The Secrets of The Chronovisor

An Indie-Narrative Fantasy Game by Nolan Cross

Final Design Document



Two Sides - One Story. A Game of Morality and the Cosmos, Where You Play Against Yourself.

INTRO & MAIN CHARACTERS

The Wizard-Scientist Xepe must race against time to uncover the mysteries of a steampunk device before a chaotic dimension can break into the real world. This device, THE CHRONOVISOR, which the Vatican once claimed to possess, allows its user to glimpse events of the past, and with certain modifications, actively participate in altering them. Meanwhile, his unknown nemesis has an agenda of his own.



XEPE:

The main protagonist, Xepe is one of the brilliant founding members of the modern Trispirekians, who have guarded their ways from most of the world for centuries, dwelling in their snowy spire of Icikalis. He volunteers to be the test subject of the Chronovisor, and bear witness to the events of the past to find the secret on how to stop the invasion of the dimension Duria, and fuse the metaphysical with a new technology. He will need to help people in various Levels across space-time, and ensure they see a higher purpose. But, his own self-doubt and masochism may prove to be his undoing.

These two gameplay styles are distinct, driven by a linear path. In Xepe's Story, you bring people of the past to their senses, in O'Shanty's, you corrupt them. Each one has abundant puzzles and challenges in Sneaking, Dialogue Choice, and Lore Research.



TOM O'SHANTY:

The antagonist of the story and the other playable character, Tom O'Shanty is an enigmatic yet charming figure who poses as a butler in order to integrate himself into the wealthy Bryant Family, and lure them into darkness one by one, in service to a very dark entity indeed. He must use his Personality and Stealth to utilize each one of the Deadly Sins to hit each of the household where it hurts - and use their traumas and personal 'Sins' against them to claim their lives.
He worships the entity known as Vyllez, which has lived in the walls of the Mansion for generations, and manifests as O'Shanty's determination to allow the Invasion of Duria.

Supporting Characters

THE TRISPIREKIANS:

RUFUS WARREN - Armed Guard of Icikalis, he lost his children under circumstances attributed to Vyllez. He accompanies Xepe on one of his Quests to the near-primitive Village of Royn, and offers a fresh, stern perspective.

DR. GOTTO - An introverted Trispirekian who paints images using mechanical brushes, she also weaves the robes and outfits for the rest of the group and offers dermatology, as the high altitudes in the area can cause various skin defects. She also goes to Royn to assist Xepe.

MILES THE INCHMAN - In charge of records keeping at the Spires, and a gifted mathematician who designs his own trigonometric tools for charting. He can provide data which can aid in the solving of the first Chronovisor Clockwork Puzzles in Episode One.

DR. KARRA - A former doctor of mental health, Dr. Karra is the resident counselor at Icikalis, who tries to walk Xepe through many of the challenges he faces, from a perspective of self-care.

THE BRYANT MANSION:

JULIA BRYANT - The Matriarch of the Mansion. The foggy old house has been in her family for generations. She has her own demons, pertaining primarily to Pride, that O'Shanty will have the means to use against her, despite her shrewdness and her love for her son. She is a calculating businesswoman, and congratulates herself on destroying rivals for her benefit.

MARCUS BRYANT - Julia's estranged husband, and a major source of doubt for the Matriarch of the Mansion. Marcus devoted his time to reading about the Trispirekians, but never had the initiative to try and become one. Gradually, he neglected his family, and as a result, has gone missing. Ultimately, his sin was Envy.

RAOUL BRYANT - Julia's son, and a troubled young boy, who has been secretly communicating with Vyllez without knowing for quite some time. O'Shanty empathizes with the boy, but wants him to agree to making a pact with his 'imaginary friend', while Marcus persists in acting out in temper tantrums of escalating intensity. His sin is Wrath.

SERVANTS:

RAYMOND - The aged head butler, and secret embezzler. His sin is Greed.

ETHEL - The maid, a lonely dreamer. Her sin is Lust.

RAJA - The gardener, a recovering addict. His sin is Sloth.

SIMON - The obese cook, who feasts from the rations. His sin is Gluttony.

PEOPLE OF THE PAST:

BULLIO, A MINE TYCOON - A relentless and impatient mine boss who pushes ahead with a job that he knows is dangerous for his workers. His interactions with Xepe are angered and intense.

BYFF, A MEDIEVAL KING - A craven ruler who hides behind his castle walls and library of olde texts. He is quiet, reserved, and often incompotent.

HAYMAKE, A TRAVELING MERCHANT - A charismatic merchant under life threatening pressure, accused of swindling. He is a broken man, desperate for salvation as he retains his innocence.

Level Design & Mechanics

ICIKALIS - The headquarters of the Trispirekian Guild, built by a mysterious order that judged their activities too existential for the world to know. Here, in its main chamber, The Chronovisor spins above a blue electromagnetic force, made of bronze bars and clockwork gears. Xepe can also explore other areas of the Three Spires in Episode One and between the other chapters. He can find resources here such as food and drink in the common hall, texts on lore in the massive circular library, mini-games, challenges, and maps in the workshop, and customizing options in his private quarters of several different robes and cuirasses.

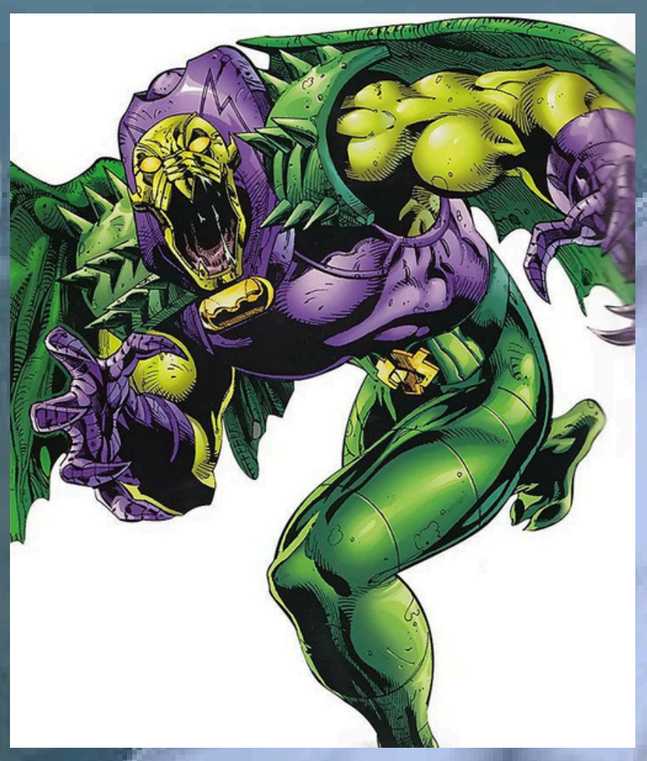
CHRONOVISOR PUZZLES - The Chronovisor is an ancient and frequently unreliable device. To make sure it keeps functioning, Xepe will have to complete a few gear mechanism puzzles of increasing difficulty. Think something akin to the lockpicking of Oblivion and The Beast Inside, with the puzzle style of the Arkham games.

NAVIGATING DURIA - Once Xepe enters the realm of Duria, Platforming on the moving bridges and causeways, and Evading natural hazards becomes the dominant gameplay.

BRYANT MANSION MECHANICS - Tom O'Shanty will perform his butler duties like this is gothic horror Sims, while using the Little Nightmares-styled sneak mechanic, and brewing devious recipes like Amnesia: The Dark Descent.

DYNAMIC DIALOGUE TREE - For both characters, the Dialogue Navigation should be branching and involve variables in persuasion and deception. There may even be a way to allow the player to input their own words into the game, resulting in organic responses from the NPC's.

SINGLE BOSS BATTLE - At the end of Xepe's journey, there is a chance that they will have to fight the creature Vyllez directly. This will be more of a spectacle than a Souls-like encounter, and will involve turn-based combat as Xepe uses his abilities, not strictly meant for combat, to defeat Vyllez with strategy.



EPISODE ONE: TURNING STARS, BREAKING ARCHES

WORLD: In an alternate version of our reality, lost between both future and past, the Trispirekian Guild of Wizard-Scientists dwell in their frosty Spires of Icikalis. They have a device known as The Chronovisor, which allows the user to view past and future events, and actively time travel into these pocket dimensions. Across this fractured world, a wealthy family known as the Bryants lives in their gothic Mansion, unaware that the house, and themselves, are in peril of being corrupted by evil forces at work.

NARRATIVE: Player-character Xepe, one of the founding members of the Trispirekians, struggles with his inner doubts as his Guild works to find answers on how to prevent an interdimensional invasion. According to their studies, the sentient Lovecraftian realm they call Duria is on the rise to absorb the world as we know it into a physics-breaking purgatory. Meanwhile, the rival player-character, Tom O'Shanty, simultaneously arrives at the Bryant Mansion to integrate himself into the troubled family as a butler.

MISSION: Xepe is tasked with undertaking a mind-bending mission utilizing The Chronovisor to search for answers on how to stop Duria. The experienced and brilliant sage must rise to the occasion, seek help when needed from his fellow Trispirekians, and break the foundations of space-time to save what remains of the world. Tom O'Shanty however, secretly works against them by winning over the trust of the Bryant Household for a shadowy purpose. He will ease into his role as butler, and profile each of the seven residents for future exploitation.

FACTORS IN GAMEPLAY: The player will be introduced to the game's core mechanic: how best to play a game of moral chess with themselves, and counter even the smallest decisions, forced to play both for corruption and kindness, to affect the largest scope. At Icikalis, they will solve challenging puzzles as Xepe to get The Chronovisor operational, with assistance from Miles The Inchman, chief engineer. As O'Shanty, they will perform their butler duties in a stately manner, all while spying and eavesdropping.

THE HOOK: Xepe enters The Chronovisor - but there's a glitch. He is sent to Duria itself, and must find a way to reach the time he's supposed to be. O'Shanty now has six secrets for six souls.

EPISODE TWO: ABOVE THE SEA OF BILE, A TAPESTRY FLOATS

WORLD: Xepe awakens in Duria - a realm of floating objects suspended on greasy platforms above a sea of vomit. Here, time has no meaning, and the platforms will constantly shift and move. Tom O'Shanty is trusted with unlocking new wings of the manor, as a grand feast is set to be prepared.

NARRATIVE: Xepe learns during his escapade in Duria that the dimension has a mind of its own, and feeds off universal human doubts. It had already absorbed a part of the world centuries ago, and wants to do it again. O'Shanty sees his first chance to claim a soul, as a banquet is underway for the distinguished guests of matriarch Julia Bryant. It is revealed that her and her missing husband Marcus have donated to the Trispirekian studies. Everything hangs on the obese cook, Simon, who has been gluttonous in the kitchen storeroom, secretly gorging himself.

MISSION: Xepe must traverse Duria and find a way to repair his broken Tether to Icikalis - an antique watch he keeps in his belt. Once successful, he will then experience his first Memory within The Chronovisor: when Bullio the Mine Tycoon, part of the elder Bryant clan, decided to set his workers into a hazardous dig site. It'll be up to Xepe to convince him of the virtues of patience, and prevent disaster for the greater good. O'Shanty discovers that Simon has a paralyzing fear of rats in addition to his unceasing appetite, and will have to lure the vermin into the kitchen to sabotage the banquet, while sneaking past Simon.

FACTORS IN GAMEPLAY: Players will get the chance to explore the abstract window into disembodiment known as Duria, and uncover more of the lore at their own discretion, through solving puzzles with plaques made out of animal skin. Xepe's first main dialogue challenge comes with how best to persuade Bullio to exercise patience. If this is failed, Xepe will be sent back to Duria and have to redo the level. On O'Shanty's side, they will have the task of setting the dining room for guests, and then luring a horde of rats and using the sneak mechanic. They will also be able to speak with the manor guests, and learn more about the Bryants through O'Shanty's method of persuasion.

THE HOOK: Xepe is successful in convincing Bullio, and uses his Tether to move onto the next Chronovisor level, which sends him further into the past. Simon ingests rat poison during his binges and dies horribly, while O'Shanty stands by to take his soul using a Duria-enchanted Accordion.

EPISODE THREE: THE TIMID SHALL INHERIT APATHY

WORLD: Xepe finds himself in a medieval keep as a city is under siege. Outside, the crashing of trebuchets and the shouts of fighters can be heard. Within, a craven king awaits counsel in cold stone chambers. O'Shanty follows two servants to their places of the mansion's vibrant gardens, and a maid's quarters full of storybooks and unwanted gifts.

NARRATIVE: Xepe learns that King Byff, a scholar royal and another distant ancestor of the Bryant Family, dwells in near-comatose solitude and refuses to surrender his castle even as the unknown enemy army offers terms. A great many of his people will be killed if he does not wake up. O'Shanty will set his sights on Raja, the manor's gardener and a former addict, who begins to fall back into a lull of apathy. Also in line is Ethel, the sweet yet naive maid, who longs for a prince to come and take her away from the disturbing place. She has resorted to using a chemical that elicits sensual dreams to satiate her desires.

MISSION: Xepe will have to gather King Byff's favorite texts and reminders of his past days of glory in an effort to awaken his sense of courage and humility, and then enter into another dialogue tree to persuade him. He will also need to speak to his own court to find these details, and together confront the king. O'Shanty will need to find ingredients suitable to concoct a lethal narcotic, and hide it in Raja's garden for him to find, while avoiding a few dangerous plants that seem to know what he's up to. He will simultaneously be replacing Ethel's potion with a different drug, one that will send her into an episode of mania.

FACTORS IN GAMEPLAY: Players will have to do a bit of reading of Old-English written texts to find which passages will best work on King Byff, using their own best judgement. Then, it comes down to a final confrontation with the extravagant court, where Xepe will exercise teamwork with NPC's to convince Byff. O'Shanty will have to perform alchemical chemistry to mix the poisons for both servants. To be successful, he will dodge Venus fly-traps and strange contorted vines in the garden, and manipulate Ethel into trying his insanity potion.

THE HOOK: Byff will open his gates and surrender peacefully, thus saving hundreds of lives. Xepe will use The Chronovisor to go backwards in time once more, while Raja is found hunched over and dead, and Ethel is found heartbroken and dead atop the frame of a door. Two more souls for the Accordion.

EPISODE FOUR: RAGE LIES IN THE COLLECTIVE

WORLD: The Chronovisor takes Xepe to Royn, a near-primitive outback village of hunters and herders who stake their survival on making dairy and hunting the surrounding kangaroos. They live in thatched houses, and lead simple pious lives. However, a shadow of rage has hit the villagers. A stranger, Haymake, has been accused of swindling them to trade in useless trinkets, and mobs gather in the thoroughfare. O'Shanty will access the Mansion's expansive basement at last, a network of wine cellars and empty storerooms that echo with what remaining sorrow the house has left.

NARRATIVE: The village mob grows in strength, openly threatening Haymake, who claims innocence. Such are their superstitious ways that they create a literal Kangaroo Court, dressing up the captured animals as judges to decide his doom, while he appeals to Xepe as his defence. O'Shanty is aware that the aged butler Raymond has been embezzling funds from the family that he and his forebears have long served, and will use his greed against him after Raymond urges a confrontation in the cellars, finally suspicious of O'Shanty's role in all the recent deaths.

MISSION: Xepe will stand in as Haymake's only advocate, attending the absurd 'trial' as best he can, while coming to his own conclusion if he is guilty or not. He uses his Tether to contact Icikalis, and enlist the help of Trispirekians Rufus Warren and Dr. Gotto in case his own life is in danger. Rufus arrives as a guard, and Gotto arrives bringing gifts of the future to convince the villagers they have the best intentions. O'Shanty will descend into the underground, to meet with Raymond, harboring a devilish plan: he will explain Raymond's thievery to Julia, and take her and Raoul down with him, after establishing a friendship with the troubled boy. Three birds with one stone, as O'Shanty plans to flood the cellars by breaking a rusty plumbing main. It will also kill him, but he is prepared to be reborn after surrendering the Accordion to Duria.

FACTORS IN GAMEPLAY: Xepe's mechanics include interacting with the crazed mob and using his best skills of debate. Working with Rufus and Gotto and the option to learn more of their stories will also be available. O'Shanty must find ways to bond with young Raoul, through 'Toy Bartering'. For breaking the water main, he will get the chance to run around Smashing Pipes with a Ruby Crowbar from the family treasury.

THE HOOK: Both characters, so close to achieving their goals, both suffer setbacks. No matter what the player does, Xepe is unable to save the town from killing Haymake, the futility of intervention. He escapes the timeline with his allies, but they are separated in the gears of The Chronovisor by another glitch - this one done on purpose, by an entity that they glimpse - Vyllez, a monstrous manifestation of Duria's intelligence. The malfunction sends them to Duria. O'Shanty also fails, managing to drown only Raymond in the cellars, while Julia and Raoul leave, now aware of his true nature, and welcome Marcus home after a long absence.

EPISODE FIVE: THE CYCLE IS COMPLETE

WORLD: Back in Duria, the color of the realm has changed from green and yellow bile to rusty excrement. Xepe awakens upon a platform branching off into seven rotating tunnels, each one designed after a Sin and their corresponding Virtue, and each leads to a different Final Encounter. The voices of Rufus and Gotto are heard calling, they could be anywhere. O'Shanty encounters something similar as the Mansion has transformed into a frozen and burning, flooded and barricaded prison, with seven possible locked rooms before him, that can only be opened by playing his Accordion, and thus 'spending' all four collected souls. Julia, Marcus, and Raoul are heard from behind each door.

NARRATIVE: The tunnels and the rooms each lead to a slightly different ending scene, which can result in a Final Boss, more kernels of lore, a happy, sad, or neutral ending. It all comes down to this simple decision, where only one path can be taken for each character, or a mix of both. Which Sin and which Virtue sum up this story? Secrets that can be found depending on which path chosen include: O'Shanty is a former Trispirekian, who decided to use his knowledge to serve Duria rather than hold it in check. Julia had her own husband lobotomized after discovering his affair in a different city, and has caused ruin to many of her business partners through sheer arrogance. Raoul is not their son, but a conduit created by Duria to contain the realm's wrath, and planted as their child. The otherwise stoic Xepe has great fear and obsessive-compulsions.

MISSION: Taking a certain path will decide whether Xepe rescues his allies, and whether he directly faces the ultimate antagonist: a monster spawned by Duria known as Vyllez, who has been communing with O'Shanty from the start to counter Icikalis. O'Shanty's chosen path will decide whether he consumes all three souls of the family, and if he will be reborn as part of Duria, or vanish into its oblivion.

FACTORS IN GAMEPLAY: Consists of exploration for both characters, watching events play out, and solving a few last Platforming Puzzles to cross the tunnels/rooms. However, if Xepe takes the paths of Wrath, Envy, or Pride, he will be forced to fight Vyllez in combat. The Boss Fight will consist of dodging his Winged Attacks, and his weapons of Battle-Axe and Cudgel, while using the tools that Rufus gave him to Stun and Damage the creature's weak points.

THE HOOK: No matter which path has been taken, and whether Vyllez is defeated or not, Xepe is returned to Icikalis, where he paralyzes himself using hypodermic needles, in order to avoid being tasked with using The Chronovisor ever again, and is relegated to a steampunk wheelchair. He vows to continue studying the events of the past and future. O'Shanty's fate is left mostly unknown, but he is implied to be forced into an eternity of servitude to Duria, as it prepares for its inevitable next invasion, however long that may take.

Replayability & Closing

With its dynamic episode structure and diverse set of gameplay mechanics, *The Secrets of The Chronovisor* would offer many chances to replay in order to discover new details in the environment, find a new ending out of the 14 possible scenes, and complete a Ranked Challenge Run to finish the game as quickly as possible. There is a fixed Difficulty Setting, so some set pieces will not be easy to complete on a first try. The game's lure to keep coming back pertains to its visual design, dense lore, character mystery, and subversions of tropes. On first release, the Episodes may be released one by one, building anticipation and a loyal player base.

THANK YOU!