

# When the Stars Switch

## Description

**When the Stars Switch** is a 2D top-down Undertale-like game about [Bipolar Disorder](#).

The main goal of the game, which is *kind of* hidden from the player is to restore "balance" between the two states - mania and depression, showcased by two characters: [Lumen](#) and [Umbra](#).

The main character we get to play as is called [Astra](#), a young male astronomer, living in an vintage observatory.

He has a journal, which is one of the main gameplay elements, because some of the important stuff will be happening in it.

## The plot

### Prelude

[Astra](#), a young astronomer living next to a small village in an undisclosed location, notices that something is wrong.

Something is wrong with the sky, the stars shift places each night, not a little (like they do normally), but drastically.

## Act I - The Stable Sky

### Setting

This act's role is to ease the players into the game world, learning controls and building trust between them, only to slowly erode it in next chapters.

The main character feels isolated, aware that something is wrong but no one believes him.

Emotional tone is melancholic with a little feeling of anxiety,

### The Observatory

A circular, cozy tower filled with books, telescopes and unfinished constellation charts. The only place where [Astra](#) feels truly "safe".

Subtle hum can be heard in the background which gets more noticeable when the world is close to "switching", no dedicated music.

*Maybe something like a desk lamp that can shine with two colors, warm yellow and cold blue depending on the state of the world.*

### The Town

Pastel-colored houses under eternal twilight.

People have simple daily routines, restarting each night but with a little *different* dialogue.

Shops sell ordinary things that subtly switch descriptions - for example, "Sweet Bread" becomes "Bitter Bread", where the default is just "Bread".

Music is a gentle piano + ambient hum.

## The Fields

A quiet expanse leading to the hills, where [Astra](#) sketches constellations.

Each night, fireflies mimic stars, foreshadowing the theme: **fake light, real darkness**.

## Gameplay loop

1. Observe & Record - Each night, [Astra](#) goes to sketch constellations
2. Explore & Talk - By day, [Astra](#) visits the nearby town, interacts with people who subtly contradict his memories.
3. Reflect & Write - The player opens the journal, which tracks what they've seen, sometimes incorrectly.
4. Discover & Doubt - Each "day" ends with another inconsistency.

## Gameplay elements

- Journal - records information of what Astra has seen without the need for user interaction. At first, it's just a record. Later, it *responds*, comments appear that [Astra](#) didn't write, handwriting style changes - the journal slowly begins to refer to [Astra](#) in second person - **"You saw them move again last night, didn't you?"**. The journal is not haunted, it's a representation of thought loops and intrusive memory.
- Sketching the constellations - It might be a little tricky to implement, maybe a mini game of some kind, like arranging puzzles or connecting the dots. Each drawing becomes a **journal entry**. But over time, lines start to shift by themselves and some constellations appear *before* you draw them.
- Making small tasks for people living in the town - self explanatory.
- Memory drift - after each in-game "night", [Astra](#)'s memory changes slightly. When the player speaks to NPCs, the game sometimes alters dialogue that's already been read.

## Key events

### Scene I - First discrepancy

After the tutorial night, the town insists the stars have *always* been different.

[Astra](#) meets: **#to-do**

- [Mae](#), a friend who's patient but forgetful.
- [The Watchmaker](#), who maintains the town's clock — he's always fixing it, saying "time keeps slipping forward faster than it should."

The first sign of unreality: the clock tower strikes **fifteen** at noon.

[Astra](#) writes in the journal: The stars aren't the only ones out of sync...

## Scene II - Reflection

Astra passes a lake at sunset.

The reflection shows a **different sky** than the real one. #to-do

When the player looks away and back, the stars in the sky match the reflection instead.

The journal sketch of that constellation *auto-fills itself*.

That night, [Astra](#) dreams about two skies: one golden, one black, representing [Lumen](#) and [Umbra](#), foreshadowing what is next to come.

## Scene III - The Observatory Night

Astra tries to stay awake to "catch" the stars moving.

The player manually advances time by pacing and using the telescope.

When the clock hits 3:33 AM:

- The stars start to move and pulse.
- Behind [Astra](#) a opaque figure appears - [Lumen](#).
- In the background the player can hear faint laughter layered with reversed whispers.
- The game prompts: Would you like to remember this?
  - Yes - the screen flashes, and the world becomes *unstable* #to-do
  - No - Astra blacks out, waking up in an unfamiliar version of the town - first Switch.

### Choosing the Yes option

By this point, the player has spent the whole act trying to prove that the stars are changing. They finally see it happen. The world asks if they want to "remember."

The question feels harmless - a validation of their effort - but it's actually a **trap of awareness**.

The moment they *choose to remember*, they violate the rules of their world.

They've seen something that *can't coexist*, so now the entire reality starts to fall apart around them.

### What happens in-world?

- Immediate visual effect
  - The screen overexposes to white for a full second, then drops into a slow flicker of alternating gold and black frames.
  - The hum that's been quietly present since the beginning surges into the foreground, modulating between two pitches.
  - Pieces of the UI (the journal icon, clock, interact prompts) flicker in and out - as if the system is failing.
- Environmental shift

- The observatory bends slightly: shelves stretch, floorboards ripple like reflections.
- The telescope's lens shows two overlapping skies instead of one.
- Stars on the horizon move independently, some rising while others fall - impossible orbital motions happen.
- Outside, lightning flashes with no thunder.
- Time on the clock jumps forward and back.
- Narrative effect
  - The act of remembering *creates the next phase*. The universe reacts violently to the contradiction - "You shouldn't remember both skies."
  - For a short playable sequence (30–60 s), Astra can move through the distorted observatory as text fragments appear around him: "You saw it move", "No one ever remembers", "The sky must stay blind".

After the short playable sequence ends, just before the screen cuts black, two faint silhouettes appear - Lumen and Umbra - facing opposite directions.

*They say something* #to-do

That single action of *remembering the impossible*, even if contradictory, allows to unlock the **True Ending**. It also introduces a recurring theme in the game: "**knowledge carries a cost**".

The goal is to player to think: "*I did the right thing, but something broke when I did*".

That tension - wanting truth but fearing what it does to you - is the emotional spine of the next act.

## Act II - The False Sky

### Setting

*The world looks almost the same, but it isn't.*

- Town layout subtly changes
  - Color palette shifts to gold and pink
- The music becomes upbeat, but the longer you stay the more de-tuned it becomes.
- People remember events slightly differently
  - They start to repeat themselves
  - They sometimes contradict player's memories, making them doubt their own memory
- Journal entries become automatic - loss of mental control
  - Drawing constellations (the puzzle mini-game) externalize the attempts to regain some control over chaos
- Nights are brighter, maybe too bright - reference to mania
- As a **Easter egg**, there could be hidden medication bottles scattered in The Observatory

## Emotional tone

Elation with an edge of panic.

Colors glow, music is faster, people adore Astra.

It's the high that comes before the crash — the manic world that insists everything is wonderful.

## Key events

### Scene I - First morning

Astra wakes in the same observatory, but it's filled with sunlight.

Dust motes drift like stars; every sound is sharper.

The journal is open on its own. New handwriting covers the pages - neat, confident, not [Astra](#)'s.

Everything is better now.

It has to be.

When the player looks outside, the town sparkles; even the air shimmers.

Everyone waves. The world loves him.

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### Scene II - Meeting Lumen

The day starts with a new journal entry appearing automatically.

Everything is better now.

It has to be.

Right?

[Astra](#) then meets [Lumen](#), a charismatic figure who encourages him to "embrace the brighter side".

He speaks quickly, always a little *too* close.

You did it! The stars follow your hands now.

Don't stop. The world moves when you move.

But the longer [Astra](#) stays embracing the manic state, the more control they lose - conversations start to repeat without any new branches, laughter becomes distorted etc.

He invites Astra to the **Festival of Dawn**, a new event that the town "always" celebrates but was never mentioned before.

Accepting begins a set of increasingly frantic "tasks".

- Re-drawing constellations to "keep the sky alive".
- Giving motivational speeches to the townspeople.
- Painting on the walls to "make things brighter".

- etc.

**More coming soon!**