# THE CUBE: UPDATE PLAN AND REPORT

TEAM DOORS / AXEL TUOMALA / 26.02.2022

The update plan was first documented in the PowerPoint file returned in earlier steps. This document focuses on the current state of the game, details of the updates, and the future for these, as well as detailing the recent status and development of the team itself. It will also define the root and solutions for the problems presented with the updates. First, we will introduce each update point. At the end we will investigate the results and give some insights to the development and current team status. Below these pictures the update plans can be seen, before they are discussed in more detail.
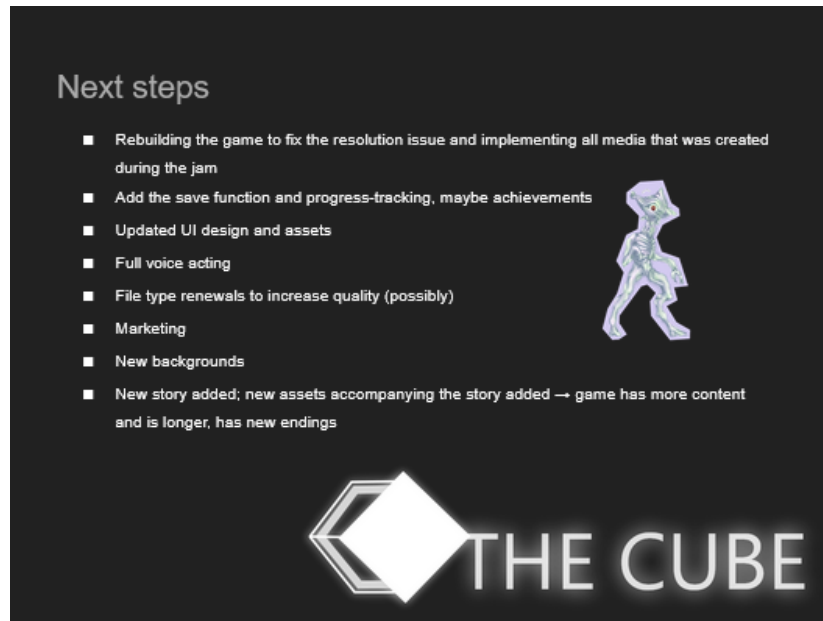
Picture 1: The update plans from previous documents, part 1.
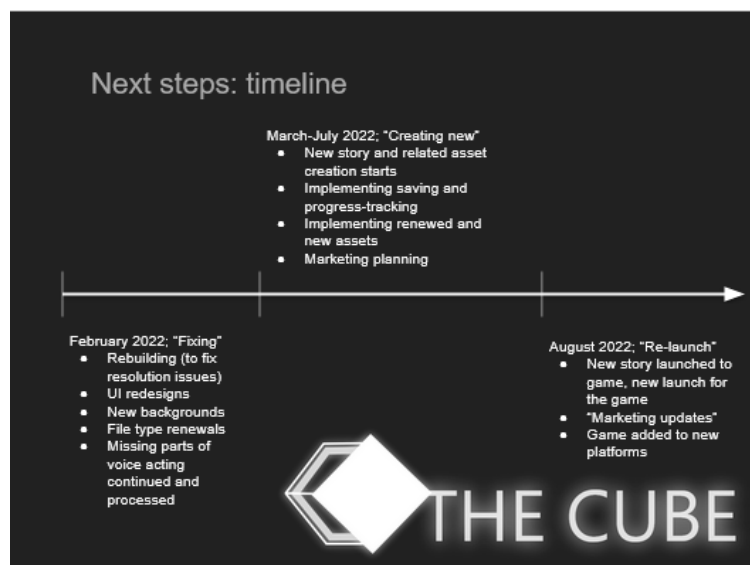
Picture 2: The update plans from previous documents, part 2.

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE GAME

The game has currently functions such as story progression, 4 game endings, story tree -structured visual novel story logic, text animations, and button-based choices. The assets currently include multiple characters, and 5 backgrounds for three doors, and the background for the door scene, and a death scene, half of the voice acting (monster's voice acting and some of the doctor's voice acting lines), and some self-made sound effects (for interaction sounds and the different ending sound effects). The story tree is also extensive, and writing the story requires it's own tasks as well.

The game can be divided to 3 parts: the snowy scene, the red scene, and the door and death scenes. These scenes are mostly fully acted, but any introduction scene is missing, and one path is cut short as time ran out while implementing the assets for it. It should also be noted that the game can be started and finished, with failures or good endings – but the entire playing experience is not very high quality at all.
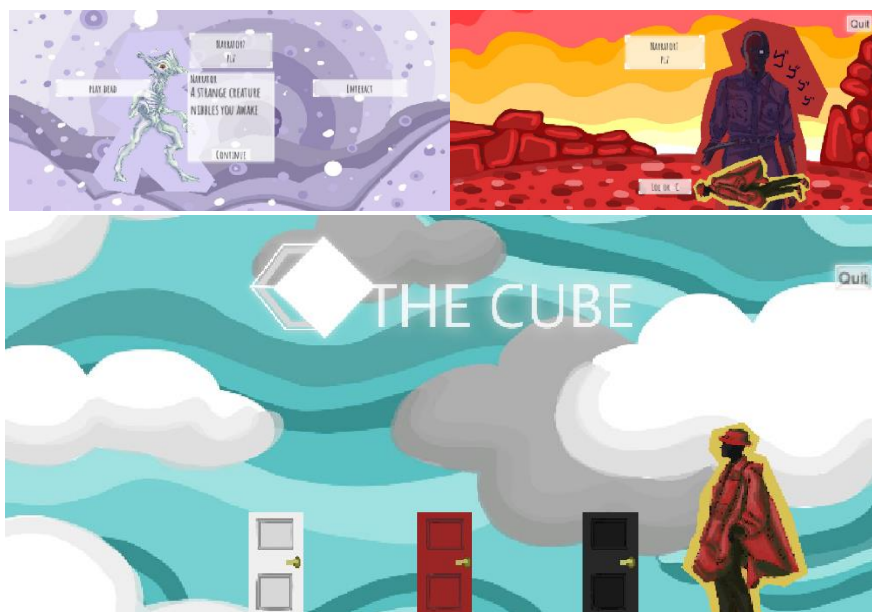
The current state is overall lacking some of the functions that were intended to be in the game at the game jam. It also lacks polish in the design implementation, as the game project is still under construction. It is a functional game, but does not offer much besides it's bare-bones game structure and minimum functions for a visual novel. The team find this as expected, when considering that the team had many novices in it. Fixing these issues and upgrading it with some quality-of-life updates is welcome.

NEXT STEPS FOR UPDATES

The February tasks are aimed at fixing the game to a more functional degree, and to fulfil some tasks that were cut short during the game jam. These tasks are manageable within February, but will provide another game jam's worth of work, even though they are main bug fixes or quality fixes. The tasks that are planned for the 27.02.2022 deadline or end of February are as follows:

- **001: Rebuilding the game and fixing the UI glitches**
- **002: Save function and progress-tracking**
- **003: New UI**

- **004: Full voice acting**
- **005: File type issue**
- **006-A: Create backgrounds to existing story**

The remaining tasks are planned to be worked on in March-July, as documented in Picture 2. These are larger tasks that expand the game beyond its original form more may be completed, e.g. story updates and their resulting new art asset demands, as well as "marketing" asset updates. These March-July tasks include:

- 006-B: Create backgrounds for future story
- 007: Marketing materials
- 008: New Story

These latter tasks can also be found from the list of updates, and their descriptions in the following sections. These latter tasks aim to help us to update the game to be longer; as such, they will require many work hours and more co-operation. The large updates should be done by July. After this, in August there will be a relaunch for the game, with slightly longer gameplay and slightly more polished experience.

February	March-July	August
"FIXING OLD"	**"CREATING NEW"**	**"RE-LAUNCH"**
001: Rebuilding the game and fixing the UI glitches 002: Save function and progress-tracking 003: New UI 004: Full voice acting 005: File type issue 006-A: Create backgrounds to existing story	006-B: Create backgrounds for future story 007: Marketing materials 008: New Story	- Testing and polishing for the aforementioned tasks should be finished - Game "relaunch"; updated version uploaded to itch.io

Table: Phases of the updates, and their timing.

LIST OF ALL PLANNED UPDATES

001: Rebuilding the game and fixing the UI glitches: This issue was caused by an unknown error where in Unity the starting scene's resolution did not carry over to other scenes, causing many parts of the graphics to downgrade and the UI to reveal items that should not be revealed. Fixing this was attempted during the game jam, but after seeking help from other programmers around the jam site, no solution was found besides "rebuilding" the entire game from the start with the same assets. This process was too time-consuming to complete during the jam and was marked to be done with the new updated assets after the jam. However, the updated graphics and new scenes mean that parts of the code also need to be updated. **This task should be done by 27.02.2022 / the end of February.**

> **001-A: Rebuilding scenes:** Rebuild the entire game from start in Unity, using the old assets.
> **001-B: Text animations:** Adjusting the text animations scripts to fit new scene and graphics.
> **001-C: Element animations:** Adjusting the element appearances scripts (buttons, sprites, etc) to match the new scene and UI.

002: Save function and progress-tracking: This was missing from the original game, and even though the game was short enough to not necessary need them, we decided that adding them is better game design and helps one to explore all endings better. This also allows us to create in-game achievements or a way for a player to track if they have found all the endings of the game. **This task should be done by 27.02.2022 / the end of February.**

> **002-A: Progress-tracking:** Build a way for following which scenes and events the player has witnessed.
>
> **002-B: Saving and loading:** Make the player able to save their progress and continue later, and load previous saves.
>
> **002-C: Achievements board (optional):** mark all the endings, and show which ones the player has found, and show how many are still unexplored.

003: New UI: The old user interface does not suit the later developments of the game, and new updated functions require more UI elements as well. The old UI elements were slightly difficult to use in Unity, and the contrast was not always good with every background – the blending into the light elements of the background was common. As such, the UI will be updated or redesigned completely to match the current update, and to offer a better user experience. **This task should be done by 27.02.2022 / the end of February.**

> **003-A: UI redesign:** Co-operate with others to create a better UI. Take time to explore different options and get more feedback.
>
> **003-B: UI examples:** Create multiple high-fidelity examples of the UI in different views. Help guide the programmer to implement them in better detail.
>
> **003-C: Assets and file packages:** Create new UI assets in the requested file type, and pack them for the programmer to use.

004: Full voice acting: The narrator's voice acting lines are missing, while the doctor and the creature are recorded. The current story should be as fully voice acted as possible, to offer more content in-game and to support the story's experience. This includes both recording and sound processing of the lines. **This task should be done by 27.02.2022 / the end of February.**

> **004-A: Record:** The voice lines should be recorded by the voice actor for the narrator.
>
> **004-B: Process:** The sound engineering and other sound processing should be done for the new lines before implementation; cut out bad takes or pauses, reduce background sounds, hum, clicks and other low-quality microphone issues, etc.
>
> **004-C: Implement:** Implement the lines in-game, to match the narration and text animation.

005: File type issue: Some files might not show in their original quality, and some pixelation is present. Some files may not be in optimal types, especially some visual assets. Check the source of the issue – e.g. recommended sizes and file types for each type of assets, and then make the changes (e.g. turn them into this type when possible). <u>This issue is likely connected with the rebuilding and UI glitch in 001.</u> Adapt to the changes that are required to fix 001. **<u>This task should be done by 27.02.2022 / the end of February.</u>**

> **005-A: Root of the cause:** Check the root of the issue, and check all media assets for faults.
> **005-B: Rework old assets for better quality:** E.g. use the correct resolution size or file type that is required by this update.

006: New backgrounds: Diversify the background selection – add new ones that exist in the current story. These may include e.g. scenes in the red door path, or in the introduction to the game. After these are finished, newer backgrounds can also be started, if they can be defined to exist in the future story updates and the writer can provide descriptions for them.

> **006-A: Create backgrounds to existing story:** Find which story scenes would take place in settings not seen in our current backgrounds. **<u>This task should be done by 27.02.2022 / the end of February.</u>**
> **006-B: Create backgrounds for future story:** Get descriptions for future backgrounds and work on them.

007: Marketing materials: Make gameplay video or plan for visual assets that are required to describe and present the game in platforms (e.g. GGJ, itch.io). Also plan on which (free) platforms the game could be released in addition to GGJ. The game is not fancy or high-quality, but it is free and it's assets are public due to it's creation in global game jam, but it would be preferable to be able to find it later on from e.g. itch.io, and to send it to friends and closer contacts this way as well. Many similar game jam games are also in such platforms, and it is unlikely that it would be bad to create a memento for it this way even though the game is not very high quality. This all should be kept in mind when recording any basic videos of gameplay, or making these assets – keep it real, keep it honest.

> **007-A: Gameplay video recordings:** Use an app or a program to record a short, realistic gameplay video. Any playful trailers can also be edited, if one has time for it.
> **007-B: New description texts:** Plan the descriptions and on which platforms the game exists on. The platform selection will affect the formatting and demands of the assets needed.
> **007-C: New platforms and the team:** Plan on which platforms the game can exist freely on. Inform the team of the options and make a common decision where the game is allowed or is not allowed to be spread to.

008: New story: The story is to be lengthened, and new endings added. These typically require new art assets as well. Some of the story had to be cut short during the FGJ time limitations. Now we can explore some more cohesive storylines, as we have more time. **This update is planned to be created after the February update (see: Picture 2).**

> **008-A: Writing new:** Write more story, and/or deepen/fix the old one.
> **008-B: New art assets:** Create new backgrounds, items, and/or characters according for the new storyline.
> **008-C: Implementation:** Build the new scenes from the assets and the story text. Old scripts may be used.

EXPECTED RESULTS FOR EACH STEP

Fixing (February): The February update is aimed at fixing the game, and providing it all intended functionality at the time of the game jam. These fixes will elevate the game to a more pleasant playing experience, as the bare minimum of functions often results to a rather iffy playing experience for most. After this fix, ideally, the game is more playable and does not have any of the known gameplay glitches (such as the resolution and UI glitch), and playing it is more intuitive for the player as it shows more basics of a visual novel. The base of the game should be now at better quality, so more story can be continued later.

"Creating new" (March-July): This period is used to create a longer story with more content. As the bare bones of the game are now reliable and running, we can focus on creating more content and make the story more in-depth, longer, and better quality. We will be making more story, and all assets for the new story will be created and added to the game. The length of the gameplay is ideally at least tripled from the original game; which takes less than 10 minutes to play to completion. Little to no known bugs exist in the mechanics of the game. We will also be creating more marketing assets to be able to make more comprehensive description on future platforms, where the game will ideally reside after it has been worked on for a little bit.

"Re-launch" (August): At this time the planned marketing updates should be ready and a re-launch is performed, as the game is uploaded to itch.io or similar platforms. The game is finished, and is upgraded beyond the vision we had during FGJ2022. The game is expected to remain there; if feedback about any major issues arises after the launch, bug fixes can and will still be made.

ACTUAL RESULTS IN FEBRUARY

Most of the February update tasks were completed. Complications arose during the development: the story writer has not responded to messages, and the programmer decided not to seek out the school credit for this project but was willing to help us to update the game. These issues made some changes to the updates and their planned work order to be changed dynamically, which succeeded due to the dynamic nature of the group's working methods. However, these complications mean that the March-July activities need to be replanned, but it should also be noted that these do not make the future development impossible.

In the table below the success for the tasks and their status is seen better:

TASK and task ID	PERSON(S) mainly working on it	STATUS: Is it done by 27.02.2022? ☑ = completed ✗ = unfinished ☑ ✗ = partially completed
001: Rebuilding the game and fixing the UI glitches	J44karhunen/Kasperi Ammy/Axel	☑ ?
002: Save function and progress-tracking	J44karhunen/Kasperi	☑ ✗ : Started and some functionality exists in-game, but not fully finished yet.
003: New UI	Ammy/Axel	☑
004: Full voice acting	J44karhunen/Kasperi Ammy/Axel	☑ ✗ : Some narrator voice acting lines not recorded yet by the voice actor (J44karhunen). But most lines are recorded, and all recorded ones are processed (by Axel); resulting in a nearly fully voice-acted game.
005: File type issue	Taiisia/Taiisia	☑
006-A: Create backgrounds to existing story	Taiisia/Taiisia	☑

None of these tasks were uncompleted, and as such the update is rather successful overall. The game after the update has all the intended elements during FGJ. It still lacks polish and some quality updates, but it is functional and has almost all intended parts now. More than intended amount of time was spend on these updates, and some need still some extra work which will be completed in it's entirety – e.g., the saving function is still under better construction. Some time was also taken by the documentation and management tasks, increasing the workload further. Communication was also challenging due to having separate schedules and responsibilities of each member. As mentioned before, the writer has not contacted the rest of the team, and his input is not reflected upon for this reason.

The rebuilding of the game was well defined, and the tasks needed for fixing the bug were clear, yet time-demanding. The saving and progress tracking are new functions which came after the rebuilding – progress-tracking was implemented, but saving functions are still not completely done after some playtesting. These technical tasks allowed the game to feel fuller and bring more practical experience for basic game functions for all participants.
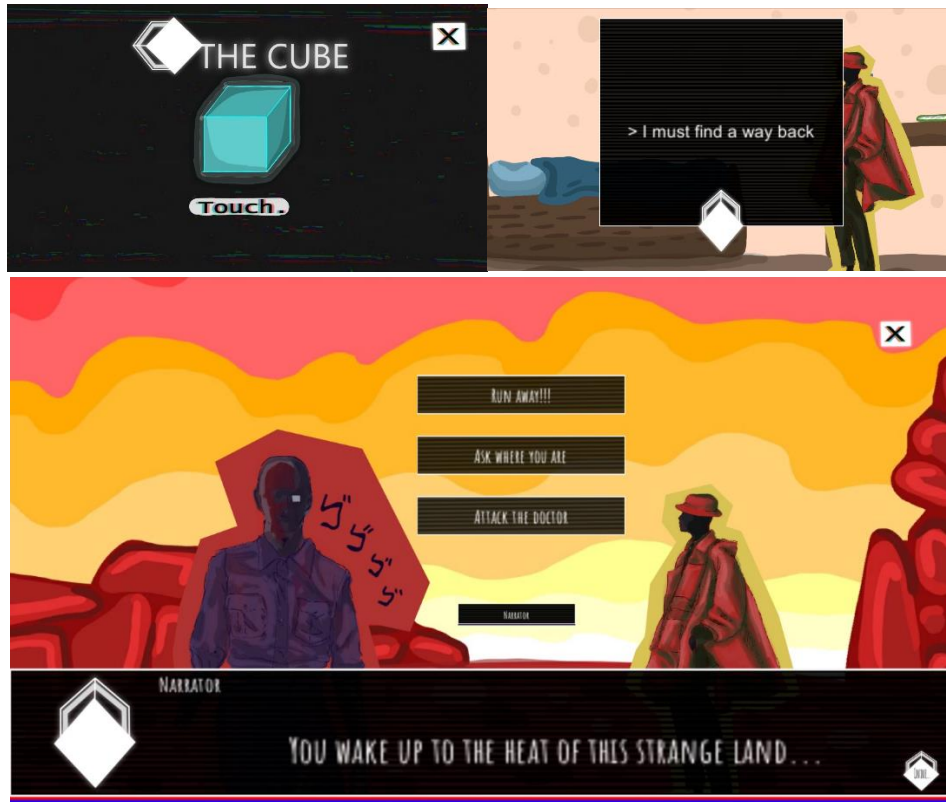
Picture(s) 3: Screenshots from the updated game.

New user interface was designed. One of the options was chosen and developed further. The end results also include new elements that appear in this update, such as save menus and the game starting sequence. This new design has better readability and is usable in more contexts, even the new functions of the update. It was also developed in closer co-operation with other members than the previous one, improving overall communication and both technical and design details further.

Picture(s) 4: The UI updates.

Full voice-acting was attempted, and it is nearly done as well – some ending narrations are missing, but more narrator lines are acted and sound engineered, and implemented in the game. New backgrounds were also produced. New backgrounds were numerous, and they can be used to bring more content to the game – some backgrounds were overlooked during FGJ, and now they can be implemented.

The file type bug is also fixed. The correct resolution and limitations were searched and implemented, and the new backgrounds follow the results of the research. The files look better and fix some issues that were prevalent in the game's user experience.

Picture(s) 5: Examples of new backgrounds. One background is also seen in the UI designs.

As a bonus that was born from the new update mechanics, new character was introduced to the game: if the main character gets home, he may see his live-in girlfriend again. This character also plays a major role in the "achievements" and new progress-tracking – she is supposed to not appear until you have completed all game endings, and the game ends with a better and more fulfilling gameplay experience.

Picture 6: The new character that was implemented to the game.