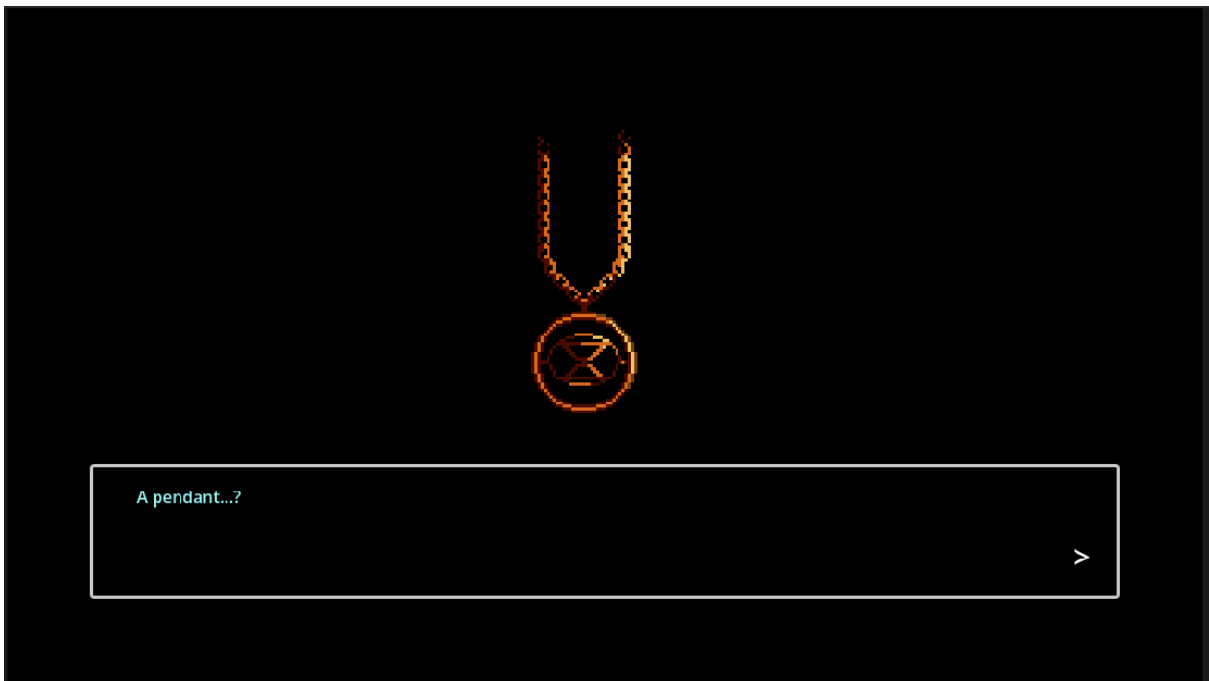
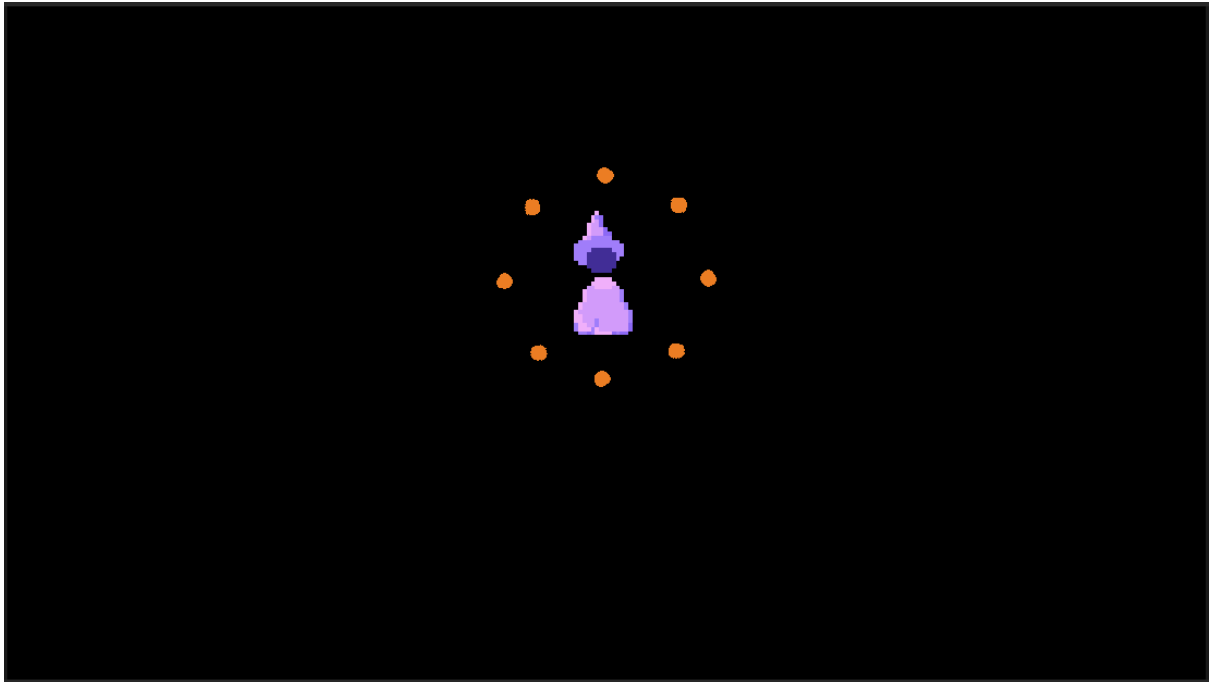


# REMNANTS OF TIME

## Chapter 6: Final release and conclusion

### State of the Game

The game starts with an animated cutscene that introduces the player to the story context and the incentives to progress.



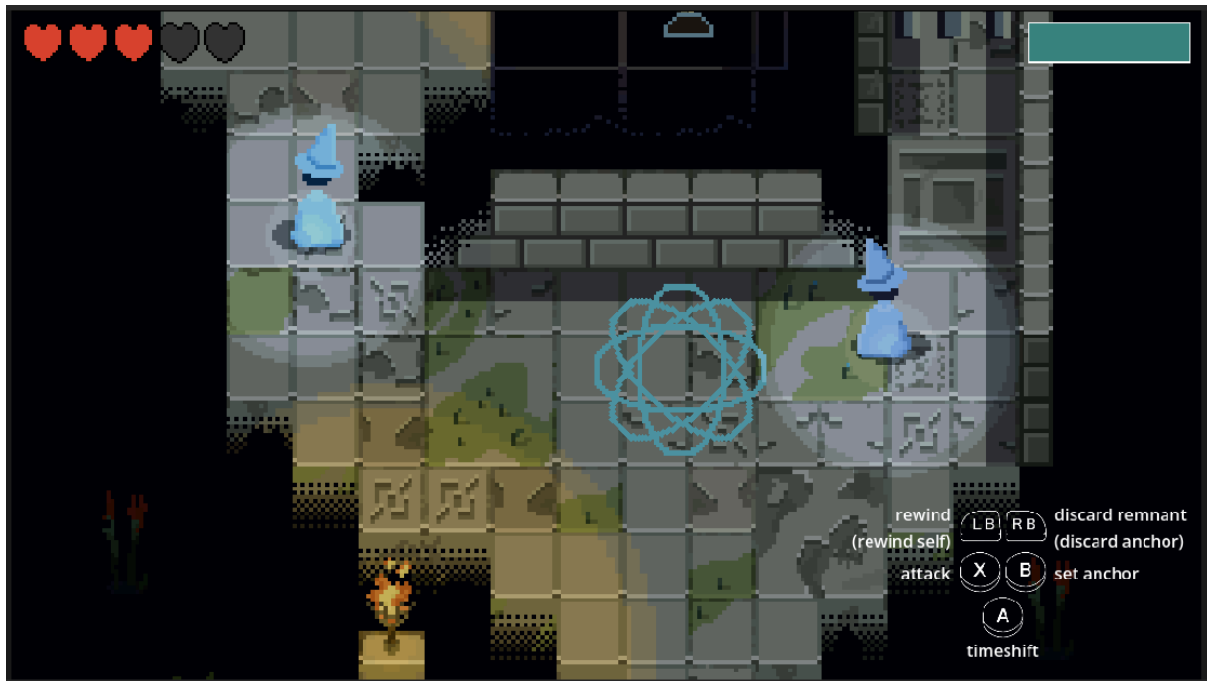
Following the cutscene the player is free to interact with the environment which is made of 2D tiles with pixel art sprites that are all hand drawn. The dungeon is intentionally not a generic cave. It is full of cracked stone tiles that give the impression of it being something artificial that is now in ruin. The dark background with vegetation display a deep pool of water where you can't see the bottom which together with corrupted transparent tiles give an ethereal feeling and a sense of unease to the player.



The first ability that the player can use is “timeshift”. The player travels to a past version of the room they are in, this is also denoted by using tiles with less wear and a light sepia filter to the whole screen. On the top right of the screen an indicator of how much time you can be in the past is also displayed.



The second ability also gives name to the whole game, the “Remnants”. By setting a temporal anchor the player can rewind to that point in time when they wish, within a time limit. Doing so creates a copy of themselves that repeats the same actions they did. This allows the player to perform more actions at the same time in different places, and that’s how most of the puzzles that involve it are solved.



The player uses the abilities to explore the dungeon they are in and solve puzzle rooms. Stealth is always an option to deal with enemies, such as in the “maze”.



After all the puzzles have been completed and all mechanics learned, the player faces the wizard that previously kidnapped him. The wizard fight uses all the mechanics present in the game and in addition throws the player's abilities back against them. Once the first phase is over, the evil wizard, much like the player does, rewinds time and creates a remnant that the player needs to deal with. After both phases the boss is defeated and the game ends on a victory screen.

## Changes after the playtesting

In the playtesting sessions we found that players didn't intuitively understand some things. They didn't notice that levers were levers, they did not understand the AI of the boss, they did not use all the mechanics. Most of our changes after the playtesting milestone worked on improving the invisible communication to the player.

The visual difference between the past and present was too small, so we added multiple things. First of all a sepia filter, giving an old colouring. After that we also made the tiles in the past look clean and spread overgrown tiles in the present. Furthermore we made the levers more eye-catching. We positioned and angled them in a way that they didn't align with

the grid of the tiles, standing out from the floor. Extra sound effects were added to e.g. communicate to the player that the boss is stunned.

Instead of throwing them right into the action again, we added tutorial rooms, where players can get to know mechanics in a low risk environment. We also added dialog / cutscenes to places where playtesters were left confused before. These helped a lot to smooth out the difficulty spike and frustration we have witnessed in playtests before. A separate playtesting session a few days before the demo day proved that now the anchored remnant, the enemies and the boss traps were significantly better understood, keeping up the game flow way better.

The boss got changes regarding his readability. Before the changes the attacks were instant and when time shifting, the boss just appeared instantaneously, surprising players and feeling unfair. To counter this we added indications for where the time shift happens, as well as let the attacks have a little charge up time. Some more fixes and changes to the boss and enemy AI were also done.

Some more polishing changes were e.g. extra lighting; a point light on player keeping the focus and torches on some walls for ambient mood.

## Considerations

- What was the biggest technical difficulty during the project?

Surely coordination and scope management. Deciding to cut some features during the early stages almost didn't happen, but in retrospect not only was it the right decision, we should have done it sooner. In hindsight our initial scope was also too large so that is an area where we found difficulties.

- What was your impression of working with the theme?

Any theme around time travel, recursion and loops feels inappropriate for a game project. Those are at the same time too specific and not specific enough, those are fundamental 1 word mechanics, not themes that you can workshop around. The limitations that they create are very well defined and mostly mechanical while leaving narrative justification and setting too foggy, often leading to running around the same few points for a long time in the early stages of the project. Given the option we would prefer for different keywords or themes.

- Do you think the theme enhanced your game, or would you have been happier with total freedom?

We don't think we would have been happier with total freedom, as that would unnecessarily add more things to figure out in the crucial first moments of the project. In the end the game was enhanced by the theme, even if it was difficult to work with.

- What would you do differently in your next game project?

Probably spend more time in preproduction to further narrow the idea. We had to cut some things during development, and that meant time wasted. Maybe an approach in which we first put our time to a real vertical slice could work best.

- What was your greatest success during the project?

Our greatest success is definitely the cohesion that the player abilities have and the way they interact with the other game systems. While because of time we could not lay out many puzzles to make players express their full potential, we managed to make them work in a flexible way that we are very happy with.

- Are you happy with the final result of your project?

We are very happy with the final result. Compared to the previous semester we made much progress, and we could both feel it during development and see it in the final game. We managed to internalize lessons learned previously and the development cycle went much better for it.

- Do you consider the project a success?

For all the reasons above, yes we consider this project a great success. But we can nonetheless still see ways in which we could improve it.

- To what extent did you meet your project plan and milestones (not at all, partly, mostly, always)?

Thanks to good planning we managed to hit almost all the goals that we set at the beginning of the semester. What we did not achieve was either cut early when we saw it was out of scope or is something that was always considered a “nice to have” only on the occasion that we had extra time on our hands.

- What improvements would you suggest for the course organization?

We would suggest cutting the physical prototype or integrating it in the first milestone, it took a lot of time for little reward. In our case what we discovered from the prototype were things that would have surfaced even from building an actual prototype, but then we would have had some code already, saving on development time. In general the concept seems more suited to board games than video games.

## Conclusion

We are proud of what we were able to create. There are still things we want to polish and more content we want to add. We plan to continue updating the game on the itch page (<https://sishsash.itch.io/remnants-of-time>).