

Character Design Reflection: Dave & Chester Halford

Hey, Chordies! It's me, Bowser!

It's been over a year since I made one of these! It's high time for another character design reflection! Today's victims are Dave and Chester Halford.

Yes, I'm doing both! Why? Because I really can't do one without the other. They're a package deal, in more ways than one.

Let's start from the beginning. To tell the story of how I designed Chester and Dave, I need to give some back story on what inspired Chronicles.

Back in 2021, when ChoPro was a silly little idea in my silly little brain, I knew that I wanted it to be a slice-of-life VN that centers around a music store.

My brother and I grew up as metal guitarists. We were in and out of music stores quite a bit when we were kids. We always had to ask our mom to drive us to neighboring towns so we could play some instruments and buy gear.

To our surprise, our dinky little central Pennsylvania town got its very own guitar shop in (circa) 2009. Even better, it was also a music venue! It had an excellent stage and a very impressively sized front-of-house, much larger than what you'd see from most nightclubs.

To this day, my brother's primary social group consists of people he met at that guitar store all those years ago. He even networked his way into a couple of bands as a result. I saw firsthand how these stores became social hubs for local musicians and the lifelong connections they create.

My most precious memory of that store was the night I got to play guitar on stage with my brother and his band. He invited me up to play some Metallica songs and I got a little taste of what it's like to get up on stage and show the world what I can do. I'll treasure that forever.

To this day, I lament the fact that the store had to shut down. That said, the shop had a lot of problems. The main one being the owner of the place was a curmudgeon who wasn't very fond of teenagers using his space to socialize. That, compounded with other hardships, led to the store closing only a few years after it opened.

About a decade later, I found myself daydreaming about that place. I thought about what kind of store it could be if it was *perfect*. In my mind, the perfect music store would need to be a great place to socialize, have tons of room, and have friendly staff. It'd also have to be very queer friendly, or even queer-owned.

I decided to take this daydream and make it into a visual novel. I thought about how I could create my own little paradise into a story, and that's how Chronicles was born.

From there, I started populating characters. I first thought about who'd frequent the store. That's when I came up with characters like [Darrell](#), [Cliff](#), and [Trent](#). Then, I thought about who'd *work* at the store. That's how I came up with April and [Pat](#). Finally, I needed to think about who'd *own* the store.

The boss character remained undeveloped for some time while I was focused on Darrell, Cliff, and Trent. All I knew was that the store needed an owner, and I would need to create a character to occupy that position.

In my little daydream fantasies, I always imagined my perfect music store as a place where you could grab a bite to eat *and* shop for music gear. So, I decided to attach a café to it! The more I thought about it, the more it made sense to have *two* owners, one for the café side, and one for the music side. From there, I thought it'd be really cute to make these two owners a gay couple.

Many of you may remember that I had originally only planned on three routes for ChoPro: Darrell, Cliff, and Trent. At the time, I wasn't very comfortable with the idea of writing a boss/subordinate romance story. So, I decided to make the two owners a *married* gay couple. I thought this would deter people from being interested in pursuing them romantically...

...

Yeah, I was really fucking wrong. I'll elaborate on that later.

So, now that I understood I needed one character to be the café boss, and one character to be the music store boss, I got to work on their designs.

I was most inspired to design Dave first. In the interest of expanding the body-type diversity in my cast, I decided to make his build chubby, but not muscular like Darrell.

I wanted to make him a skunk, but found myself way more drawn to spotted skunks than striped skunks. There's something about a chubby skunk baker that just feels... *right*, you know? There's a good chance I was subconsciously inspired by [Sweet Leaves' baking badger](#).

With those two things in mind, I reached out to Zun to start designing him. Zun did a great job with [Eddy](#), and thought he'd be the perfect person to help design Dave.





Now, here's where I make a confession to you, my dear audience. I am, in fact, guilty of giving Dave Killmonger hair. *Take me away, officers.*

There's a lot of discourse on Twitter about game designers giving their characters "Killmonger hair." It seems to be overdone nowadays. However, please allow me to make my case. I had some purpose and intention behind this choice.

Back in 2021, I had recently seen Marvel's *Black Panther* for the first time. I fell in love with the movie, and I particularly loved Michael B. Jordan's performance as Killmonger. He's a *very* handsome man, and I was smitten by his many hairstyles in that movie.

Chord Progressions is a story about many things, one of which is a celebration and critique of American culture. Black Americans undeniably create a huge portion of this culture. In order to celebrate American culture, one must also celebrate *Black* American culture. No exceptions.

In the pursuit of this, I wanted to give some of my characters black hair styles. Hair is a very important component to a character's design. It gives you a window into understanding what that character thinks and believes. In other words, it gives you a look at what kind of culture they come from.

In *Black Panther*, Killmonger is a black American man. The film often highlights the contrast between Black American culture and Black African culture. To me, the most interesting way it does this is with costumes, makeup, and [hair](#).

Killmonger's short and stylish dreads was an intentional character design choice by the movie's creators. It was one of the many ways he was delineated as an American. Needless to say, I was very inspired by that artistic choice and wanted to pass it off to one of my own characters.

If I were to redesign Dave in 2024, I wouldn't touch this haircut with a 10-foot pole. Industry game designers have done it to death and it's [starting to become reductive](#). I personally would like to not continue that trend.

That said, I don't plan on changing his hair. Unlike industry game designers, I don't have thousands of dollars to pay for consultants, art directors, and visual designers. Money's tight, and what's done is done. If the problem in the gaming industry gets worse, I may reconsider that decision.

Alright, sorry for that long tangent. You may now take me to Twitter jail. 🚗

In terms of personality, I knew I wanted the two bosses to have different management styles. I wanted one to be a little more stern, and one to be a little more loosey-goosey. I decided to make Dave the goosey.

A lot of his personality started to develop in the moments I was writing him. For example, I had no idea he was going to be a southern man until I started writing his dialogue. The southern charm lent itself to his cuddly and hospitable nature. It was just a perfect fit, all around.

In a weird way, sometimes the character tells *me* who they are. I had a similar experience with Chester.

When I started writing him, I knew I needed him to be the Yang to Dave's Yin. Chester needed to be the more level-headed and sterner of the two. His visual design reflects that with him being fit and muscular compared to Dave's softness.

I needed them to be different, but they couldn't be *too* different, or else they wouldn't mesh as a couple. To achieve this balance, Chester developed a bit of a goofy side. His corporate-friendly, dad-joke style of humor seemed like the most sensible way to express this side of him. So, I started leaning into that.

Unlike Dave, I didn't have a rigid visual design concept for Chester. All I knew was that he was going to be an athletic, buff wolf.

Making Chester a wolf wasn't a very difficult decision. If you haven't noticed, there's quite a trend with [wolf characters in furry visual novels](#). I'm not ashamed to admit that I was very interested in following that trend to get some eyes on my project.

By the time I was knee deep in my draft for Build 1, I had hired [Drake](#) to be my sprite artist. I asked him if he'd be interested in designing a character for me. He was hesitant at first, but then he gave it a shot.



What he ended up creating piqued my interest right away. He gave my wolf a beautiful coat and a very interesting haircut. I was a little hesitant about the mullet at first. I thought it might be too flamboyant for him. But, the more I thought about it, the more it fit like a puzzle piece. The whole ethos of a mullet is "business in the front, party in the back." This fits his personality exceptionally well.

Chester's visual design, in my opinion, was a home run. I'm very proud of Drake for taking on the challenge and producing such a fabulous result. I'm very, very lucky to have found someone as talented and hardworking as him.

After his visual design was complete, I found myself narrowing in on the character's voice as I kept writing. Striking that balance between business and casual became my focus for his dialogue. From that point forward, a lot of his dialogue practically wrote itself.

So, let's circle back to that point I made earlier. My original intention with these two was to *not* make them romanceable. Let me tell you why that was a mistake.

First of all... look at them. They're very handsome. I dangled these hot, caring, sweet men in front of my readers, and I expected them to *not* be interested??? Very silly of me.

I was also hesitant to create a romance story about a boss and his employee. It's a rather uncomfortable subject, and it's one that has many devastating consequences in the real world.

But the more I thought about it, the more it became an appealing idea. One of the key things you want to do as a writer is learn how to create tension. I don't think I'm the best at it, but I'm doing my best to be conscientious of this fact.

A boss dating his employee has a lot of tension already baked into the premise alone. From there, I was able to map out a plot using the tension that nepotism inherently creates.

Now, let me be clear. The Chester and Eddy romance route is a pure fantasy. It's merely a story that begs the question "what if?"

To be painstakingly clear, I absolutely do not condone workplace romances.

I'll say it one more time for the media illiterate bozos out there. **DO NOT DATE YOUR BOSS.**

Disclaimers aside, I could go on and on about my plans for these two and how I'd like to structure their romance routes. That said, I don't want to spoil anything. The upcoming build, [Episode 6: Plunge](#), is really going to set the tone for how the rest of Chester's story will be panning out. I'm really excited for you all to read it :3.

Alright, I've written over 2,000 words on these two. I think that's enough for now. Hope you enjoyed this little deep dive into how I created Chronicles and the husbands. I also hope the aspiring writers in the room are taking notes!

Take care, Chordies! 🐱❤️