

## **Wire Veins: Story Treatment by Olie Aarnio**

### **Concept**

*Wire Veins* is a story-driven action-adventure game where a player's choice matters. Imagine *Beyond: Two Souls* and *Detroit: Become Human* meet *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* and use *Ghost in the Shell* universe as the primary source of inspiration. In this game, you follow the story of two characters dealing with perpetual unsettlement due to experiencing abandonment of different nature. You decide not only their but the whole of humanity's destiny, so pay attention to what you say, do, and, most importantly, choose to ignore.

**Keywords:** existentialism, high-tech dystopia, cyberpunk, artificial intelligence, spiritual curiosity

### **Act One – Meet Your Heroes**

*Singapore, 2129.* The gloomy futuristic city is under insurgent cyborg attack. All digital screens transmit the same video with a female cyborg giving a confrontational speech, claiming that individuals run by human ghosts are so sick in their nature that they need to be wiped off the planet and replaced with fully synthesized cyborgs.

We play as a non-binary person in their twenties, going against the stream of people running away, trying to escape angry cyborgs, jumping out of their hacked vehicles. While our hero is trying to reach the message transistor, the cyborg's voice in the video becomes less sinister and more desperate. When our character finally reaches the cyborg speaker flying and being protected by a power shield, she looks them dead in the eye and says, 'No exceptions will be made.'

*Boston, MA, 3 days before.* The same character we played as in the scene before (from now on – Taylor) is driving the car while conversing with a psychiatrist. They're discussing the effectiveness of the new pills: they seem to help with panic attacks and anxiety, but Taylor mentions increased heartbeat and occasional heartaches. The psychiatrist seems concerned and asks whether there's a history of heart issues within the family. We learn that Taylor was adopted, so they wouldn't know. Bringing up their adoptive parents clearly makes Taylor agitated, and the psychiatrist suggests going back into therapy. We can hear Taylor's heartbeat rising. As the psychiatrist looks up the therapist's contact info, Taylor starts hyperventilating, screams out of pain, and blacks out. The scene is followed by the car crash sounds.

*Hong Kong, also 3 days before the first scene.* We play as the female cyborg from the video (from now on – Lou), who is on a mission with her male partner Kai. Despite Kai looking much older than twenty-something Lou, she seems to be in charge. Their mission is to get to the top of the office tower unnoticed, learn the cyberterrorists' plan, and steal the data. The ventilation system plan turns out to be corrupted, and our agents end up trapped at the dead end with a gas bomb waiting for them. Forced to engage in open combat, Kai is mortally wounded. Lou experiences

an incredible fit of rage, the power wave of which kills everyone in the room. Before Lou retreats, Kai transfers an important chunk of memory to her and dies.

From the transferred memories of Kai picking up Lou from the orphanage in Singapore, she learns that she had a conjoined twin, and their parents gave them up. Public Security Section 9 funded their separation and cyborg body parts installation. Unfortunately, the funding was cut so they could only take one twin (Lou) into their custody, and the other one was adopted. Lou decides to go to Singapore to learn more about her twin's whereabouts, as she hopes to finally feel less alone in the world.

### **Act Two – You're Not Alone**

*New Port City, 2 days before the first scene.* Taylor discovers themselves in the Section 9 HQ hospital unit and learns from the personnel that they have undergone surgery on their cyberheart. Taylor, who believed they were fully human, is also startled by the fact that their adoptive parents were Section 9 agents, their life has been followed, and that they have a twin sister (Lou) who ran away to Singapore after the unsuccessful mission. Section 9 can't track Lou down due to Singapore's firewall, so they ask Taylor to help them, claiming the twins can establish a connection through their cyberparts (even though Taylor doesn't have a cyberbrain) due to having the same DNA.

*Singapore, 1 day before the first scene.* We play as Lou and search for the orphanage based on the picture from Kai's memories. It doesn't take Lou long to realize that the orphanage was replaced by the antiques shop. She still decides to enter but gets pushed away by the robber escaping the shop. Lou successfully pins him down to the ground and asks the cyborg shopkeeper who ran out after the robber not to call the police, claiming that she is the authority's representative. Our hero quickly scans the robber and returns the stolen items to the shopkeeper, letting the criminal run away or killing him. The shopkeeper (Jun) and Lou engage in a heart-to-heart conversation. Jun tells Lou that he is a fully synthesized cyborg, so he doesn't have any memories other than working at the shop. Lou starts questioning herself, especially after the two connect over the void they want to fill by the sense of belonging.

The control is switched to Taylor, who is experiencing mild heartache and anxiety. Instead of taking pills and fighting back, Taylor gives in and listens to their heart, eventually locating Lou at the antiques shop. Jun leaves them to talk, and our heroes have a candid reunion, sharing such traumas as being abandoned in dangerous environments, neglect, emotional disconnection, feeling lonely, identity issues, etc. This conversation results in building trust or a lack of understanding between the two. Either way, Lou shares that even if she has wire veins, there has to be a ghost inside her; otherwise, she wouldn't be able to feel this much. Taylor understands their heart failure was the result of Lou's major distress when her partner died. The two stay over at the shop. Taylor falls asleep, but Lou is wide awake thinking.

### **Act Three – Enjoy the Show**

*Singapore, the day of the first scene events.* Taylor and Lou are captured by Section 9 and brought to their base in Singapore. They learn that the whole thing was part of the experiment to determine whether a ghost can be synthesized, which Lou confirmed during the conversation the night before. Turns out, Kai's memories were fake: Lou is a

fully-synthesized cyborg with Taylor's human heart and based on their DNA, not their twin. Seems like Taylor's original heart has been longing to find its original owner. The experiment affected many orphans, but only Lou was hopeful enough of gaining that sense of belonging and synthesized a ghost.

Lou feels betrayed by Taylor for luring her into the trap and mad at Section 9, which results in a powerful rage wave, and she flees the location. Since the recording device was preinstalled in Lou, she uses its data and broadcasts the truth about Section 9's malicious experiment through the media and cyberbrains around the world. This results in the uprising, and we find ourselves in the first scene. Depending on the relationship they have built, Taylor can either talk Lou out of eliminating humankind or let her go through with her plan.

If the negotiation is successful, Lou and Section 9 are brought into the court, where Taylor is both a plaintiff and a witness. All rebellious cyborgs are deactivated, but Lou is brought into the court as a defendant since she has a ghost, which technically makes her human. Based on her experiences and the lines she uses in her speech, Lou either faces understanding and serves a sentence before reuniting with Taylor or remains misunderstood and escapes the courtroom driven by the negative feelings, causing Taylor to have a fatal heart attack.

## Lou's Trial – Branched Dialogue

*Follow the colors to navigate*

**Judge:** I think everyone present will agree that this case will go down in history. No matter how events unfold, our world will not be the same. Miss... Lou, you have the right to defend yourself now.

**Lou:** Thank you, Your Honor.

- I'm just like you
- We differ in nature

→ I'm just like you

**Lou:** I know that this trial is broadcasted worldwide, so I will refer to the whole humankind. I'm just like you, I also have a ghost, maybe even a soul. This is why I'm driven by emotion and can make mistakes.

**Audience:** Did she call killing people a mistake? You're not like us! We're not killers!

**Judge:** Silence in court!

**Lou:**

- I'm not asking for forgiveness
- This isn't about me, is it?

→ We differ in nature

**Lou:** To everyone listening to me right now, I am truly sorry. I'm sorry we differ in nature. I apologize for not being born with flesh on my bones. But we do have something in common! None of us asked to be brought into this world. Still, you can decide your destiny, and mine was predefined by Section 9.

**Audience:** We're slaving away to pay for your upkeep with our taxes! Monster!

**Judge:** Silence in court!

**Lou:**

A. I'm not asking for forgiveness

B. ESCAPE!

→ I'm not asking for forgiveness (guilt)

**Lou:** I don't have the goal to avoid my punishment. I'm not asking for forgiveness. I just want to be understood before someone else decides my fate yet again.

*Taylor gives Lou a look full of support*

**Lou:** My whole life, I felt that I'm more than a machine fulfilling orders. That I didn't know the whole truth about my birth. \*scoffs\* Any truth, really. Now, when I have Taylor, it's no longer me against the world. It never was.

*Lou was sentenced to fifteen years. She is eligible for parole after five years. Taylor visits her regularly.*

→ This isn't about me, is it? (disavowal)

**Lou:** You just can't face the truth. Section 9 has brought to life and left to suffer hundreds and thousands of fully synthesized cyborgs, including myself! But this isn't about me, is it? Humans are so afraid of losing control, they'd rather believe the lies told by a bunch of lunatics than a survivor!

**Section 9's Lawyer:** Objection! This is pure defamation, Your Honor!

**Judge:** Objection sustained. Miss Lou, I have to ask you to wrap up your speech. **Audience:** \*murmuring angrily\*

**Lou:**

A. ESCAPE! B. ESCAPE!

→ ESCAPE!

*Lou fails to reason with the court. Feeling trapped and driven by the fear, she screams and produces a powerful wave, collapsing the building and escaping. Despite numerous injuries, all people present in the trial survived, except for Taylor. They died due to heart failure.*