

Anagnorisis – Adam Stammer

Twine Game

In Anagnorisis, you play as a distinguished astrophysicist. After years of leading an international team, your research has finally come to a head! Cryogenics have long been believed to be the next turning point of space travel, and the key to exploring beyond our own solar system. With countless ground tests and a successful unmanned flight, it's finally time for a manned flight test. As project lead, and a trained astronaut, it seemed only fitting to volunteer for the flight yourself.

Today is launching day! Today all of the hard work by you and others will be put to the test. If everything goes right, you'll go down in history as a modern pioneer to all who venture beyond the stars. If anything goes wrong, you'll still likely end up in history, but you won't be around to see the results. Eyes all over the world are looking at you now. Will today be the monumental achievement you've been hoping for, or will all of your hard work end in failure?

Play Description:

You get to explore two locations: your house, and your spaceship. Apart from that the narrative is relatively linear with some dialog choices. Some decisions will lock you out of exploration, or change parts of the future story. The story starts at home, with your spouse, and leads to being on a spaceship in space. This is not an inventory based game, but decisions do affect your character and character interactions. There's quite a bit of symbolism and a few allusions if you're looking for them. I strongly encourage you to play the game before reading the development notes below.

Development Notes:

I based this story off the music video of Sound & Color – Alabama Shakes (this video will absolutely spoil the story, so go play the game before reading this or watching that video). I've always loved science fiction, especially when the ending is a bit of a twist. I know that the ending to this game isn't quite as a strong of a twist as some (like Isaac Asimov's The Last Question (highly recommend)), but I really did have a lot of fun making this game.

Unfortunately I didn't have as much time to work on it as I would've liked. It's been a very busy semester, so I was a little rushed. I didn't get to test the game out as much as I wanted to, or have others play it and give me feedback. Some of the choices (like what you wear) has very little effect on the game, so it's more of an illusion of choice. I've DM'd many games of Dungeons and Dragons, so telling a narrative though choice was by no means new to me, but that doesn't mean it's easy. As with many narratives, the term "railroading" is unfortunately common. I would've loved to spend more time on this game and added more choices, that were more meaningful, but I'm still happy with what I've accomplished

As I said before, the story was based off of an existing song/video, so I was able to use that to help me build the floor plan for the spaceship, though there was a good amount of creative liberty. With the floor plans drawn up, I just started working my way through the narrative one step at a time. When I did reach the exploratory settings, the floorplans I drew helped out a lot! I was also able to pull in various concepts and ideas from other Science Fiction stories to add a little more flavor to this story than just what was in the video it was based off of.

My background in Computer Science, programming video games, playing video games (including Telnet games), leading tabletop games, and my love of Sci Fi, not only made this type of game easier to develop, but really fun too. Even though I didn't have a lot of time, I was able to get quite a bit done in my opinion, and I was always motivated to work on it.

Again, I really just wish I had more time. I think this game could be even better if I had fleshed more of the ideas and choices out, and tested it more. I also think spending more time on game design prior to the actual implementation in Twine, probably would've resulted in a better game. I've always been more of a design-while-you-program kind of guy, because that's where I have the most fun, but I know that's not ideal.

The most frustrating thing in development was getting the pronouns right. Half of my debugging was correcting the variables I used for pronouns, and I'm sure I didn't get them all fixed. I also think this game is pretty heavy on role playing a specific character, and doesn't really give you the freedom to be yourself. While that fits this story fine, it's kind of the opposite of what a choose-your-own-adventure-game is all about. I'd almost want to call it more of an interactive story, rather than a choose-your-own-adventure.

Going back to what I was saying about railroading, your choices don't have any long term effect. I really am just telling you a story and pretending you're a part of it. I'd love to go and add more endings, but the ending is really the best part of the story, so I didn't know how to do that even if I had the time to. I mainly wanted to add a child to the character's family, and more interactions before the launch.

