

# Game Narrative Review

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**Month/Year you submitted this review:** November 2023

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**Game Title:** Cyberpunk 2077  
**Platform:** Windows, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Stadia, PlayStation 5, Xbox Series X/S.  
**Genre:** Action role-playing game (RPG), open world  
**Release Date:** December 10, 2020  
**Developer:** CD Projekt Red  
**Publisher:** CD Projekt  
**Writer/Creative Director/Narrative Designer:** Marcin Blacha, Tomasz Marchewka

## Overview

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The warm cement was rendered pale by the tall buildings, hazy atmosphere, and neon lights. The streets are crowded with people from vibrant cultures who wear brightly coloured attire. There are shops wherever you turn in mixed-use slums home to hundreds of people. In "*Cyberpunk 2077*," you awaken as V, a small-time mercenary, who is about to win big. Jackie and V have just been called upon by one of the most renowned fixers, Dexter Deshawn, in "The Afterlife," a bar notorious for brokering high-profile contracts.

After proving themselves to Dexter by securing a remote-controlled robot critical to their mission, V and Jackie get to their actual job. They are stealing an object called "The Relic" from the most important man in Night City, Saburo Arasaka. Everything is going well for V and Jackie until Saburo is assassinated by Yorinobu, his son and heir to the company. Following their grand escape, Jackie gets shot and entrusts the Relic to V. They both manage to barely get out, but the shot Jackie takes proves to be fatal, leaving V to fend for themselves. V makes it back to Dexter, only to find out that they've been betrayed. Dexter shoots V, believing they are left for dead, but V wakes up hours later with a new problem. "The Relic" was a construct of the famous dead rocker-boy Johnny Silverhand that has been uploaded into his mind, and to make matters worse, Johnny is beginning to overwrite V's psyche.

Will V be able to survive with Arasaka Corporation hunting them? Will they be able to prevent Johnny from overwriting his identity? Could they work together to find a cure for this newfound illness?

## Characters

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### Main Cast (Mercenaries):

#### Valerie / Vincent “V” (The Player Character):

A no name mercenary hailing completely customizable appearance, gender and various backgrounds based on player choice.

#### Johnny Silver hand (Deuteragonist):

Johnny was a famous rocker boy and lead singer of the band Samurai, notoriously a scumbag; 54 years before the main game on August 20, 2023, during the Night City Holocaust, Adam Smasher killed him when he tried to overtake Arasaka Tower, however, his consciousness was later turned into an engram. When V steals his engram during a heist on Arasaka tower, his consciousness begins to be overwritten by Johnny.

#### Jackie Wells:

V’s best friend and a fellow mercenary. Depending on the lifepath of the protagonist, V and Jackie either meet when he **hires v to smuggle a crate** [Nomad], **attempts to rob the same car** [Streetkid] or is **already a longtime friend and well-established connection** [Corporate]. Six months or more after this encounter, Jackie and V get hired by Dexter DeShawn to steal something called “the Relic” from Saburo Arasaka. During the heist, he becomes fatally wounded.

### Fixers:

#### Rogue Amendiares “Queen of the Afterlife”:

A former street kid turned legendary fixer in Night City. She was a Resistance member during the Fourth Corporate War and an active participant in the storming of Arasaka Tower during the "Night City Holocaust." Extremely well known and has a history and personal connection to Johnny Silver hand. She occasionally gives V jobs or helps them out. Depending on the player's choice, Johnny in V's body may romance or eventually storm Arasaka Tower with her getting revenge for Johnny.

#### Evelyn Parker:

Enigmatic fixer, involved with the Voodoo Boys, offers V a series of high-risk jobs, starting with contracting Dexter to plan and execute the heist in Konpeki Plaza ("the Relic"). She is a femme fatale in personality, which eventually becomes her undoing. By attempting to take the relic herself, she ends up having her cyberware destroyed by the VB and becomes a pawn for prostitution and slavery while comatose. Even though she is eventually saved by V, her trauma from the incident causes her to commit suicide.

## **Dexter DeShawn (“Dex”):**

A distinguished fixer in Night City gives V and Jackie their initial "big break," tasking them with invading Konpeki Plaza and stealing "the Relic." When Saburo is murdered, and things go south, Dex betrays V, attempting to kill him. Goro Takemura intervenes, saving V's life and eventually murdering Dex when he outlives his usefulness.

## **Independent Allies:**

### **Panam Palmer:**

Skilled nomad mechanic and driver introduced to V during the main storyline. Depending on the player's choices, she can become a significant ally and potential romance option for V. Panam is strong-willed, resourceful, and fiercely loyal to her nomad family, the Aldecaldos. Throughout the game, she becomes deeply involved in V's quest against Arasaka Corporation. Panam is a reliable friend, offering support, expertise, and a sense of camaraderie in the often harsh and unforgiving world of Night City.

### **Judy Alvarez**

A braindance engineer who works for "Clouds", a brothel that specializes in virtual reality experiences. Judy is a talented hacker and a passionate activist for the rights of sex workers. She is also a potential romance option for female V. During the story, she helps them gather intelligence through Evelyn's braindance in Saburo's penthouse. Judy becomes a close ally and confidant of V as they work together to expose the corruption and violence behind the braindance industry.

### **Viktor Vektor:**

A local ripperdoc who operates under Misty's Esoterica shop in Watson. Viktor is a longtime friend of Jackie Welles and a mentor figure to V. He provides them with cyberware upgrades and medical assistance throughout the game. Viktor is a kind-hearted and generous man who often gives discounts or free services to his loyal customers. He is also a former boxer who still follows the sport with enthusiasm.

### **Misty Olszewski:**

A close friend of Viktor and V, and the romantic interest of Jackie Welles. Misty is a spiritualist, frequently giving V tarot readings and warning them of the potential dangers in their future. She runs Misty's Esoterica, a shop that sells various mystical items and services. She is a gentle and compassionate person, who cares deeply for her friends and customers.

## **Arasaka Corporation**

### **Saburo Arasaka:**

Second son of Saburo Arasaka and the heir to the Arasaka empire. He is a rebellious and charismatic leader who opposes his father's vision and methods. He left the family at a young age and formed a group of anti-corporate rebels called the Steel Dragons. He later returned to the family under pretenses, secretly plotting to overthrow his father and destroy Arasaka from within. He is the main antagonist and kills Saburo in a coup d'état.

### **Yorinobu Arasaka:**

Second son of Saburo Arasaka and the heir to the Arasaka empire. He is a rebellious and charismatic leader who opposes his father's vision and methods. He left the family at a young age and formed a group of anti-corporate rebels called the Steel Dragons. He later returned to the family under false pretenses, secretly plotting to overthrow his father and destroy Arasaka from within. He is the main antagonist, and the one who kills Saburo in a coup d'état.

### **Goro Takemura:**

Personal bodyguard of Saburo Arasaka. Goro initially thinks V is the murderer of Saburo, but when assassins show up to kill them both, he realizes there could be more to the story. After barely surviving the conflict with the assassins, V calls Viktor, who saves them both, making them unlikely allies. Depending on if V looks for him in the mission "Search and Destroy," he can prematurely die in the game. He also commits seppuku in any epilogue where V doesn't side with Hanako Arasaka. Otherwise, after the game, he becomes Hanako's new personal bodyguard.

### **Adam Smasher:**

A primary antagonist in the story is one of the most legendary people in Night City. Adam Smasher is a fully robotic hitman currently stationed as the personal bodyguard of Yorinobu Arasaka. He is psychopathic, cold, and unforgiving, often speaking profanities towards anyone near him. He also is the killer of Johnny Silverhand. Depending on player choice, Smasher is either killed or spared by V in the mission Nocturne Op55N1.

## IMPORTANT FACTIONS

### **Arasaka:**

A Japanese megacorporation that specializes in security, banking, and manufacturing. It has a powerful influence on world politics and economy and often uses covert operations and cyberwarfare to achieve its goals.

### **Militech:**

An American megacorporation that is one of the largest producers and suppliers of weapons and military equipment. It has a fierce rivalry with Arasaka and often engages in armed conflicts and corporate espionage with them.

### **NCPD:**

The Night City Police Department is the law enforcement agency of Night City. It is responsible for maintaining order and security in the city, but it needs to be more staffed, underfunded, and corrupted by the megacorps. It has several divisions, such as MaxTac, NetWatch, and Trauma Team.

### **MaxTac:**

The Maximum Force Tactical Division, also known as the Psycho Squad, a particular unit of the NCPD that deals with cyberpsychos, individuals who have lost their sanity due to excessive cyberware implantation. They are equipped with advanced cyberware and weapons and have the authority to use lethal force.

### **Maelstrom:**

A violent and ruthless gang that operates in the industrial district of Watson. They are obsessed with cyberware and often modify their bodies with illegal and experimental implants. They are hostile to anyone who trespasses on their territory or interferes with their business.

### **Voodoo Boys:**

A group of skilled netrunners and hackers who are mostly of Haitian descent. They are based in Pacifica, a rundown area of Night City that the authorities have largely abandoned. They are fascinated by the mysteries of cyberspace and the Blackwall, a digital barrier that separates the old and new nets.

## Breakdown: Death and Dissonance, How Cyberpunk 2077 Critiques the Value of Life

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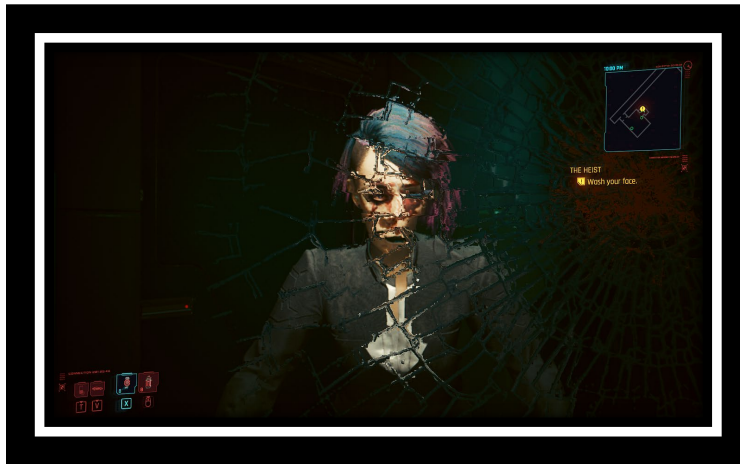


Figure 1: V shatters mirror post Jackie death

Credits <https://medium.com/@EDarkness/cyberpunk-2077-becoming-human-again-158e2e9e0368>

### **I just want the world to know I was here. That I mattered – V.**

Cyberpunk 2077 is a game that is constantly tackling the subject of mortality and grief through the value, meaning and impact of death. Right in the opening mission of the game, where Jackie and V are tasked with saving a kidnapped Corpo named Sandra Dorsett, countless mutilated bodies can be seen, littering the apartment of the scavenger gang like slaughterhouse disassembly lines, showing how cheap and disposable human life is in Night City and how technology can be used to exploit and dehumanize people.

Additionally, the exploitation of individuals can be highlighted by Braindances, virtual recreations of people's memories and final moments. Some users become addicted to the thrill of death without having to face the consequences of it, causing them to lose their sense of reality and empathy. In many cases, the people that brain-dances are built from are abused and sold into it through prostitution, like Evelyn Parker.

Because of this, death takes on multifaceted significance, acting as a lens through which the game critiques the devaluation of human life, the consequences of unchecked technological progress, and the blurring lines between reality and escapism. However, while death is a central theme in the game's narrative, it is not reflected in its gameplay mechanics.



Figure 2: Night City Exterior source <https://wccftech.com/cyberpunk-2077-path-tracing-100-mods/>

**Swap meat for chrome, live a BD fantasy, whatever, but at the end of it all, it's the code you live by that defines who you are – Johnny Silverhand.**

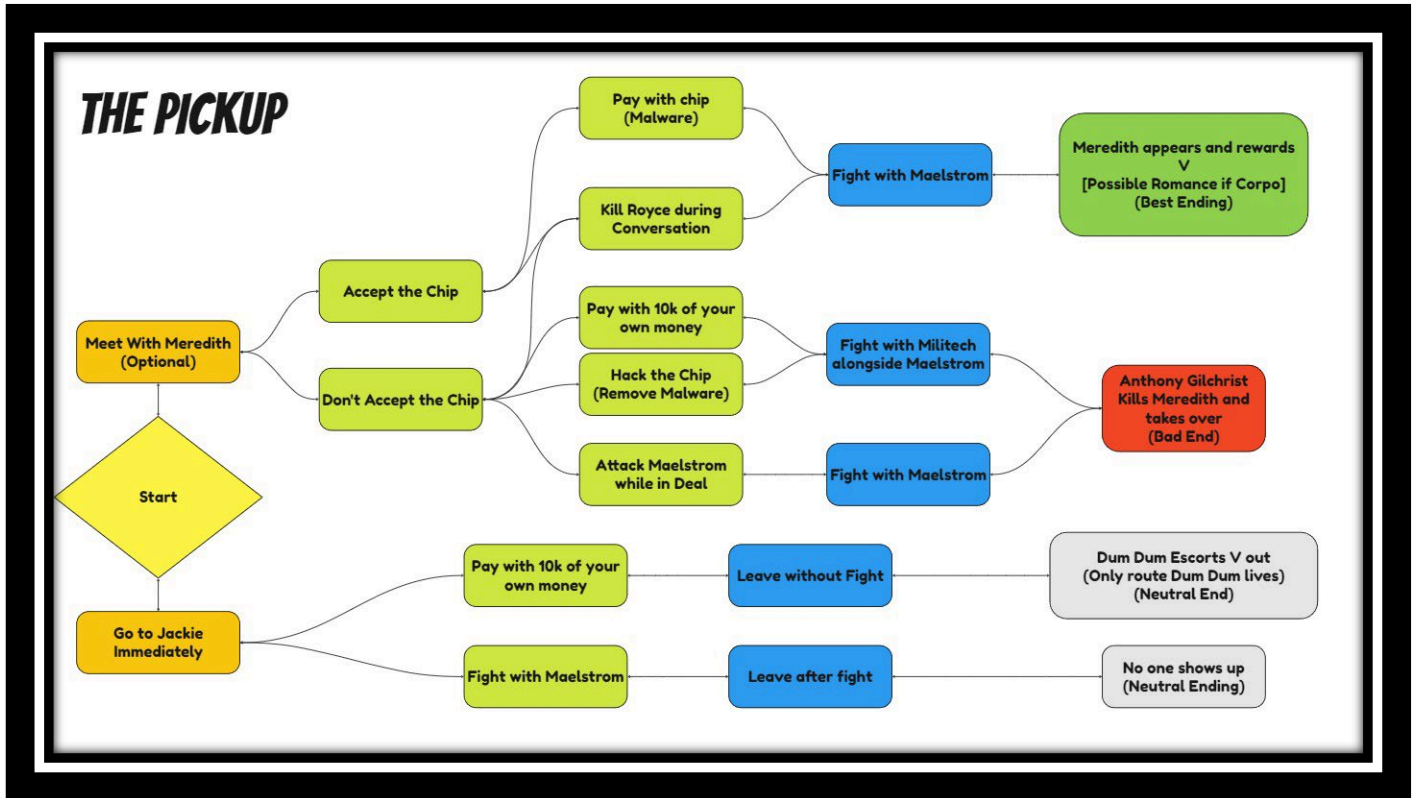
Players must face the harsh fact that V has a limited amount of time left, raising the emotional stakes right away. They are forced to act quickly, make important decisions, and build relationships before time runs out due to the constant ticking of the clock. Because of this, they should be compelled to interact meaningfully with the story. However, the game presents a dichotomy as V, despite the imminent threat to their life, continues to function under the same fixers in Night City's underbelly.

This contradiction raises a fundamental question: why does V persist in mundane tasks for others when their own life hangs in the balance? At the heart of this dissonance lies a disparity between the game's narrative and gameplay mechanics. While the storyline consistently emphasizes the urgency of V's situation, the gameplay needs to enforce this effectively.

Players can leisurely explore Night City, undertake side contracts, and delay the campaign's progression without ever facing significant consequences. The absence of tangible repercussions for procrastination diminishes the impact of the narrative urgency, creating a disconnect between the story and the player's experience. Ludo narrative dissonance, however, is not inherently harmful. In certain games, discomfort and moral complexity serve a purpose, immersing players in challenging situations.

Cyberpunk 2077, therefore, needs to strike a delicate balance between narrative urgency and player agency. To achieve this equilibrium, the game could manifest V's time-sensitive predicament more tangibly during gameplay. Implementing consequences for delaying the campaign, such as missed opportunities or a gradual deterioration of health, could bridge the gap between the narrative and the player's actions, enhancing the emotional resonance of the story.

## “THE PICKUP” INTRO TO THE WORLD AND CHOICE

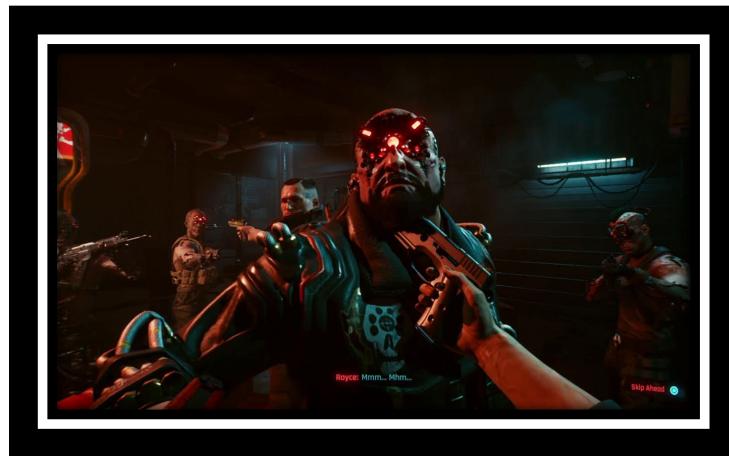


### **Royce: Alright, you want the Flathead? I better see some eddies.**

Cyberpunk 2077's first mission undoubtedly has the most branching choices and outcomes of any mission in the game. Introducing the player to the complex and dynamic world of Night City, where every decision matters and has consequences. The player must deal with two rival factions, Militech and Maelstrom, and decide how to obtain a valuable military drone from them. They can choose to cooperate or betray either faction, use diplomacy or violence, hack or pay, and even romance or kill some of the characters involved. The Pickup showcases the game's rich narrative and gameplay variety, as well as the player's agency and freedom. Depending on how the player approaches the mission, they can experience different scenes, dialogues, combat scenarios, and endings.



# THE MISSION BREAKDOWN:



*Figure 3: Royce Conflict in "The pickup"*

"The Pickup" is a mission that involves V and Jackie retrieving a valuable military drone from the Maelstrom Gang, who stole it from a Militech convoy. The mission has four main story beats: Introduction, Infiltration, Betrayal and Consequence, and Conclusion.

In the **Introduction**, after being given the job by Dexter Deshawn, V and Jackie are contacted by Meredith Stout, a Militech agent who wants to use them to hack the Maelstrom Gang and find out who tipped them off about the convoy. She gives them a credit chip that contains a virus and tells them to pay the gang with it. Alternatively, the player can skip this part and go directly to the gang's hideout.

In the **Infiltration**, V and Jackie meet with Royce, the leader of the Maelstrom Gang, and try to negotiate for the drone. The player can pay with the credit chip, scan it first and reveal the virus, or refuse to pay. Depending on the choice, the situation can escalate into a fight or be resolved peacefully. The player can also side with either Militech or Maelstrom if they have established a relationship with them beforehand.

In **Betrayal and Consequence**, the player must deal with the aftermath of their choice. If they paid with the credit chip, Militech would hack the gang and attack them. If they revealed the virus or refused to pay, Maelstrom would turn hostile and attack them. The player must fight their way out of the hideout and escape with the drone. The player can also try to avoid violence by using stealth or persuasion.

In the **Conclusion**, the player will learn that Anthony Gilchrist, a Militech executive, was the mole who leaked the convoy's location to Maelstrom. Depending on who survived the conflict, Meredith Stout will either kill him or be killed by him. If the player manages to avoid violence, Dum Dum, a Maelstrom member, will escort them out of the hideout and thank them for their cooperation. If the player skipped meeting Meredith Stout, they would leave without encountering anyone else.

# Staying Human in a Transhumanist Society

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*Figure 4: Transgenderism used as a commodification / sex sells type mentality.*

**“Your Body Can Be Chrome... But The Heart Never Changes. It Wants What It Wants.” – Lizzy Wizzy**

In a world where megacorporation’s control the globe and cybernetics are widely used to enhance human capabilities. The game explores the themes of humanity and transhumanism, which are philosophical and ethical questions about the nature and value of human life in relation to technology.

## Humanity and Cyber-Psychosis:

One of the main aspects of the game is character customization, which allows the player to modify their appearance, skills, and cyberware. Cyberware is an implant that grants various abilities, such as enhanced vision, reflexes, strength, hacking, and more. However, cyberware also comes with a cost: the loss of humanity. The more cyberware the player installs, the more they risk losing their sense of self and becoming a cyberpsycho, a person who is driven insane by their cybernetics. The game uses a mechanic called cyberpsychosis, which measures the player's mental stability and affects their gameplay. Once they have reached a certain threshold and accrued police stars from committing a crime, whenever they kill someone, their screen will become more glitched out and erratic. Additionally, the player character will become harder to control, simulating the natural loss of control that comes with Psychosis. This mechanic forces players to balance their desire for power and efficiency with their need for human connection and emotion.

# Factions, Ethics and Beliefs

The game also presents different factions and ideologies that have different views on humanity and transhumanism. A few of these include:

## **The Corpos:**

Corporate elite who uses cyberware to gain power and wealth, but also lose their empathy and morals. They are ruthless and pragmatic, willing to sacrifice anything and anyone for their own benefit.

## **The Nomads:**

Wanderers who live on the outskirts of the city and value freedom and family, but also struggle to survive in a harsh environment. They are loyal and resourceful, relying on their bonds and skills to overcome challenges.

## **The Maelstrom:**

Gangsters who embrace cyberware as a way of expressing their identity and aggression, but also become violent and unstable. They are rebellious and anarchic, seeking to impose their will and style on others.

## **The Voodoo Boys:**

Hackers who use cyberware to connect with the Net, a virtual reality network, but also lose touch with reality and their physical bodies. They are curious and mystical, pursuing knowledge and transcendence through technology.

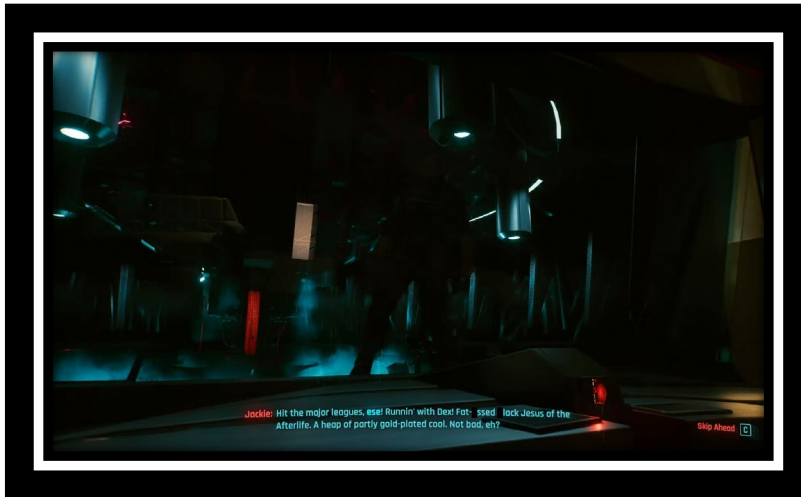
## **Conclusion:**

The game challenges the player to make choices that reflect their values and beliefs about humanity and transhumanism both on an ethical and moral scale. Choosing to align themselves with different factions, pursue different goals, and interact with diverse and nuanced characters. Some endings may be more hopeful or tragic, depending on how the player defines their humanity and relates to others. While the game does not provide a clear answer to what it means to be human or what is the best way to use technology, it does invite the players to explore these questions for themselves.

# THE SHIP OF THESEUS ENGRAM DILEMMA

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**“We Shouldn’t Fear Change Itself, But Only Who We Might Change Into.” – Misty**



*Figure 5: Engram Jackie and V Conversing in Soul Killer*

In “Cyberpunk 2077” V and Johnny are more than just partners in crime. They are two souls trapped in one body, sharing memories, emotions, and thoughts. Their story draws parallels to “the ship of Theseus”, a paradox that asks whether an object that has had all of its components replaced remains fundamentally the same object. As V and Johnny interact with each other, they are constantly changing each other, influencing their decisions and personalities. Are they still the same people they were before they began fusing? Or have they become something new, a hybrid of their former selves?

## **V: Remember anything? ‘Bout what happened?**

**Jackie: Hit the major league, ese! Runnin’ with Dex! Fat-assed Black Jesus of the Afterlife. A heap of party gold-plated cool. Not bad, eh?**

This question is also reflected in the fate of Jackie, V’s friend who died and became an engram. His digital copy was supposed to preserve his identity, but it failed to capture his essence. He was not the same Jackie that V knew and loved. He was quite literally a shadow of his former self, impossible to see properly when talking; he was a simulation, a broken mirror. V and Johnny face a similar dilemma: how much of themselves can they lose or gain before they stop being themselves? How do they define their identity in a world where everything is replaceable? How do they cope with the loss of their original selves?

## INDIRECT CHARACTERIZATION THROUGH MOTIFS

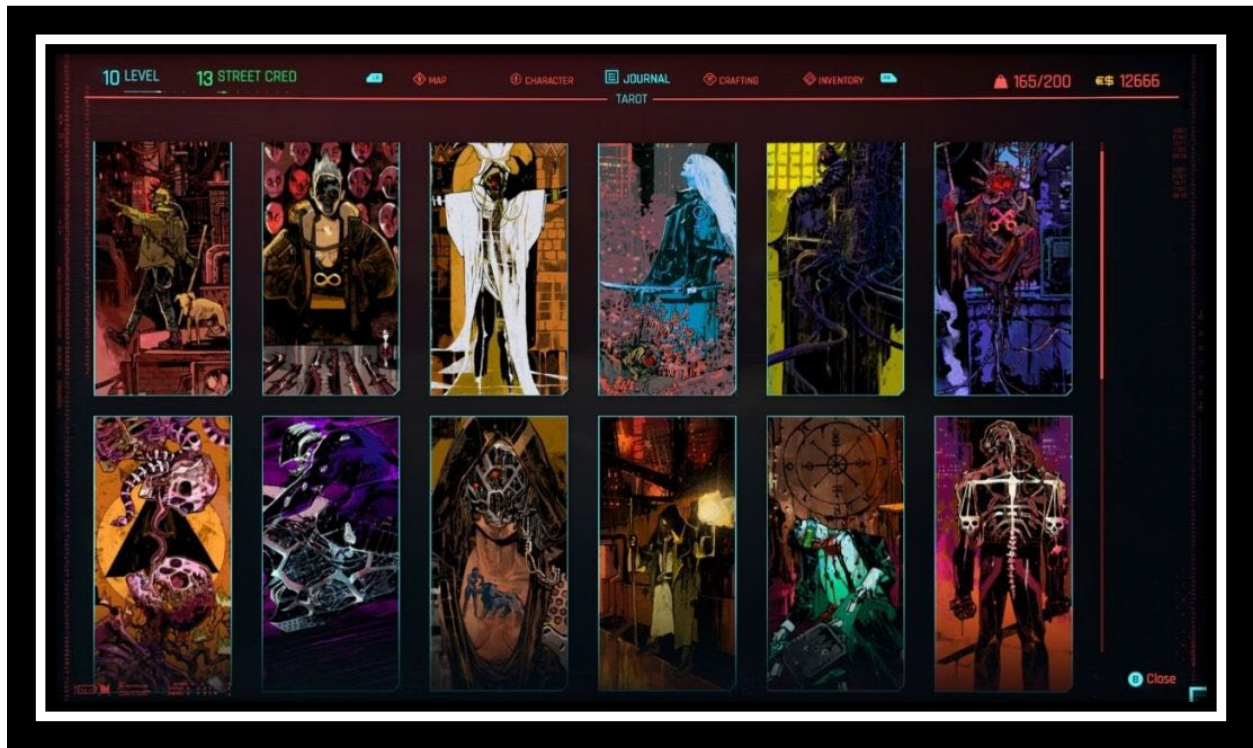










Figure 6: Tarot Card Menu in Game Credit: <https://eip.gg/cyberpunk-2077/guides/tarot-cards/>

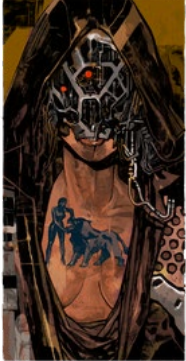

**Tarot cards** are a complex tool for **symbolism**, concealed **storytelling**, and **character development** in the cyberpunk universe. This allows readers to learn more about the **characters' worldviews** and **personalities without resorting to traditional exposition**. The Tarot motifs don't stop at individual characters; they extend to **pivotal moments in the game's multiple endings**. The Death card, marking the point of no return before the epilogue, emphasizes the irreversibility of choices **made**.

In a nutshell, Cyberpunk 2077's usage of **Tarot cards** as **themes** for **ambiguous characterization** is evidence of the game's rich narrative. It immerses players in a **universe** where people are characterized by **their deep symbolism** rather than just their words and deeds. By adding to **the narrative experience**, this method makes it more **interesting** and **interpretable**.



# CHARACTERS:

Character	Tarot	Description	Significance
<b>V</b>	<b>The Fool</b> 	<b>New Beginnings, Free Spirit, Recklessness, Naive</b>	As the protagonist, there is no greater embodiment of the Fool than V, the player innocent to the harsh conditions of Night City, embarking on a new conquest with the goals of seeking fame and fortune while skimping the law.
<b>Johnny Silverhand</b>	<b>The Hanged man</b> 	<b>Sacrifice, Martyrdom, Perspective</b>	Found next to Johnny's grave, serving as a reminder of how he passed. In life, Johnny dedicated his time to self-sacrifice against the corporations. When resurrected, he is given the chance to grow and gain perspective on his past life. Depending on the choice, he can once again sacrifice a second chance at life to save V.
<b>Judy</b>	<b>The Magician</b> 	<b>Willpower, Desire, Cunning,</b>	Judy carries a solid connection to the magician; being a braindance technician, she is incredibly gifted with both her hands and mind. She also never lets her willpower falter in the face of adversity, even when encountering the most challenging battles like the suicide of Evelyn.
<b>Johnny and Rogue</b>	<b>The Lovers</b> 	<b>Romance, Conflict, Balance, indecision</b>	Found in the back of the Drive-in, where Johnny and Rogue reconnect and reconcile. Reflecting on their previously toxic relationship, it acknowledges their differences and brings back a balance to their broken relationship when they commune at the Drive-in.





<p><i>Hanako Arasaka</i></p>	<p><i>The High Priestess</i></p> 	<p><b>Spirituality, Higher Power, Intuition</b></p>	<p>Hanako is the only daughter of the Araska family. A self-taught netrunner, she is cunning and always displays a strong sense of intuition and grace. Depending on the player's choice, her "spirituality" may be seen through resurrecting her father using Yorinobu as host..</p>
<p><i>Goro Takemura</i></p>	<p><i>The Hierophant</i></p> 	<p><b>Righteousness, Sacredness, Hierarchical Order</b></p>	<p>Takemura respects Tradition more than anything else, serving as a longtime personal guard to Saburo's family; he embodies the values of a samurai.</p>
<p><i>Alt Cunningham</i></p>	<p><i>The Hermit</i></p> 	<p><b>Solitude, Recluse, Loneliness</b></p>	<p>Alt's relationship with the hermit reflects her life of solidarity. Trapped in a digital realm without a body while having the vast emptiness of the net at her hands, she embodies a deep loneliness.</p>
<p><i>Rogue Amendiares</i></p>	<p><i>The Empress</i></p> 	<p><b>Nurturing, Beauty, Femininity,</b></p>	<p>The face of the afterlife, rogue could be considered a model even in her old age. She represents a strong female leader and takes ownership and care of those who fall under her protection.</p>

<p><b><i>Panam Palmer</i></b></p>	<p><b><i>Strength</i></b></p> 	<p><b>Resilience, determination</b></p>	<p>Panam is a potent symbol of inner strength, hot-headed and passionate in personality. She constantly challenges V when they make questionable choices, but there is no more an excellent ally than her and her family.</p>
<p><b><i>Saburo Arasaka</i></b></p>	<p><b><i>The Emperor</i></b></p> 	<p><b>Authority, Control, Tyrant, Domineering, Structure</b></p>	<p>The emperor card is an appropriate representation of Saburo, who serves as the CEO of the Arasaka Corporation. His authoritarian traits are shown in his power and dominance over the corporate empire. The moniker "The Emperor," given to Saburo, highlights his tyrannical presence and the rigid order he upholds inside Arasaka.</p>

## ENDINGS

Context	Tarot Card	Description	Significance
<p><b>Before Epilogue</b></p>	<p><b>Death</b></p> 	<p><b>Endings, Change, Transition, Resistance to Change</b></p>	<p>This represents the point of no return before the epilogue; V gets this card when sitting on the rooftop before Nocturne Op55N1, the final mission of the game. Additionally, it could refer to a secret ending in which V, after spending too long contemplating who will help them storm the tower, decides to commit suicide.</p>
<p><b>Hanako Ending</b></p>	<p><b>The Devil</b></p> 	<p><b>Attachment, Restriction, Shadow Self, Exploring Dark Thoughts</b></p>	<p>Once again, it is another card that can be taken more literally than metaphorically. In this ending, Hanako succeeds in resurrecting Yorinobu and promises to save V from death if they sign a contract and "sell their soul" to the Arasaka corporation. From there, V will become a test subject on the moon until they die.</p>



<p><i>Panam's Ending</i></p>	<p><i>The Star</i></p> 	<p><b>Hope, Purpose, Renewal</b></p>	<p>The "good ending" of the game, Panam and her family offer V the most hopeful outcome of the game. When they successfully raid Arasaka tower and free Johnny from V's body, V finds out they only have months to live. But Panam vows to save them, taking V with the Aldecaldos out of Night City and off into the sunset in search of a cure.</p>
<p><i>Johnny Ending</i></p>	<p><i>Temperance</i></p> 	<p><b>Re-alignment, Self-Healing, Balance, Purpose, Imbalance</b></p>	<p>The ending where Johnny takes over V's body after fully integrating with their mind. V sacrifices their life to re-align their health and mental state. With Johnny surviving, he takes on a new journey like V and rekindles his love for music and life with a newfound purpose and appreciation.</p>
<p><i>Going Alone</i></p>	<p><i>The Sun</i></p> 	<p><b>Confidence, Optimism, Vitality, Success, Happiness</b></p>	<p>The card can be taken in a more literal sense than symbolic; in this ending, V would instead go out succeeding in a blaze of glory without the help of others to get their name in the afterlife. The ultimate accomplishment for a mercenary.</p>
<p><i>DLC Ending</i></p>	<p><i>The Tower</i></p> 	<p><b>Disaster, Destruction, Sudden Change, Personal Transformation, Fear of Change</b></p>	<p>This card represents Arasaka Tower and V deciding not to invade it, siding with the UCFA. It additionally means V's loss of identity as they have no access to cyberware. After being in a coma for two years, everything has rapidly changed, and V now must "move with the times," living out a completely everyday life.</p>

## Strongest Element: Character Growth

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**V: I thought you were tired of talking to me?**

**Johnny: I was. But I'm not able to talk to anyone else....**

Both Johnny and V are characters ultimately shaped by each other; Johnny initially joins the party rude, hostile, and overall parasitic to V, killing them and overriding their conscience with both seeking to become the dominant identity; however, as the story unfolds, and the pair get closer, we as the player begin to witness a different Johnny whose tough exterior serves as a facade to conceal his deep-seated fear of intimacy, unveiling layers of vulnerability that make him a more intricate character than initially perceived.

Their dialogue with each other serves as a platform for exploring opposing philosophies on life, death, and freedom, offering players a more nuanced exploration of contrasting ideas, which enriches the narrative and prompts players to contemplate the intricacies of morality and personal values. Shared memories, unveiled through quests like "Chippin' In," forge an emotional bond between V and Johnny. Allowing them to witness Johnny's love for Alt Cunningham, a netrunner, and his tragic demise during the Arasaka Tower heist. These shared experiences humanize Johnny, adding layers to his character and enabling players to explore Night City through a more intimate lens, deepening their connection to the game's world.

In a sense, the longer Johnny challenges the player's views and personalities, the more they become him or see themselves in him, not only serving as a way to deepen the player's connection to him but to embody that narrative that Johnny and V are in a sense becoming the same person, neither of them can deny that their personality has been shaped by each other.

All this growth is met with a beautiful payoff in the climax of the story of V: surrender their body to Johnny or fight for their survival. This moment encapsulates their profound growth—transforming from a self-centered mercenary to someone willing to sacrifice everything for a cause greater than themselves. Depending on the player's choice and their relationship with Johnny, he will become emotionally overwhelmed by the choice, lashing out at V for giving up and scared of their death but, in most cases, grateful for the experiences they shared in new life or death. This choice becomes a testament to the player's agency, reflecting the impact of their decisions throughout the game. But it isn't all sunshine and roses; no matter who controls the body of V, both will feel a little cold without the other, making the ending much more bittersweet than happy.

## Unsuccessful Element: UNDERUTILIZED LIFEPATH

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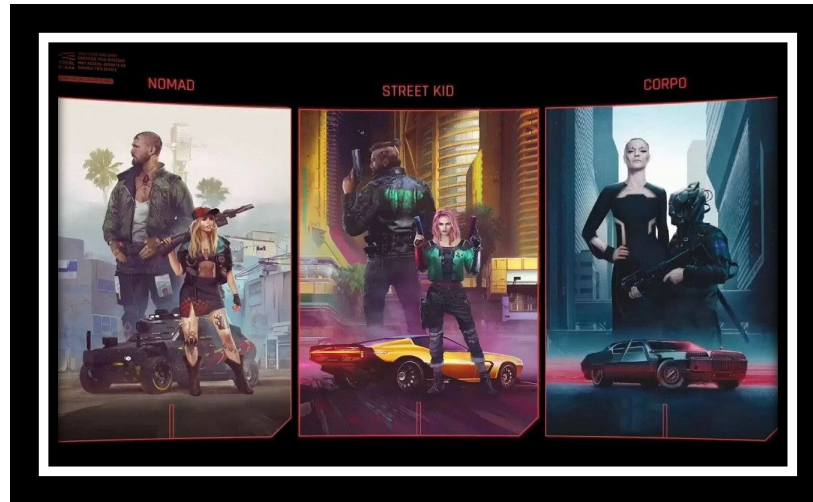


Figure 7: Lifepath in game Source: <https://www.gamesradar.com/which-cyberpunk-2077-lifepath-should-you-pick/>

At its core, Cyberpunk 2077 is designed as a character-driven action role-playing game. The game offers players three lifepaths: Nomad, Street Kid, and Corpo, with these lifepaths promising unique narratives with different casts, starting points, and locations for players to explore. However, despite this initial diversity, the game fails to fully capitalize on the potential of each lifepath storyline outside of the prologue.

Because of this, the lifepaths gradually fall into shallow storytelling traps despite their early diversity. Rather than providing significant options and outcomes, the lifepath content frequently descends into superficial conversations or brief interactions with characters who don't make a lasting impression. The deep backgrounds that lifepaths promise are hardly touched upon by these encounters, leaving players longing for a more fully realized role-playing game.

This lack of depth becomes glaring when contrasted with the game's often chaotic and breakneck main storyline. While the overarching narrative hurtles forward, lifepaths, which should serve as the backbone of the characters' identities, feel disconnected and inconsequential. Players often feel detached from their chosen LP, unable to fully embrace the role they were meant to play within the game's universe.

The consequence of this underutilization is twofold. First, players are denied the opportunity to truly inhabit their characters, to walk in their shoes and make decisions that reflect the lifepath's unique perspective. Second, the game needs to improve its overall narrative depth. The various experiences, viewpoints, and obstacles from the LP could make for fascinating side stories that enhance the main narrative. Instead, they are merely a tiny part of the game's world, existing on its edges.

## Highlight: BOATDRINKS

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Figure 8: Kerry playing music Source: [https://cyberpunk.fandom.com/wiki/Boat\\_Drinks](https://cyberpunk.fandom.com/wiki/Boat_Drinks).

In the mission “Boat drinks” Kerry invites V to go sailing, highlighting on the boat that he brought a guitar special to him, on in which he begins to play a completely unique tune, which he’s never shown off to anyone.

**V: OK, So, lemme hear what this’s all about.**

**Kerry: Like I said, life’s loops?**

**V: Um breakfast cereal?**

**Kerry: Nah, no, no, no, no... Loops, Cycles. One chapter ends, another begins. Life’s full of ‘em. At least my guru tells me so.**

...

**Kerry: No more mayhem, no more shady-ass schemes. Done with that. Well... Starting tomorrow.**

During this moment, he begins to lament his past and reconciles with the fact that his success comes solely from himself. He no longer must live mentally in Johnny’s shadow. Kerry is a character who has often been known as a reckless rocker boy, living life on constant edge. However, because of his experience with V and reconciling with Johnny and his past, he can grow from it.

Kerry humming softly while strumming the guitar, the waves being at your side and the soft presence of Johnny, not only brings a metaphorical conclusion to this chapter of the characters life, but also brings a short, peaceful moment to the lives the protagonists, allowing them to take a moment, sit back and forget about all of the problems they are very soon to face.

This specific scene, while brief, not only is a masterclass in character development, but also serves as a strong reminder of how impactful side characters can be when used effectively.

## Critical Reception

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### **ROCK PAPER SHOTGUN – Unrated**

“Cyberpunk 2077 is huge, sprawling, complex, and deeply flawed. It's at its best as a straightforward single player action game, with likable characters and thrilling capers in a fascinatingly detailed open world that looks better than any game before it. It's at its worst if you want it to be an RPG, an approach-as-you-please Deus Ex successor, or a polished piece of software. I enjoyed my time with it a lot, and I even want more of it, though I'm going to spend years complaining about its flaws. I'll enjoy the complaining, too.”

### **Destructoid – 7.5 / 10**

“While it's more than adequate at giving us a general look at a dystopian techno-future, a lot of the details are muddled ... It...works until it doesn't. Again, a lot of the meat of Cyberpunk is found in the cracks between the main questlines. Many supporting characters have a compelling story to tell; you just need to coax it out of them through optional missions, because the critical path really isn't going to deliver on that front. In some sections it feels cobbled together and rushed, quickly dispensing lore dumps and then whisking you out of a fixed location.”

### **IGN – 7.8 / 10**

“Even if you can nosedive V into a life of crime and greed, the repercussions highlight what's possible in the relief of what you reject in favor of power and money. Cyberpunk 2077 is a game about close relationships, or if you're roleplaying a more coldhearted type, seeing what life is like at the top without them.

I found it moving and life-affirming in the final moments, even in the face of near certain death and a relentless onslaught of bugs. I suppose it's an appropriate thematic throughline though: Cyberpunk 2077 is a game about V coming apart at the seams, in a city coming apart at the seams, in a game coming apart at the seams. Play it in a few months.”

# Lessons

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## **Give more time to explore character relationships:**

Dissonance formed through Jackie's death because players aren't given enough time to connect with Jackie emotionally; instead of giving the players a cutscene, have them play a few missions with a companion to get emotionally attached. Powerfully written characters can sometimes lead the show, allowing for a more immersive and emotionally driven experience.

## **Focus On Player Agency:**

The player agency in *Cyberpunk 2077* takes center stage in their combat system, allowing players to decide thematically if they want to lean into or away from their humanity through augmentation and cyberpsychosis. Additionally, the game could further explore this theme by giving players more story interactions that incorporate the mechanic.

## **Offer Meaningful Side quests:**

Kerry's companion side quest carries the story's thematic elements and uses dialogue to convey narrative themes without feeling overly expositional. As a result, the world comes to life and becomes an experience that begs to be explored. The game could have more side quests like this that carry that add depth to the world.

## **Explore Social Commentary Through Fiction:**

Technological ethics, class conflict, corporate greed, and other complex subjects can all be explored narratively in the cyberpunk setting. By employing fantastical or futuristic settings to address contemporary societal issues symbolically, writers can help audiences interact with real-world problems in a new way.

## **Embrace the Consequence of Choices:**

The path of the story is greatly affected by player decisions. Every decision, no matter how big or small, has an impact. This demonstrates that decisions made by characters should have significant and long-lasting effects on the story, teaching storytellers to embrace the complexity of choices.

## Summation

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Cyberpunk 2077," despite its rocky start, manages to immerse players in a captivating narrative that unfolds in a richly detailed world. Undeterred by its initial instability, the game delves deep into a compelling storyline, providing players with an experience that can captivate them for hours on end. The potential for the game to be a masterclass in narrative structure and character analysis is evident; however, it falls short due to the hurried development of the characters it introduces. With more time and refinement, the game could have truly reached its full potential, offering players a profound exploration of intricate storytelling and in-depth character examinations.

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