

## CYBERDECKER – story overview

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Dear reader, reviewer 😊 hope you had fun with your storybible writing. Just to inform you, I included the first task we had to do in this course (the high concept document) at the end of this document. I thought you could use it for reference of gameplay elements and genre. On the other hand, I hope the story overview is self-contained and explanatory. Should you wonder, what kind of game my proposal is, see details below. Best of luck with learning/designing and stay safe in these difficult times. <3 ZZ

1. Provide an overarching brief at the beginning of the document highlighting the foundations of your game's setting, plotline and main characters. This brief will frame the rest of your document.

*In a world after the apocalypse where people are tribal again while some of the technology is still operating and is known, the Datasphere is alive and well. Cities are semi-automated. You are a decker, someone who can join the stream of virtual world, explore, discover, improve, steal or even destroy whole digital systems. You are also a runner; it is your livelihood. You penetrate networks, deal with virtual AI corporations or help with securing real-life people and cities. Your long-life companion BernARD – a tiny little ball of circuits, hovering above your head and shoulders each time you need to wake up; singing awfully – is degrading. While exploring the issue with its faulty algorithms you discover a mystery of its (or even yours) origin. During your journey you will meet new companions, discover what happened with the world, destroy networks, steal corporate data, help the cities grow and most of all, you will find out who you really are...*

2. Provide a detailed description of your game's Setting. Help us imagine your game's world. Include concept art if you'd like.

*The story is set into a standard city-based cyberpunk theme. The cities are overpopulated, highly vertical, filled with people of unequal social classes living side by side but not together. Most of us depends on a tribe. The power is divided between medical, food processing and network companies that formed over time into a few unified global corporations. Value of human life depends on information (s)he has and/or acquired. To survive in the City – one could argue that it is no longer a city but a megalopolis, stretching over all of the Earth, covering the ground with concrete – is could be an easy task but not for those who wants to know the truth. Yes, there is a plenty of food and sustenance but if you look closely onto what companies are doing with common folks for keeping them well fed, entertained and uneducated, things will start to look odd. Add subcultural religions, faith in the Datasphere, mystery occult programmers, traditional tree-people (their goal is to grow trees again; could not achieve it in last few centuries) and Optimalizers (they see human body as an energy reservoir; harvesting and transforming energy)... and you have a lot of friction.*

3. Provide a detailed description of your game's major Plot or Storylines. Include concept art if you'd like.

### **Plot: What is wrong with BernARD – a little robot companion of yours?**

*Storyline: the starting point of our story, your trusty companion will break, and the plot is set. What is wrong with the little robot? Can it be repaired? Indices will lead you to the repairman and mainly to the Datasphere. Yes, BernARD can be repaired, his personality core escaped from the body to the Datasphere (which he despises). You embark on a self-proclaimed run into the cyberspace to save BernARD consciousness while trying to get spare parts for its*

robotic body. You will be successful but during this run you will find out about some weird corporation processes that started to happen few days ago. Something will happen, as they are all preparing for something, but you don't know for what. Also, you will hear a few disturbing facts about BernARD and will start to lose trust in it.

**Plot: For what are fractions and religions preparing themselves? They all started to stock up...**

Storyline: *During your last run to help BernARD function again, you will discover that something is coming. Religions are trying to grow, Datasphere is humming with activity, occult programmers are still doing the same thing – program occultly – traditional tree-people are buying processed food in enormous quantities and Optimizers started to gather peoples energy(= bodies) transparently without coverup. “Come to us, die and help your family with your body carbohydrates. You can also donate only a part of your body.” You run for a few times, gathering bits and pieces and observing the activities of corporations. Economy machinations, equipment aggregation, new software and a lot of runs emitted on the freelance decker market. After few runs and data steals you will come up with a few scenarios: (1) there will be a blackout of the Datasphere which secretly runs a lot of semi-automated cities on the world – and thus a total chaos of production, there will be blood; (2) there is a virtual war coming between corporations over influential servers and nodes in the Datasphere, that hold secrets to the world before the apocalypse and civilization rebirth; (3) the god will appear in the Datasphere AND in the physical environment, legend states that the god will choose who will live and who will die. It will be the second apocalypse. Now the thing is – in a way – all of these three scenarios will happen at the same time and you will be dragged into it.*

**Plot: What happened that the world was destroyed?**

Storyline: *An overall plot that is open and hopefully will remain open for interpretation. I tend to write simple logical reasons why the world was destroyed because what is fascinating (to me) is what came after the apocalypse not why the apocalypse happened itself. But I feel maybe BernARD had something to do with it. 😊*

4. Provide a detailed description of the characters in your game. Tell us about them and their reason for existing in the world. Include concept art if you like.

**You** – you sacrificed a lot of memory in order to acquire early implants to be a good runner. You had a lot of income at your disposal in the past, but that days are over. You are at the beginning again but with a lot of experience. Living without tribe for the moment. Only you, your runs, your faded memory, your little one-room flat and a small trusty robot floating around, jabbering all night. You don't think about it often, but... who the hell are you?

**BernARD** (lifelong companion) – robot with wits and its own personality. Likes to sing out of tune and helps you with getting up every day. Keeps you in shape and manages to be your company for a long time. He, she or it (depends on the mood) is afraid of the Datasphere and thinks it will consume its soul. You have long discussions about electronic soul together.

**Ceastrix** (companion) – one of the rebel Optimizers, body harvester that gone rogue, not sure with the believes of his tribe. Big body, strong hand from carrying corpses. Skilled with knives, oils, bandages and ropes. Datasphere is a learning tool for him. Clever, punctual, strong in opinions. Until now he was a believer, stable. Now he is in a state of faith flux and denial. He could – and he wishes – to smash BernARD every time he “sings”.

**Elea** (companion) – another runner, she thinks she is skilled, but she did only beginners runs. She is a caretaker in her tribe, a lot of people depends on her runs and thus she is not likely to undergo risks. She feels her tribe and runs can function in disjunction, but that is not

the case. You run; you are a runner. There is no escape from that. She joins for a big job with great rewards hesitantly, but she wants to provide for her tribe. And the food is getting scarce because something is coming up. She sees you and how well you run, and she realises, how amateurishly she runs. A conflict of adoration and hate will start to boil with every successful run.

**Dunwan** (trusted NPC) – an old technic and software developer, a mystic with his white hair and beard, with skin wrapped around the first generation of data ports, and with his body penetrated with computer parts from top to bottom... Dunwan is like a father to you. He will fix you when you will appear before his apartment all electrocuted and bloody. He will also bill you a fair amount of cash for it, *just to be sure, we are still conducting business...* On the other hand, Dunwan knows about you more than you know about yourself. Even more than BernARD.

**Fayea** (tribeswoman) – a leader of a division of tree-people with no interest in you at all and a lot of hatred for all your mechanic parts that will have to buy your services. Something is up and tree-people couldn't purchase rations, tools, books and factory material. Fierce, beautiful, blind in faith, long after the time she should have chosen a mate. Alone in her leadership she will share with you after few successful runs her doubts. She thinks war is coming and she knows tree-people life and its religion will be eradicated in a few days. Should tree-people arm themselves? Should she lead her people away from their beliefs?

5. Explain how your game's mechanics, or gameplay relate to the overall narrative of your game.

The Datasphere – virtual network (matrix) – consist of nodes and transitions in between them. While stealing and/or exploring data you will discover story bits (text, images, short video/audio files). Think a mixture of CYOA (choose your own adventure gamebooks), visual novel standard (dialogue), with branching dialogue (Baldur's Gate, Pillars of Eternity) and audiovisual recordings (typical audio log, terminal, emails – Deus Ex; videos – Her Story). Thus, through gameplay – choosing runs to run; exploring semi-generated data networks under time pressure – stealing data – the player will be uncovering what is going on. Gameplay => get the story bits; reconstruct from the story bits what is going on => another gameplay. Choosing companions, have discussion with them, running with them also influence the story and gameplay. Dunwan companion is designed to be a combination of a shop / upgrade shop / hideout element of the game.

# CYBERDECKER – high concept document

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**Target Audience:** experienced players with more willingness to invest time in a story  
**Gamer Type:** explorer, achiever  
**Target Platforms:** mobile, but the idea is valid for PC/consoles (it differs with dodging movement)  
**Genre:** decker rogue-lite with a pinch of skill-based bullethell dodging  
**Number of Players:** 1  
**Projected Release Date:** 2022

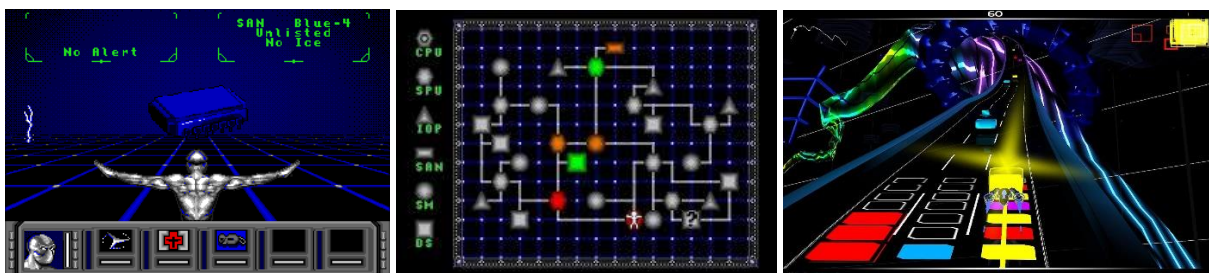
## High Concept Statement

In a world after the apocalypse where people are tribal again while some of the technology is still operating and is known, **the datasphere is alive and well**. Cities are semi-automated. You are a decker, someone who can join the stream of virtual world, explore, discover, improve, steal or even destroy whole digital systems. You are also a runner; it is your livelihood. You penetrate networks, deal with virtual AI corporations or help with securing real-life people and cities. Your long-life companion BernARD – a tiny little ball of circuits, hovering above your head and shoulders each time you need to wake up; singing awfully – is degrading. While exploring the issue with its faulty algorithms you discover a mystery of its (or even yours) origin. Get better at hacking, buy new decks, evolve your software tools, save companions, discover what happened with the world, destroy networks, steal stealthily data, help the cities grow and most of all, find out who you really are...

**Core mechanics:** *Story -> Explore -> Fight -> Improve*

## Feature Set:

- **Story** simple non-linear dialogue with (fake) choices and menu-based movement in the world (gamebook/MUD style).
- **Explore** semi-generated node networks; some quest related.
  - Movement between nodes can be called *ride-throughs*.
- **Fights** are in the theme of hacking real-time. It is a mixture of:
  - (1) time-based strategy choice (abilities with fill up timer; standard JRPG Action Battle System – similar to FTL: Faster Than Light) and
  - (2) skill-based avatar positioning and bullet dodging (moving the avatar from left to right; it implies the Audiosurf / Guitar Hero game mechanic / UI visuals).
- **Improvements** menu-based item buying/selling



Shadowrun (1994, Sega Genesis – (from the left: 1) avatar in virtual world and the node before him, skills on the bottom; (2) node structure of the network); Audiosurf (2008, PC – (3) a visual reference for “ride-throughs”)

## Player experience goals:

- adrenaline => during hacking/exploring/bossfights
- getting better => build + leveling (new deck, new software, character traits, battle strategies)
- exploring => the datasphere (nodes, hidden places, hints, story bits, embedded narrative)
- solving the mystery => story, ending(s)

### Team Roles

- **Coder** (everything)
- **Artists** (concept, 2D, 3D, UI, animation, effects)
- **Designer / Tester** (battle system, RPG progression, handmade story networks layout, content generation rules, enemies, skills, balancing)
- **Writer** (overall story arc, plot, variants, dialogues)

### The Competition

Inspiration consist of cyberpunk theme for the story setting and its narrative elements. From game mechanics perspective it is a thought mixture of *Shadowrun* (1994; its decker phase), JRPG Action Battle System (*Dragon Quest*, *Final Fantasy*, *FTL*) and basic bullet dodging (*Audiosurf*, *Thumper*, *Guitar Hero*). Also, games like *Uplink*, *Hacknet* and so can be unintentionally included – but I played them 10+ year ago. I am not aware of any pure cyberdecking games, most of the time the cyberdecking is just a minigame or a part of a game.

### Compelling aspects / USP

The game is a hypothetical unique mixture of a decker simulator (strategy, RPG), bullethell dodging (skill based), semi-generated rogue-lite world (networks) while still retaining validity with the theme (postapo-cyberpunk). Are there any narrative driven cybredecking games?