

Why I Made a Game of My Mental Challenges

I've been a people-pleaser most of my life. I've been the "yes man" who constantly seeks approval. Since I've done it for so long, it has become a chronic problem in almost every area of my life.

At work, I never really paid attention to doing things I personally enjoyed. Instead, I focused on work that either paid well or was expected of me. After far too many years in different roles and positions that went against my personal interests—or even my values—I burned out.

In family life, I've always tried to be the best dad. Taking into account all the needs and possible problems my kids might face, juggling everything at once (as a single dad), handling it all by myself—eventually, I burned out.

In relationships, I've tried to be helpful to everyone, carrying the burdens of those I care about. I spent so much time solving their problems and supporting them in every way I could that I forgot about my own needs and limits. And so, I burned out.

Years ago, I watched a movie that many game developers have seen as well: *Indie Game: The Movie*.

In it, someone said: *"Take your deepest flaws and vulnerabilities and put them into a game. See what happens."*

That stuck with me. At first, it sounded cliché. Then, after a second thought, I realized I didn't fully understand what it meant.

But then life happened. I found myself at a dead end, burned out. And suddenly, it hit me—maybe these are my deepest flaws and vulnerabilities. Maybe expressing them in some way could actually help.

Not just to make a game that reminds me of those days, but to make sense of it all. And maybe even to create something that others might find value in—especially those struggling with the same issues.

It turned into a horror story. Not by intention, but because that felt right.

I wanted to set it in a fantasy world, to avoid making it *too* personal. And the characters? I've never really liked cats for some reason. I've never understood why people would willingly bring a creature into their home that doesn't respect them. Or if they do, it's only when they feel like it or need something.

So, of course, it had to be cats. Just because I seem to have a problem with them.

The setup? A dystopian world where society treats everyone the way I've felt treated. Not that it's necessarily true (or is it?), but because it gives me the perfect foundation to create an authentic world—one that comes from my own emotions rather than an existing template.

The mood? Dark, but with hints of color to remind me that there are still good things in this world.

The art? 100% hand-drawn. Not because I'm good at drawing, but because I want to get better.

The music? I composed everything myself. Again, not because I'm good at it, but because I want to learn.

Now, the journey is in motion. I've managed to create a demo, and the rest of the content is already planned out.

The amount of learning in this project has been *insane*. Why? Because I did everything myself. Literally *everything*—every sound, every brushstroke, every voice-over, every effect. Some might call that masochistic, knowing how hard it is to make a game. Honestly, even I think that sometimes.

But I wouldn't trade a second of it. This journey has been exactly what I always wanted game development to be.

Making crazy worlds, telling stories, and bringing them to life.

Not that it's perfect. But there's always the next game.

You can play the *Cats With Standards* demo at the link below:

<https://jestercraft.itch.io/cats-with-standards>