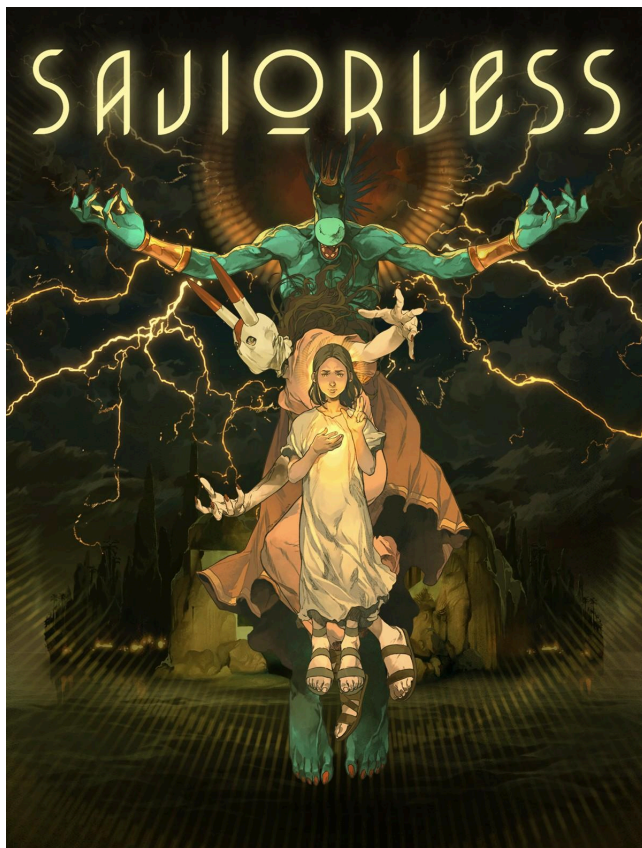


# Saviorless

May 10, 2024

## A Dark Fantasy Platformer Adventure

Saviorless is a captivating 2D platformer set in a dark fantasy world with hand-drawn artwork. Players control three protagonists with unique abilities: Antar, the curious child; Savior, the masked avatar; and Nento, the merciless hunter. Players explore treacherous landscapes, fight nightmarish monsters, and unravel a mysterious narrative, all while experiencing dynamic gameplay and an atmospheric soundtrack.



### The World of Saviorless

The game is set in a beautiful realm known as the Smiling Islands, a place shrouded in enigma and peril. The world of Saviorless is a showcase of hand-drawn art, with every frame meticulously crafted to create an atmospheric and visually striking environment. From the crumbling ruins of ancient civilizations to the twisted landscapes inhabited by nightmarish creatures, the game's world is a feast for the eyes, immersing players in a fascinating dark fantasy adventure.

## The Story

At the heart of Saviorless lies a captivating narrative that unfolds through the eyes of three distinct protagonists: Antar, a recklessly curious child determined to unravel the secrets of the Smiling Islands; Savior, Antar's fierce masked avatar tasked with battling the horrors that lurk within the realm; and Nento, a merciless hunter obsessed with control, whose ambitions may ultimately alter the course of the story.

### Antar's Journey

Players begin their adventure as Antar, a young and inquisitive child driven by an unwavering desire to become a Savior, a revered protector of the Smiling Islands. Antar's journey takes them through ancient ruins, treacherous landscapes, and puzzle-filled environments, where they must evade the dangers that threaten their path while uncovering the mysteries that lie ahead.

### The Savior Rises

As the story progresses, players transition into the role of the Savior, Antar's masked alter-ego. In this form, players engage in high-speed, unforgiving battles against bizarre enemies and formidable bosses that haunt the realm. Wielding powerful abilities and facing overwhelming odds, the Savior must overcome every obstacle that stands between them and their ultimate destiny.

### Nento's Obsession

The third protagonist, Nento, introduces a twisted dynamic to the narrative. A merciless hunter driven by an insatiable lust for control, Nento's actions and motivations may ultimately shape the course of events in unexpected ways. Players will witness the unraveling of Nento's obsession and the lengths to which they will go to become the unexpected protagonist of this dark tale, even if it means annihilating everything and everyone in their path, including their own followers.

### Gameplay Features

Saviorless offers a rich and immersive gameplay experience that combines platforming, puzzle-solving, and intense combat. Players will:

**Unravel a Mystery:** As they progress through the game, players will gradually uncover the secrets behind the Smiling Islands, revealing a narrative filled with unexpected twists and turns.

**Fight Nightmarish Monsters:** Prepare to face hordes of bizarre and terrifying enemies, as well as formidable bosses that stand as obstacles in the path to becoming a Savior.

**Collect the Pages:** Throughout the game, players will encounter scattered mementos that hold pieces of the story. Collecting these pages is essential to fully unveiling the narrative's depths and intricacies.

**Explore the Islands:** Immerse yourself in the melancholy atmosphere and crumbling ruins that permeate the Smiling Islands, each location rich with its own stories and secrets waiting to be discovered.

**Experience a Broken Narrative:** Saviorless presents a unique storytelling approach, where the narrative unfolds in a nonlinear fashion, challenging players to piece together the events that keep Antar from reaching the Smiling Islands and ultimately leading to an unexpected twist of events.

## The Atmosphere

Saviorless features an atmospheric soundtrack that complements the dark fantasy world. From the haunting melodies that accompany Antar's exploration to the pulse-pounding tracks that underscore the Savior's battles, the game's music is an integral part of the immersive journey.

## Concept

At the core of "Saviorless" lies the struggle for control. Antar, Nento, and the Narrators vie for dominance over the narrative, clashing with each other in their quest for authority. The game's unique mechanic of allowing players to embody each character reinforces the theme of control, inviting players to gain diverse perspectives and navigate the complexities of a story where the power dynamic is perpetually in flux.

## Visuals

Saviorless is a 2D dark fantasy platformer that blends classic 16-bit gaming aesthetics with a bold visual style. At its core is a striking contrast between realism and the iconic. The characters and creatures are rendered in an exaggerated, almost grotesque manner with realistic anatomical structures - yet sit within a vividly cartoonish world of thick black outlines and flat, pure colors. This bizarre juxtaposition lends the game an unsettling, symbolic quality reminiscent of 19th-century symbolist art.

The backgrounds evoke a melancholic, dreamlike atmosphere of faded colors and gloomy ambiance. Line art has an angular, geometric rigidity reminiscent of art deco and medieval stained glass. There is a purposeful absence of realistic depth and perspective, keeping the world iconically flat in a style unconsciously diverging from modern 3D realism.

Movement provides a vivid counterpoint, with every character and creature animated by hand, frame-by-frame. This meticulous full animation makes even the most outlandish figures feel grounded and lifelike as they move.

Overall, Saviorless cultivates a balance of realism and the iconic, the grounded and the bizarre, the childlike and the darkly adult. It is a cohesive, self-contained visual language evoking the great symbolist traditions while maintaining a campy, black-humor aesthetic all its own.

## In-Game History

Antar is a naive young boy whose greatest desire is to find the Smiling Islands, a mysterious and forbidden place rumored to hold the unlimited power of the Saviors. But no matter how many times he's tried, the boy can never get close to his destination. Not even Nento the hunter, as strong and determined as he is to become an immortal Savior, has been able to reach the islands either. You see, Antar's adventure is destined to fail from the start. Unbeknownst to him, the boy is cursed to repeat his fruitless attempts to reach the islands in an endless loop, manipulated by the Narrator to never achieve his goals.

The Narrator is the one truly in control of everything. He has maintained an iron grip over Antar's story by meticulously following two sacred rules. First, a narrator must never allow the protagonist to achieve their objectives, for that would bring the story to an end. Second, a narrator must never control more than one protagonist. One day, through the Narrator's moment

of distraction, his inexperienced apprentices took control and began toying with Nento the hunter just for fun. As a result, Nento becomes an uncontrolled second protagonist, one who will stop at nothing to conclude the story, even if it means destroying the narrators themselves in the process.

Scared and out of options, the old Narrator is now forced to guide Antar into the heart of the Smiling Islands. It's a desperate gambit to stop the rogue Nento and prevent him from reaching the story's finale, shattering the narrator's never-ending tale forever. In this eternal struggle between protagonists and storytellers, the saga's continuation hangs in the balance. Who will emerge victorious - the naive boy, the ruthless hunter, or the all-powerful Narrator?

## Development History

### Summary

"Saviorless" achieved a significant milestone as Cuba's first-ever independent video game to collaborate with an international publisher, gaining global visibility across consoles and online platforms. It faced numerous challenges during its seven-year development. Despite initial success and support, the team faced setbacks due to political tensions, budget constraints, game name trademark conflict, and the loss of a key member. However, with the help of a publisher and the dedication of the team, they persevered through technical difficulties and delays to release a visually stunning game that exceeded their expectations.

### History

In 2016, the artist and designer Josuhe Pagliery, along with programmer Johann Armenteros, began developing the video game Savior, currently known as Saviorless, in Havana, Cuba, under the studio Empty-Head Games. Widely advertised as "the first independent Cuban video game," this project was undoubtedly the most ambitious of its kind undertaken in the country at that time.

The project caught the attention of a U.S. foundation called Innovadores Foundation, which facilitated access to a crowdfunding campaign on the IndieGogo platform. Surprisingly, the campaign was a success; the game became trending on the second day, and within just six days, the requested funds to start the project's development were obtained. As a result, much of

the specialized press became interested in *Saviorless*, gaining greater visibility and public recognition.

The initial development process was somewhat complex due to the team's high degree of inexperience, but it resulted in a playable demo presented to the public in August 2017 at the VR Gallery in Chicago. Though far from excellent, the result at least helped define many of the visual and gameplay foundations that would be further explored later. Shortly after this event, relations between the U.S. and Cuba deteriorated following the closure of the Embassy in Havana due to sonic attacks, thus ending any possibility of participation in festivals or events held in the United States. Around the same time, the programmer left the project for personal reasons, leaving the project's survival in limbo.

The entry of the new programmer David Darias revitalized the dynamics of *Saviorless*, initiating a very productive process of experimentation that occupied the team for several years. During this time, at least three completely different demos were developed, concluding with a final demo that met all expectations at the time. It's worth noting that developing a video game in Cuba presented challenges beyond those traditionally faced by developers worldwide, such as daily power outages, lack of technical equipment, the impossibility of remote work, very limited internet access (at the time, one had to go to a public park to connect to a Wi-Fi network), and the inability to access any form of international financing or promotion, in addition to the fact that the IndieGogo campaign fund had long been exhausted. As a final blow, a studio of industry veterans in Portland, United States, upon seeing that we didn't have the name "Savior" trademarked – an impossibility for us from Cuba – and completely ignoring the overwhelming online presence of the game, decided to register the name "Savior" for their game, forcing our team not only to change the name to "Saviorless" but also to accept that much of the promotion we had already done was in vain.

Under these difficult circumstances, it became evident to the team that without the help of a publisher, it would likely be very difficult not only to finance *Saviorless* but also to get it published. Fortunately, it was then that we had an interview with the French publisher Plugin Digital, who, after being interested in the demo, decided to work with *Saviorless*.

The start of work with the publisher was a boost for the production of *Saviorless* and an economic relief for the team; work times improved, and expectations for the game grew

significantly as well. With gameplay and mechanics defined, it became much easier to focus on Saviorless' visual aspect, which constitutes one of its greatest attractions and also one of its greatest challenges. Although it was originally agreed that the game would last around two hours, the team ended up developing a prototype three times that duration. The cost of this decision, again based on inexperience, was a full year of delay compared to the agreed delivery times. Finally, in June 2023, this long process, which has already exceeded eight years of work, was completed.

## Team

### Creator, Game Designer, and Artist

**Josuhe H. Pagliery (1981, Havana, Cuba)** Visual and Multimedia Artist. Graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts San Alejandro (2002) and the University of Arts ISA (2008) where worked as a professor of Visual Arts (2008-09). Created the performance group Golden Popeye's Theory (2003-2013) and has been part of many art exhibitions in Cuba and around the world, also has some experience as an animator, comic, and game artist.

### Lead Engineer and Level Editor

**David A. Darias (1989, Havana, Cuba)** Programmer. He majored in Computer Science at Havana University (2013). Assistant professor on the topics of Computer Architecture and Machine Programming. Taught a full course on Introduction to Game Development and another one on Computer Vision.

### Additional Team Members

**Ruben Cruces:** Graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts San Alejandro, Ruben is a filmmaker in charge of the VFX design and also works as an additional game and level designer.

**Tony Nodarse:** A prestigious traditional animator in charge of almost all the hand-drawn character animations on Saviorless. One of the top-ranked animators in Cuba with a lot of experience in short animated films and video clips.

**German Carrasco:** A promising young musician who recently graduated from the University of Art ISA as a composer. He is the one responsible for all the music and sound effects in Saviorless.

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