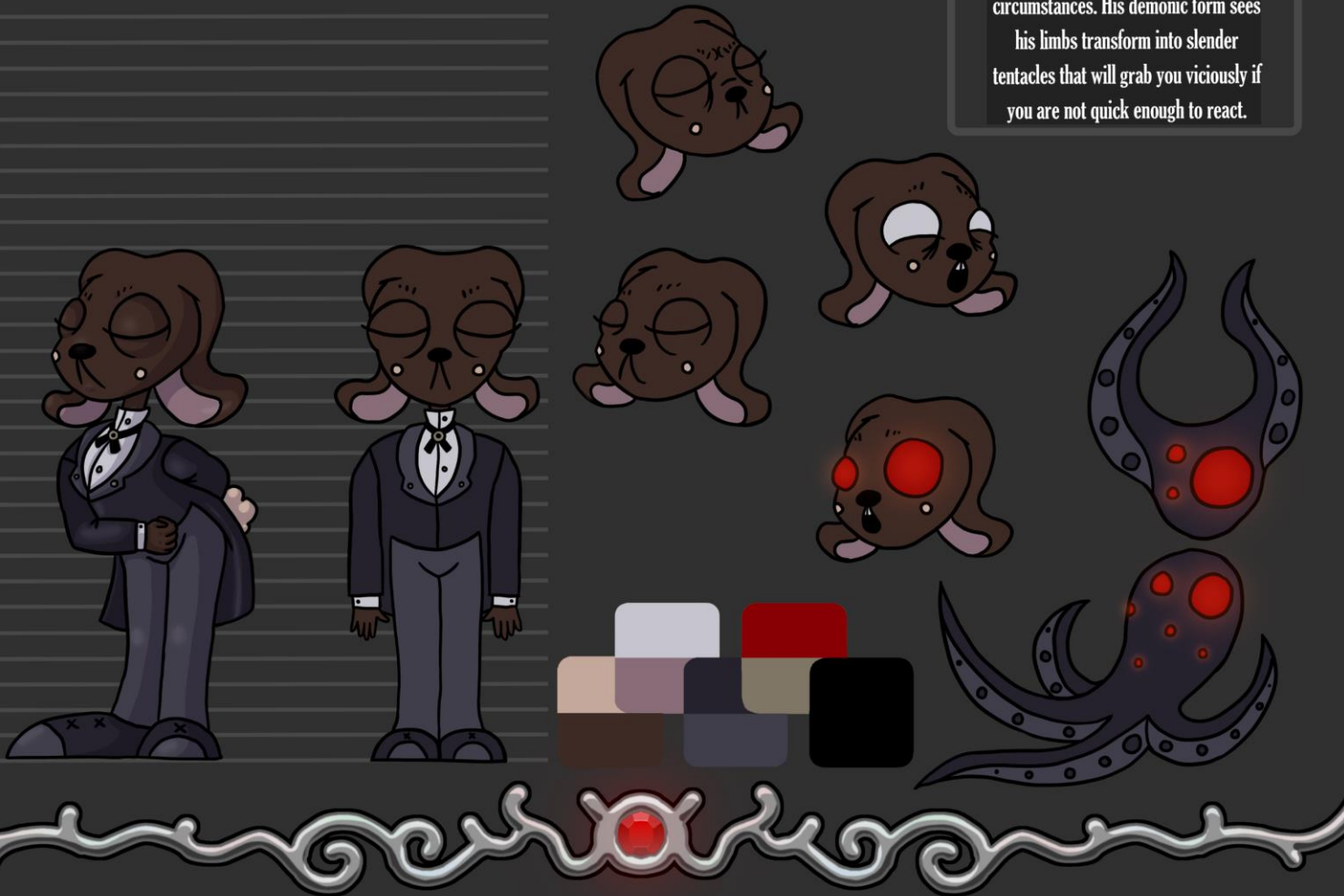
The Hare needed some particular last minute changes when sketching. One of the major points of feedback I had received on this character was that he more closely resembled a dog than a hare. Though I debated simply raising his ears, I found that they felt like an important design feature to his character as a Butler. As such I instead decided to give him larger feet and a fluffy tail, both features very commonly associated with rabbits. This helped a great deal and was definitely helped make his character clearer. I also simplified the details on his demon form as it felt too detailed in comparison to the rest of the characters. Overall I think this helped strengthen his design. Once again I could fit 4 expressions on this sheet.



Hare

Malice in Murderland - Josie-Lea Hood

A silent and stoic servant who acts as servant and bodyguard to the Mad Hatter. He has a surprisingly effective ability to blend into the Background and harbours a demonic secret that only reveals itself in dire circumstances. His demonic form sees his limbs transform into slender tentacles that will grab you viciously if you are not quick enough to react.



This character sheet, similarly to the others, did not need many tweaks when finalising.

Character Sheets

Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum

Hare

A silent and stoic servant who acts as servant and bodyguard to the Mad Hatter. He has a surprisingly effective ability to blend into the Background and harbours a demonic secret that only reveals itself in dire circumstances. His demonic form sees his limbs transform into slender tentacles that will grab you viciously if you are not quick enough to react.



This sheet required a lot of layout adjustments when sketching. The actual character himself was very small but had significant extra information that needed to be included on the page. I was able to fit 4 expressions on the page, as well as a small illustration of how he would stack and disguise himself on his brother.

Tweedle-Dee

Malice in Murderland - Josie-Lea Hood

Often Nicknamed 'Tweedle-Dick' he is the smarter, and also ruder of the twins. He likes to hide his brother and pretend he is one bigger scarier person. He can be quite cunning however his arrogance often gets the better of him. He is openly ashamed of his brothers stupidity, however secretly he holds a deep envy for his size as he is self-conscious of his own.



Finalising this sheet initially was a bit tricky as it was already quite full however I soon adjusted as necessary.



Hare



A silent and stoic servant who acts as servant and bodyguard to the Mad Hatter. He has a surprisingly effective ability to blend into the Background and harbours a demonic secret that only reveals itself in dire circumstances. His demonic form sees his limbs transform into slender tentacles that will grab you viciously if you are not quick enough to react.



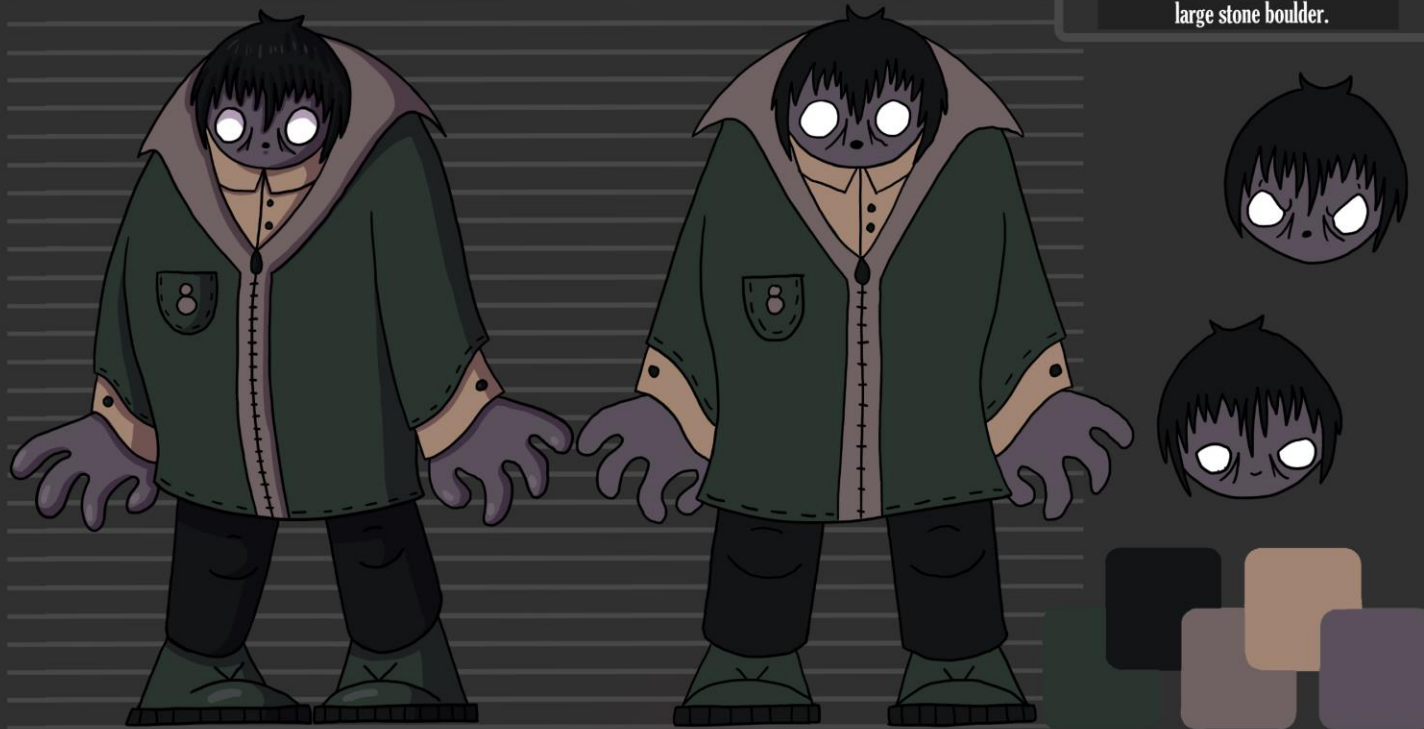
This sheet in particular proved to be a challenge to layout. In contrast to his brother, this character was very larger and in particular, wide. After sketching his turnaround I only had space for 2 expressions and could not fit the illustration of him stacked with his brother. This however felt like an acceptable sacrifice as their character sheets are part of a set anyway and it seems therefore understandable that this information would be found on the other sheet.



Tweedle-Dum

Malice in Murderland - Josie-Lea Hood

Often nicknamed 'Tweedle-Dumb' due to his naive nature, this idiot twin is blissfully unaware of his brothers resentment. He does essentially whatever his brother tells him and is effectively resistant to insults since he likely won't understand them. He can however prove to be a highly resistant enemy and weighs the amount of a large stone boulder.



Much like the sketching, finalising this sheet was the trickiest of them all. The layout was already very cramped and so moving everything even closer together was not an easy feat. I did however eventually find a way that though not the most visually appealing, does what is needed without significantly sacrificing the established layout.



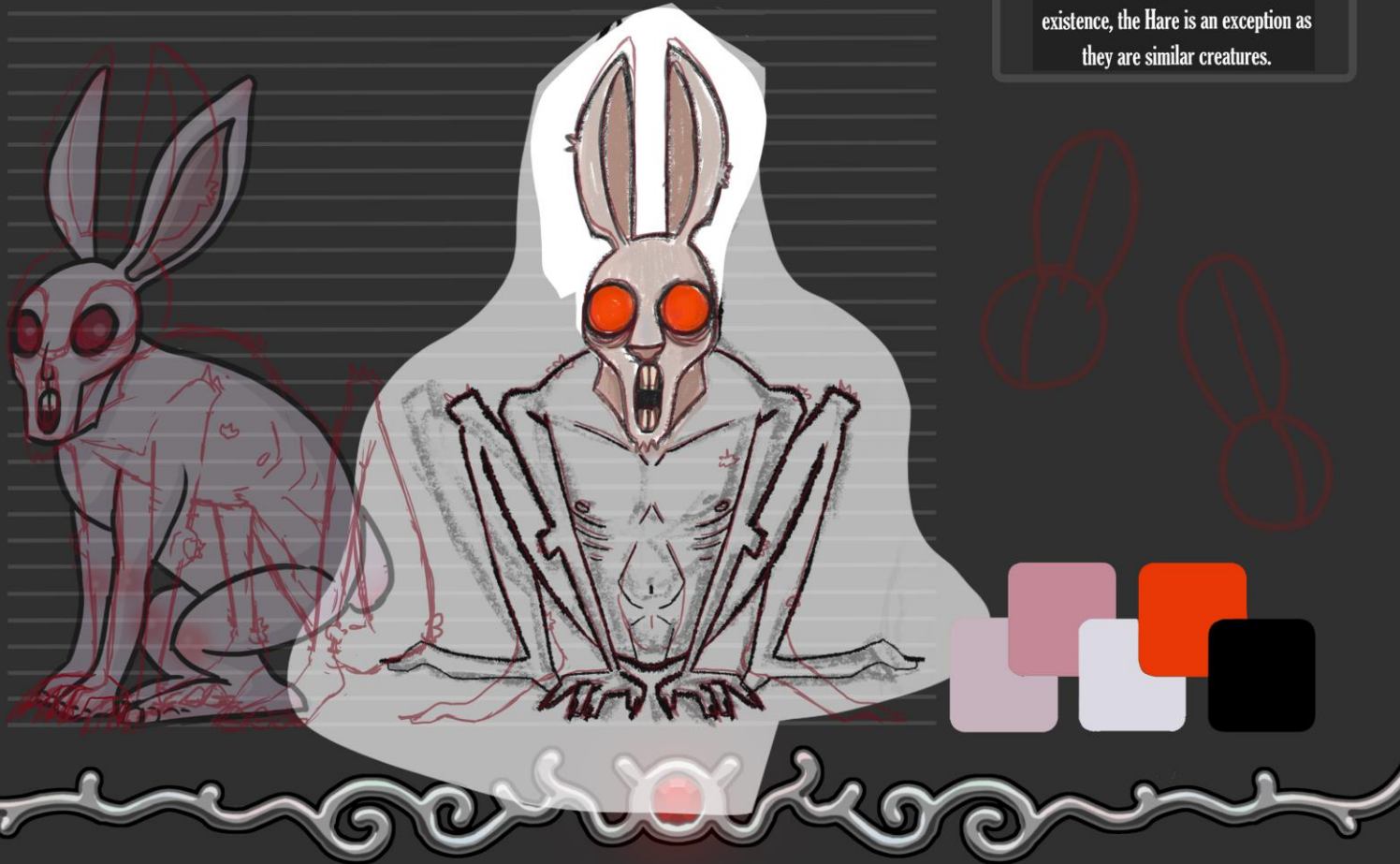
Character Sheets

Rabbit

Rabbit

Malice in Murderland - Josie-Lea Hood

A mysterious figure that acts as the doorway to and from Wonderland. He will always appear when Alice feels particularly low, however it is her choice whether she enters or not. He has a direct link to her emotions and so he can always feel them, no matter what. Not many even know of his existence, the Hare is an exception as they are similar creatures.

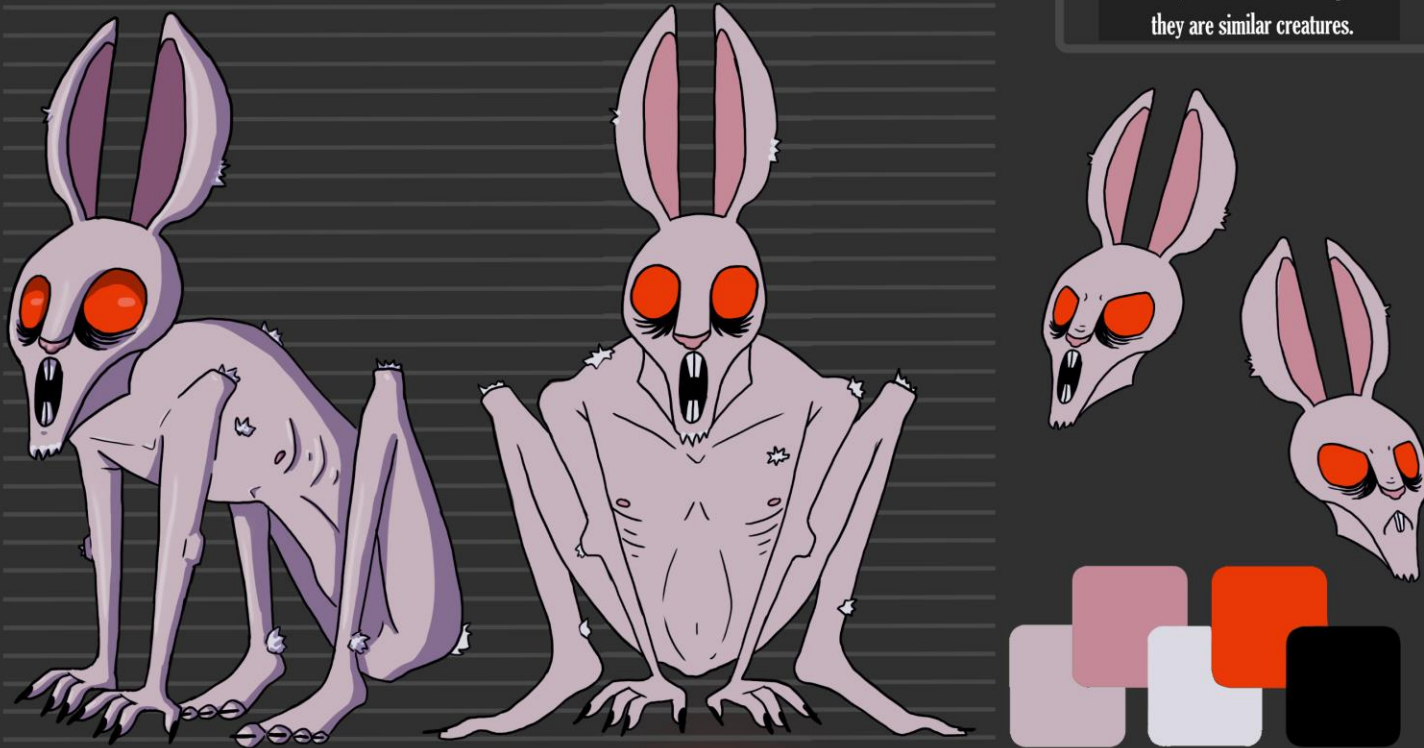


This design inarguably went through the most changes. When finished designing the character I never quite felt completely happy and so whilst sketching this sheet I revisited some of my initial design sketches. I found some doodles that I then realised I much preferred and so I used those when sketching turnaround instead. What I ended up with was a design I was much happier with and that better captured what the character is supposed to be. Unfortunately I could only fit 2 expressions however this character did not really need more than that anyway.

Rabbit

Malice in Murderland - Josie-Lea Hood

A mysterious figure that acts as the doorway to and from Wonderland. He will always appear when Alice feels particularly low, however it is her choice whether she enters or not. He has a direct link to her emotions and so he can always feel them, no matter what. Not many even know of his existence, the Hare is an exception as they are similar creatures.



As I had redesigned the character I needed to redo some of my colour correcting in order to make sure he was cohesive with the others, however other than that it was a pretty straightforward process.



Character Sheets

Caterpillar

Caterpillar

Malice in Murderland - Josie-Lea Hood

A strange parasitic creature that has infected a great old tree at the center of Wonderlands forest. He hatches from his cocoon when first approached but quickly grows into a much larger form. He seems to be addicted to some mysterious white powder that gives him remarkable powers. He can suddenly be lightning fast and burrow through holes.



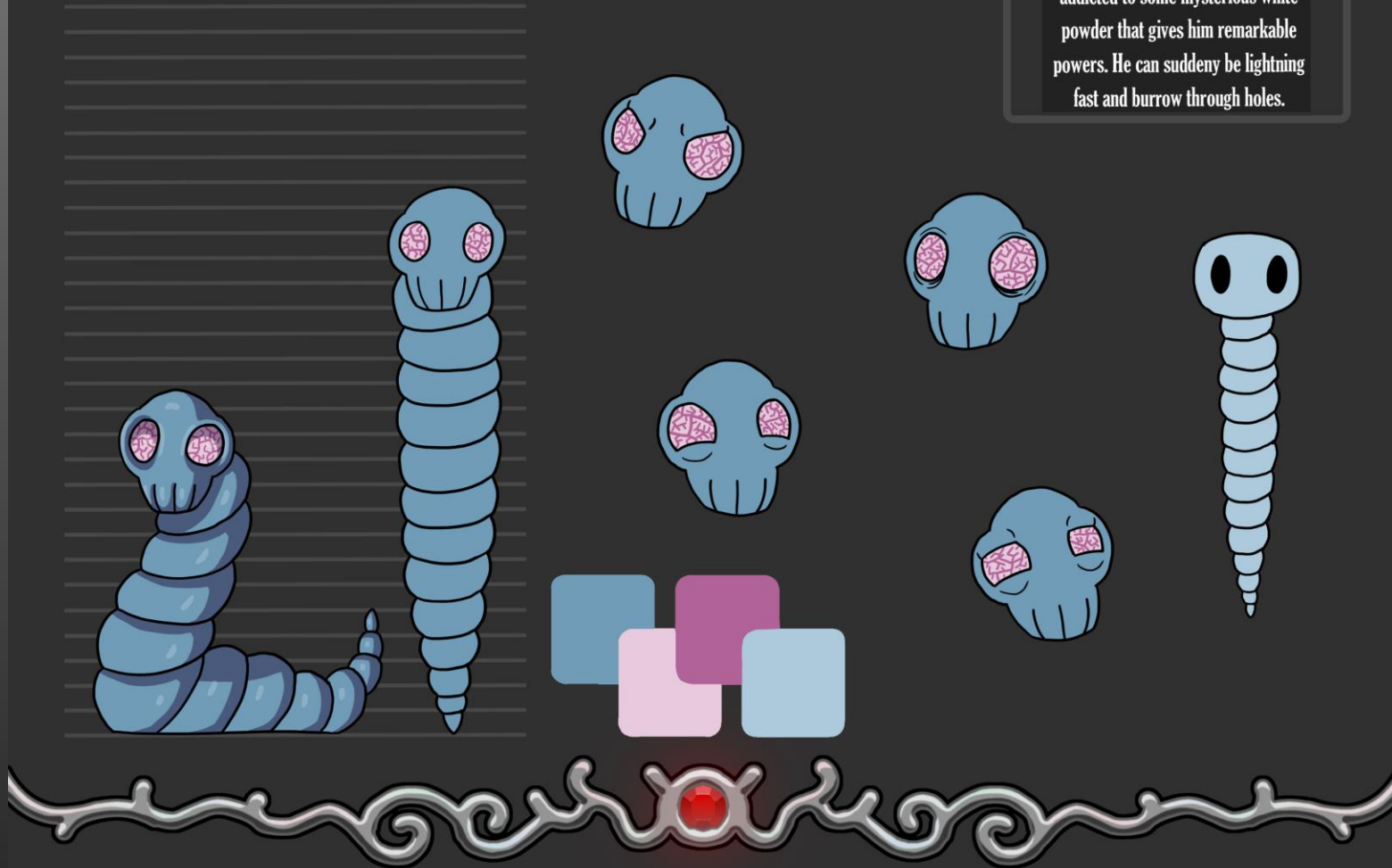
This character was very simple and did not take much time at all to sketch. I was able to fit all 4 expressions as planned and I made sure to include his larvae form as this is important to his narrative.

Caterpillar

Malice in Murderland - Josie-Lea Hood

A strange parasitic creature that has infected a great old tree at the center of Wonderlands forest. He hatches from his cocoon when first approached but quickly grows into a much larger form. He seems to be addicted to some mysterious white powder that gives him remarkable powers. He can suddenly be lightning fast and burrow through holes.

Much like the sketching, finalising this character was very simple and provided me with no trouble.



Character Sheets

Character Lineup

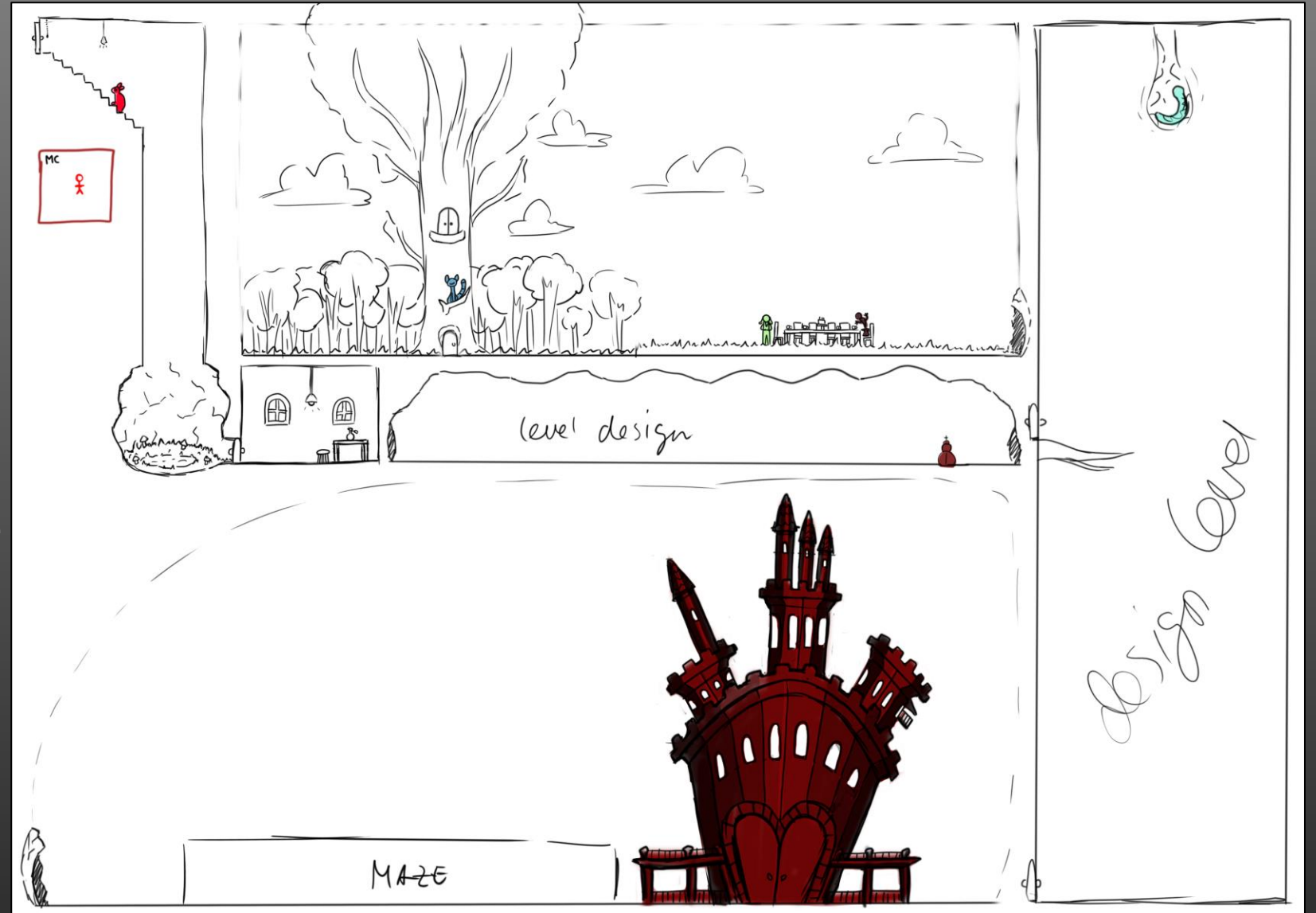
Lastly I recreated the character line-up as I find it a helpful tool for better visualising how these characters look next to each other. I also think it is a great visual simply because it better showcases the variety in silhouettes that these characters have.



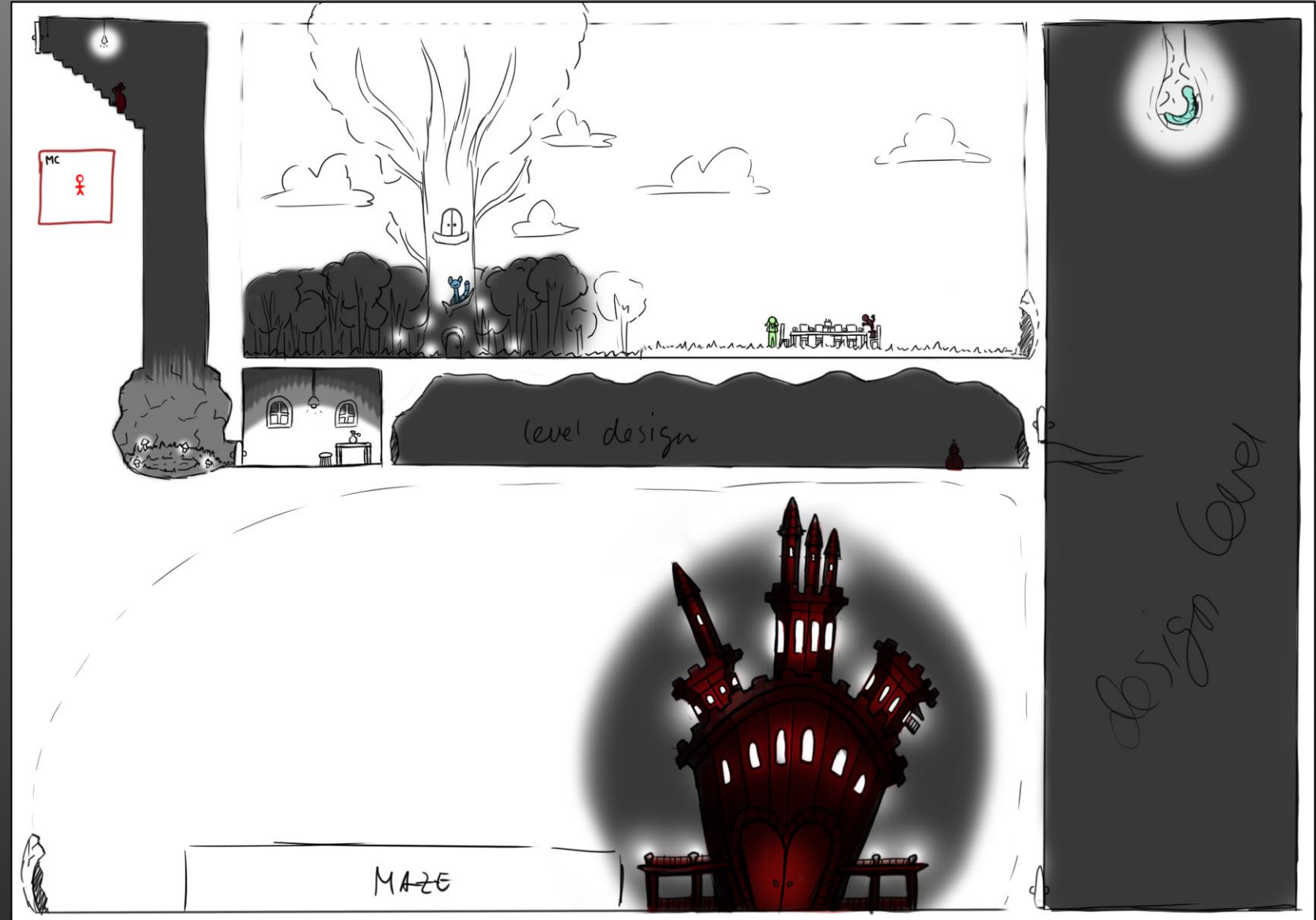
Backgrounds

Map sketches

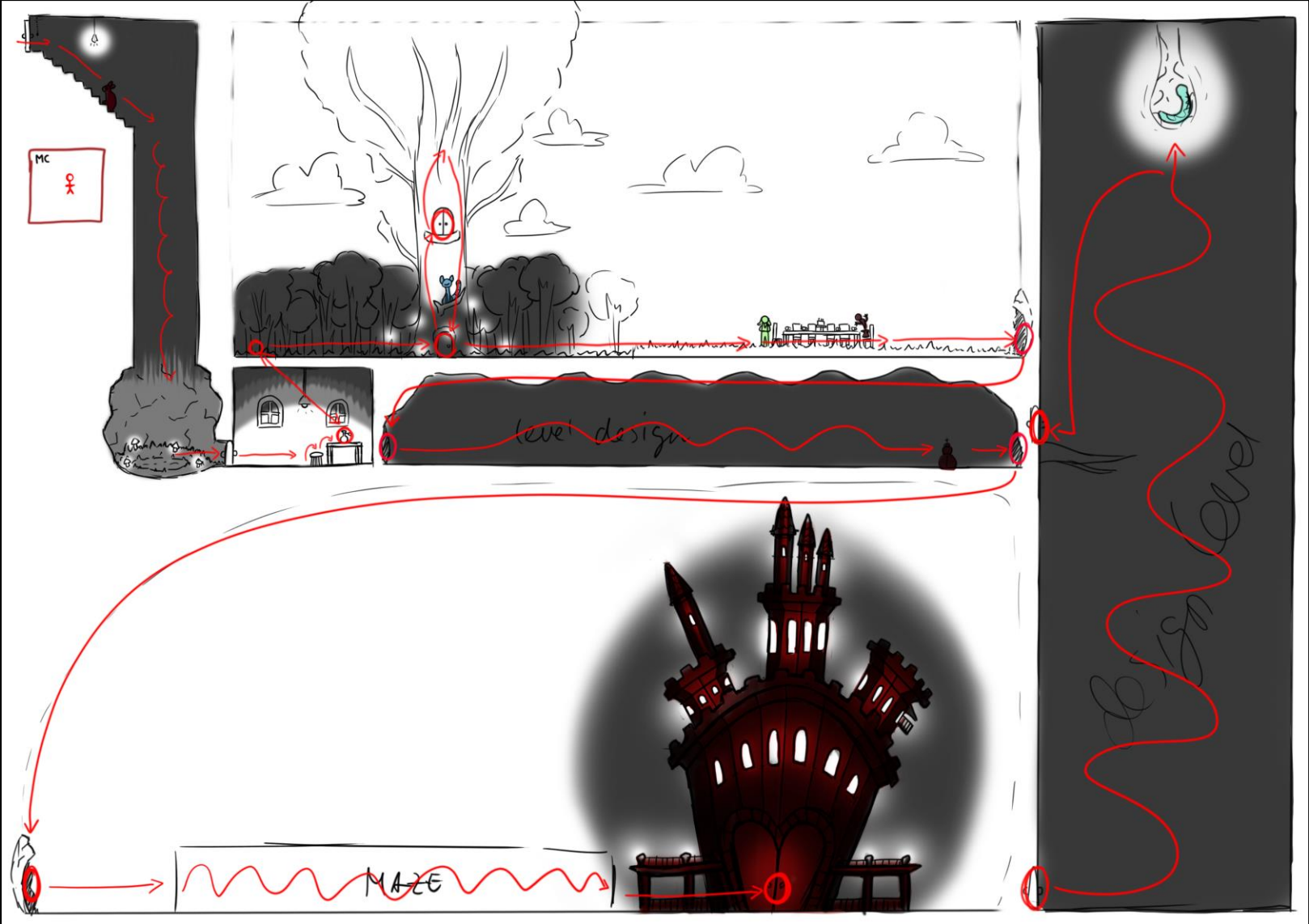
Before I could start on making the backgrounds, I needed a general idea of what I wanted to make. For this I decided to create a mock-up of the map to experiment with the rough concepts I had of the areas of the game. This was obviously nothing final as I would not consider myself skilled in level design and I have little experience with it, however it greatly helped me get a general sense for what I would want the game to look like and the rough direction of the narrative. The final design would likely have more minor areas and more vast, open level designs.



Since the main goal of this was to create an assortment of background guides, I also used this opportunity to map out the lighting of each area. Generally, I wanted the game to be quite dark to accompany its macabre visuals and horror narrative, but I also wanted it to be visually appealing and pretty in places. Using specific spot lighting in places really helped bring both of these things across. This was accordingly marked on the map.

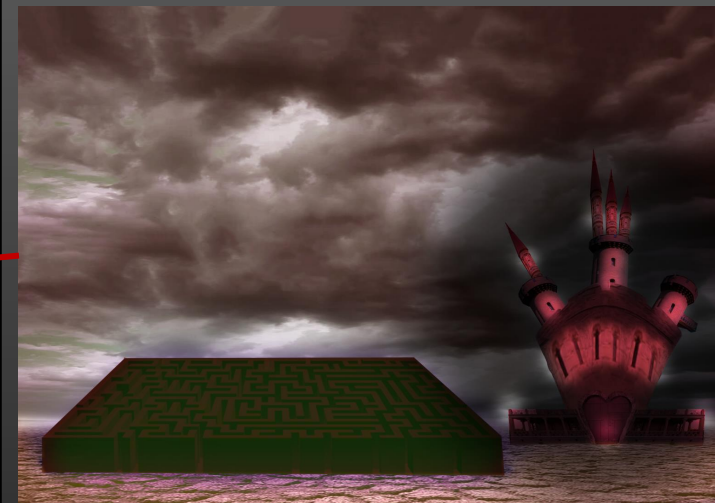
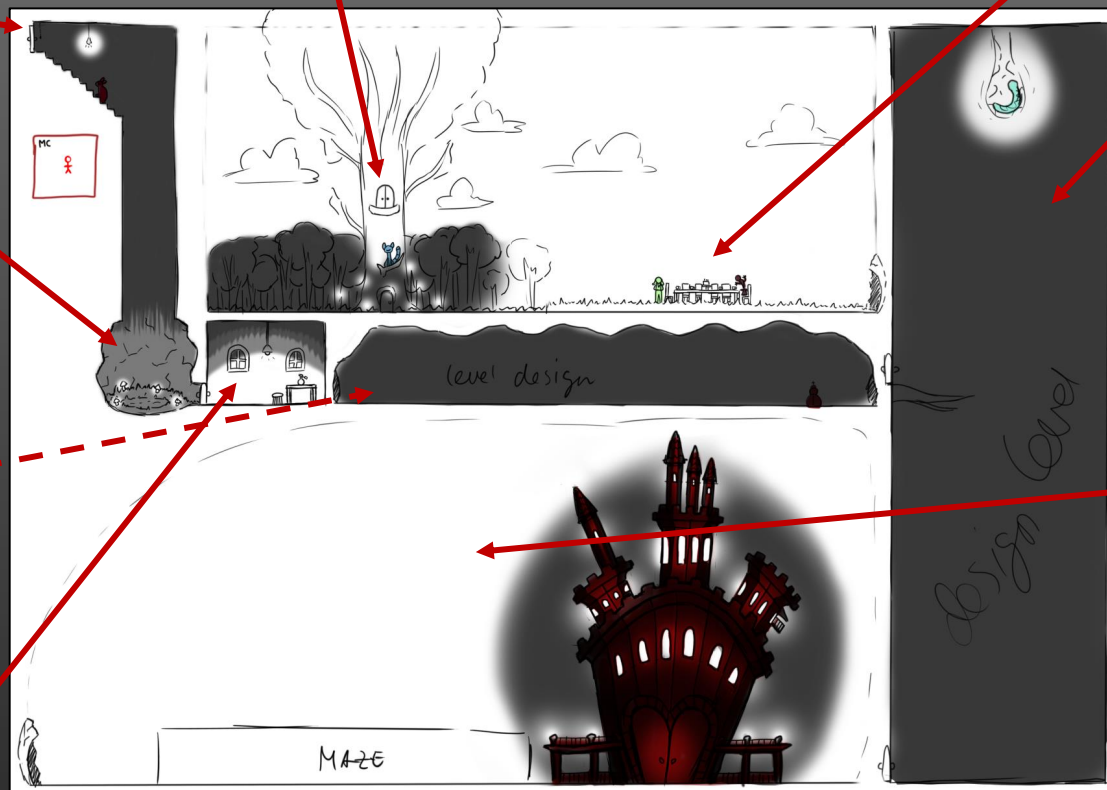
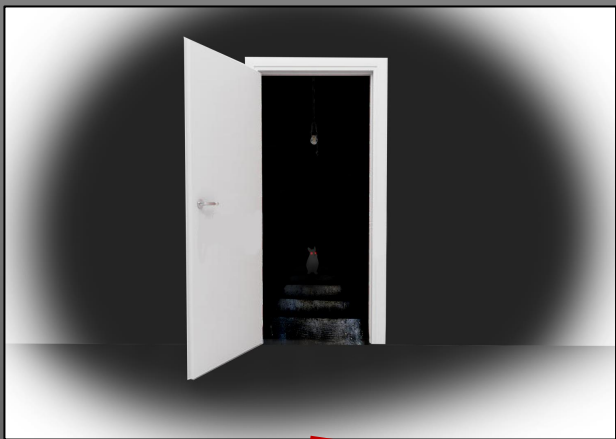


Lastly, I sketched what the imagined route for this version of the map would be. This was strongly based on a script I wrote for this story in 2020, however I naturally updated it based on the project developments made since then. A big thing I found myself struggling with in this, was that I found that this version of the map was very limited to a linear route, and so I knew that I wanted to keep working on it to develop it into something that would work as an open world map. However, for now it allowed me to further develop the backgrounds

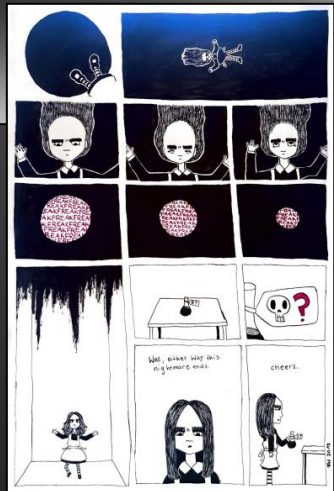
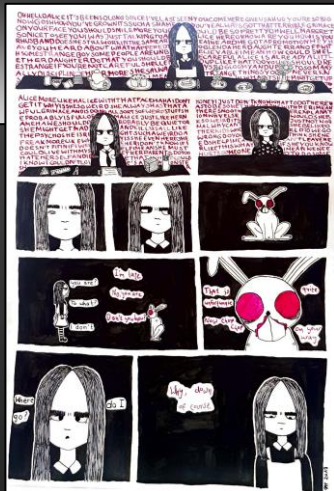
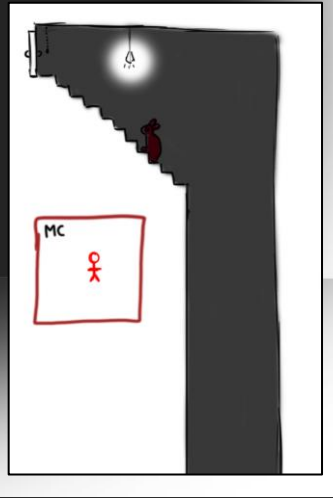


Backgrounds

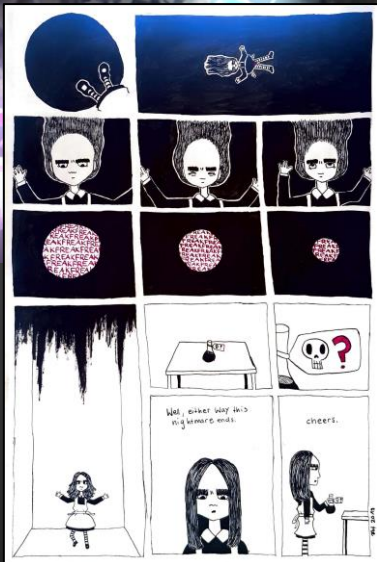
Photo bashes



I used the preliminary version of the Map to create a sort of visual guide for the environments with photo-bashes.

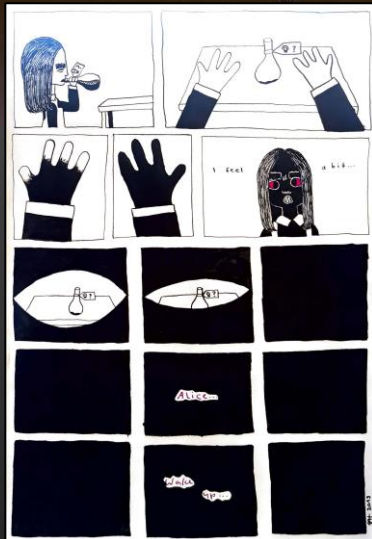
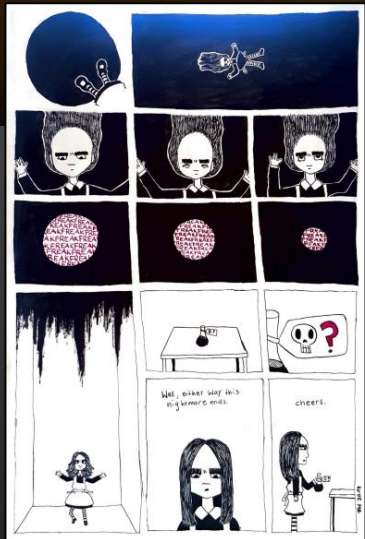
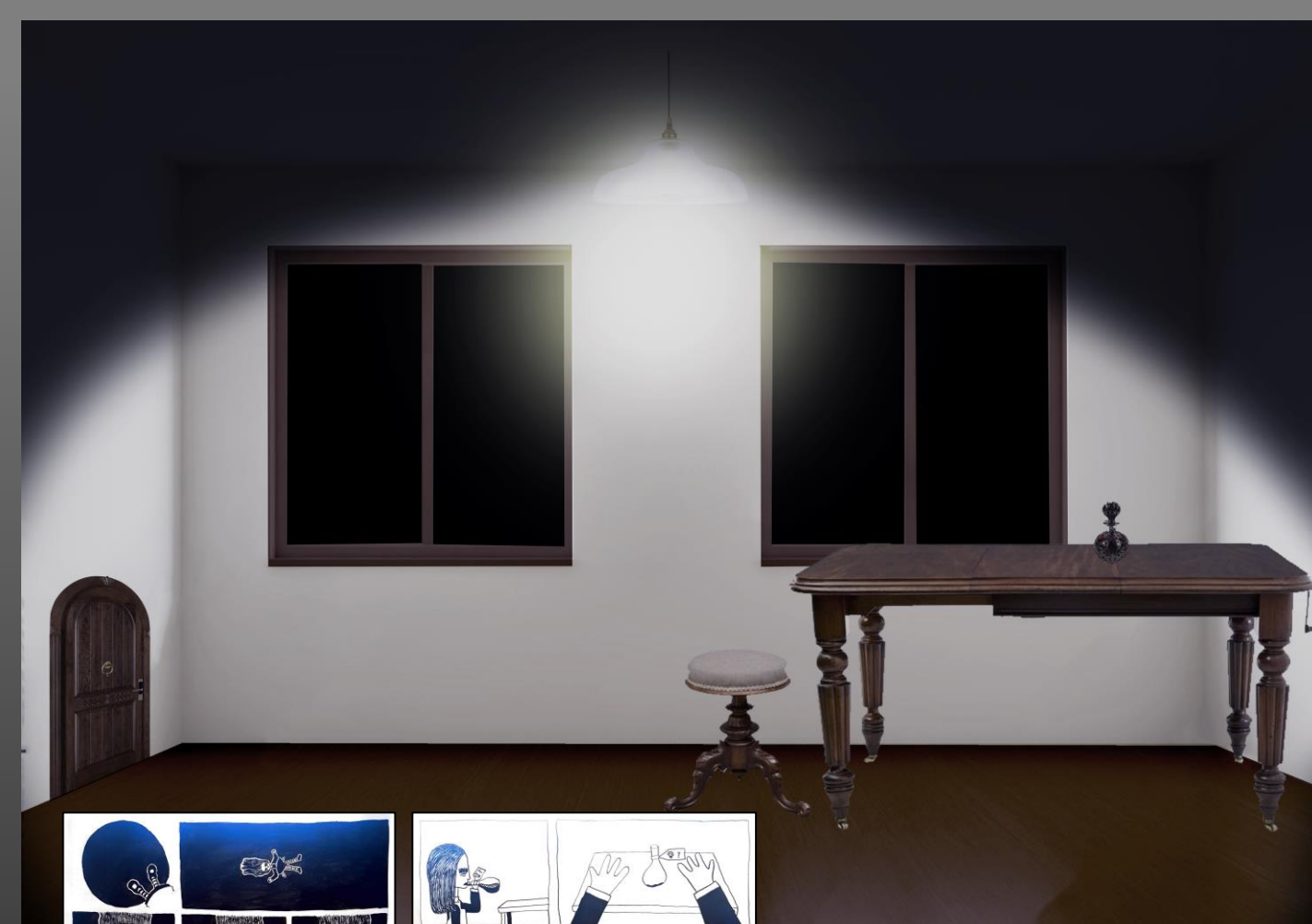


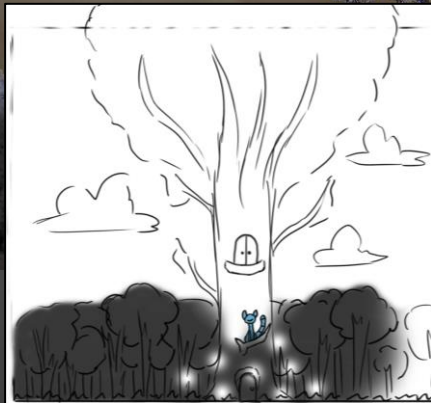
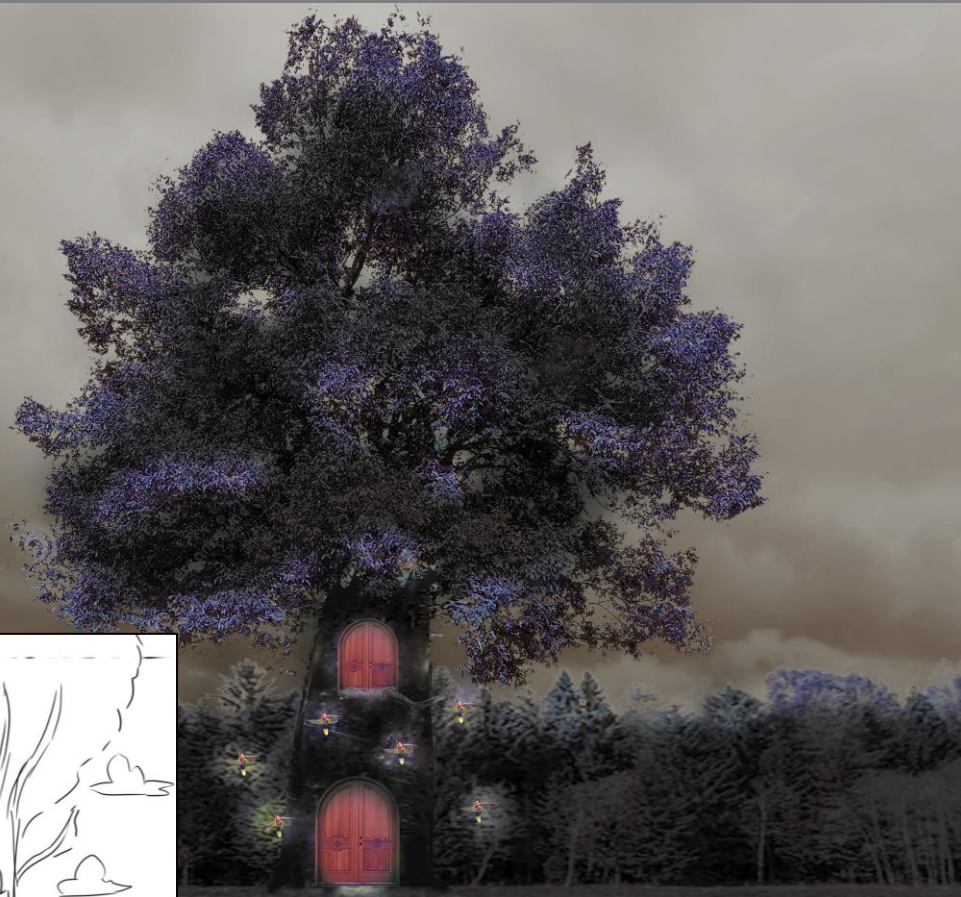
The original beginning of the story was that Alice found herself in an eerie, empty area where she had a short conversation with the white rabbit. After prompting her to look down, she then suddenly notices herself falling down a seemingly endless hole. Although I liked this concept, I wanted to push the horror feeling more and so I researched into a few different horror concepts to find something “scariest”. I decided she would find a dark cellar door with nothing but a singular lightbulb with a pull switch visible when opened. When pulled, the light would quickly flicker on and then off to reveal the white rabbit lurking on the stairs. Alice would curiously attempt to approach the rabbit, but find that the stairs suddenly end, and she finds herself falling down a dark hole. Although the “scary dark cellar door” concept is quite common, it is familiarly horrifying and can be incredibly unsettling when done right. I also much prefer that in this version Alice makes the decision to enter wonderland rather than just happening to fall into it, as I find this better symbolises her desperation for a different life when entering her mind.



Originally, Alice landed in the sterile room after her fall, however I wanted the narrative to slightly follow Lewis Carrols Alice in Wonderland story a bit closer. In that story Alice enters the actual wonderland environment through a small door, but I wanted to keep the part where the potion she finds is a potion that knocks her out, and so I decided instead she would enter the sterile room through the door. Naturally I then needed to think of a new area she could land in instead and the idea of a cave came to mind. Not only did this seem like a more natural place for the “endless” hole to lead to, but it also logistically made more sense for the bottom of the hole to be illuminated by the mushrooms rather than there simply being a harsh nonsensical transition from dark to suddenly light. It also provided much more clear imagery of how she had fallen into a strange land with unnaturally coloured plants, whereas before it wouldn't necessarily seem unplausable for a hole to simply lead to a room I also liked the harsh contrast of the door leading from an overgrown cave to a perfectly sterile room as this greatly showed how unpredictable wonderland is supposed to be. Lastly, it is also just very visually pleasing and a perfect way for me to introduce the mushroom motif which I want to be an important part of the game. At the bottom of the cave, I wanted there to be a grass circle to show that it is an intended landing place and also convey a sense of welcoming and make the player feel like wonderland was expecting Alice to come. It also made more sense in my mind for the cave floor to not just be stone if it has the capability to grow mushrooms. Aside from that, mushrooms and grass circles are also very commonly depicted together.

After entering through the door, Alice enters the sterile room. This room in the original story was simply an all-white empty space with nothing but a table, however this seemed a little bland in hindsight and doesn't make much sense to a Victorian time-period. Instead, I wanted it to look like a regular room that had simply not been furnished with more than a table and a stool. I also wanted to reintroduce the shrinking imagery that is iconic to Alice in Wonderland, and so it made sense for me to add the stool to allow Alice to climb the table. I also imagine this will act as a perfect tutorial level to familiarise the player with the mechanics. I retained the potion bottle on the Table but realised that it needed a more Victorian design, as the one I had originally imagined resembled a scientific beaker. In my reimagining it is not the potion that shrinks Alice, instead it will poison her and cause her to pass out. So, to retain the shrinking aspect, I made the door through which she enters disproportionately small to the rest of the room. This simply means that when she enters the room, she will find that she is already much too small for it. This concept also is reminiscent of the shrinking doors found in the original Alice in Wonderland stories. Lastly, I also added windows to the room, but to maintain the feeling that she is in an eerie and empty place, I made it so that the windows only show complete darkness.





After poisoning herself, Alice will pass out and later awaken to find herself in a dark forest. This forest is where she will meet the Cheshire cat and where the player will eventually find the first Boss of the game, the Caterpillar. Since both characters have a Blue colour scheme it made sense to me to reflect this in the forest. I wanted it to be unnaturally coloured anyway and so making the trees blue was a perfect fit and conveys well how dark the forest is supposed to be. My original story was that she would meet the Cheshire cat immediately upon awaking, but for the sake of a game narrative, it makes more sense to find him later on. Alice will traverse through the forest to find a Large tree at the centre of it, where she will find the Cheshire cat sitting on a branch. He will guide her inside and equip the player with the first weapon of the game. Whilst in the forest Alice will not be able to see anything but the trees and will feel fully submerged in darkness with only a few mushrooms and fireflies to light the way, but halfway through the level inside the large tree, she will have the option to peek outside. Here, halfway up the trunk, she will be able to look across the tops of the trees and see the sky. This sky is murky and grey and will convey that wonderland is a gruesome and dreary place. I am considering also making this stage of the game rainy and empty at first, but after defeating the caterpillar in the tree, the rain will dissipate, and life will return to the forest. This would be a perfect setup to not introduce enemies in the forest until after the player has acquired a weapon to fight them

EXT. FOREST

Alice wakes up to find herself in a forest. It is quiet as though there were no living creatures in it. She gets up and looks around to find a pair of eyeballs and some teeth lying at her feet. She furrows her brow and turns around but takes a surprised step back as she finds the same Assembly of body parts to be floating directly in front of her.

CHESHIRE CAT

"Oh my, did I scare you?"

ALICE

"Who are you? I recognize your voice... you're the one who woke me from my sleep!"

CHESHIRE CAT

"No, How would I know your name? We just met after all."

ALICE

"If it wasn't you, then how did you know I was woken by my name?"

CHESHIRE CAT

"How else would you awaken one from slumber?"

ALICE

"Forgive me for saying so, but I am not particularly inclined to believe an assembly of body parts to be trustworthy."

CHESHIRE CAT

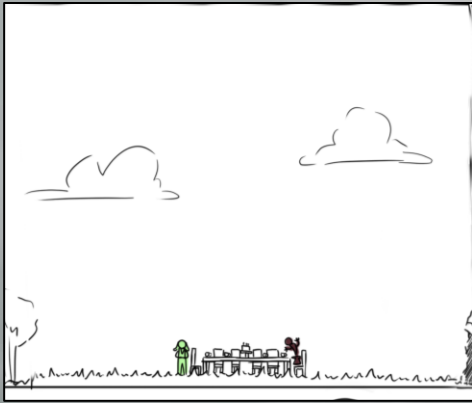
"I take no offense, would you prefer me to look like so?"

As he says these words a body begins to form around the parts. A slightly unstable looking cat now stands before her.



Inside the tree trunk, everything should look wooden and natural. It is a purely level driven area and needs to only consist of platforms and enemies. The wood will have a blue hue to reflect both the exterior of the tree, but also the blue light emitting from the cocoon. The only light source in the tree is the cocoon and so the bottom of the level will be very dark and become progressively lighter. This will help the player feel like they are making progress and give them a sense of how much further they must go before reaching the top. It will also provoke curiosity in them as they will wonder what is emitting this light. Platforms will look like a combination of wood eaten into shape by bugs and branches that have sprouted in the empty space inside. At the top by the cocoon the platforms will form a larger platform that will create a good base for the boss fight to take place. After killing the caterpillar, the parasites in the tree will die.





EXT. MEADOW/MAD HATTERS TEA PARTY

AS the woods clear up, Alice reaches a meadow. In it, she notices a long table, piled with all sorts of goodies.

ALICE

"I'm getting a strange sense of Déjà Vu."

She approaches the table and sees that despite its size and the number of seats, there don't appear to be any guests. Instead she sees only a rather large upside-down hat, placed on the chair at the end of the table. Next to it stands a stoic Hare in a servers uniform.

ALICE

"It seems I've missed the fun."

She says, but just as she does, a strange creature emerges from the Hat and peeks at her with its bulging eyes.

MAD HATTER

"Malice...?"

ALICE

"That's not--"

The Creature Bursts from the hat and stretches into the air, with its arms outspread.

As Alice leaves the forest, the trees will dissipate, and she will find herself at a wide and empty meadow. The grass beneath her looks yellowed and dead and the sky above is still as murky and grey as before. As she approaches the centre of the meadow, she will find a banquet table that looks as if it's hosting a tea party. This is where she will meet the mad hatter and his server/bodyguard Hare. This part of the story I want to play out fairly similarly to my original idea, however I don't want the Hare and the Hatter to be dead by the end of their battle as I think they would be more interesting as revisitable NPCs in an open world game. I also think they could possibly act well as a shop where you are able to buy new weapons and abilities. The banquet table is laid with what appear to be delicious treats but upon closer inspection reveal themselves to be human body parts. The tea is blood-red and contains a human eyeball, the cake has finger candles, and the display tray has skewered tongues. The seats will be empty to hint at the idea that the guests have become the food. This part of the game will have a more red-tinted colour scheme to not only contrast the blues of the previous area, but also to convey how bloody and macabre this part of the game is supposed to be. When fighting the Hare, the area will fade away and she will find herself in complete blackness.

At the end of the meadow the player will find the entrance to a cave. Inside the cave they will find all sorts of nocturnal creatures who have grown accustomed to the dark. The cave will look similarly to how the cave Alice landed in does, which is why I opted to use the photo bash I had already made as reference. It will be dark and overgrown with luminescent mushrooms. In the sketch I made for it I depicted it as a long tunnel but this is simply because I did not focus on designing an actual level for it. A final version of it would be similar to the cave systems in Hollow Knight where they are more in-depth and deep with puzzles and mini-bosses to guide the way. At the end of the cave you would meet Tweedle-Dee and Tweedle-Dum as the third boss of the game.



level design



After exiting the cave you reach the semi-final area of the game, a vast dry and deserted area in an endless storm populated only by a large maze and a dark and foreboding castle. The maze is another platforming level before you reach the final stage which is the castle. The castle looks strange and unnatural but that is because it mimics the shape of a human heart. Inside is one last platforming level before you reach the final boss which is the Red Queen.



Backgrounds

Finals



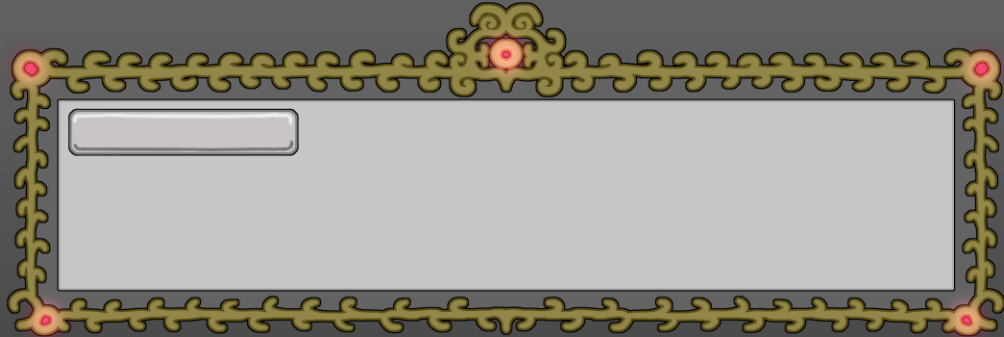
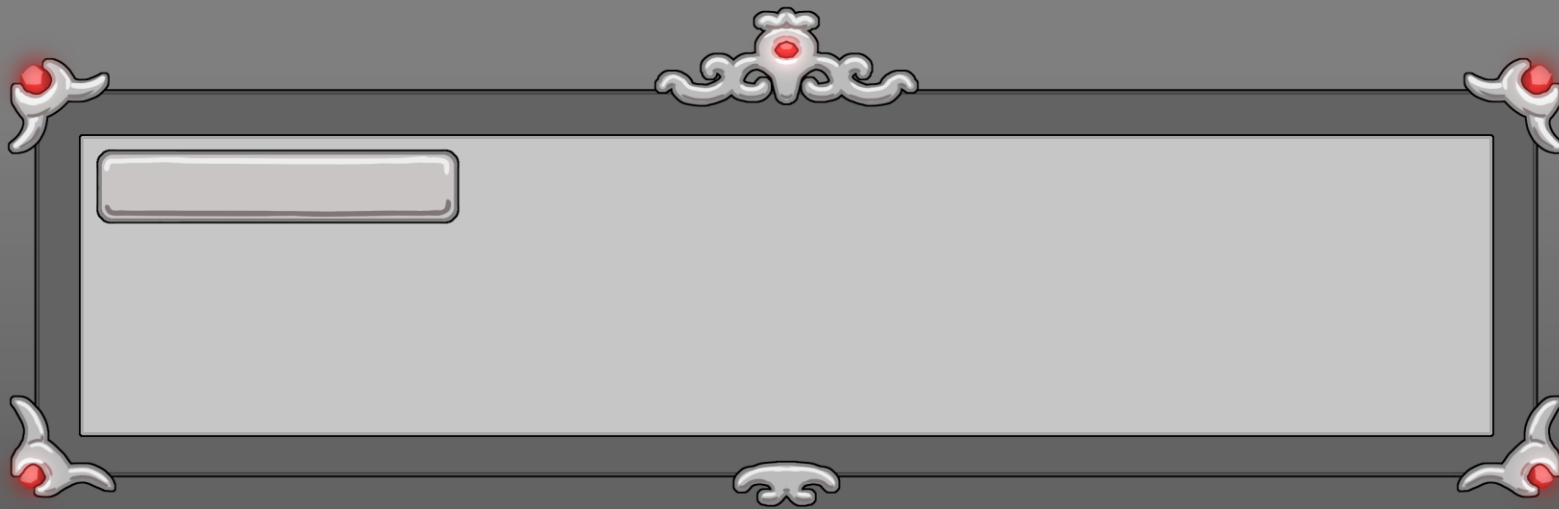
In order to get this project done in a timely fashion, I knew I needed to limit myself to only finishing one of my Backgrounds. The Tea Party area seemed like a natural choice, as it not only was always my favourite and strongest background design, but also is a setting where my favourite character design is placed. Therefore I knew this area would ideally lend itself to my subsequent game mock-ups, to show off my best assets. I stuck fairly closely to the photo bash I made though I did redesign the chairs to more closely resemble what I was going for. I then simplified everything a bit to better lend itself to what I was going for more.



Originally I had intended the backgrounds to be very monotone and very simplified, however when compiling my photo bashes I realised that I really wanted to push the murky discolouring of her surroundings which I wouldn't be able to do with my initial idea. I still wanted the background to strongly contrast the style of the character sprites however and so I opted for a somewhat simple painterly style.

UI

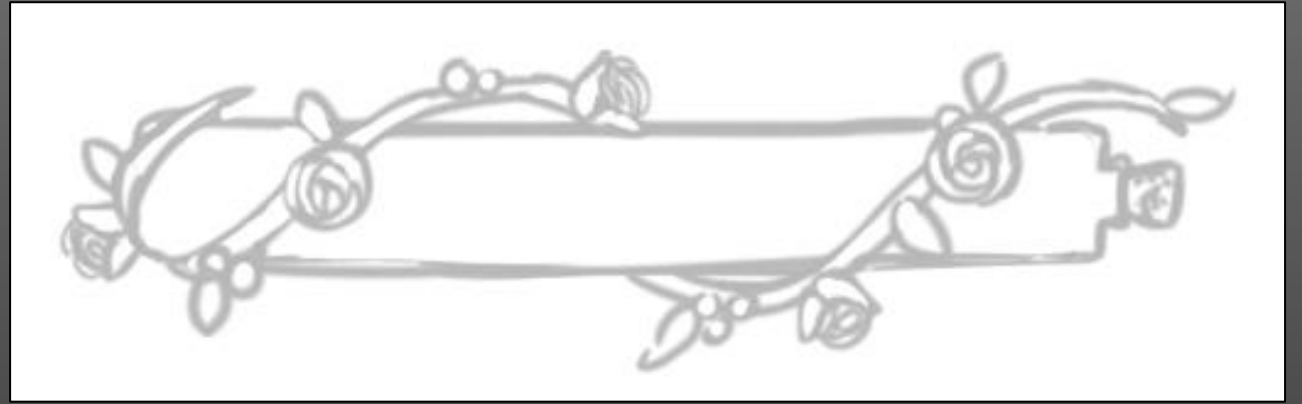
Dialogue Bar



The first variation of the dialogue bar was simply something I was experimenting with but I realised very quickly that it was too detailed making it feel cluttered and messy. I created another version and instantly preferred it. This time I referenced some actual ornate detailing and kept it to a minimum which felt much more classy. I also much preferred the silver over the gold as I feel like it has a darker feel to it than the gold and fits the primary colour scheme of the game better.

UI

Health bar



Next I sketched out an idea for the health bar. I wanted it to be a long slim bottle as bottles are supposed to be a general consumable item in the game and it therefore made a lot of sense to me. The bottle alone seemed a bit empty though and so I thought to put a vine around it. I then added some roses on those as I felt they both signified life quite well and it would then make sense for the vine and roses to start to wither as the bar ran out. I was inspired by ornate health bars like the ones found in American McGee's *Alice* and *Vampire the Masquerade Bloodlines*.

UI

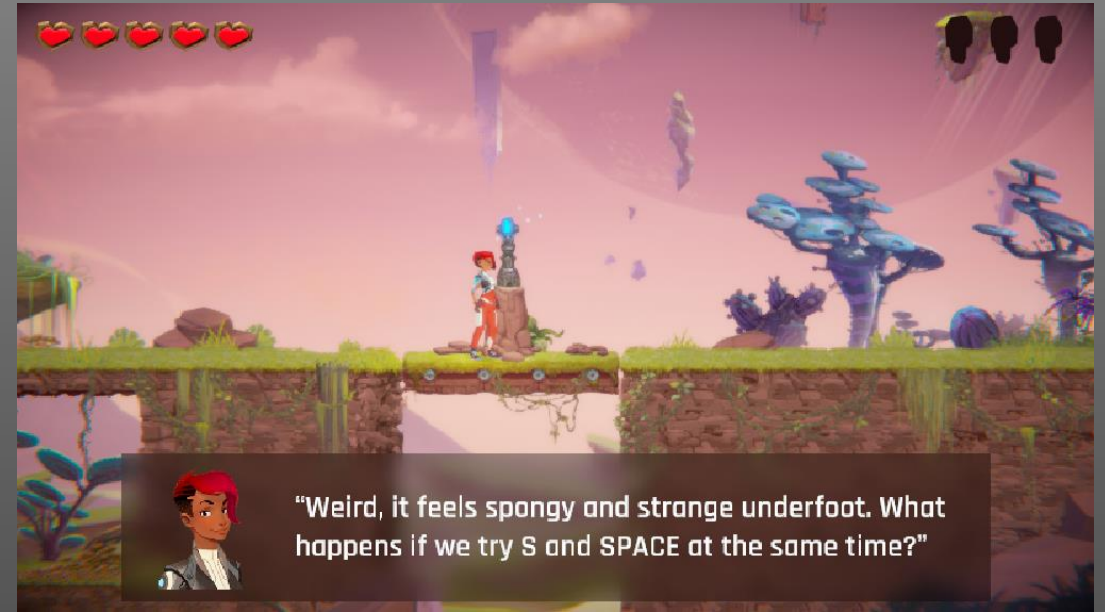
Weapons indicator



The last UI item I created was a weapon indicator to fill out my game mock-ups. I was inspired by the way that this is done in American McGee's Alice however I also tried to make it match the Health Bar. Since my png of Alice is holding a knife I used this as the placeholder weapon for this design of it. In an actual game this would be interchangeable.

Game Mock-ups

Rough Drafts



Once I had some preliminary assets prepared I realised I could work on some rough game mock-ups. First up was a rough draft of the general gameplay UI. I am a big fan of the way it looks in *Alice: Madness returns*, but I want my game to have a central dialogue bar with full body character portraits that grey out when not speaking during character interaction scenes as this is more suited for a 2D game.



The result I ended up with gave me confidence in the vision I am going for, however I am hoping that I will be able to add a weapons tab and a reward system counter in a more final version of the mock-ups.

The dialogue scene mock-up also perfectly captured the idea I had for it and will serve as a great base for the more final mock-ups.



Game Mock-ups

Finals



I tried to recreate the draft game mock-ups I created but this time made sure to be accurate to the canon sizing of the characters. This resulted in Alice being very small on the screen which initially concerned me, however I realised I actually like this feature, as she is supposed to be a small child and I feel that playing as a small character will better capture this. This first mock-up is a representation of what it would look like when traversing the areas and approaching other characters.



The second mockup is a representation of what speaking to characters would look like. I included a random sample dialogue and made sure that the dialogue UI stands out.