**About Lantern Studio**

Lantern Studio is a small indie team of four, originally from China.

Art Director Beidi and Team Manager Fox have been good friends since high school. When Beidi came up with the idea that would eventually grow to become *LUNA The Shadow Dust*, Fox introduced his friend, ex-Ubisoft programmer Wang Guan, to begin forming the game. Together, the three created a small demo that served as a proof of concept and received very promising feedback from gamedev friends and others in the industry. From here, the team met our fourth member, Susie the music composer.

After our successful Kickstarter campaign, we began to form these ideas into a full length game. Development has not been without difficulty, however! Through various work/lifestyle choices, the team has been spread around the globe, with Beidi working from London, Susie in Toronto and Wang Guan and Fox in Shanghai. Over these three years, the time zones have been a challenge – whenever we need to have a meeting, somebody has to either get up really early or sleep late. We call ourselves the 24 hour stand-by operation team!

We’ve also made quite a few difficult decisions throughout development, for instance choosing between receiving investor funding, or staying poor and retaining creative freedom. In 2017, Beidi and Wang Guan quit their day jobs in order to focus time fully on the game. Despite the fantastic £17,570 Kickstarter campaign, funding for four team members over three years has required each team member to contribute personal savings to keep development moving forward.

**Inspiration behind LUNA The Shadow Dust**

The original narrative of the game was based on a student animation film, produced by Beidi back in 2007. The story of a man who pilots the moon around the Earth and his long-distance relationship with his family, the film proved to have a mysterious and atmospheric setting, influencing the making of the game.

*LUNA The Shadow Dust* also takes inspiration from *‘The Earthsea Quartet’*, by the novelist Ursula le Guin. The game is not simply a tale of good vs evil, but rather draws attention to the importance of the balance between the two. Without light, there will be no shadow and vice-versa. The quote, “to light a candle is to cast a shadow” is also from *‘The Earthsea Quartet’*.

In terms of other games, 90s ‘clay-mation’ puzzler *‘The Neverhood’* and point-and-click classics, *‘Machinarium’*, the *‘Samorost’* trilogy and *‘Gorogoa’* are all great examples of beautiful, hand-crafted games that gave us inspiration to go make our own! Most notable about these games is the willingness to tell meaningful and heartfelt stories through only animation and music, something we’ve looked to achieve.

Last but not least, regarding overall aesthetic and style, Studio Ghibli’s films and the illustrations from artists, Shaun Tan and Jean Giraud have greatly given influence to the art style and character design seen in the game. We have tried our best to deliver the surreal, but tangible atmosphere of a magical world.

**What makes LUNA The Shadow Dust unique from other games?**

* **Hand-drawn animation**

Everything in the game is hand-drawn, from the environments to the characters; twelve frames per second, three layers per frame. Each character has seventeen sets of interactive animation. Instead of just one or two walking cycles, as seen in most games, we designed eight in order to more convincingly allow the characters to respond to player interactions. There are over two-hundred-and-fifty in-game animations and twenty-plus minutes of cinematics. People might say we are crazy. We agree. Although time-consuming, this process allows us to maximise the vividness of the characters through both emotion and mobility.

* **Wordless cinematics**

The wordless design of the entire game makes it available for players all over the world, regardless of language barrier and age.

* **An engaging, original soundtrack**

We approached the music composition in a way more similar to film, than games. Without showing Susie the game footage, we revealed the full story, allowing her to create a soundtrack that interweaves throughout each level, telling the narrative as a whole and not just chapter by chapter. Furthermore, each character’s themes represent their personalities and roles in the game. Mixed with the overarching soundtrack, we hope players will be drawn in to this moving tale.

During development as a small team, it’s been incredible to receive help from countless people all over the world. We recently were able to improve the music in our official trailer with a live recording (flute and tin whistle) played by Rotem Moav, the co-composer of Bungie’s AAA shooters, ‘*Destiny’* 1 and 2.

To hear more music from the game, here’s the Soundcloud link:

<https://soundcloud.com/elecorgan/sets/luna-shadow-dust>