

Sky Dragon STORY

Foreword

Sky Dragon Story has been part of my life for a full nine years, with perhaps half my weekends in a given month going to some aspect of development: coding, art, musical composition & transcription, script writing & data formatting, testing, documenting, the list goes on. Some weekends, it would be a comfortable 4-6 hours Saturday afternoon, others I'd get an idea in my head and go from 2pm until midnight, breaking only for food, and still need to tie up loose ends Sunday or even Monday.

I thought I felt accomplished when I took the first playable demo of Chapter 1 with me on a \$300 potato of a laptop to get feedback in the casual rooms of AGDQ 2014. It's now 2022, and "done" barely feels like a believable concept. But here I am. Except for some final test/bugfix revisions and perhaps a standalone bundled package, the game is what it is, and the sheer volume of content I've produced solo is mildly terrifying to look back on.

And yet I always knew the very format of this game would be incompatible with serious monetization. It's web. The game is the source, and I used no compilation/obfuscation tooling. But I myself might not have gotten into programming were it not for e.g. QBasic GORILLAS.BAS, Mario3 Improvement, and other open-source and community projects with very low barriers of entry to just crack open and begin editing, experimenting, and seeing immediate results. So by all means, enjoy this game as a game, free. And if you like, enjoy it as an engine, free. My time with SDS is coming to an end, but yours is just beginning. Have fun!

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A Serious Note.

While lighthearted in initial presentation, Sky Dragon Story is ultimately not a light game. Themes of depression and suicide arise by Chapters 4 and 5. I wish I could let that be a surprise; allow you, the player, to find out on your own that things are not as they first appear. But mental health is not a joke, and it would be a very unkind surprise for someone who does not need more examples of negative thinking and negative responses in their own head.

It's ok to not be ok. If you need help, get help. Ask for help. You are not a burden, especially to a trained and qualified professional (which your immediate social circle may not be, hence the need to reach out).

I am not a trained professional, just an independent game developer, with only the experience of my own head. I was as surprised as anyone at how hard the story turned part way through. Nothing in the game is intended to be representative, or prescriptive, of any individual's specific situation; please do not use it in lieu of professional help, or as an authoritative illustration of the experience of others who might need help.

Long, long ago...

A void, containing nothing but space. A Goddess, alone, comprised of nothing but the potential to create. And so, the Goddess created. The Goddess created the world- sea, land, and sky. The Goddess created light, and warmth. The Goddess created every living being, including intelligent peoples suited to the sea, land, and sky. And, proud of her work, the Goddess created her own form to mirror her most favored children. Seeing her shimmering serpent's tail, flowing silver hair, and luminescent wings, the people dubbed their Goddess the Sky Dragon, placing all their faith and hopes upon her.

And yet, with their faith and hopes came fears and concerns. Where the light she made was not enough, her people experienced darkness. Where the warmth was not enough, they experienced cold. Where their own life force was not enough, they experienced death. The Goddess was pained, and out of her pain, she created a servant, Malfose. To Malfose would be entrusted the dark and the cold; the endings; the destruction and decay of the world and its souls into the primal energies with which the Goddess could replenish it.

And so balance was to be maintained...

Less long ago...

A great, creaking crash of rent and wrenched metal as the Gargoyle tore its nigh-indestructible stone claws through the hull of the Nautilus, the last hope of the three peoples.

Malfosse, long discontent with his role, had finally rebelled, and fashioned a “living” creature by carving out a piece of the Goddess’ very world-body and imbuing it with the most anguished and resentful souls in his collection. While the Nautilus’ artillery had shattered the creature’s wings, it directed its fall onto the mighty vessel, carrying it to the floor of the atoll in which it moored.

Yet in this same atoll, hailing from the very village it sheltered, *her*. A red-tailed Hero wielding a trident so potent with absorbed magic that, scale by scale, fleck by fleck, she successfully chipped away at the enraged beast.

On the surface, however, worried survivors gathered. Magically ensouled as it was, even the destruction of the Gargoyle’s body might not “kill” it. There was no alternative. The greatest sorcerers of the sky prepared a spell to blanket the bay. A spell derived from Malfosse’s own power. A spell to sever the soul of anything, and anyone, in its radius, Gargoyle and Hero alike...

Quite recently...

A girl stirs in a plush, clamshell bed. She awakens, but her mind is still... numb? A scramble of half-finished thoughts and recollections that her deadened consciousness can scarcely find purchase in. She has been told several times now that she was drawn from the rubble of a landslide out in the nearby bay, and that her memory ought to return with rest, or perhaps active stimulation. And yet, she reflects, her injuries are suspiciously light, with no evidence of head trauma, and everything she has learned since first awakening in the village is as fresh and clear as it ought to be.

No name, no past, no clues or possessions, all the girl knows for certain is that she is scarcely deserving of the kindness the villagers have shown so far. As soon as she is well, she *must* find some purpose, some deed, by which to repay them. And... she must seek the Goddess? Surely, the Goddess will... have something she needs?



Controls

Sky Dragon Story is built around a model of a classic 2-button digital gamepad.



No universally reliable gamepad API existed for most of its development, however, so instead controls are mapped to keyboard inputs typical of the genre. Any of various third-party tools may be used to assign these keys to a gamepad if desired.

Directional Buttons

Arrow Keys
WASD

Move, push
Select dialog
Aim kicked objects*
Down+A on land:
standing kick*
Up+A in air: extra
jump*

X Button

X key
. key

Investigate
Talk
Confirm choice
Enter doors
Grab/hold
objects*

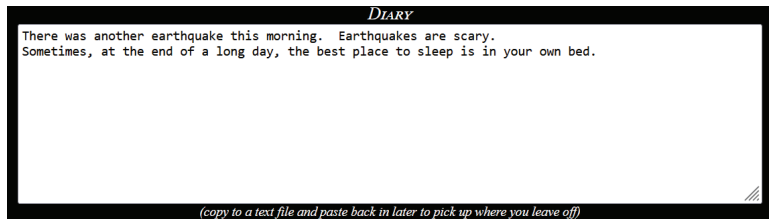
Z Button

Z key
, key

Confirm choice
Speed up text
Kick (in water or
midair*)
Jump* (on land)
Kick held object*

**Some actions require a particular item*

The Diary



It's not just the game that's a story. Your "save file" is one as well. Yes, that text box beneath the main game screen really is the authoritative record of your progress. Save in-game at a diary pedestal to see your latest progress. If you wish to continue, paste that same text back into the Diary box before hitting a button on the title screen.

For best results, save your progress in a very simple text editor, like Notepad on Windows or TextEdit on Mac. If the editor replaces e.g. straight quotes with curly quotes, or periods with ellipses, it will "break" the save data.



Other Keys

F: Enlarge the game canvas so it fits the size of your entire display. Use after you have set your browser's fullscreen option.
(backtick): Toggle a set of early-experimental on-screen button controls. Not recommended, but if all you have is a touchscreen...

Gameplay



Press X or Z on the title screen to begin your game.

If there is accurate text in the Diary, the game will continue from that point, otherwise a new game begins.

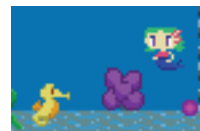
From now on, it's continuous play. Examine your surroundings, interact with characters, investigate objects, or simply explore to determine what your next objective should be. You begin the story underwater, and can swim freely in any direction. If you reach the water's surface, however, you may find progress far more difficult if you haven't sufficiently expanded your abilities!



When interacting with other characters or some objects, you will see one or more text dialog boxes. It is **STRONGLY** recommended that you read any text at least once, as the game contains very few other indicators of your objective, purpose, or abilities.

If the text box concludes with one or more words/phrases in **«brackets»**, this is a decision point! Use the arrow buttons to select which word or phrase you find most appropriate and press Z or X to confirm. Not every choice influences how the game progresses, but any choice might! Your treatment of certain characters **WILL** determine how the game ends!

** Choices may be arranged horizontally OR vertically!*



Not all people and creatures you encounter will be friendly, but combat is **NOT** the focus of the game! Try to use the environment to your advantage. When

needed, you do have the ability to pacify certain hostile creatures with a projectile pressure wave, but if you don't also disrupt (or absorb?) the power that was corrupting them, they will become hostile again!

Helpful Items

Refills

Dropped randomly by destroyed creatures, and occasionally found in the environment. Collect to immediately restore your Hit Points (HP) to better survive contact with dangerous objects and entities.



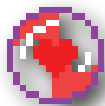
Regain 1HP



Regain 5HP

Expansions

When you're lucky enough to acquire one of these, your power will be permanently increased.



Max HP Increase

What are these, anyway?



Max Chi Increase

Said to be a tear of the Goddess

In-Game Meter



HP count: current/max

Chi bar: consumed by some actions

Treasures

Relics of the Goddess, entrusted to keepers across the island. Acquire them to unlock latent abilities (which consume chi).



Bracelets of the Dragon's Claw

Closer to bracers than bracelets, this solid armwear allows one to grab and carry large objects like rocks, tree branches, and fruit.



Collar of the Dragon's Breath

This handy choker allows the wearer to breathe underwater. Those already so-gifted might also find the land more hospitable.



Belt of the Dragon's Heart

This chain-link belt grants a blessing of raw strength and stamina. Jump a little higher, kick a little harder!



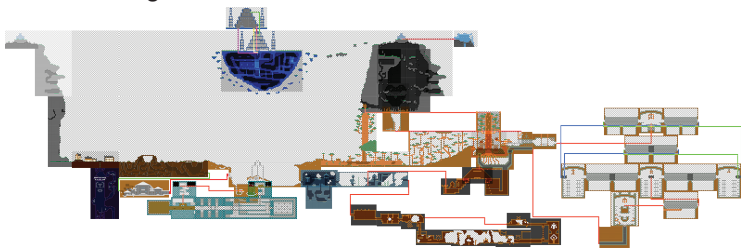
Circlet of the Dragon's Wing

So-annointed by this fine headpiece, one can leap in midair as if on solid ground! Does not protect from hitting one's head on ceilings.

Each Treasure also has an additional, undocumented power...

World

Viewed at a certain extreme distance from an entirely nonexistent perspective, the world of the Goddess Sky Dragon might look something like this:



But that hardly gives one a sense of the geography.

Viewed from directly above, the game nominally takes place on and around a small, crescent-shaped island. Go far enough one direction, and you'll end up back at the other, although certain routes may meander a bit in and out of the strict ring.



Regardless, expect to traverse water, beaches, a forest, a mountain, various caves and several ruins during your journey.



Characters

What would be the fun if every character you were to meet was listed up front? But here are a few to get you started:

????



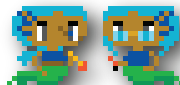
The hero. What she lacks in memory and identity she makes up for with a double dose of wants-to-help-others.

Rinda



Elderly keeper of the sea village shrine. Knows a great deal of history, and also how to handle unruly altars and other statuary.

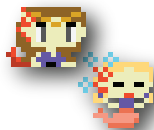
Charis & Lela



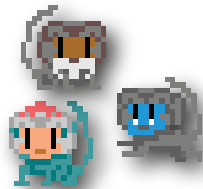
Scholarly sisters. Charis is a retired adventurer turned artist, and willingly gives tips on exploration. Lela prefers to study books, which can prove just as insightful. Be sure to check in with both as your adventure progresses!



Melody & Grace



Melody's responsibilities include a sunken shrine in which ghosts have taken up residence, and a daughter who wants to play with them.



The Monkeys

Individually they may be somewhat one-dimensional, but a whole diverse troupe of these energetic primates have built a home just outside the shrine in their forest.



The Inkeepers

The town of the landchildren hasn't been the same since the emergence of the gargoyle, but this stalwart duo maintain a tavern there all the same. Stop by if you ever need to talk over troubles or make a meal.



The Troublemaker

A powerful sorceress among the skychildren. What is her relationship to the hero, and why is she so intent on making a mess of things?

Cats



Everyone knows it's lucky when a black cat crosses your path.
Not everyone remembers why...

Tips

- Character dialog changes over time. Specific characters exist primarily to give advice! If you're stuck, be sure to ask around.
- Death is a place you go when you die. Things happen in places.
- No, really, the way you treat people matters. The way you treat yourself matters.
- Numbers don't matter; in the end, it's "all" or "nothing." To put it another way, for narrative reasons, ending the game with 4 max HP, with 12 max HP (but not any 12...), and/or having collected 10 droplets might be more satisfying to some players.
- "SPEEDRUN" (without quotes) is valid starting Diary text.
- "SPEEDRUN EXTREME" is valid starting Diary text.
- Both of these change how the game plays in a few significant ways not recommended for casual players.
- On that note, the only "true" RNG in the game is enemy drop chance and "the droplet puzzle." The rest is timing & input-driven. A future version may hardcode RNG values.

Supplemental Life Skills Section:

Train timetables!

Trains are not difficult. They go where they go, you just need to be on the right one to get where YOU want to go.

It is, however, a common misconception that anyone you encounter on a rail platform will know every station in the rail system and be able to direct you to yours. Most riders, in fact, only know the stations on their own line between their usual arrival and departure points. But with this one weird trick, YOU can gain the superpower of knowing where to go without needing to ask ANYONE- not even your phone!

FIRST, know where you're going. Trains only go where the rails are laid, so if there's not a run of rails going your way, you're out of luck. If where you're going IS along a rail run, that rail run is typically called a LINE. In order to get to your station, you need to know your LINE. (As a bonus, while most passengers will not know all STATIONS, they WILL tend to know the LINE they ride, and maybe a few others.) Also, find the station you are AT and what line(s) IT is on. If the station you are AT is NOT on the same line as your destination, you will need to search a system map for a station at the intersection of your current and destination lines and be ready to TRANSFER off one train onto another.

The line!

from here →

Stations!

to here →

Runs!

SLSS Thought Line

	505	507	509	511
Station Square	12:00	12:30	1:00	2:00
Sunset Park	12:21	12:50	-	2:21
Phantom Forest	12:34	1:03	-	2:35
Underground City	12:45	1:14	1:36	2:46
Palm Brinks	12:55	-	1:46	2:56

Yes! *507 doesn't.* *off 507 onto 509*

505 work! *at U.C. does, tho*

Once you know the line you need to take from your current station to your same-line destination, look for a posted chart at the station. There really ought to be one. Be sure it is titled with the LINE you want to be on- some stations service multiple lines! One edge of the chart will be stations. Find where you are and where you want to be, and be ready to look at those entire ROWS. The perpendicular edge will be RUNS- IDs of actual physical trains that run along the rails between stations. At the intersection of a STATION and a RUN is the TIME that run will be at that station. NOT ALL RUNS STOP AT ALL STATIONS!

Find the first TIME in line with your current station that is still in the FUTURE. Then, follow that RUN to see if it has a TIME by your destination. If so, that RUN will get you there! If not, you may need to wait for a later RUN, or else get off the first RUN and onto the next at a STATION that services both.