

Background

No need to memorize all this at all, but hopefully this is useful information to have in the back of your mind on what the context is for these lines at all, rather than just having these strange lines out of the blue!

The character speaking is Darrell Williams, a man who was once a programmer married to a statistician. But now he and his wife are in their 40s, and it has been nine years since That Day, when there was essentially a form of zombie apocalypse. Life has stabilized for them in a house surrounded by sprawling iron fences; they venture out for supplies and for any supplemental food that they don't grow themselves, and Darrell and Mary run in to other survivors every so often. Four years ago they had a baby girl, Lela, who is now precocious and strange. Strange because of her circumstances -- she has never met another child, and she has never known the pre-apocalyptic world, so she's very different from children we think of today. Much more self-sufficient, speaks like an adult, and is older.

Darrell is a strong man, and very dedicated to protecting his family. However, the fragility of the world causes no small amount of deep-seated emotional vulnerability in him. His wife is more the hard-nosed pragmatist, but he finds himself a bit melancholy about the sort of life that he once knew, but can no longer give to his family. That provider instinct does him credit, but also makes the whole ordeal more difficult on him because of every human's inability to control circumstances when a disaster like this strikes. At the start of the story, he has taken in a six year old white boy, Pierce, whose mother he was unable to save. As events unfold early in the story, both Pierce and Lela disappear, chased by supernatural monstrosities and kept from their parents by them. Darrell blames himself for this, as you might guess, but nonetheless he and Mary set out together to save the kids.

Normally games focus on the "adolescent journey," in a literary sense. An unattached young person (usually a man) goes out on a journey seeking to make a place for himself in the world, right injustice, or whatever other cause. Ultimately it's a journey of self-discovery, however. This journey is very different, as are the two main characters, Darrell and Mary. They are both older, mid-30s or thereabouts, and are quite confident in who they are and very much wise enough not to desire adventure. Like most people that age, they are instead seeking security and stability. However, parental love forces them into an adolescent-style journey against their own inclinations. They are not hoping to get anything out of this other than the return of their children; as with any parent whose child is missing, they are single-minded in their focus.

Hopefully this background gives some good insight into Darrell and his state of mind as he would be saying these things contained within the lines below. He is very strong, but has been pushed almost to his breaking point. So there's a deep-seated melancholy in him fastened to a grim determination to do everything in his power to get the kids back -- or nothing, there is no alternative. As you can guess, this story is rather allegorical in quite a number of ways (as are most zombie apocalypse stories, to be frank), but rather than exploring the human condition in general, this story is focused on the parent-child bond, as well as the general state of mind of someone in the life stage of mid-30s during a catastrophe.

In terms of overall pacing of these lines, I'm hoping that these come out powerful and slow; there's no particular hurry with them, and the lines are meant to linger rather than be something that are sped through. Some of these lines will be rearranged and use for voiceover narration in our trailer, so making sure that there is enough of a pause between each line is important.

Last note: please feel free to make the lines your own. If there's something that reads a bit awkwardly in terms of your normal speech patterns, feel free to flip it around to match how you'd naturally speak, or words you'd normally use. I really notice how in movies actors tend to have things that they say that are more specific to the actor than the movie they are in at the time, and I think that overall leads to the most convincing performances. Christopher Walken has a habit of saying "to the moon," whereas Hugh Grant says "oh right" quite a bit. Those distinguishing verbal characteristics are not something that any writer could anticipate and write convincingly. I think that the best performances come down to being a true collaboration between the actor and the writer, in short, when the actor takes the lines and makes them his or her own.

Scene 1

This is set very early in the game, after Pierce has been rescued by Darrell, but before Pierce and Lela disappear.

Darrell: I left the compound last night. Routine supply run.

Darrell: It's not often Mary or I come across other people out there. Not living ones, anyway.

Darrell: I was in a burned-out house when I heard them coming. A mother and her son... more than a dozen grays on their heels.

Darrell: At the end of it all the grays were dead, but so was the mother. (pause) The boy didn't even cry. I carried him home draped over my shoulder. Like something lifeless.

Darrell: Kids are funny these days. I've met a few who were born after That Day. (pause) My own daughter is four, and she's never met another child.

Darrell: This life... it does things to kids. The sort of childhood I remember is long gone. These kids don't think like I did. They're like miniature adults instead of truly being children.

Darrell: I regret that Lela cannot know the world I grew up in. (pause) But at least now she will have more company than just her parents.

Scene 2

This is also set early in the game, but after Pierce and Lela disappear.

Darrell: Mary and I are leaving the compound that has been our home these last nine years. All in all, we

had surprisingly good memories there.

Darrell: Now the place is swarming with grays, and we may never be able to go back.

Darrell: I never wanted this. I never wanted adventure, or to try to save the world.

Darrell: Mary and I created a tiny haven against the outside storm, and raised Lela there.

Darrell: But now that haven is gone. My baby girl is gone. (pause) And I have no idea what my future life looks like.

Scene 3

This is set a bit farther into the game, after the kids are located. However, the family finds themselves caught in a conflict between a supernatural entity named the Shadow Man, and another entity that they simply call the Giant Squid Monster.

Darrell: (very emotional) At least I know where the kids are now.

Darrell: I don't understand what is going on here. I don't think any man alive does.

Darrell: (disdainfully) I refuse to be a pawn for this "Shadow Man."

Darrell: I don't know why he wants my family. He wants Mary and I to kill grays? Fine. We do it all the time, anyway. If it will get our kids back, then fine.

Darrell: But I'm nobody's servant, least of all the grim reaper's. I AM going to get Lela back, but I'm not going raise her in a world where her daddy bowed to evil.

Scene 4

This is set vastly farther into the game, after a key scene which may or may not happen depending on what the player does. Pierce's mom has come back as a gray, but an unnaturally alert one who still clearly has affection for her son, confusing him greatly. The parents have taken to referring to her as "zombie mom," since they don't know her real name. She has been helping the parents in bits, trying to help them save her son. However, Shadow Man has now brought about her death.

Darrell: It doesn't seem right to call you "zombie mom." But I never knew your name, lady.

Darrell: I regretted your first death, but I never thought I'd regret the passing of a gray.

Darrell: I'm starting to have an inkling of why that damn squid is so interested in your son.

Darrell: And I think, if the Shadow Man is who I think he is, I even understand why he wants us to kill the

squid.

Darrell: All of us have been caught in the midst of two great evils.

Darrell: I was already trying to save your son, but still I thank you for trying to save my daughter.

Darrell: He's young, but we'll make sure he doesn't forget you.

Scene 5

This is set near the end of the game, after a key scene which may or may not happen depending on what the player does. Pierce has just died, sacrificing himself to the squid so that Lela could escape to her parents.

Darrell: (very emotional) DAMN! First I failed the mother, now her son.

Darrell: (still very emotional) I have my daughter back, and I swore I'd never be a hero.

Darrell: (emotion fighting with resolve) But that squid is going to die.

Scene 6

This is set at the end of the game -- one of several possible endings. The squid has just been dispatched from this world.

Darrell: The squid is dead. Part of me never thought I'd utter those words.

Darrell: Shadow Man is every bit as evil as I thought, but I have to say I agree with him on this one point.

Darrell: In a surprisingly gracious move, the Shadow Man is even leaving us alone to let us get on with our lives.

Darrell: (more darkly) Whether that just means he thinks he'll have more use for us in the future, I'm not certain.

Darrell: The important thing is that, for now, my family is safe.

Scene 7

This is set at the end of the game -- one of several possible endings. The Shadow Man has just been banished from the world.

Darrell: I... I actually can't believe this. Is he gone? Is he coming back?

Darrell: Shadow Man *seems* to be gone, but there's no way for us to know for sure.

Darrell: I don't relish the thought of living out the rest of my life worrying about his return. (pause) But at least we'll *have* a life.

Scene 8

This is set at the end of the game -- one of several possible endings. Everything has gone sideways and the whole family is being wiped out. These are Darrell's dying words. It's very difficult to get this ending, which is obviously the darkest one you can possibly get.

Darrell: I can't... I can't accept... not my baby girl. Not Lela. Not Mary.

Darrell: (anguished) I can't take this.

Darrell: (sluggishly surprised) Oh! Here they come...

Darrell: (even more sluggish) I'll be with... them... soon...

Scene 9

This is set at the end of the game -- one of several possible endings. The Shadow Man has been banished from the world, and zombie mom is still alive.

Darrell: All of that, and Pierce's mother is still with us. I don't know what we're going to do with her.

Darrell: But I think the squid knew she was different, and her son is even more different. She's resistant to whatever causes us to become grays. I bet he is, too.

Darrell: With the two of them here, I have unexpected hope for the first time in nine years. Maybe this world can be more than just isolated havens. Maybe we *can* rebuild something of the world Mary and I once knew.

Scene 10

This is set at the end of the game -- one of several possible endings. Pierce died as part of the game in this one, and this gets tacked on to one of the other endings.

Darrell: The boy died, but he didn't become a gray.

Darrell: I will forever regret his death, but it has also given us hope. Somewhere out there, there must be others who are immune.

Darrell: For so long I have focused inward, on my family and nothing more. But there is a wider world out there, and I now find myself in possession of knowledge that surely *must* be useful.

Darrell: Maybe there really is a chance that this world can again be more than a sea of isolated havens. Maybe the world my daughter grows up in won't be quite as bleak as I thought.

Scene 11

This is set at the end of the game -- one of several possible endings. Pierce lived as part of the game in this one, but his mother did not, and this gets tacked on to one of the other endings.

Darrell: The mother died, but she was never a true gray. Even to the last, she gives us hope.

Darrell: It seems clear that the squid thought Pierce was also partly -- or wholly -- immune to whatever turns people into grays.

Darrell: I never saw myself as a bringer of change. All I set out to do was carve out a good life for my daughter.

Darrell: But with everything we've seen and learned... maybe the life ahead of her is going to be much better than I ever hoped.