

## Core Concept

*“Your brother has been cursed to be your shadow. You and your brother must work together to return him to his physical self by navigating light-based puzzles and climbing the Tower of Stars to receive a wish granted by the dragon who lives at the top. All the while, the Witch of Mirrors stalks you and slows your progress.”*

“Between the Stars” is a puzzle-adventure platformer that revolves around the interplay of light and shadow. Players control two characters, Apollus and Kastor, who must work together to solve intricate puzzles and navigate through diverse environments. The core mechanic involves manipulating light sources and reflective surfaces to open up new pathways necessary for progression. Apollus can move objects and light sources while Kastor can move through shadows using hidden paths. There is also a game mechanic where the player can switch between day and night modes to alter the environment to move forward in the game. Occasionally, the players will encounter the Mirror Witch who will obstruct the player’s progress by adding mirrors to the level, which players must then use to redirect light and unlock new paths. Players can either play as both characters in single-player mode or as one character in a co-op mode. Thematically, the game explores strong emotional narratives, including loss, loneliness, and tense brotherly relationships. The overarching goal is to climb the Tower of Stars to break Kastor’s curse, all while overcoming the obstacles placed by the Witch of Mirrors.

## Main Features

### Compelling Story Elements:

By virtue of Kastor’s existence being limited to shadows and Apollus’ illuminant body, the Witch’s curse prevents the two protagonists from being able to be in the same room or even look at each other. Their journey through the Tower of Stars is not only a physical challenge but also a metaphorical exploration of their strained relationship, with moments of separation, sacrifice, and eventual reconciliation.

## Visual Style:

- A striking contrast between light and darkness, emphasizing shadows/glowing elements and ethereal aesthetics.
- The visual style and art direction is inspired by Sky: Children of Light and Monument Valley, both styles that have a simple but elegant and ethereal feel to them. This also adds on to the emotional and dark mood and atmosphere of the game and themes.
- Dynamic lighting effects enhance gameplay mechanics, with environments transforming between day and night. The game will feature a color palette that changes significantly when switching between the day and night cycle. During the day, more saturated blues/yellows/oranges will shine. When the player shifts to night, our neutral grays/blacks will stay the same but the saturated blues/yellows/oranges of the environment will be toned down significantly, allowing any flames or other light sources to become the eye catching saturated elements of that picture.
- UI and text boxes will be filled black boxes with glowing light borders, allowing our gold and white text to be high contrast/readable while also maintaining the visual style we're going for.

## Interesting Mechanics:

### Light Sources

- Apollus can create or manipulate existing light sources such as candles, torches, and orbs.
- Light intensity and positioning affect the environment, revealing paths or triggering light-sensitive objects.
- Some light sources are static and others can be repositioned
- Special properties of certain light sources allow them to interact differently with enemies or the environment.

### Day/Night Shifting

- Players can toggle between day and night, altering the availability of light sources in the environment.
- During the day, sunlight can be used for puzzles, while nighttime relies more on candles, fireflies, and the usage of shadows.

### Light Seals

- Light seals appear throughout maps, producing various environmental effects based on their exposure to light.
- Manipulating light sources, including Apollus, to interact with these seals is essential to progressing through certain puzzles.

### Mirrors

- Mirrors will allow players to reflect or concentrate light on certain areas. There will be other objects like mirrors added throughout the game that bend light in different ways to add to the complexity of puzzles.

### Selling Points:

- Deep, emotionally driven storytelling centered around themes of separation, and brotherhood.
- Innovative puzzle mechanics involving the interplay of light and shadow, with unique abilities tied to each character.
- A visually striking art style that uses light contrast and shadow to enhance both gameplay and narrative.
- Dynamic environments that change between day and night, influencing gameplay and storytelling experience.

## Target Platform and Target Audience

Our primary target platform is PC, supporting both single-player and cooperative multiplayer modes. Players will have the ability to swap between characters in single-player, or choose a co-op experience similar to *It Takes Two*, where only one player needs to own the game, and the second player can download a free “Friend Pass” copy to join. We're actively pitching to a publisher with the resources to assist in porting the game to Nintendo Switch, Xbox, and PlayStation 4 to maximize reach and accessibility.

The game targets players ages 12-25 of any gender, who are fans of narrative-driven co-op games (*It Takes Two*, *A Way Out*) as well as puzzle enthusiasts who enjoy logical, character-based challenges (*Portal 2*, *Baba Is You*). We wanted to target an audience who are old enough to comprehend more emotional and complex themes. Themes of identity and family relationships may have a stronger impact and resonate with younger audiences as the players themselves are at the typical age for identity formation. This dual appeal taps into a growing niche: co-op narrative puzzle games. *It Takes Two*, for

example, sold over 20 million copies, proving both the market viability and appetite for emotionally resonant, two-character-driven games.

Puzzle games also perform well on Steam, with titles like Baba Is You and The Witness maintaining strong visibility and critical acclaim. By combining meaningful storytelling with clever, dual-character puzzles, we aim to engage both couples/friends seeking shared experiences and solo players looking for a tight, character-swapping adventure.

## **Timeline/Development Milestones**

### **Q2 2025 – Pre-production**

Team assembly, prototype development, vertical slice focused on character-swapping, day/night mechanics, and light mechanics.

### **Q3 2025 – Production Begins**

Development of first levels, implementation of art direction, dialogue scripting, and character animations.

### **Q4 2025 – Demo Release (Itch.io)**

A free 30-minute demo showcasing key mechanics and early narrative beats, released for feedback and early community building. This will be a vertical slice that is essentially just one or possibly two polished levels. We'll try to incorporate dialogue akin to what we are going for in the real game without spoiling anything. Additionally, if we have the opportunity for press coverage because of our publisher relationship, that would boost engagement and we'd be able to get more hype for the real release + more feedback from the demo.

### **Q2 2026 – Steam Early Access**

If we need the extra funds or if there are certain things early in the game that we need feedback on, we have an option for Steam early access. This will also allow us to gain momentum with wishlists for our full release.

## Q3 2026 – Steam Release

Final game released on Steam for PC. Launch includes Friend Pass functionality and full controller support.

## Q4 2026 – Console Release

Targeted ports for Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4, and Xbox One, with publisher support. Performance optimizations and interface adjustments for each platform.