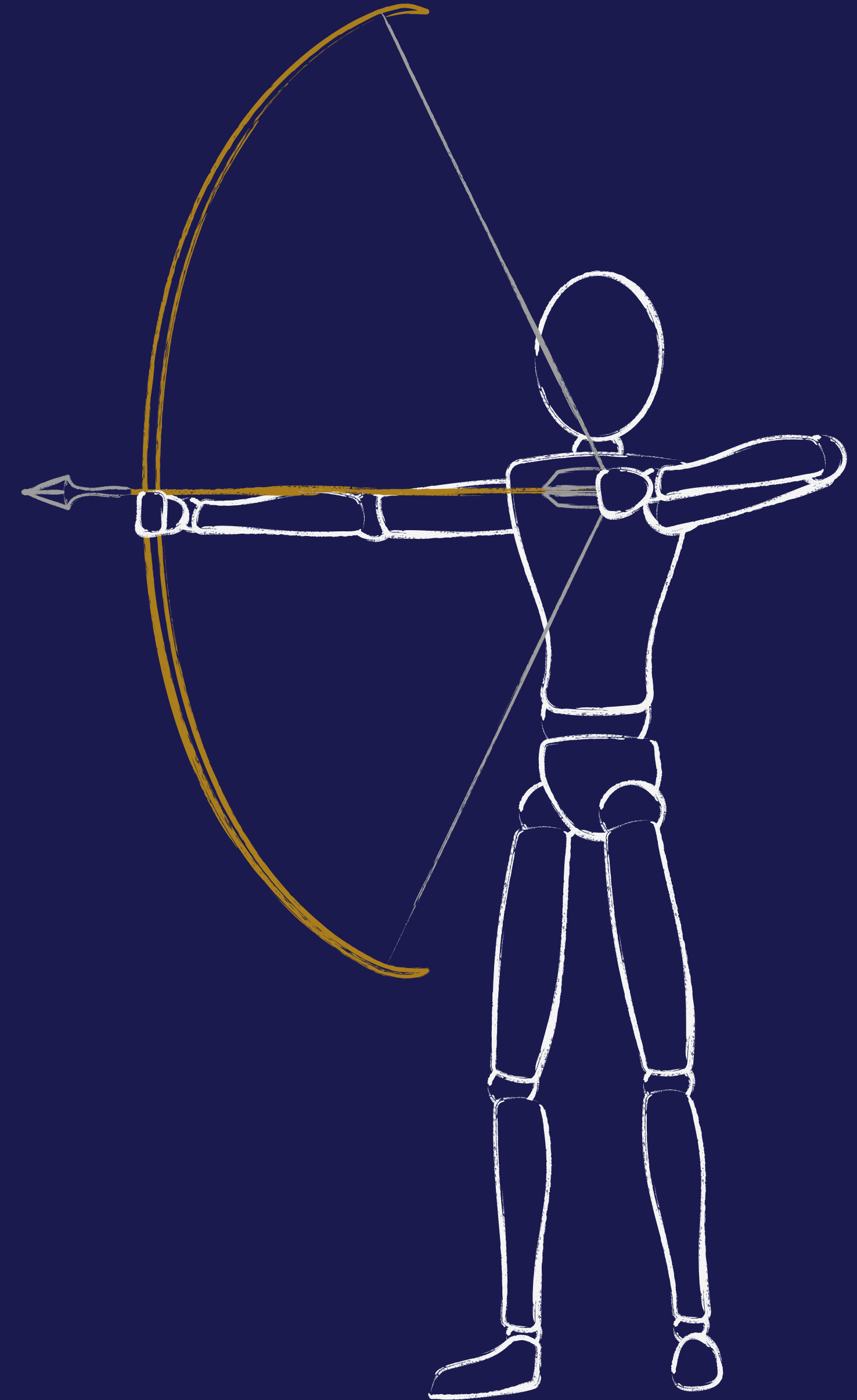


Into the Wider World

Creating the *Fimbulvinter* Concept Game

Kayla Goodison, 2024



I've always loved playing RPGs.

Even during my UX bootcamp, I chose to redesign a game's UI and UX for my capstone.

- 🎮 Traditional UX mentors couldn't guide game design work
- 🤝 Game jam discovery: Talented specialists working in silos
- 📖 MITxPRO solution: Bridge systematic UX thinking with game development



Why This Project?

Creative Passion

I've always been drawn to the atmospheric storytelling and world-building of great RPGs. This was my chance to create the kind of experience I love playing.

Bridging Two Interests

After working on enterprise UX, I wanted to explore how my design skills could enhance creative storytelling and player experience.

Learning Through Making

Game jams taught me that specialists often work in silos. MITxPRO gave me the structured learning to integrate design, development, and creative vision.

The Perfect Storm

Norse mythology offered rich, underexplored narrative territory, while the capstone provided the framework and accountability to actually finish.



The Basics

Roles

UX Design, Game Design, Game Development, Sound Design, Project Management

Timeframe

2 Years (2 Months in Active Development)

Tools

Figma, Unity, Audacity, Visual Studio Code

The Challenge

Create a compelling game experience while learning Unity development and managing scope as a solo creator.



From Game Jams to Structured Learning

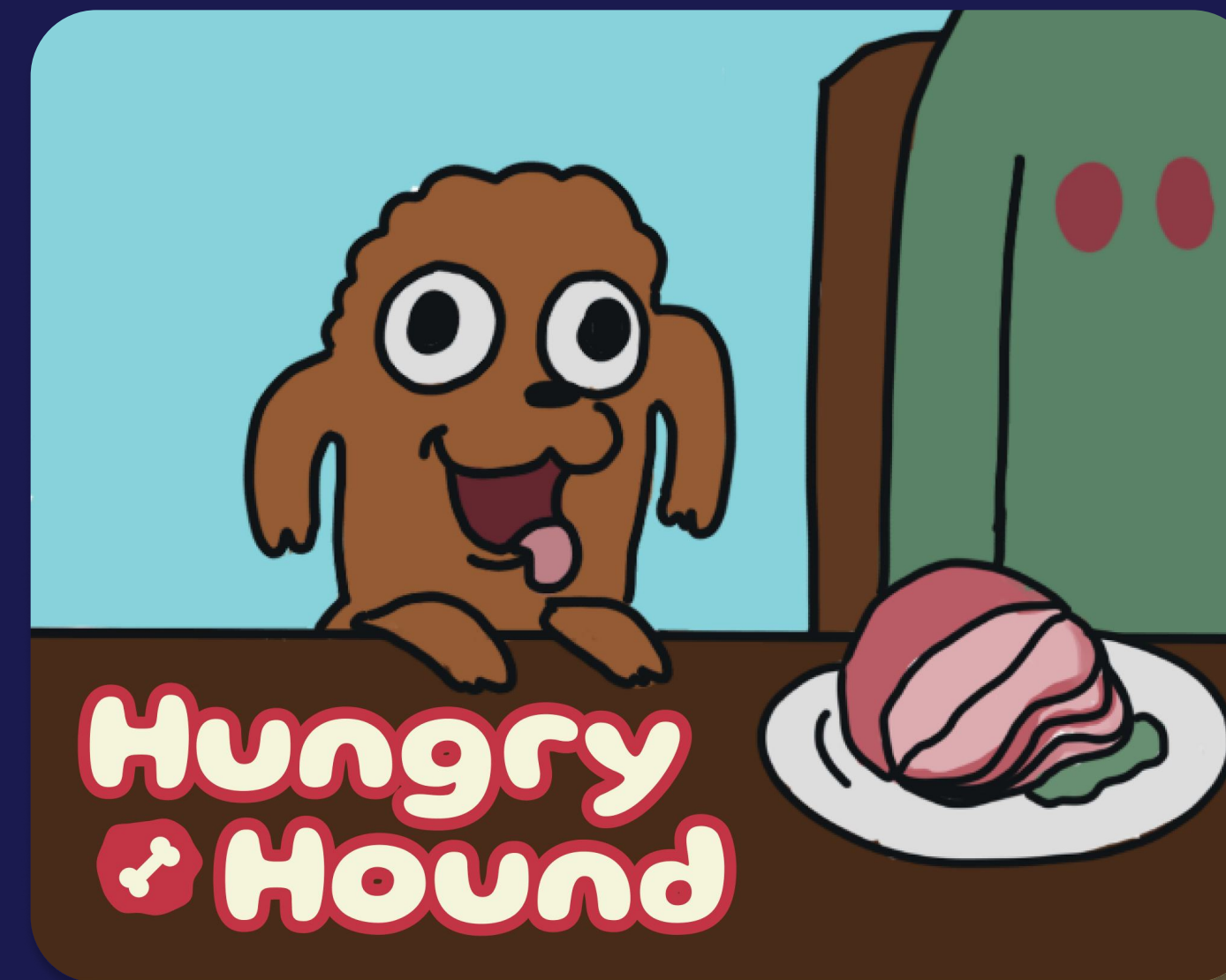
Learning From Game Jams

What I Discovered

- Talented specialists (programmers, artists, audio designers) working in silos
- Limited systematic design thinking connecting different elements
- Great technical skills but inconsistent user experience considerations
- Need for someone to bridge creative vision with systematic development

What This Taught Me

I needed formal game design education to combine my UX background with creative development skills. MITxPRO offered the structured learning to make this vision possible.

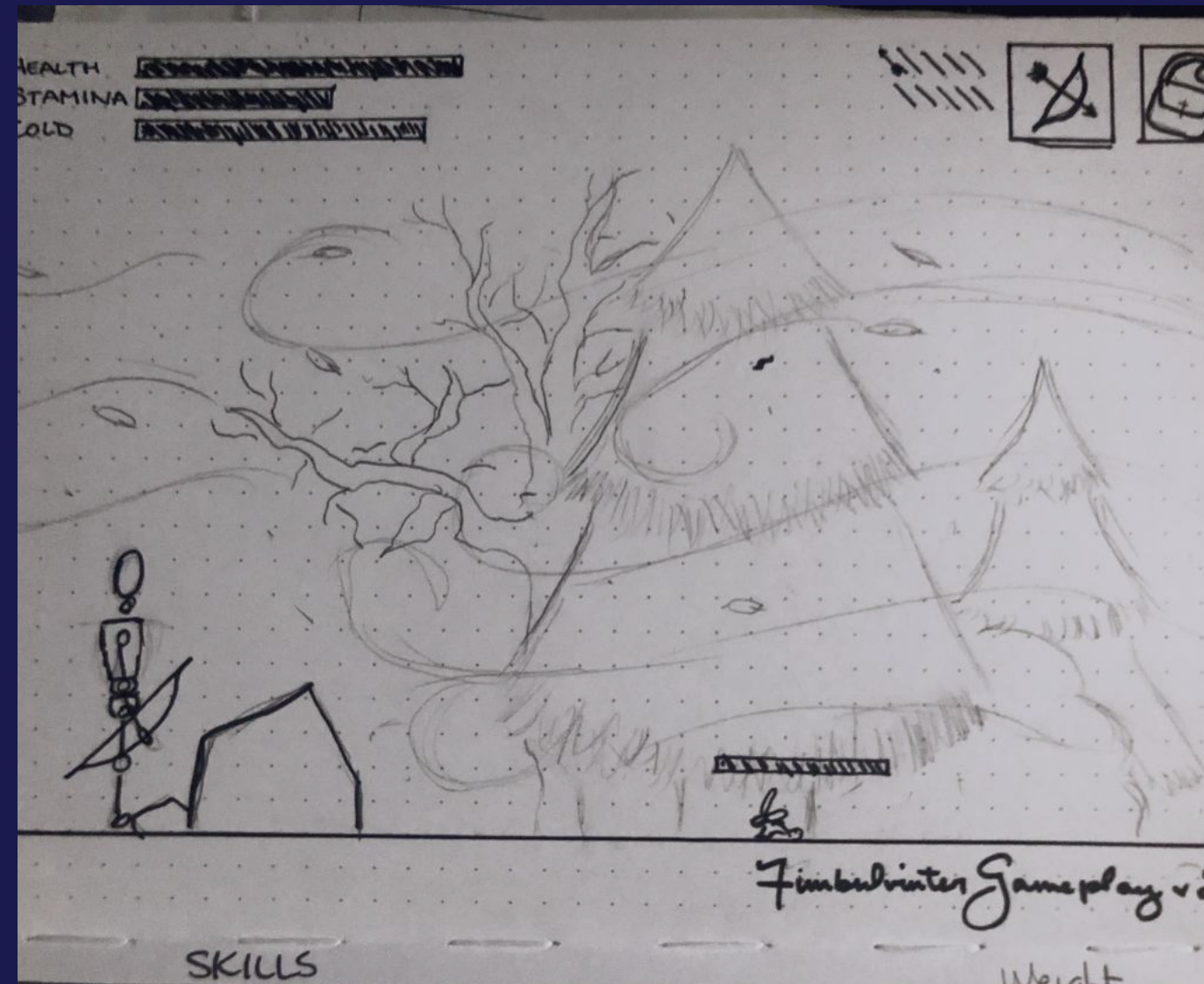


Timeline

Goals: Develop and complete a proof-of-concept game.

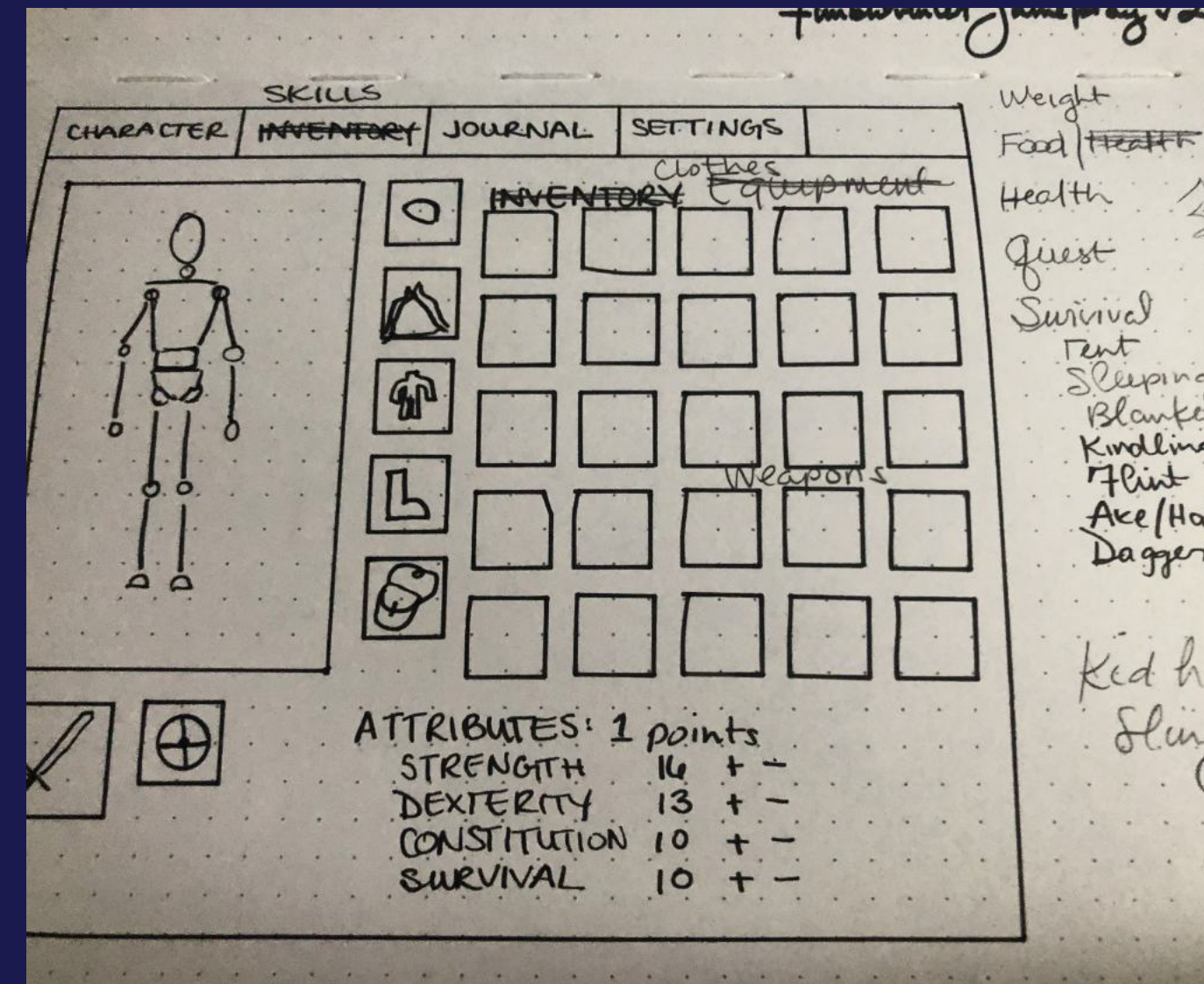


Early *Fimbulvinter* Sketches - 2021



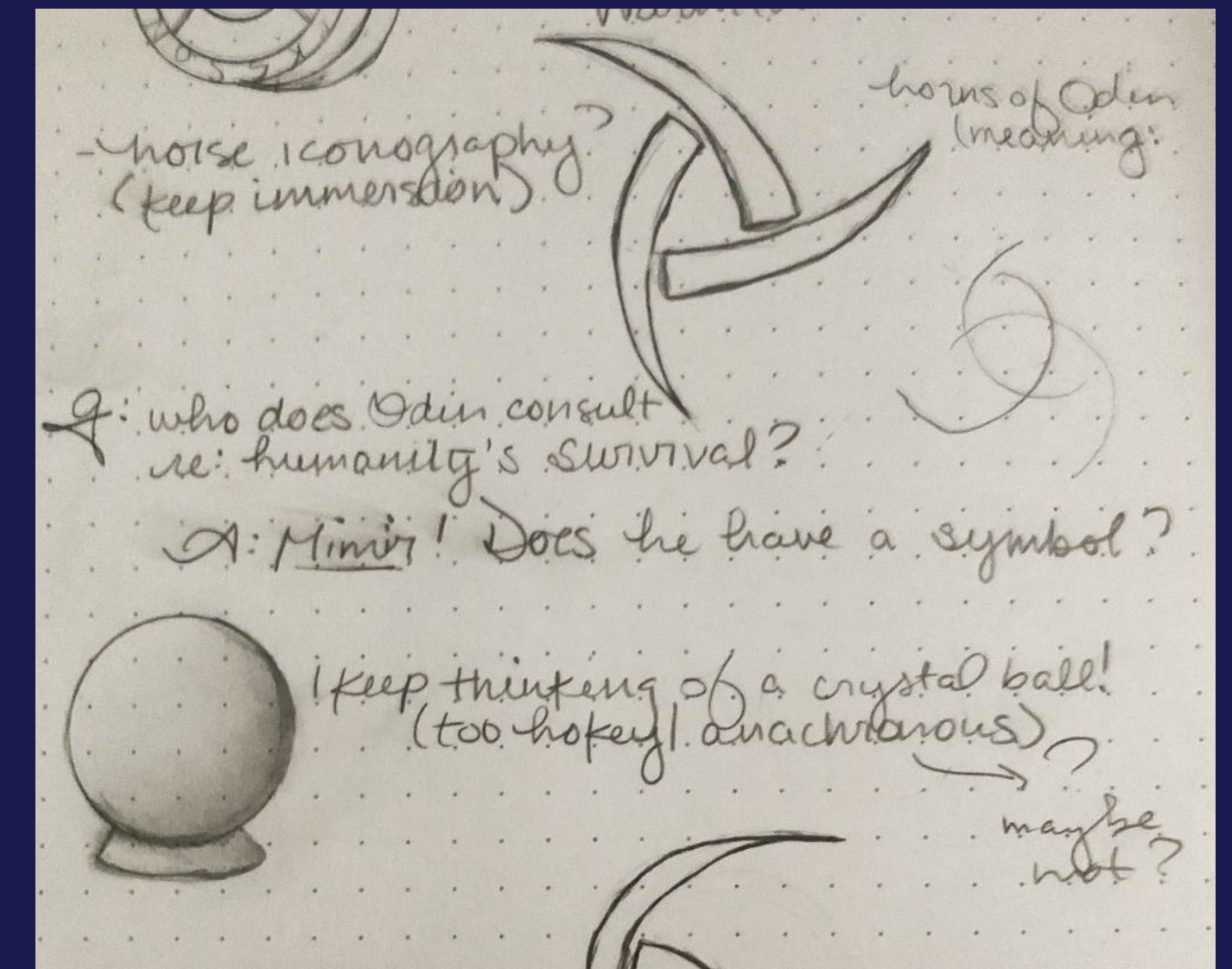
Gameplay

Original idea for a gameplay screen.



Menus

Equipment modal with a list of possible items, attributes and more.



Symbology

Ideas for theming the UI based on Norse symbols.

Early Wireframes - 2021

The initial idea for the interface - with the challenge of keeping the main gameplay clear while displaying a plethora of information.

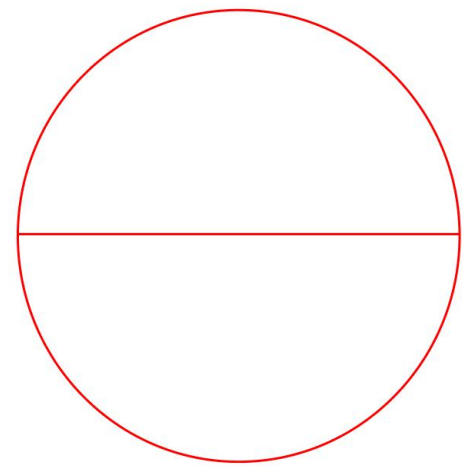


Concept Art - 2021

SHIELDS

Surprisingly, Viking shields were normally custom-made to the warrior. Additionally, you didn't strap them to your arm — instead, you held a handle in the center of the shield (where that metal bulb is, which is called a "boss").

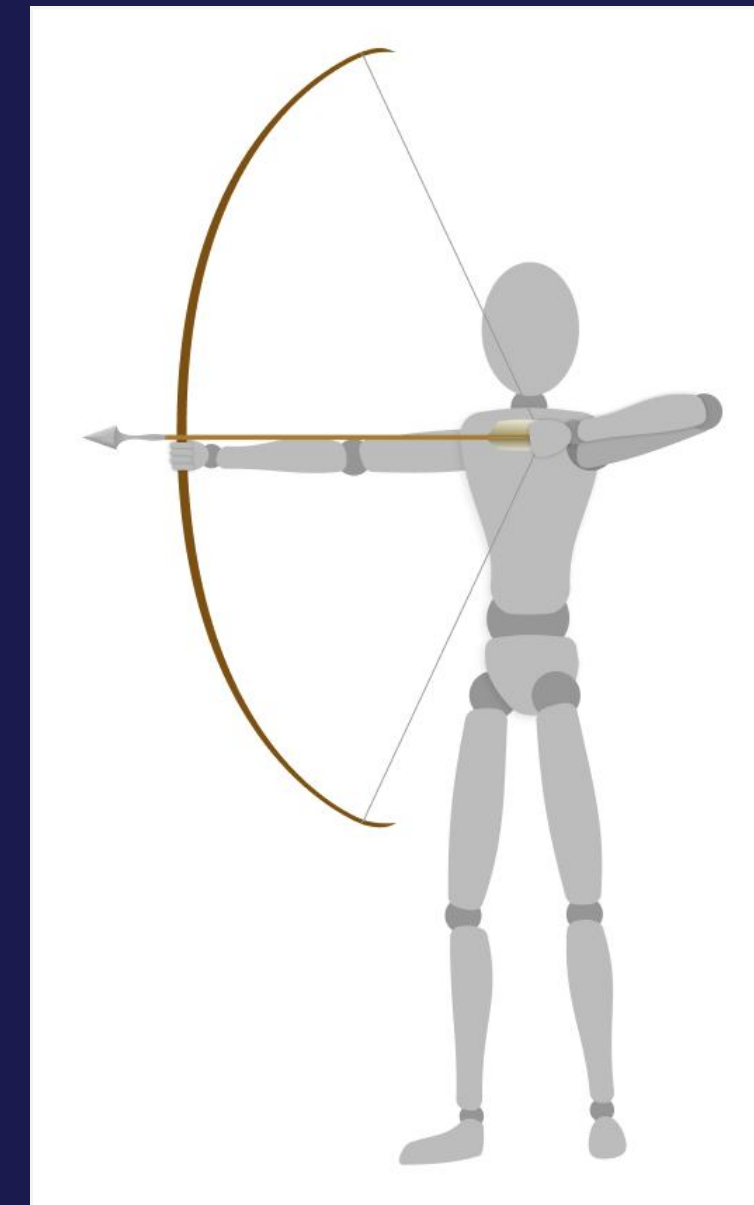
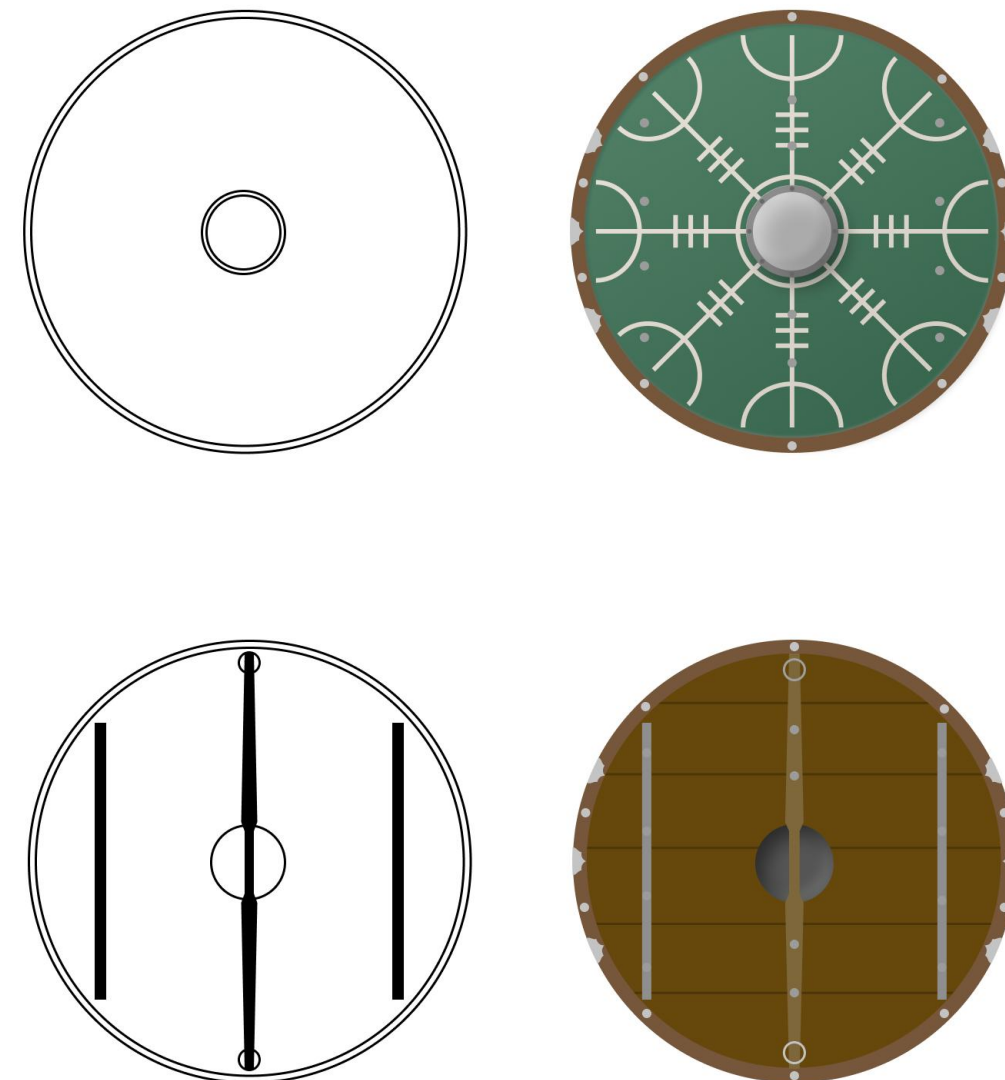
Most shields were between 32 and 36 inches in diameter. With this in mind, let's create a shield that's 35 inches in diameter, or 192.5 pixels.



The boss was about 6 inches in diameter, or 33px. The shield was also surrounded by a layer of leather.

Something to consider - Viking shields didn't last long. Literally, they might have 5-10 good hits in them before they were splintered and useless.

For colors - green and white. The Vikings viewed green as the color of hope, and white as the color of life. I'm choosing the helm of awe for the shield pattern, as it's commonly associated with protection.



Wingspan (W):
363px/5'6"

Height (H):
368.5 px/5'7"

Conversion
Multiplier: x5.5

Early Aesthetic Work

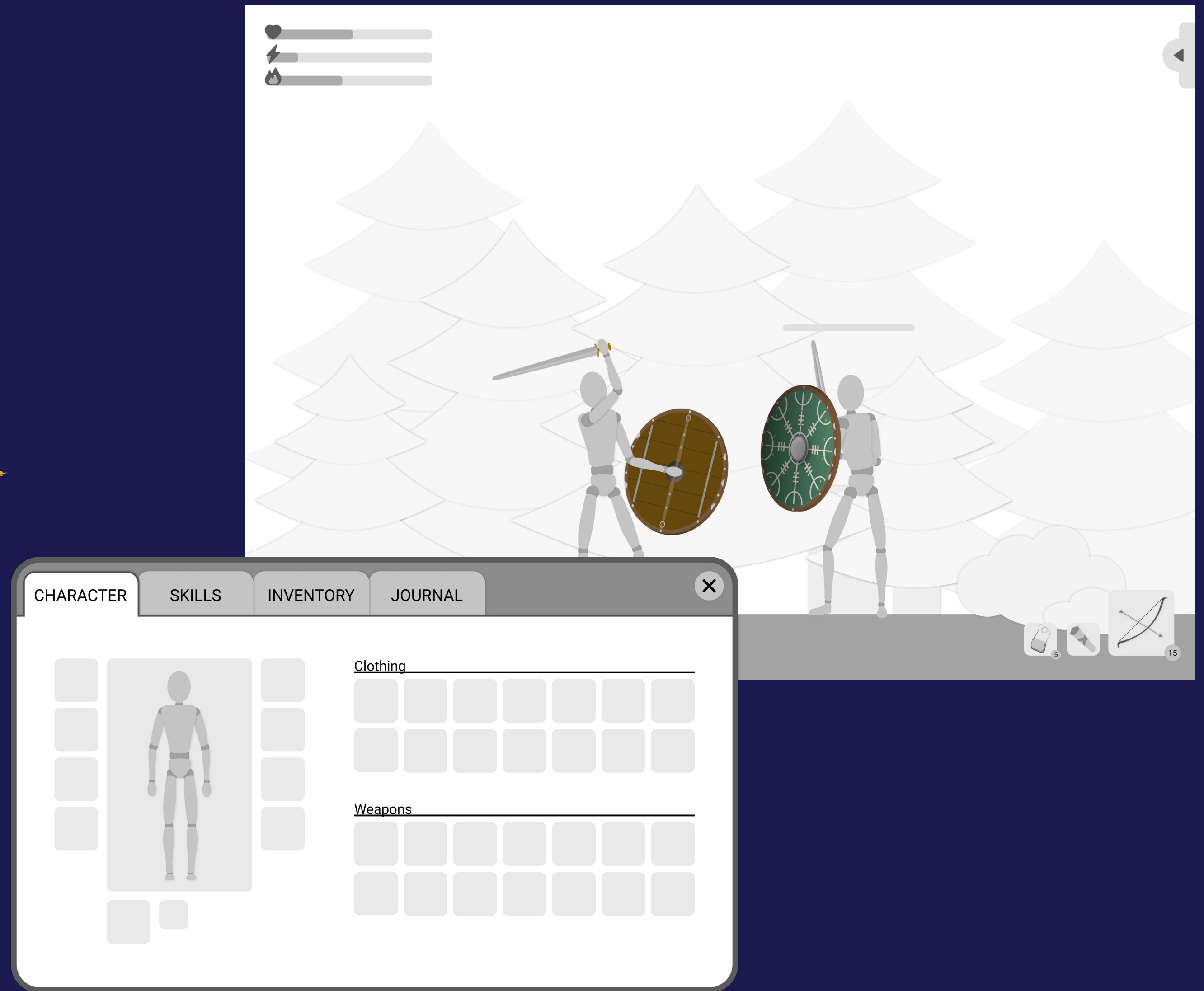
Before making the decision to use a 64-bit art style, these concepts were created to help understand the space needed for these tools. In addition, these forays allowed me to do more research on Norse weaponry and clothing for a more authentic feel.

Keeping Things to Scale

Moveable "maquette" built to a scale helped with ensuring the gameplay area (and the set design) wasn't too big or small.

Final Wireframes - 2023

A simplified interface, to better match modern RPG
UIs.



Development

Split into three phases: Basic Mechanics and Visuals, Combat and Animation, and Game Feel. Playtests were conducted after each phase.

Playtesting: Applying UX Methods To Game Development

Round 1

Basic Mechanics

- Applied heuristic evaluation principles to game controls
- Observed user behavior patterns (like watching users navigate forms)
- Identified friction points in core interactions

Round 2

Combat and Animation

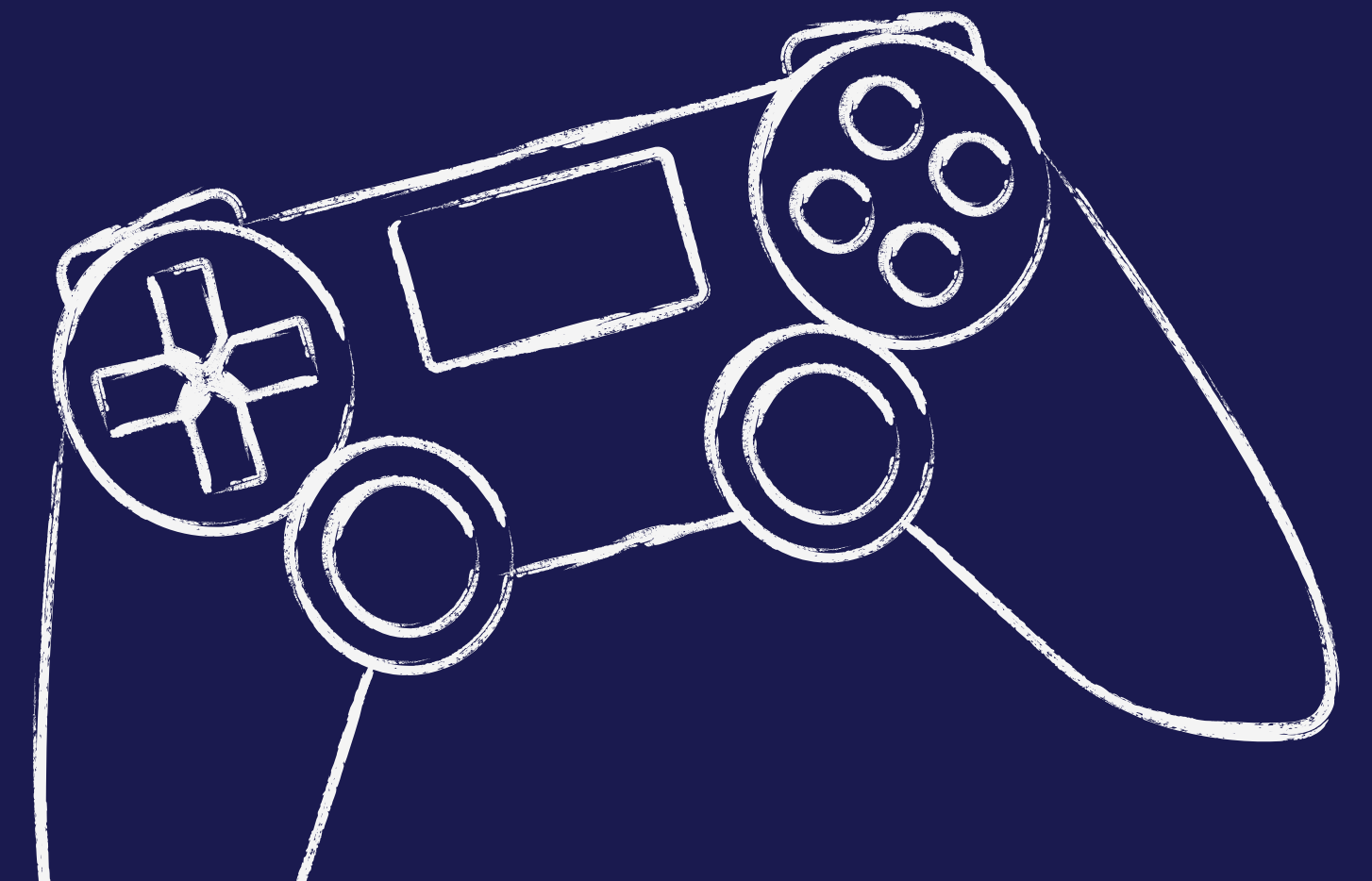
- Tested feature functionality like usability testing new UI components
- Gathered feedback on user satisfaction and engagement

Round 3

Game Feel

- Conducted holistic experience evaluation
- Identified and fixed critical bugs affecting user flow
- Refined based on complete user journey feedback

The systematic feedback cycles mirrored the user research approach I use in enterprise UX work.





Listen to me give my elevator pitch, then check out the game on itch.io [here](#).

What's Next?

Sparrow Arcade Partnership (2027+)

- Collaborating with Sparrow Arcade to develop Fimbulvinter into a full commercial RPG
- Leading UX and design strategy while expanding the creative and technical team
- Applying lessons learned from the prototype to guide full-scale development

Strategic Development

- Advanced Unity techniques for more complex interactions
- Deeper game design principles for player engagement
- Balancing creative vision with technical constraints and commercial viability

Creative Expansion

- Deeper narrative systems and character development
- More complex environmental storytelling
- Enhanced atmospheric audio and visual design

This isn't just a portfolio piece—it's proven concept validated by creative collaborators and moving toward commercial release.

What I Learned

Creative + Professional Skills Integration

Successfully combined UX methodology with game development, proving that systematic design thinking enhances rather than constrains creative work.

Independent Project Leadership

Led complete product development from initial concept through technical implementation to shipped experience, managing scope and quality independently.

Cross-Disciplinary Learning

Gained hands-on experience bridging design, development, audio, and creative storytelling—understanding how each element affects the others.

The Power of Structured Learning

MITxPRO provided the framework I needed to turn creative passion into systematic skill development and tangible results.

Personal Fulfillment, Professional Growth

This project reminded me why I love design work—solving problems and creating experiences people genuinely enjoy.



Want to Learn More?

Head on over to the [Contact](#) page. I'd love to chat!

