

When the going gets tough

Thoughts on making KreatueKind, and indie games in general

Anna Högberg Jenelius
Valiant Game Studio





This talk

- Development of KreatureKind
- The lack of funding
- The sacrifices made
- Questioning if it's worth it
- What is "success"?
- Funding options
- Hopes for the future

Who am I?

Anna Högberg Jenelius

Any pronouns

Indie Game Developer/Consultant

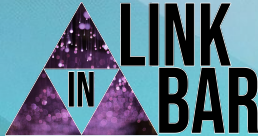
Games since 2011

Indie since 2015

Valiant Game Studio since 2017

Credit on 50+ games

Based in Stockholm, Sweden



VALIANT GAME STUDIO



Talecore STUDIOS



2015

2016

2017



2018

2019



2020



2021



2022



2023

2024



Quick intro to KreatureKind

Debate monsters, recruit friends, and start a movement! In this wholesome and approachable card battler/deck builder, you use the debate skills in your card decks to convince opponents to join your cause. Balance your team and your decks carefully - or you won't be able to save magic!

A wholesome and approachable cardbattler, where you debate monsters and recruit them to your cause. It's designed to be easy to pick up for new players, while still giving a challenge to more seasoned ones.

KREATUREKIND



2018: Origins of KreatureKind

- First seed was sown in 2018, while we worked on Pendula Swing.
- The original project name was “Girls with Swords”, because it was about girls finding magic swords in lakes.
(Also called “Project Universe” after Steven Universe)

Eight-year-old Swedish-American girl pulls pre-Viking era sword from lake

 Catherine Edwards · catherine.edwards@thelocal.com
Published: 4 Oct, 2018 CET. Updated: Fri 5 Oct 2018 18:14 CET

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#)



Eight-year-old Saga and her sword. Photo: Andrew Vanecek

UPDATED: An eight-year-old Swedish-American girl came across an exciting find swimming at her local lake, when she pulled an ancient sword from its depths.

Matilda Jones, from Doncaster, with the 4ft sword she discovered  image: SWNS.com

NEWS **POLITICS** **FOOTBALL** **CELEBS** **TV** **CHOICE** **ROYALS**

Girl, 7, finds 4ft SWORD in same lake where King Arthur was said to have hurled Excalibur

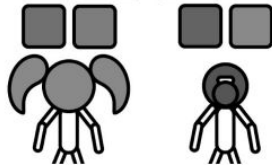
Matilda Jones was paddling waist-deep in Dozmary Pool when she came across the blade while on a family holiday, having just heard about legendary King Arthur from her dad

2019: Creative Europe

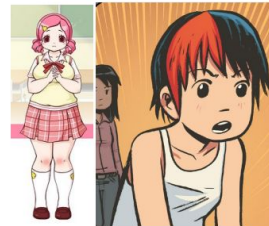
The application took two people a full week each to complete.

We did not succeed in getting funding.

In the encounter, the player can see the creature they are up against. They can see the emotional stats of the creature, the characters they have chosen, and the available abilities of those characters.



Character visual references (not original art)



2020-2021: Development

- Just me left in Valiant, can't get Girls With Swords out of my head.
- Found Hannah Idén Gustafsson, started working on art.
- Started designing, and building the systems.
- Meanwhile, I consulted to stay afloat.
- Swords were eventually removed.



2023: Break

- Spring 2023, I was burned out & depressed.
- At the very last second declined a full-time job. I was still not done.
- Mulle Meck and CULT Games. Teacher/mentor.
- May-November 2023, I barely touched KreatureKind.
- Stopped using social media (mostly).



○ × FUTURE
× ○ GAMES

CULT

2024: New opportunities

- I still have not given up. CreatureKind *will* be released.
- Financial buffer.
- Porting grant.
- Festivals.
- Still consulting (on great projects).
- Working with artists again.
- Energy is back!

 krillbite
STUDIO



Reflections

Should I have given up?

Probably.

Will it be worth is?

Economically, *likely not*. Emotionally, *definitely*.



What are we willing to sacrifice?

- Savings.
- Pension.
- Security for future generations.
- Mental health.
- Physical health.
- etc



What is success?

- Is being rich success?
- Is awards success?
- Is being famous success?
- Balance: Work/life, vs making money.
- Pitfalls of success.
- Consulting can be comfy, inspiring, good learning experiences.
 - But is it *success*?
- Live to make another game.



Midvinter is a cozy little point-and-click game, which invites you to explore Swedish folklore using puzzles and riddles as well as compelling music and voice over. In it, you as a player take on the role of gnome - the guardian of the farm - and get to interact with various dark and fantastical creatures.

ALL REVIEWS: **Positive** (45)

RELEASE DATE: 5 May, 2016

DEVELOPER: **Talecore Studios**
PUBLISHER: **Talecore Studios, Valiant Game Studio**



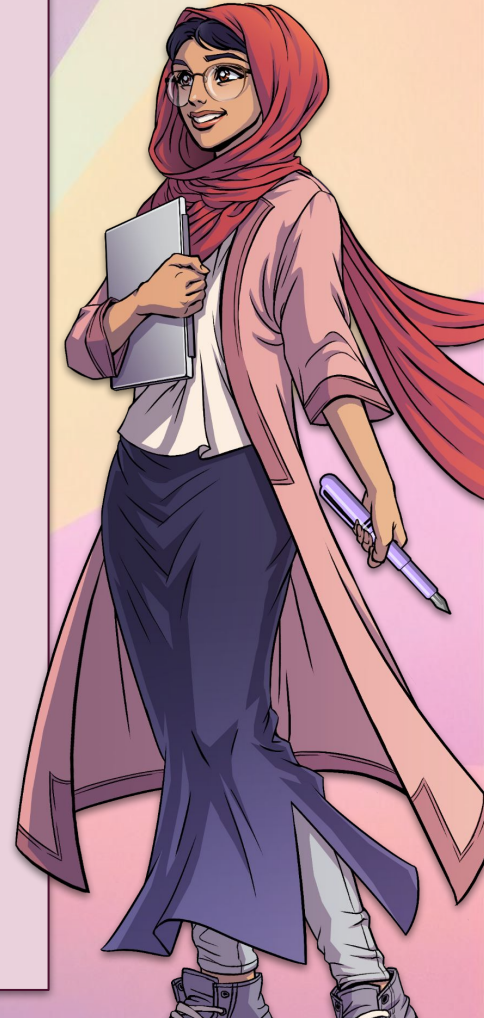
You've inherited your grandfather's old farm plot in Stardew Valley. Armed with hand-me-down tools and a few coins, you set out to begin your new life. Can you learn to live off the land and turn these overgrown fields into a thriving home?

RECENT REVIEWS: **Overwhelmingly Positive** (7,614)

ALL REVIEWS: **Overwhelmingly Positive** (551,788)

RELEASE DATE: 26 Feb, 2016

DEVELOPER: **ConcernedApe**
PUBLISHER: **ConcernedApe**



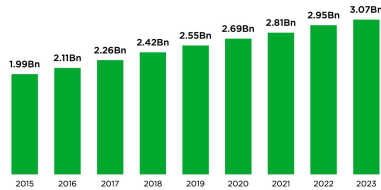
We need better funding options

- Women and gender minorities are left behind.
- For equity funding in general:
 - Women founded companies in First Round Capital's portfolio outperformed companies founded by men by 63%.
 - Women-led businesses secured just 3.5% of the equity funding being invested in UK businesses during the first half of 2023.
- If you don't have a VS, you often can't get funding.
Many can't afford to develop a VS.
- Wholesome, colorful games are still seen as "lesser".
- Publishers and funds are leaving money on the table.
- If indies are not able to experiment and try new things, the industry will keep stagnating.



2015-2023 Global Players

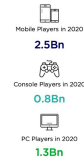
Forecast Toward 2023



Source: ©Newzoo | 2023 Global Games Market Report
[newzoo.com/global-games-report](https://www.newzoo.com/global-games-report)

+5.6%

Total Players CAGR
2019-2023



10%

of gamers identify as LGBTQ+.

The average video game player is

32

and has been playing for

21 years.

VIDEO GAME PLAYERS ARE DIVERSE:

53% Male

46% Female

1% selected "Other" or chose not to answer

<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/int/en-emea/future-of-marketing/management-and-culture/diversity-and-inclusion/lgbtq-media-representation-gaming-industry/>
https://www.theesa.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ESA_2023_Essential_Facts_FINAL_07092023.pdf
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/allisonkapin/2019/01/28/10-stats-that-build-the-case-for-investing-in-women-led-startups/>
<https://www.uktech.news/funding/women-startups-uk-funding-2023-20231102>

Hopes for the future

- We'll keep being trailblazers.
- We'll keep pushing for good working conditions.
- We'll celebrate the niche, the small, the forgotten.

Less



More



TL;DR

- Making games is hard.
- Making CreatureKind has been hard.
- The lack of funding has been the major hurdle.
- We need to ask ourselves what it's worth, and how far we are willing to go.
- Celebrate all kinds of successes.
- We need better funding options.
- ...And take care of ourselves, and each other <3



Thank you!

Anna Högberg Jenelius
anna@valiant.se

