

Followers and Dialogue by Clare Lauren Kelly

Now this is definitely going to be one of the more random little essays that I write, and I am totally fine with that because I believe it is important to write about the things you like, the things you enjoy, what you find interesting and so on, no matter what others may think. Because mainly I feel that you should write for yourself, and hopefully there are others who will enjoy whatever it is that you end up creating, because there are bound to be others in the world that have similar interests or ideas as you.

As someone who grew up playing video games and watching my older brother play them as well, there are some video games that have definitely been a big part of my life, some for much longer than others, and the impact they have had will be varied depending on the game, what I enjoyed about it and more. But one game that will always stand out to me as one that I enjoyed watching my older brother play and one that I play myself, a game that I will never get tired of no matter how often or how long I play, is *Skyrim*. More specifically known as *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*.

Now there is a whole lot in that game that I could go on and on about and this essay would never end because there is just so much to that game to talk about, good, bad and sad since there are some quests you can stumble upon that really get to me emotionally in some way. Which some people might think is strange since it is just a video game, but there are some characters, storylines, encounters or smaller quests that you can stumble upon or encounter that really are so well written it's hard not to feel a bit emotional. Now that can be happiness, annoyance, anger, terror, sadness and so much more. For the *Skyrim* players out there who have encountered the lighthouse quest where you have to find out what happened to the family that lived there, I think you'll know what I mean with how sad some of the quests can be. That one still gets me every time I go through and play it again despite knowing just what is going to happen and the outcome.

For this essay though, I want to talk about one specific character, one character that players can come across as a random encounter and then later interact with more during the quest line of a specific guild should you choose to join it. A character that can also become your follower should you decide to take them on your adventures with you after a certain point, and

honestly he is probably my favorite character and companion there is, and I know that there are a fair amount of people who don't like him, including my older brother. For those of you who play or who know the game, the character that I'm talking about is the quirky and often hilarious, as well as extremely entertaining, the Keeper of the Night Mother, the Dark Brotherhood member Cicero. The assassin who dresses like a jester in dark red and black with small accents of gold and brown, who I believe has some of the most amusing dialogue, actions, and responses to your actions or environment you are in of all the characters you can interact with or have as your follows.

The man who voiced Cicero, Andrew Morris, did so well with the somewhat high pitched voice, the laugh and all the little vocal things that make the character so unique, which also happens to be the very thing that some players find annoying. Not me though, I love Cicero and all of his quirks and lines, makes things a lot more amusing as I play when I've been standing in one place for a bit and Cicero starts randomly dancing and clapping like you might expect a court jester to do. I love that the developers added that in for his character. So, Andy Morris is the one that is responsible for giving the Keeper his very distinct, magical and high-pitched jester personality, and if you have gone through the Dark Brotherhood quest line and read Cicero's journals, then you know that he wasn't always the way he ended up which is pretty interesting to me. I really enjoyed the amount of detail that went into Skyrim in general for everything, but the detail that went into the little things especially, for the characters and their backstories, for the quests you can stumble upon and the items you can find in people's homes, stores and other buildings or caves.

To focus on Cicero a bit, his character is so unique in so many ways, but one of the things that I mentioned was his dialogue and the reactions that he has to different people or places that you go throughout the game. It is also worth mentioning that Cicero talks in a mix of the first and third person which is interesting and feels very fitting for his character, but it can be a bit confusing or throw me off slightly when Cicero actually switches between the two in the same bit of dialogue. There are also times when Cicero will call himself the Fool of Hearts, and I enjoy that little detail as well.

When you take Cicero with you to Windhelm, there is a quest there where you have to discover who the Butcher of Windhelm is and put a stop to their murders during the night. Now whether or not you finish this quest line, there is a bit of dialogue that Cicero has as you wander through Windhelm that makes me laugh nearly every time I hear it, but is also a good example of the voice actor making a specific choice in how to play the character. The line that Cicero has is as follows, “Oohhh... Cicero's heard about the Butcher. Interesting knife work. Just... Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab! And then... Stab, stab, stab, stab, stab!” There is so much emotion and inflection in this line, because he talks normally at first then suddenly when he starts saying stab he basically yells it, then goes back to talking normally, and once again when saying stab he begins yelling again.

Honestly there are so many great examples of Cicero's dialogue that I really enjoy and the voice actor does so well with giving Cicero personality through his voice and how each line is said, but some credit does need to go to those who came up with the dialogue as well. Cicero is a perfect example of a trope I enjoy called Shifting Voice of Madness, which is an oddball character that has a weird way of speaking or expressing themselves by a speech pattern, mannerisms, and just their voice overall. Very fitting for Cicero. Here are a few of my other favorite lines from Cicero that happen over different quests or places, and if you have the time and are interested, I highly recommend going to his Wiki page and looking through the dialogue on there because honestly I feel like it is a lot of fun to read through it all.

So here you go, a few of my favorite little lines that usually happen while just walking around. “...I saw a dwarf! I did! I did! Cicero saw a dwarf! There... Oh. No, sorry. No dwarf...” This happens usually in Markarth I believe, but it made me laugh so hard the first time I heard Cicero exclaim that he saw a dwarf. “He he he... Crazy? Cicero? He he he he... That's madness...” Always been a fan of this one, the little laugh that he has along with the genuine confusion and question in his voice for the first part, and the absolute glee at the end always makes me smile.

Then when going through the Dark Brotherhood quest if you decide to kill Cicero, something that I have never actually done because I enjoy the Fool of Hearts, as you are fighting to kill him Cicero does not change how he acts at all, laughing and joking as you try to kill each

other. When you first attack him, Cicero springs back up from the ground and the fight begins “Ha ha! Behold the final trick of the Fool of Hearts! You think me near death? Think again!” Then while you fight, he has some other funny little lines before you kill him and for most of them he sounds cheerful. “Stab you, stab you, stab you!” Or, “I’m bleeding! Ha ha ha ha ha!” Also, “Ow! Cheap shot!” And then as you kill Cicero, he remains ever loyal to the Night Mother he was sworn to protect and look after as the Keeper, “Coming... Mother...” Now there is a lot more dialogue I always enjoy hearing as I play and there may be others who agree with me, but even if you might not find Cicero to be a good follower because he annoys you or something, I still think it is worth looking through his quotes on his Wiki for a few minutes.

And I have to say, another reason that I really like having Cicero as my following, is because he is listed as an essential character and once you don't kill him during that one quest, Cicero becomes a character you cannot kill. So no matter how dangerous your journeys are throughout the game, you won't have to worry about losing your follower to a trap, an enemy, or to any of the many other possible ways to die in *Skyrim*. One thing that is hard for me, is when the follower that I have dies while we were on some quest or exploring in a cave that ended up being a lot bigger or more dangerous than I had originally thought it would be. Part of that is because I am sad that I have now lost a follower, and usually it is a follower that I actually enjoy having with me and is useful, I try to go back to the most recent save so I can try and keep them alive, but it doesn't always work.

Another thing for me about why it can be bad to lose a follower, is that I happen to be a hoarder when I play, something my brother will make fun of me for in good humor, and honestly I can't really help it no matter what game I play. I am the type of player that maxes out their carry limit and has learned ways to get around quickly so I can sell some of the armor, weapons or other items that are clogging up my inventory and weighing me down. Or if I'm not very far over my limit, I'll eat some potion ingredients and food to try and lighten myself just enough to be able to fast travel to the nearest town.

As I've continued playing and gone through more quests, there are some more rewards now that I have, spells mainly, that allow me to help lighten my inventory easily or summon a horse so I can mount it then fast travel instantly somewhere else. If you visit any of my main

houses also since I have a few that I tend to favor over the others and use as my main home bases or storage areas, there will be a lot of items in the various chests and wardrobes there that I might need at some point down the line. I am partial to smithing, cooking, alchemy and enchanting so I tend to have a lot of items I might need for those activities that I pick up as I go throughout the world then transport back to my home for when I might need it later on or for when I decide it is time for a crafting spree.

So when I have a follower, I always give them items from my inventory to lighten my own load and to let them change out any gear or weapons they are using if I come across something that they like better. Which means when my follower dies, I don't want to leave whatever I gave them there since I know I won't really be able to get it all back. Which means I now have to carry everything that I have given to my follower. Now in my defense, I don't just take everything I come across, I do have limits or standards that I use to limit what I'm taking, comparing the value versus the weight of it, but I still end up with a lot of things because I also enjoy hunting in the game and gathering ingredients as I come across them.

But with Cicero, he can't die which makes him an amazing follower for a hoarder player like me. He is also pretty good with stealth which works for a player that likes to try and sneak around, and at times I like to switch between fighting up close and ranged attacks, so having Cicero who will fight in close quarters is helpful. Except for when he decides to just run into whatever is going on the second he notices a potential enemy, setting off traps and blocking the shot I may have been trying to make. But having the quirky jester as my follower with all the fun bits of dialogue, random laughing and spontaneous dancing makes up for whatever else he may do while we are making our way through a cave. Also, it is always kind of funny to me when Cicero will randomly exclaim, "Let's kill someone!" very gleefully, even more so if he says it after we have just killed someone.

To close, *Skryim* is a game I don't think I'll ever really get tired of no matter how long I continue to play it, and while there are things that I try to do differently or focus on each new play through, one thing I'm never really able to change is my choice of follower. Honestly having Cicero as my follower with him spouting off random jokes and other dialogue or laughing for no apparent reason while trudging my way through Blacreach or Dwemer Ruins always brings a

smile to my face. Give the Fool of Hearts a try as your follower I say, you might get annoyed but you won't be bored.