

# Between the Stars

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# About

"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."

The **gameplay** of Between the Stars involves:

- Guiding Apollus to move objects and light sources
- Guiding Kastor through shadows using hidden paths
- Playing either as both characters in **single-player mode** or as one character in a **co-op mode**
- Switching between **day and night modes** to alter the environment
- Using mirrors to redirect light and unlock new paths

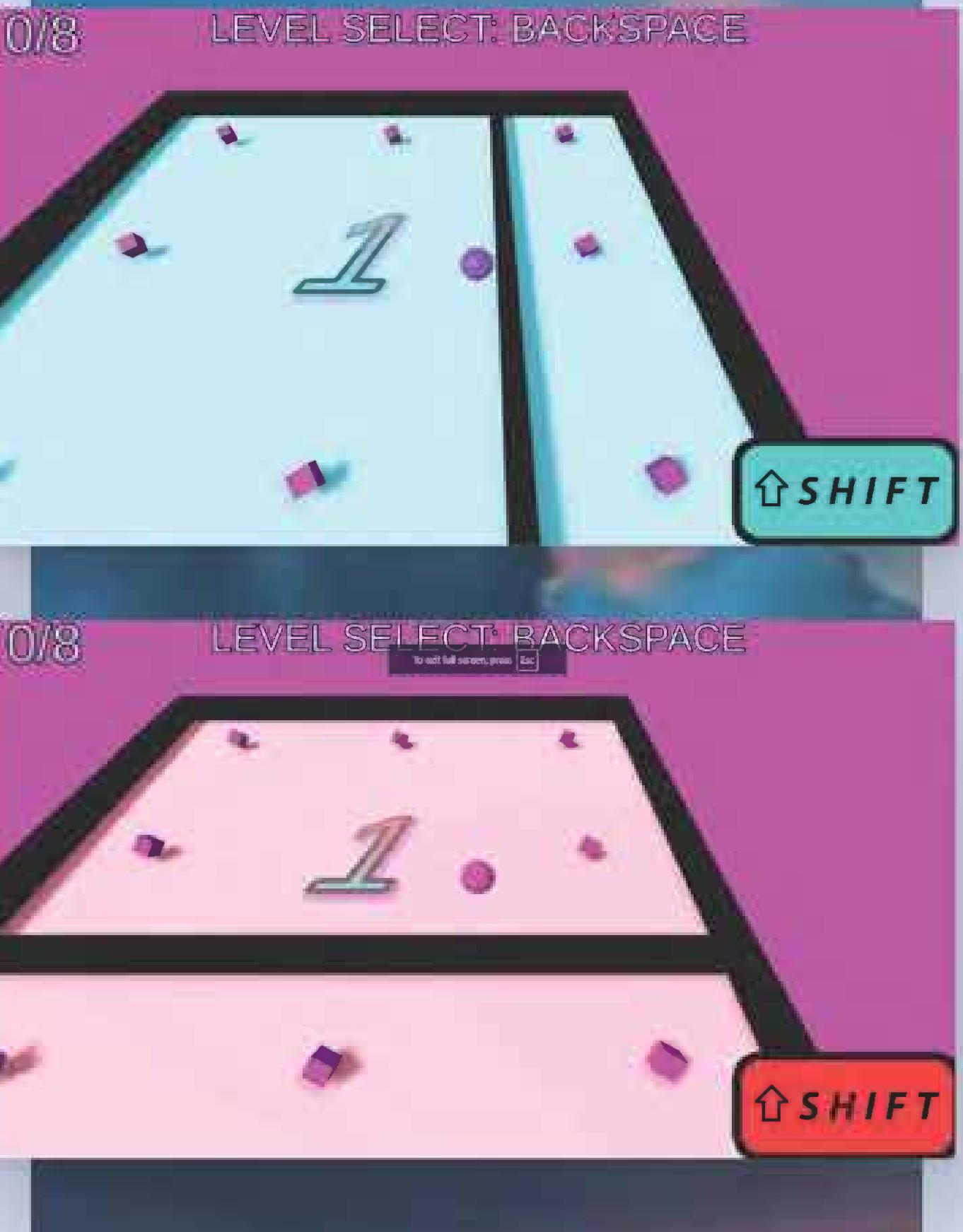
# EECS 494 Concept: Shift

## What Was Kept?

- The core mechanics of shifting between two states, Shift's parallel realities and our game's day/night cycle, has been preserved.
- Environmental changes that affect character movement and puzzle-solving, creating new interactions based on the time of day.

## What Was Changed?

- Our game uses the day/night cycle which creates interactions between light and shadow (instead of separate realities from Shift), requiring players to think dynamically and use both to progress.
- The addition of movable light sources, like candles and chandeliers



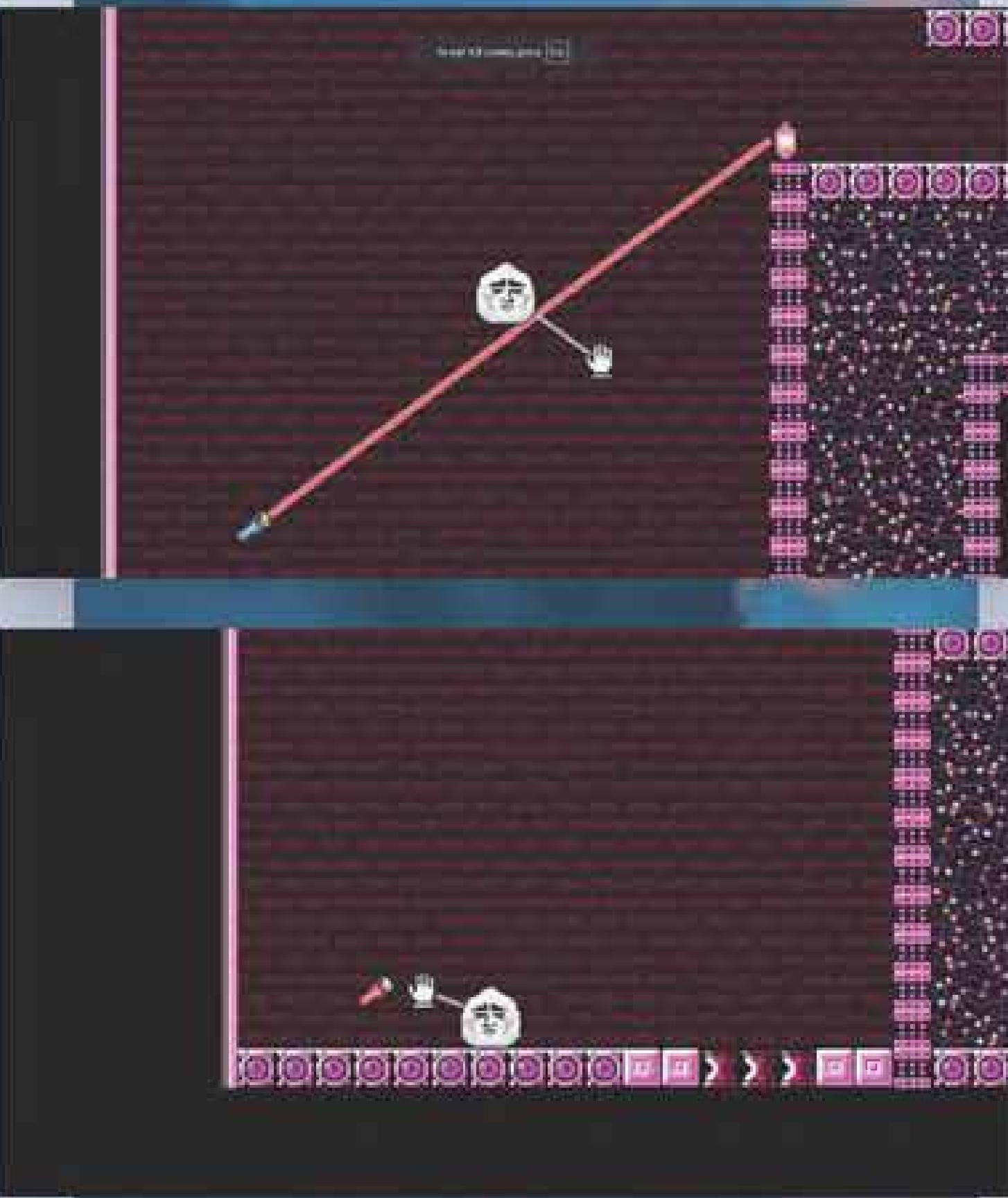
# Little Dude Plays with Reflections (EECS494 Concept)

## What Was Kept?

- Being able to grab certain objects to change the angle or location of them.
- The idea of triggering environmental changes by manipulating light, such as activating buttons or opening paths.

## What Was Changed?

- In our game, the concept of reflective surfaces is combined with the day/night shifting mechanic. Players must not only manipulate light but also consider how the time of day affects the behavior of light sources and the environment.
- The addition of movable light sources that can be adjusted to create or block shadows.



# Updates Needed for Demo

## Mechanics & Co-Op Functionality

Finalize character swapping and co-op mechanics, ensuring smooth gameplay for both single-player and multiplayer modes.

## UI & Controls

Complete core UI elements (mini-map, character toggles, day/night toggle) and ensure user-friendly controls.

## Feedback & Playtesting

Test the demo internally and externally, adjust gameplay, difficulty, and fix bugs based on feedback.

## Level Design and Puzzle Integration

Develop initial levels showcasing core mechanics, including light and shadow puzzles with day/night shifts and movable light sources.

## Art Direction and Visual Assets

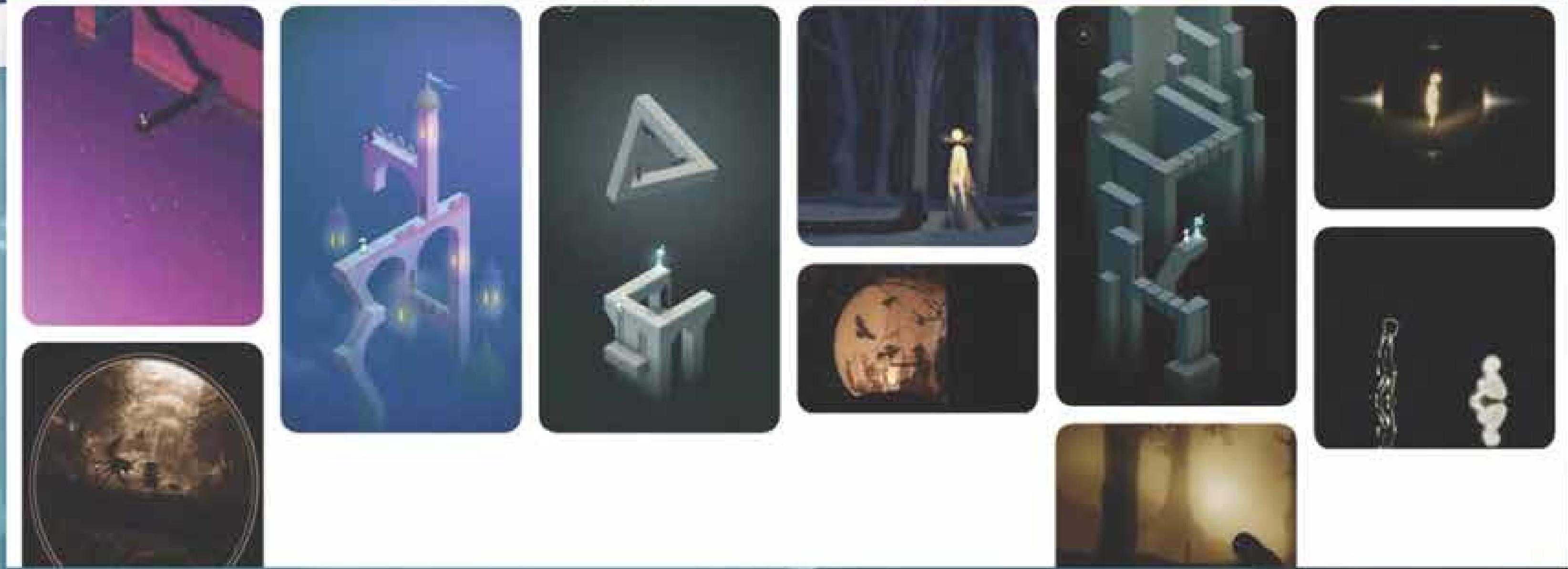
Finalize character models, animations, and environmental art with dynamic day/night cycles and interactive light elements.

## Demo Release

Release the 30-minute demo on Itch.io for early community feedback.

# Concept Boards

Atmosphere:

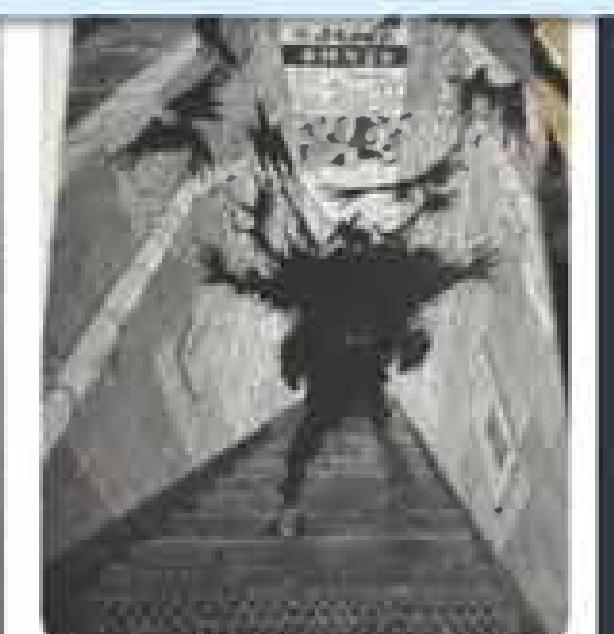


# Concept Boards

Apollus Inspiration:



Kastor Inspiration:



# Concept Boards

Mirror Witch Inspiration:



Tower of Stars Inspiration:



# Design Development

Character Sketches:



Characters:



Apollus

Kastor

Mirror Witch

# Concept Testing Methodology

## Recruitment

We recruited 24 individuals through recommendations and through friends who fit our inclusion criteria, which was:

- Ages 12-25 of any gender
- Our inclusion criteria is people who like puzzle games or co-op games (like Split Fiction, It Takes Two, etc).

## Methodology

We asked these 24 participants to fill out a Google Form, which asked the participants (our ideal demographic), their opinions about the designs, names, and overall atmosphere of our games and what aspects they are most interested in to gauge what aspects of the game we should pay particularly close to.

# Concept Testing

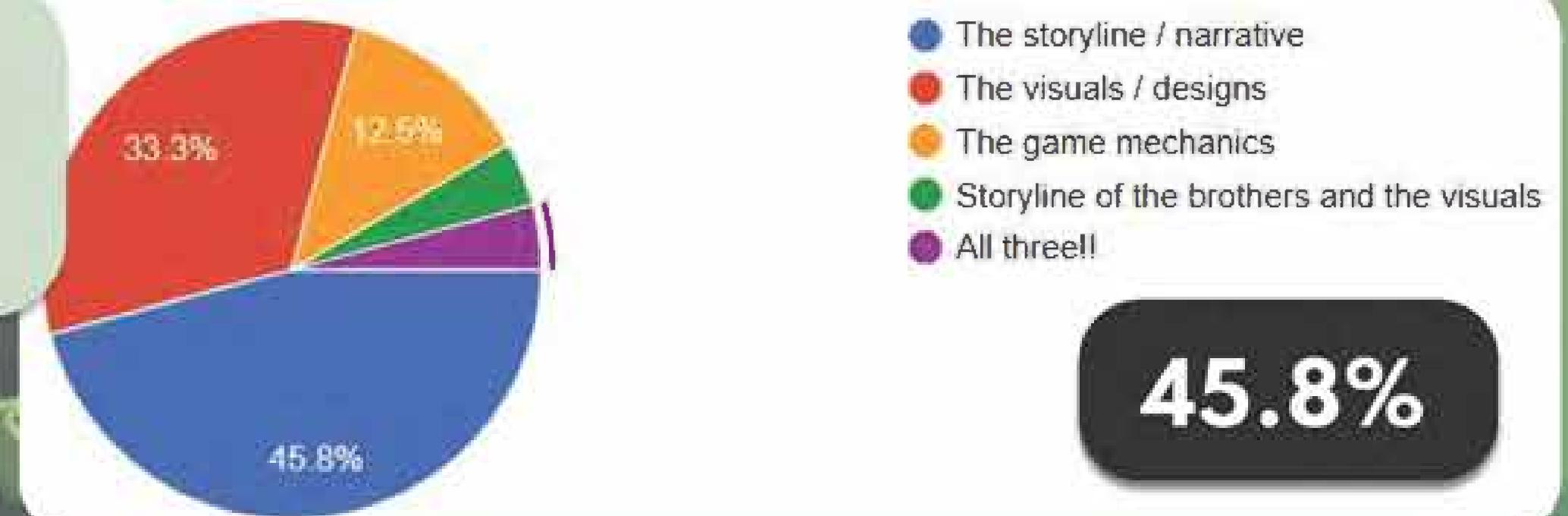
We contacted 24 participants to take a survey asking about various art, naming, and atmosphere they expect and want from our game.

## Atmosphere:

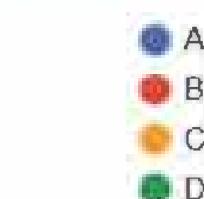
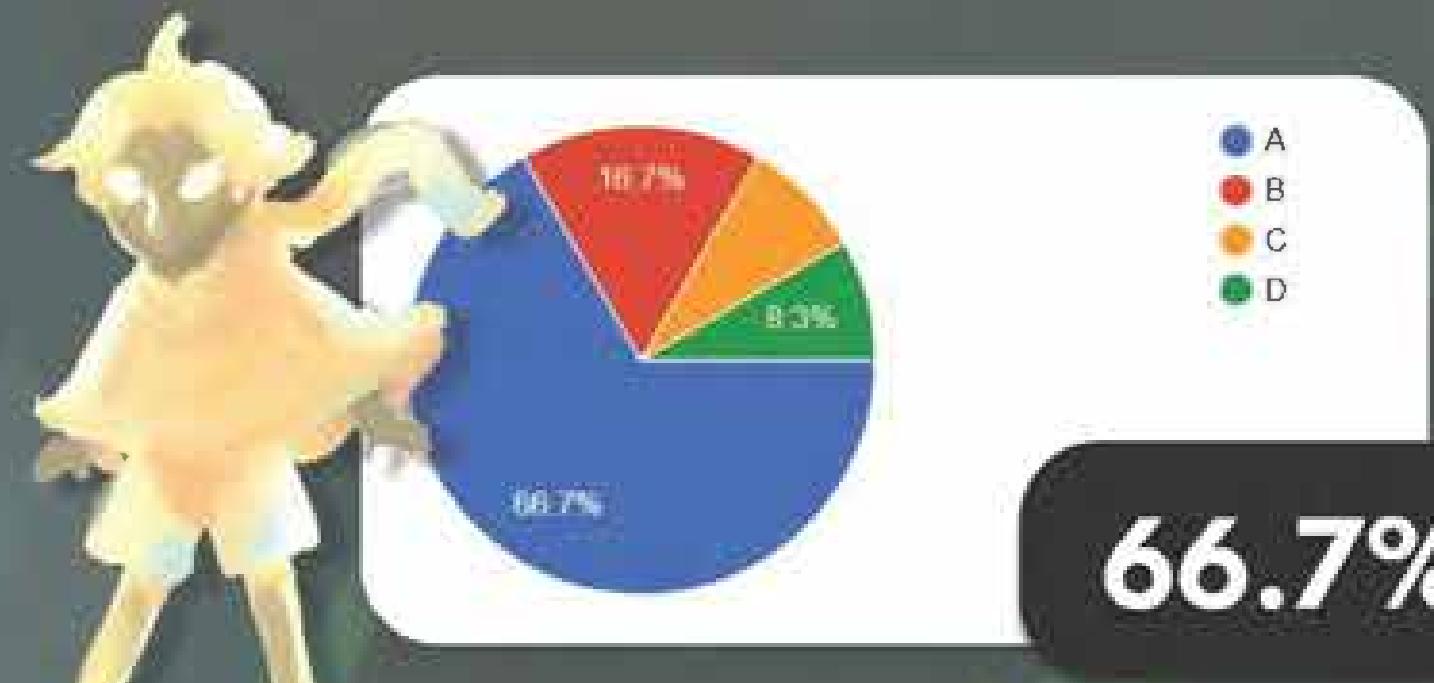


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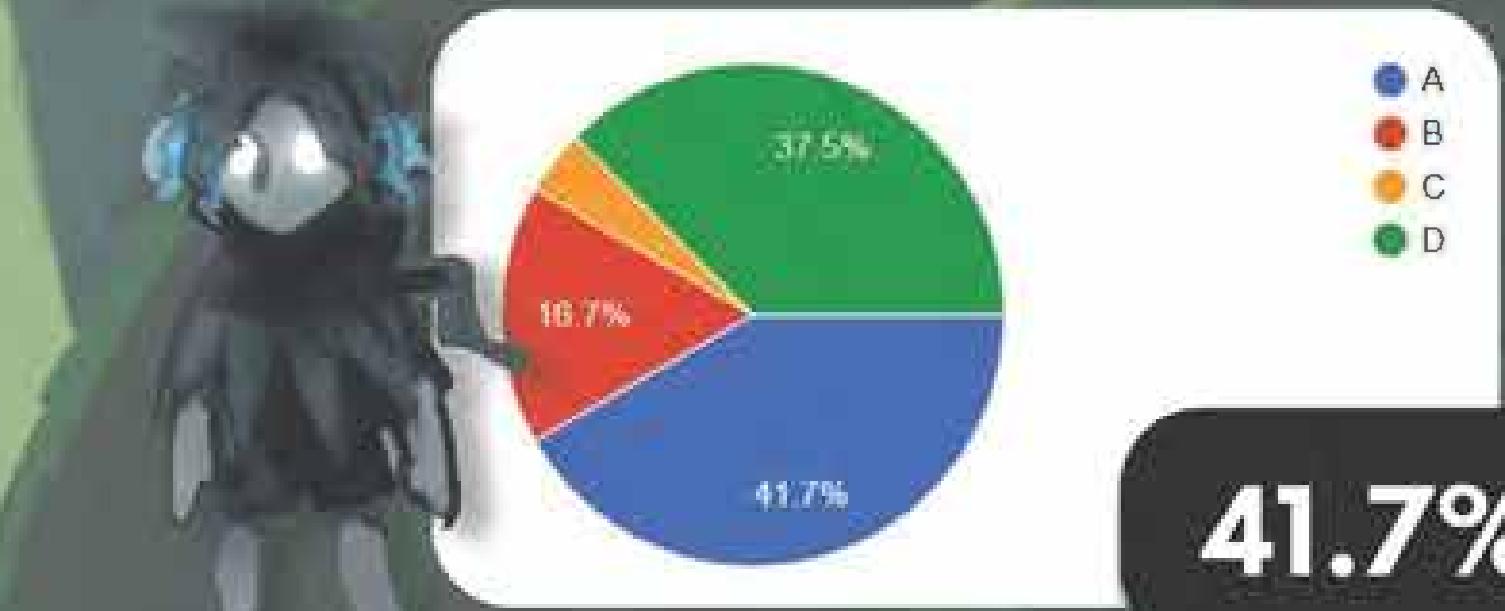
## Most Interested Aspect in the Game:



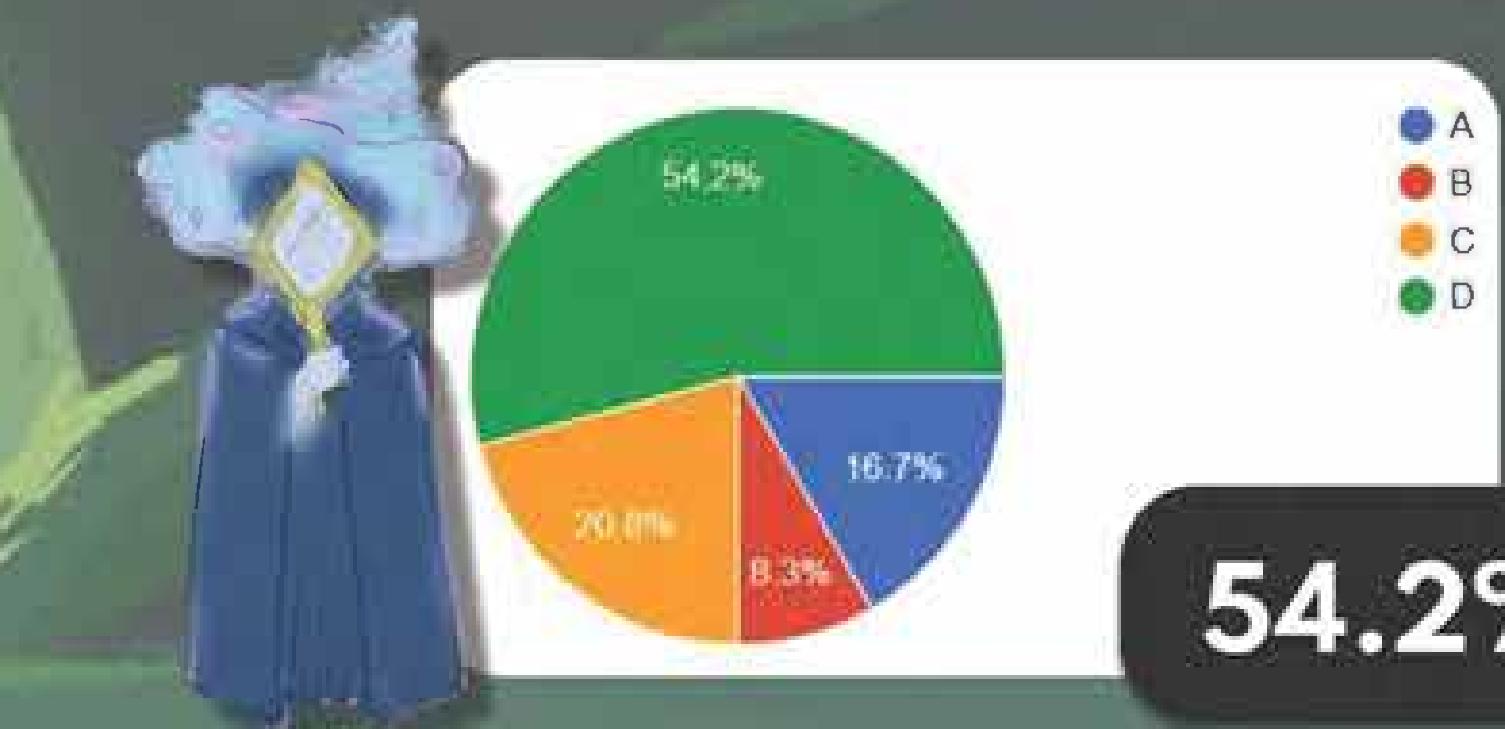
45.8%



66.7%



41.7%



54.2%

# Features & Gameplay

## Core Gameplay

Core gameplay revolves around separately controlling two characters:

Apollus: A character who acts as a light source and can interact with the physical world (ie. grabbing objects).

Kastor: The character who can only move through shadows and dark spaces and can interact differently in shadows (ie. swallowing certain enemies in shadow).

The goal of each stage is to get both characters from their starting location to the ends of the stage. To do this, the player must navigate through various light-based puzzles that involve manipulating light sources and shadowy paths to allow Kastor to move and Apollus to help guide both characters through obstacles.

# Features & Gameplay

## Light Manipulation

- Apollus can move light sources to create areas of darkness that Kastor can travel through
- Kastor can only move freely in dark spaces, so moving objects/light sources around to create safe paths is necessary.
- In areas where light is completely obscured, Kastor will have access to certain special abilities, including swallowing some small enemies/objects and being able to transport them to other completely obscured areas.
- Some puzzles will have certain light or dark sensitive button activations, to create certain bridges/bring down a wall, etc. so the player will need to figure out creative ways to allow both Apollus and Kastor to reach the end of the stage.

## Reflective Surfaces

- Players will encounter mirror objects, which can alter/redirect light, allowing for different ways to solve puzzles.

# Features & Gameplay

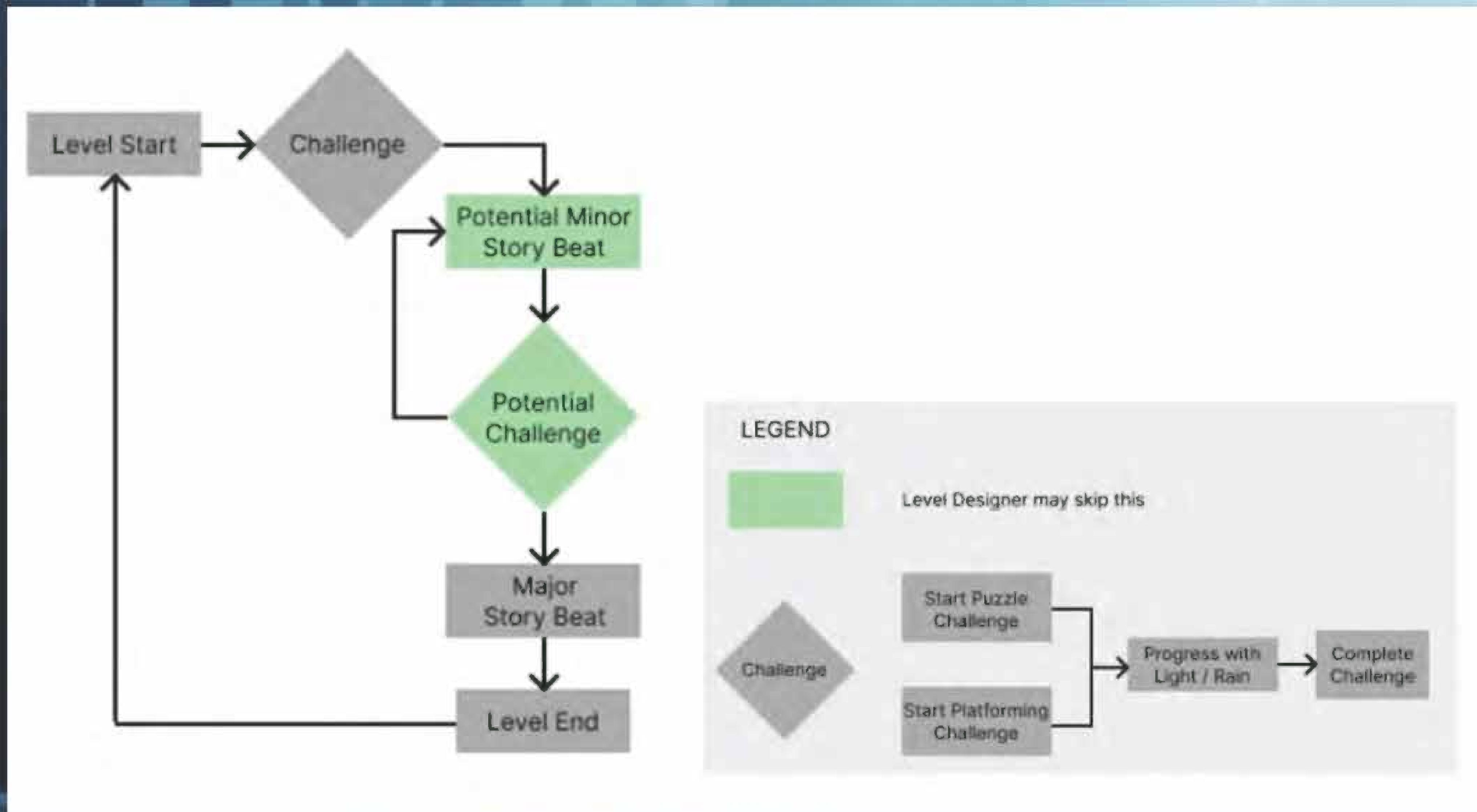
## Day/Night Shifting

- Players can toggle between day and night to change available light sources in the environment.
- During the day, light primarily comes from outside through windows, creating softer shadows
- During the night, light sources in other forms of static light (fireflies, candles), which can be moved by Apollus.
- Switching between day/night will offer different movement options for Kastor and more options to trigger certain light-based button activations.

## 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.

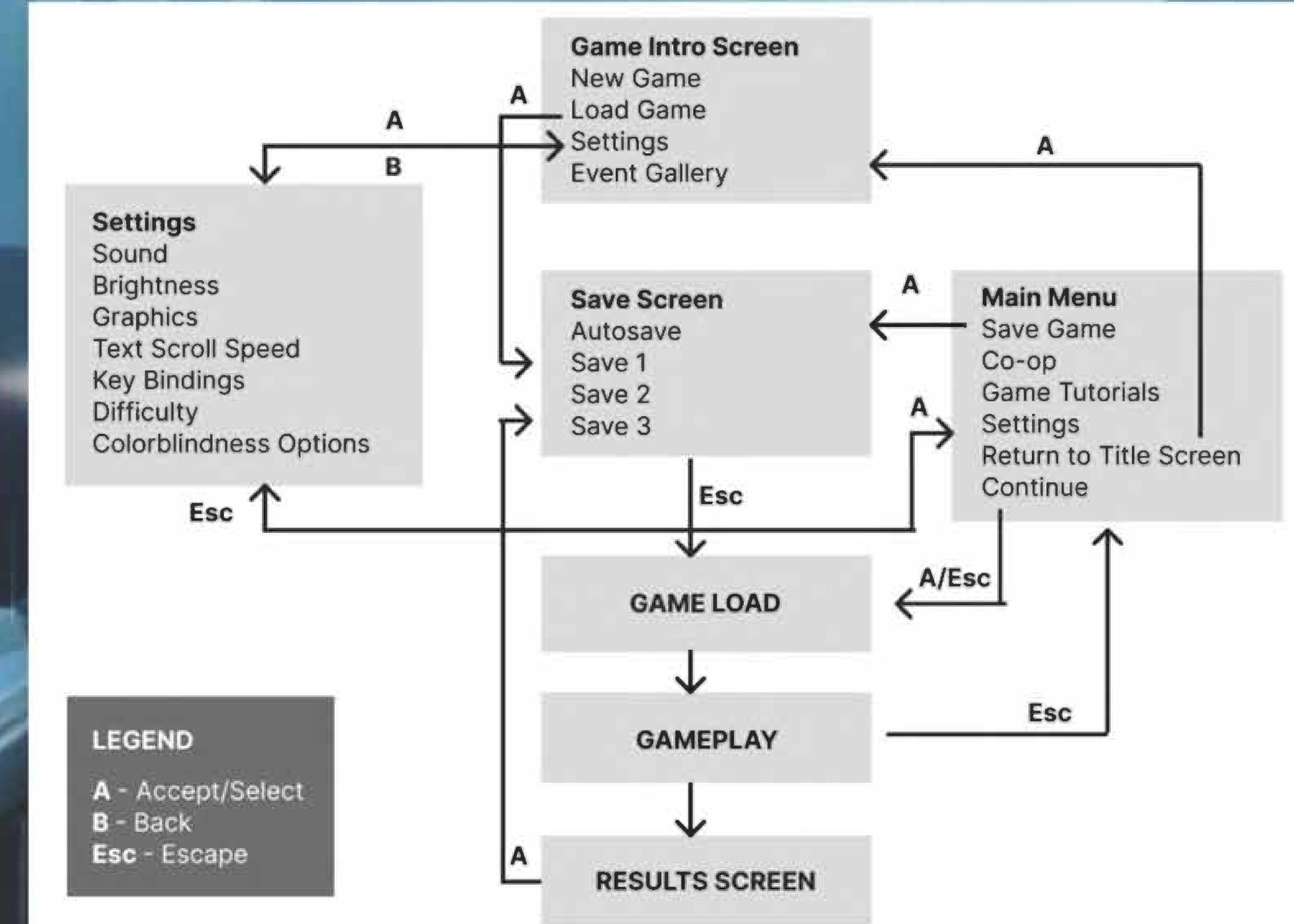
# Gameplay Diagram



# Game Architecture

## Our main screens / systems:

- Game Intro Screen
- Save Screen
- Settings
- Main Menu
- Game Load
- Gameplay
- Results Screen



# Lo-fi Prototype

## TALE OF LIGHT AND RAIN

- New Game
- Load Game
- Settings
- Event Gallery

LEVEL COMPLETE

◆ Save Game

## SAVE GAME

- SAVE 1
- SAVE 2
- SAVE 3
- SAVE 4

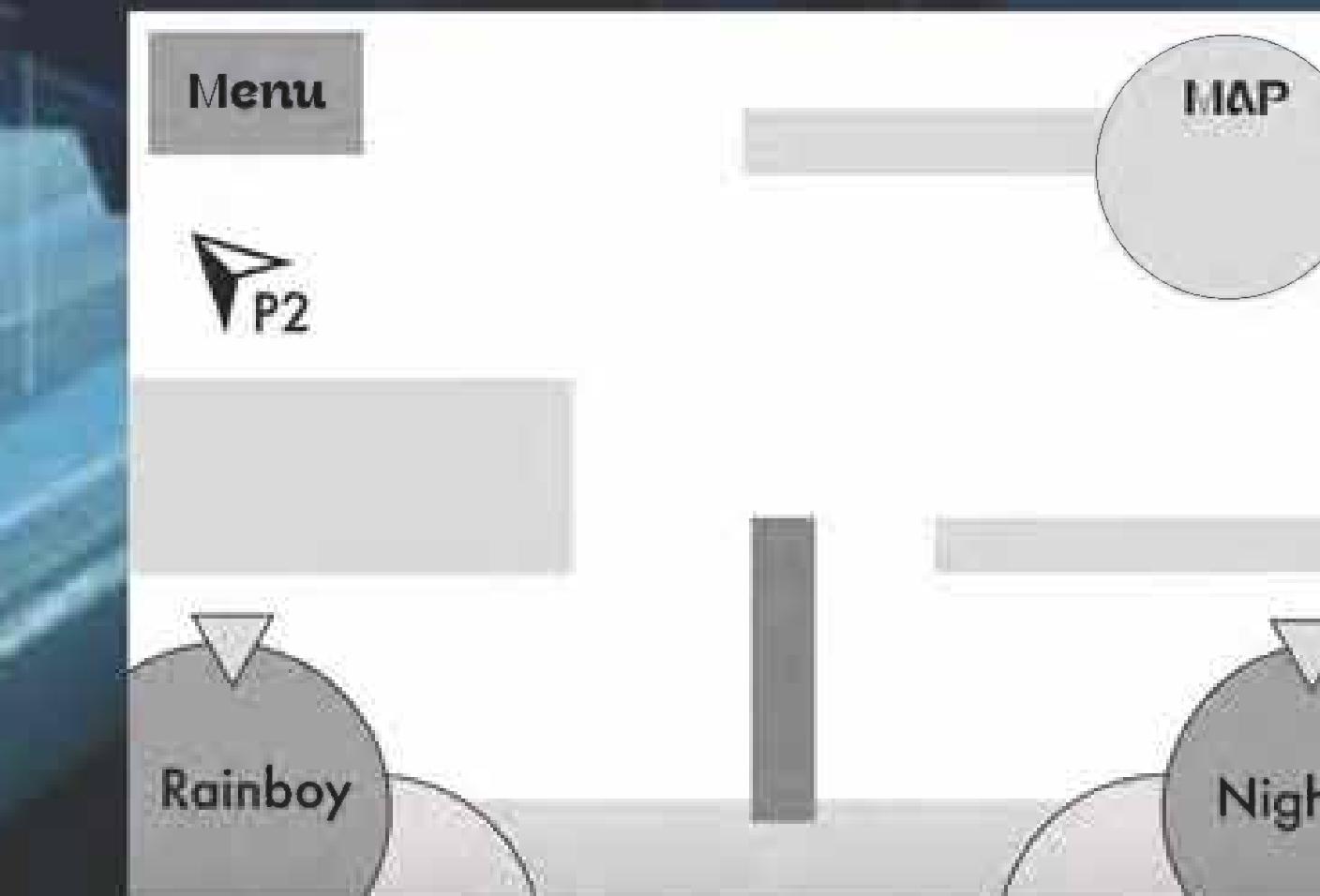
## Menu

- ◆ Save Game
- ◆ Load Game
- ◆ Co-op Mode
- ◆ Game Tutorials
- ◆ Settings
- ◆ Return to Title
- Continue Game

## LEVEL MAP

## Settings

- ◆ Sound
- ◆ Brightness
- ◆ Graphics
- ◆ Text Scroll Speed
- ◆ Key Bindings
- ◆ Difficulty
- ◆ Color Settings
- Return



# Higher Fidelity Prototype



# Release Timeline



# Our Target

## Target Audience

- **12-25 years old**
- **Fans of narrative-driven games**
- **Fans of co-op games**
- **Fans of logic puzzle games**

## Target Platforms

- **PC (Steam)**
- **Mac**
- **Switch**
- **PS4/5**
- **Xbox One**



# Market Validation

- **Narrative-driven co-op is incredibly popular but not oversaturated (*It Takes Two*, *Split Fiction*).**
- **Broad appeal**
- **Genre is popular with content creators**
- **Collaborations between creators tend to perform well**
- **Puzzle games also perform well on Steam historically**



# Competitor Analysis

## It Takes Two



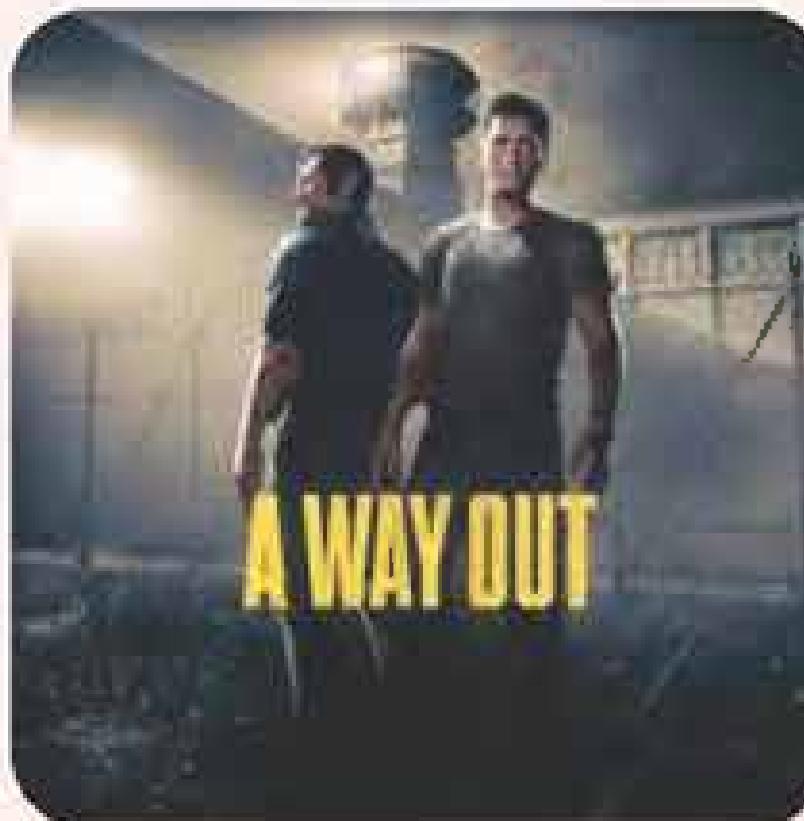
Over 20 million copies sold

Puzzle  
platforming  
emphasis

Wide  
Release

14 -15 hours

## A Way Out



Over 9 million copies  
sold

Story  
driven

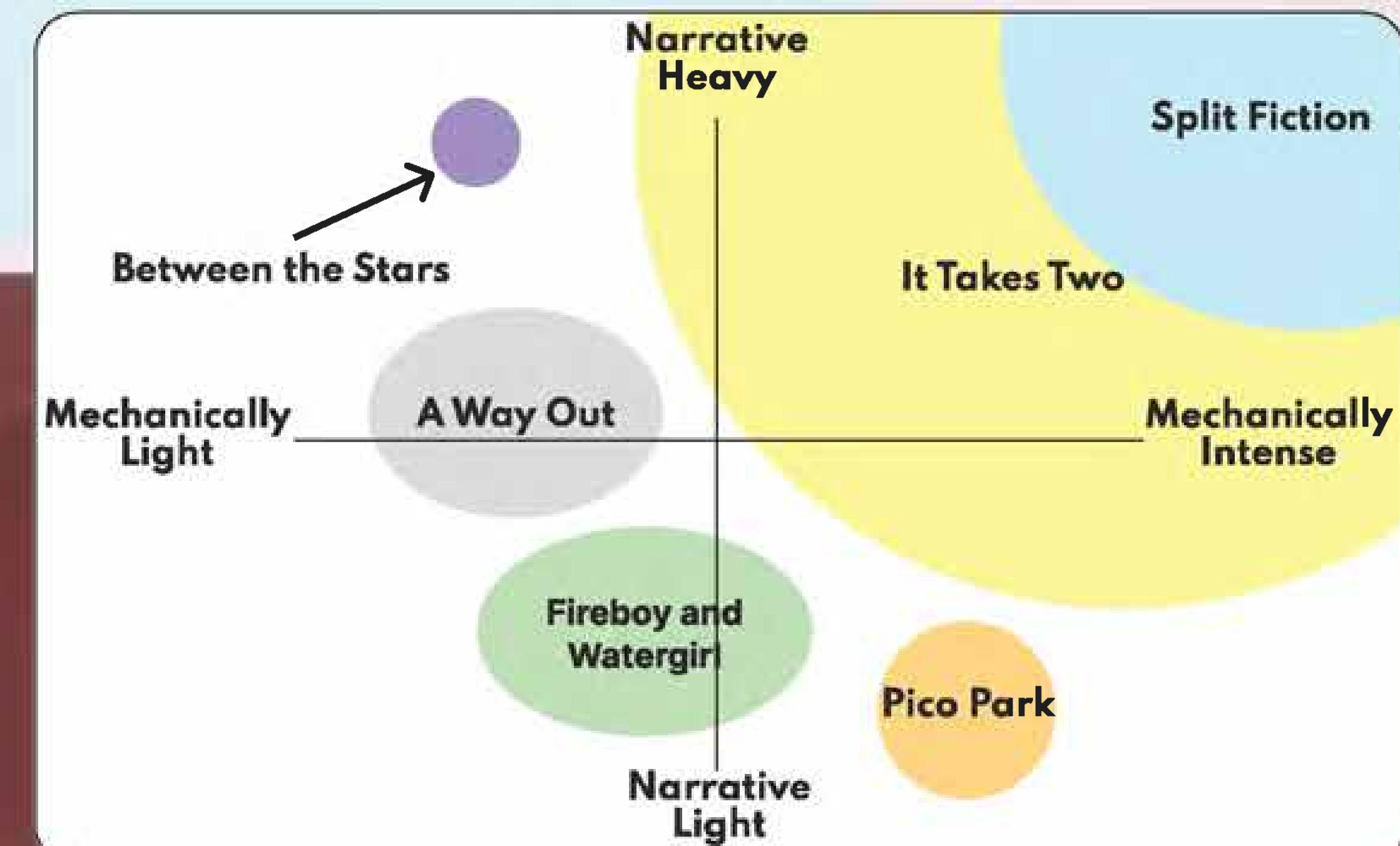
6-7  
hours

Action  
and  
Combat  
emphasis

- Hazelight is the only major developer of this type of narrative-driven co-op puzzle game (It Takes Two, Split Fiction, A Way Out).

# What Makes Us Different

- **Appealing art direction inspired by Sky: Children of the Light and Monument Valley**
- **Option for a single-player campaign**
- **Mechanically light with story focus**



# Monetization Plan

We plan on pricing our game for around \$25 with an addition of selling the soundtrack for around \$5. Some of our major competitors are It Takes Two and Brothers - A Tale of Two Sons, due to their similar genre, gameplay, and narrative themes.

## It Takes Two

- It Takes Two is priced at \$39.99 on Steam
- Charging less than It Takes Two can bring in puzzle game players looking to a slightly cheaper price with similar themes

## A Tale of Two Sons

- A Tale of Two Sons is priced at \$14.99 and \$19.99 (remake)
- Will charge more than them since our game will be longer (their game is around 4 hours long) with more game mechanics than them

# Market Strategy

## Hazelight

We need Hazelight's help and resources with the art, narrative, and programming to ensure high quality within the final game, as they fit our following needs:

- We need help funding the production of our game, especially for the art and narrative
- We aim to get marketing assistance, which is difficult through crowdfunding or investors.
- We want to pitch to a publisher with the resources to help assist us in porting the game to multiple consoles to maximize our reach.
- We prefer to work with a publisher with experience with distributing co-op puzzle games.

## Launch + Distribution

- We plan on releasing a 30 minute demo on Itch.io for feedback and exposure, but later plan on releasing the full game for PC on Steam.
  - Steam is a popular gaming platform and the Friend Pass functionality for co-op mode is beneficial for our co-op game.
- Later we plan to port our game on platforms like Nintendo Switch, Xbox, and PlayStation 4.

# Our Ask

## Funding

- \$22,000 hiring budget
- Primarily hire developers, artists, and writers (freelance)
- 80% of survey respondents cited storyline and visuals as top selling points

## Marketing

- Instagram, Twitter, Bluesky, YouTube social media accounts
- Twitch and YouTube streamers who play co-op games
- Trailers at major gaming events
  - The Game Awards
  - Steam NextFest

## Distribution

- PC (Steam)
  - Nintendo Switch
  - Xbox One
  - Playstation 4
- Both physical and digital distribution





Thank you!