

Prisma

STORY DESIGN

HIGH CONCEPT

Prisma is a narrative based action game set in space. The game revolves around Prisma, a spaceship at the centre of a galactic dispute, and her crew.

The use of Travel Sequences and Actions Sections gives the player the opportunity to both influence and immerse himself in the game's universe and to play frantic and action driven space battles.

It features a low-poly art style and is characterized by a strong narrative component with profound characters and a compelling story.

The game, with a duration of 2 to 4 hours, is going to be sold on digital platforms for the price of £5.

GAMEPLAY

Prisma features both a strong narrative and moments of intense action. The way they are going to shine during gameplay is through the use of Travel Sequences and Action Sections.

In the Travel Sequences, the player impersonates the ship's commander, Captain Lugos. His role as the captain is to manage the inventory and to take care of the crew. The player does it through multiple choice dialogues with the various characters that inhabit the game.

Every decision Lugos makes will affect the game world, whether it's about refilling the ship's fuel tanks to take longer routes or to load medicines for the wounded crewmen.

In the Action Sections the player assumes the role of Doctor Keor Veng, a scientist on-board of Prisma. His special ability is to control a shield made of energy which can be moved around the ship to protect her. This parts of the game resemble a vertical shooter boss fight, with the shield moving at the bottom of the screen and massive enemy ships coming in from the top and shooting at Prisma.

Depending on the choices made during the Travel Sequences, the player might be aided by additional power ups or suffer from negative effects.

NARRATIVE MECHANICS

Prisma's story will be told using different expedients. An opening narration will introduce the story, cut scenes and dialogues will illustrate the past and current events, and lastly the player will be able to unlock Travel Logs recorded by Keor Veng.

Opening Narration

The purpose of the opening narration is to introduce the player to the game's universe and to illustrate him the context the characters will act in. It will feature a sequence of scenes accompanied by an external narrator telling the events leading to Prisma's voyage. The intro will not focus in detail on the characters, but rather on the times and the geopolitical landscape they live in.

Dialogue during the Travel Sequences

It will be used to narrate the story of the game and to show the personalities of the characters.

Dialogue during the Action Sections

This dialogue will mostly consist of brief exchanges between Keor and the Captain, and will be used to give the player some feedback about the battle.

Cut Scenes

The cut scenes will be brief slides between missions with some dialogue between the characters. They will feature captions and will be used to explain major plot points.

Travel Logs

Travel Logs are audio diaries recorded by Keor Veng which give a more detailed overview of both his personality and the attitude of the crew members. Each Travel Log is unlocked after a determined number of battles. Depending on the player's behaviour during the Action Sections, the content of the Travel Logs will be different. If the player sustained limited damage during a fight, the crew morale will be high and Keor's diaries will have a lighter tone. If the player received high amounts of damage, the crew will be mournful because of the death of their friends and Keor's guilty feelings will show in the diary.

NARRATIVE OVERVIEW

Setting

Prisma is set in a distant future where humanity has colonized the entire galaxy. The Central Union of Planets (CUP) is a government who rules the entirety of the galaxy, from the central planets to the colonies in the outer rim. The planets of the outskirts have limited resources and can't grow a proper ecosystem as they lack ozone shields.

The CUP, to solve this problem, has heavily invested in the research of a new form of energy, called Esper, which is supposed to be the solution to all of their problems. The outer colonies, initially appeased by the project, have been recently criticizing the lack of concrete results in defiance of the increased taxations: this has led to the foundation of the Outskirts Coalition (OC), a new form of government who opposes the rulings of the CUP.

It's in this climate of tension that the story of Prisma takes place.

Main Characters

Doctor Keor Veng, the scientist, is a civilian who moved to the outskirts to study the Esper energy and its possible applications. He spent the past few years in research labs working on an Esper shield suited for space crafts. He is a 34-year-old researcher who lives for knowledge and always tried to steer away from conflict.

Captain Lugos is the commander of Prisma. He is a 41-year-old officer of the Central Union Navy and his mission is to transfer all of the scientists and the Esper from the research labs back to the central planets. He was born in the colonies and moved to the central planets when he was 18 to join the Naval Academy.

Governor Tenme Okas is one of the leaders of the Outskirts Coalition and his objective is to stop Prisma and retrieve all that it carries. He is a 49-year-old who spent his life fighting for the rights of the planets situated in the outer rim. He helped the CUP develop the Esper program back when he was Ministry of Research.

Plot

Amid increasing tensions between the CUP and the OC, Captain Lugos is appointed commander of the ship Prisma and is tasked with the destruction of the research labs situated in the colonies and the retrieval of all the assets produced.

Despite being chased by the Governor Tenme Okas' fleet, who wants to safeguard the Esper technology as he fears the CUP might use it as a weapon, the Captain manages to complete his mission and has now to travel back to base. Aiding him in his journey is Doctor Keor Veng, a scientist who created an Esper shield capable of deflecting asteroids and space debris. Thanks to Keor's help, the Captain manages to repel most of the Governor's attacks.

Different Endings

Neutral ending: the player made choices which don't favour any character or side in particular.

A last, coordinated effort by the Governor's fleet manages to cut through Prisma's defences and inflicts significant damage to the engines, leaving the ship adrift in an asteroid field. Keor supercharges the shield to create a bubble around Prisma, saving the crew but destroying the shield in the process and consuming all of the Esper available. Past the asteroid field, the ship is rescued by the CUP's fleet. In the light of recent events, a civil war breaks out between the CUP and the OC.

Captain Lugos ending: the player made choices which favour the captain's determination to complete the mission.

The Governor manages to organize a sneak attack near an asteroid field, but a CUP fleet has been hiding nearby and now has the chance to decimate the enemy fleet. While friendlies cover his retreat and fight the Governor's forces, Lugos travels back to the central planets and hands back the Esper technology.

The CUP tasks the Captain with commanding the assault on the planets in the outer colonies. Despite his effort in defending Prisma, Keor is considered an untrustworthy individual and is forced to keep working on Esper in the central planets' laboratories.

Keor ending: the player made choices which favour Keor's placating attitude.

Under the threat of a last, massive attack, the Captain decides to surrender the Esper energy to the Governor to save his ship and crew. As part of the deal, most of the scientists are forced to remain in the outer colonies to keep working on Esper.

Captain Lugos, who is accused of failing the mission on purpose because of his past life in the colonies, is found guilty of treason and punished with life imprisonment. The CUP, fearing a growth in power of the outer colonies, wages war against them. A war made even by the fact that now the Governor, despite numerical disadvantage, has control of the Esper technology.

Travel Log

This Travel Log is unlocked after sustaining considerable damage in battle.

Doctor Keor Veng//Day 8

“Hey. Guess what? My day was shit, like all the others. It’s day 8 since I got on this ship. Yesterday was another rough one, the attack was violent and you know, it’s up to me to protect these people here..and when I fail it’s all my fault after all, right? And I couldn’t save them all, I try, but I can’t. So yesterday we lost another 19 lives because of me.

I wish I never had to step foot in here. I never wanted any of this but here I am, defending people I never asked to save in the first place. I can feel them judging me for not being good enough. They pretend it’s ok, they say there are always casualties in a battle and without me using the shield everyone on board would be dead by now.

I can feel it though, when they talk to me, there is more anger than gratitude; the sense of helplessness of relying on someone who isn’t part of the crew, who doesn’t know what he’s doing...and they’ll keep dying and there is nothing they can do about it. Nothing I can do about it. And it’s all my fault.

Cut Scenes

This cut scene plays at the end of the game if the player’s choices lead him the Lugos Ending

[Officer Ittio storms in the control room, stops at the door and shouts at the captain]

Ittio: “Captain, drones report enemy forces coming fast from sector Indigo!”

[Captain Lugos, startled, turns at the Officer and nods before shouting orders at the rest of the crew]

Lugos: “Action Stations! Engines at maximum thrust towards the asteroid field. Call the scientist, get him ready to use his shield.”

[Officer Ittio scrambles to call Keor on the interphone, in the meanwhile the Governor appears on the screens of the control room]

Tenme: Rushing somewhere, Lugos? I thought you would enjoy spending more time at home.

[The Captain looks at the Governor in the screen, lowers his head and speaks in a calm manner]

Lugos: This is not my home, Tenme. I don’t want to outstay my welcome. I feel like you didn’t come here to hold the door open for us.

[Tenme Okas bursts out laughing before talking]

Tenme: Ah, Lugos, I was hoping for the contrary! Why don't you hand me all the Esper and the...

[Keor rushes in the room, still panting from running to his room to the control room]

Tenme: There he is! Talk about the devil. I want the Esper and all the scientists. It's kind of useless without the people who know how to use it, don't you find?

[Keor, a bit shocked, catches his breath before speaking]

Keor: Wait, wait, wait, what's going on? Governor, I'm sure we can find another solution to the prob—

[The Captain interrupts Keor by slamming his fist on the armchair before regaining his composure]

Lugos: Doctor, shut up. I've heard too much from you already. Your dear Governor is KINDLY asking if—

[The Governor interrupts the Captain, and speaks with a fake smile on his face]

Tenme: I always try to avoid conflict, if possible...

[The Captain continues with an angry grin on his face]

Lugos: AS I WAS SAYING, Tenme was asking for the Esper and the scientists who worked on it. I'm afraid we have different plans for them.

Keor: We?

[The Captain stands up from his chair]

Lugos: What's the distance from the asteroid field?

Ittio: Less than twelve parsecs.

[The Captain pulls a transmitter out of his coat and speaks into it]

Lugos: Should be in range now I guess. This is Captain Lugos, Operation SELEX is a GO, I repeat, Operation SELEX is a GO.

[Both Officer Ittio and Keor are surprised by the words of the Captain]

Ittio: The Hell? We had someone waiting for us?!

[Dozens of warships storm out of the asteroid field and rush towards the Governor's fleet, which under fire is forced to retreat. The Governor is visibly shocked and starts ranting on the screen]

Tenme: LUGOS! This is not over. You think you won already? The war has only begun!

[The Captain, not even looking at the screen, with a smirk on his face and a low voice]

Lugos: Oh I count on that Governor, trust me, I do.

[Prisma, covered by allied forces, manages to escape through the asteroid field and travel back to her base in the Central Planets. After a night of rest, the Captain meets with the crew and scientists on the grass fields outside the hangar]

Lugos: Ah Doctor Keor, it's been...useful...having you on-board. I'll come visit you here sometimes when I'm done with my new assignment.

[Keor salutes the Captain but is also perplexed by his words]

Keor: Captain, I did what I could to keep us alive. But what do you mean when you say you'll come visit me here?

[Two guards come and handcuff Keor and the rest of the scientists who were rescued]

Keor: Captain what are your men doing?! Tell them to let me go, now!

[Lugos stands still while his men take the researchers away from the fields towards the research labs]

Lugos: Ah Doctor, you really thought you would be a free man? We never knew if we could trust you, after all the years you spent in the outer colonies. It's one of the reasons I had to hide from everyone the fact that a rescue fleet was waiting for us. Your knowledge of this technology is too big to let you walk away from here. You are going to spend quite some time working on Esper, whether you like it or not. And work hard too, I'm going back in the outer colonies to lead the First Assault Wave and Esper might make this war shorter. Much, much shorter.

Dialogue during Action Sections

This dialogue would place during a space battle where Keor is controlling the shield and Lugos talks to him.

[At the start of the mission]

Lugos: Ok Doctor, all systems are powered up and ready to go! Launching the shield in 3, 2, 1. Launching!

Keor: Esper shield is under control and responding to commands.

[After spotting the enemy ship]

Lugos: This one is a Mango class Saab destroyer, Doc! Watch out for slow rate of fire but deadly projectiles!

Keor: Roger that Captain, I'll try my best.

[If Prisma gets hit by a few bullets in sequence]

Lugos: Doctor the shields are about to collapse! Do something!

[If the player manages to land some good shots on the enemy ship]

Lugos: Good shots, Keor. Their systems are receiving critical damage. Keep it up!

Keor: Yes, Captain!

[If the enemy drops a power-up]

Lugos: Power up, grab it!

[If the enemy ship is destroyed]

Keor: WHOO Captain, I did it!

Lugos: Good job Doctor Veng, you can move the shield back to the hangar. Officer Ittio, send a scout to retrieve anything useful we can pick up from the debris.

Dialogue during Travel Sequences

In this Travel Sequence Prisma is approaching a sector where a neutral mercenary base is situated. It's up to the Captain to decide whether to stop to refuel, load medicines for the wounded or keep moving.

Officer Ittio: Captain, we are approaching a mercenary base where we could quickly refuel before resuming our voyage. We are at half capacity and can travel for a few days only.

Keor Veng: We have enough fuel! Let's use our time to load medicines for the crew. Some of them are wounded and might die soon. The civilians are sick as well, we are not used to living in this condition!

Officer Ittio: That would take longer and the ship's sick bay should be able to handle our crew. Captain what do we do?

[The three sentences are presented on the screen, and the player has to click on the one he wants to choose]

Option 1(counts 1 point towards the Neutral Ending; the player spends 2 hours docked and obtains 10 fuel units, which allow him to take an alternative route): Officer, let's land and refuel. I'm sure we will have other ways of obtaining medicines.

Option 2(counts 1 point towards the Keor Ending; the player spends 5 hours docked and obtains 5 HP units): Let's take care of our man as Doctor Veng says, we can't ignore the needs of the crew. We are still ahead of schedule.

Option 3(counts 1 point towards the Lugos Ending; the player doesn't lose any time docking): Negative. Ittio, Keor, we have a schedule to follow and time is not on our side. The fuel is enough and the crew's job is to complete the mission, not to survive.

Commentary

Inspiration

Prisma has been inspired by the countless hours spent enjoying games, movies and books set in space. The most important are probably the books of Isaac Asimov and the ones written for the Halo Universe. Tom Clancy and his books about international military espionage fueled my interest in complicated stories which all come together and make sense towards the end.

Games like 1942, Pong, Steredenn and The Banner Saga inspired me when thinking of gameplay mechanics.

Goals

The goal when working on Prisma was to create a simple, yet interesting story which could be expanded in the future. The characters of the game are only a small part of a much bigger universe which doesn't necessarily depend on the hero's success or failure. I think focusing on the crew of a small ship which has an important role in the conflict has helped in keeping things balanced.

The other major goal was to create characters which weren't either positive or negative, but whose personalities could evolve depending on the player's choice. An example is Lugos, which can either become a sympathetic leader or a cold-hearted commander whose only interest is the mission.