

High-level concept

Working title:

Genre:

Narrative-driven life sim / adventure with branching story, light resource management (time, energy, mental health).

Core fantasy:

You live the same kind of day over and over in Tokyo as a burned-out guy in his late 30s, but slowly discover that:

1. You *are* paying off karmic debt from a brutal past life.
2. You can choose *how* you suffer: resentful, numb, or conscious and compassionate.
3. Your small choices in a very ordinary life ripple into different endings.

Emotional pillars:

1. **Ordinary life as a spiritual trial.** No epic battles, just _answer this message, stay late, feed the cat_ but every choice is secretly existential.
2. **Self-hatred vs self-compassion.** The real boss fight is inside his head.
3. **Karma as feedback, not punishment.** The game never says _good_ or _bad_ just _this is what these choices grow into._
4. **Cat as quiet guide.** Not a talking mascot, but a recurring presence and mirror.

Structural proposal: daily loop

- * The game plays out over **X days** (e.g. 30-60 in-game days).
- * Each day has **fixed beats**, but the events inside those beats vary based on your previous choices.

Daily beats:

1. **Wake up**
 - * Check phone (messages from boss, family, spam).
 - * Simple choices: snooze, get up immediately, morning ritual (coffee, stretches, stare into void).
 - * Stats shift based on habits: e.g. you can carve out rituals that protect your sanity.
2. **Cat encounter**
 - * Neighbor's cat may or may not appear.

- * You can ignore it, pet it, talk to it, feed it, confess your thoughts to it.
- * This affects a hidden **Openness** and **Cat Affinity** stat.

3. **Commute**

- * Vignettes: crowded train, old lady who needs a seat, someone bumps you, a crying child, street musician, homeless man, etc.
- * Choices:
 - * Stay in your head and stew.
 - * Act kindly (offer seat, small gestures).
 - * Act cold or hostile.
- * These feed into your **Karmic Trajectory** and your internal narrative.

4. **Work**

- * Tasks come in: overtime requests, co-worker screwups, unreasonable boss demands.
- * You are **always competent**, but choice is:
 - * Overperform quietly (reinforcing martyrdom).
 - * Set boundaries (_I can do that tomorrow_).
 - * Passive-aggressive sabotage or harsh responses.
- * **Company never truly rewards you**; your change is internal, or in subtle human relationships.

5. **Evening**

- * Options: go straight home, wander the city, convenience store, tiny ramen place, park, bar, call someone, stay late at work.
- * This is where you can build or reject small human connections:
 - * Chat with the convenience store clerk.
 - * Talk to a neighbor.
 - * Or isolate and doomscroll.

6. **Night / Dream**

- * Short dream vignette that shows a scene from his past life.
- * The content changes based on your Karmic Trajectory.
- * At first they're symbolic and confusing.
- * Later they become clearer: you see yourself as someone cruel and powerful doing harm.
- * The game **never sermonizes**, it just shows parallels between then and now.

Core systems

Stats

- * **Self-Hatred** (SH): how harshly he judges himself.
- * **Self-Compassion** (SC): ability to treat himself kindly.
- * **Isolation** (IS): tendency to withdraw from others.
- * **Connection** (CN): quality of genuine connections (cat counts).
- * **Resentment** (RS): bitterness at the world / “why me”.
- * **Karmic Clarity** (KC): awareness of his past life and what “karma” actually means.

Some of these can be visible (e.g. IS, CN), others hidden (KC, RS) to keep it mystical.

These stats drive:

- * Available dialogue options.
- * Tone of internal monologue.
- * What dream scenes you see.
- * Which endings unlock.

Choice design

The game’s soul is in the choices. Important principles:

- * Avoid obvious good/bad labels.
- * Choices often look like:
 - * Do it perfectly and silently.
 - * Do it adequately and go home.
 - * Refuse and accept consequences.
 - * Do it but complain internally / externally.
- * Many choices affect **multiple axes**:
 - * Staying late might reduce RS (feels safe: I did my duty) but increase SH and IS.
 - * Saying no might spike anxiety now, but increase SC and CN later.

Karma system

He is paying karma from a past life. Mechanically:

- * **Karmic Debt**: a hidden pool representing his past misdeeds.
- * Early game: world feels stacked against him (bad luck events, rejection, constant extra work).
- * As he makes choices that *acknowledge suffering consciously* (help others, accept consequences without self-pity, show compassion), the game:

- * Slightly reduces Karmic Debt.
- * Makes life *not easier*, but more *meaningful* (different scenes, deeper connections, more honest dialogues).
- * If he leans into cruelty, disconnection, and resentment:
 - * Karmic Debt increases.
 - * Past life dreams show him becoming the monster again.
 - * The universe starts echoing that: small scenes where he *becomes* the person who hurt him.

Karma is not a point system that gives loot; it's a lens that changes the story composition.

Narrative structure

Acts

You could structure it in 3 acts:

1. **Act I - Numb Routine**

- * Days are very similar.
- * Player thinks it's just a _sad sim._
- * Dreams are vague and disturbing but not clearly connected to karma.
- * Cat is just _a cat._

2. **Act II - Cracks in the Shell**

- * New events start appearing: a junior colleague who admires him, an old friend reaching out, an HR evaluation, neighbor trouble, landlord issues.
- * Past life becomes clearer: you see him as a ruthless officer / warlord / corporate sociopath in some other era.
- * Explicit clues of _this is karmic payback_ appear.
- * Player choices begin to diverge the story strongly.

3. **Act III - Confrontation**

- * Big events hit: layoffs, health scare, the cat disappears, neighbor crisis, major office injustice.
- * Here is where your accumulated trajectory matters:
 - * Do you collapse?
 - * Do you lash out?
 - * Do you take radical responsibility and walk away?
- * Final dream sequences show either:

- * Repetition of the past cruelty,
- * Or conscious acceptance and transformation.

Endings

1. **The Numb Wheel**

- * He keeps the job, stays competent, never confronts anything.
- * Final scenes: same morning, same train, same office.
- * Internal monologue slightly softened if you made some kind choices, but overall: karmic wheel barely moved.
- * Tone: melancholic, not _game over,_ just _you chose not to choose._

2. **The Resentful Descent**

- * He leans heavily into resentment and cruelty: snaps at colleagues, tramples others, becomes emotionally dead.
- * Final dream: he *becomes* his past-life abuser fully.
- * Epilogue shows future life hooks: he's basically lining himself up for an even harsher incarnation.
- * Needs careful handling, but thematically: _doubling down on your karma._

3. **The Quiet Acceptance**

- * He doesn't quit. He stays in the same job, same city.
- * But:
 - * He sets boundaries.
 - * He adopts the neighbor's cat when something happens to the neighbor.
 - * He cultivates a small circle of people he treats with tenderness.
- * Final dream: past life scene where he chooses *not* to take an easy cruel action.
- * The world doesn't change much, but his *relationship to suffering* does. That's the win.

4. **The Radical Break**

- * After enough Karmic Clarity & Self-Compassion, he hits a breaking point:
 - * He quits (even though it terrifies him).
 - * He downsizes or takes a low-status job that gives him more breathing space (barista, caretaker, translator, whatever fits your taste).
 - * He sacrifices status and safety but steps out of the karmic pattern of _endure abuse silently._
 - * Final dream: past life dissolves; he sees himself across lifetimes and chooses a more conscious, humble path.

5. **The Bodhisattva Loop**

- * Hardest to unlock. Requires:

- * High Self-Compassion.

- * High Connection.

- * High Karmic Clarity.

- * Instead of _escaping suffering,_ he accepts that life will be painful but decides:

- * I'll stay in this world and be kind anyway.

- * Maybe he *doesn't* leave the job. He uses his position to protect juniors, quietly fights for fairness, mentors others, and keeps feeding the cat.

- * Final dream is non-linear: he sees multiple lives, his own cruelty and his own kindness, and smiles anyway.

- * The message: the point was never to dodge karma, but to carry it differently.

The Cat

The cat deserves its own section.

- * Mechanically:

- * Appears most days in small scenes.

- * You can ignore, pet, feed, monologue to it, or even be cold to it.

- * Narrative functions:

- * Safe, nonjudgmental presence.

- * Mirror: its behavior reacts subtly to your internal state – skittish when you're harsh, relaxed when you're gentle.

- * Optional big reveal:

- * The cat is connected to someone from the past life (victim or witness).

- * Or the cat is **nothing mystical at all**, and the karmic meaning is that *you* chose love anyway.*

You can decide if you want an explicit metaphysical twist or leave it in Schrödinger territory.

Game design doc skeleton

1. **Overview**

- * Title

- * Genre

- * Target platforms
- * One-sentence hook
- * 1-paragraph pitch

2. **Theme & Pillars**

- * Main themes (karma, suffering, self-forgiveness)
- * Emotional pillars (ordinary life as trial, quiet transformation, etc.)

3. **Core Gameplay**

- * Daily loop structure (morning, commute, work, evening, dream)
- * Core interactions (dialogue choices, routine choices, micro-events)
- * Time structure (number of days, act progression)

4. **Systems**

- * Stat definitions and effects (SH, SC, IS, CN, RS, KC)
- * Karma system and how it influences events
- * Relationship system (cat, coworkers, neighbor, etc.)

5. **Narrative Design**

- * Protagonist bio (current life)
- * Past life concept (who he was, what he did)
- * Supporting cast:
 - * Boss
 - * Junior coworker
 - * Neighbor
 - * Convenience store clerk
 - * Family (maybe distant)
 - * Cat
- * Outline of Acts I-III
- * Key turning points and big events

6. **Endings**

- * Numb Wheel
- * Resentful Descent
- * Quiet Acceptance
- * Radical Break
- * Bodhisattva Loop
- * Unlock conditions & key scenes

7. **Art & Audio Direction (high-level)**

- * Visual style (muted Tokyo, small pops of color when connection happens)

- * UI vibe (simple, clean, slightly oppressive)
- * Soundscape (city noise, train sounds, minimal music that shifts with internal state)

8. **Technical Notes**

- * Data-driven system for events?
- * Flag system for karmic states?
- * Localization-friendly dialogue structure?

Tone & philosophy

Important: the game shouldn't feel like a moral lecture or a self-harm fantasy.

- * It should **validate** that life can suck unfairly.
- * It should **not** glamorize self-destruction.
- * It should show that:
 - * You can't control most external events.
 - * You *can* choose how you meet them.
 - * Karma isn't _you deserve to be crushed,_ it's _patterns echo until you meet them differently._