

Game Narrative Review: God of War

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Game Title: God of War

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Developer: SIE Santa Monica Studio

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Overview

What does it mean to be a God? What does it mean to be a husband?

What does it mean to be a father? What does it mean to *change*?

God of War is an action-adventure video game where the player takes the role of *Kratos*, a man haunted by a dark past wishing to live a normal and peaceful life with his new family. Unlike the previous *God of War* games, which were loosely based on Greek mythology, the new one, which is also called *God of War*, is loosely based on Norse mythology and introduces some pivotal Norse gods throughout the story.

The game follows *Kratos* and his son *Atreus* as they journey to fulfill the final wish of *Atreus'* late mother, *Faye*, which was to spread her ashes at the highest peak in the nine realms of Norse mythology. In their journey, *Kratos* and *Atreus* are faced with many challenges, many of which involve immortal Norse Gods themselves. In its essence, however, *God of War* is truly a story of family, of broken relationships, of loss, grief and acceptance, and of a man with a haunting past on a quest for redemption.

But most of all, *God of War* is a story of father and son.

Characters

Kratos

The main character of the game. Everything about *Kratos* in *God of War* is a contrast between who *Kratos* once was in his past and who he is at present. Once a Spartan

warrior turned Greek God of War, Kratos was a killing machine fueled by vengeance for being tricked into murdering his own family and a multitude of other innocents. This mad quest for vengeance leads him to annihilate a major chunk of the entire Olympian Pantheon. The new God of War, on the other hand, is the story of Kratos' redemption. Kratos has moved on from his past and lives in ancient Norway, with his wife and son. The primary struggle in this game is not a quest for vengeance against powerful and immortal Gods, but rather that of parenthood – *what does it mean to be a good father?* Hiding his own and his son's true nature – that of being Gods – from Atreus, Kratos hopes to live the life of a mortal being, away from the constant backstabbing and betrayal that is common in the world of immortals. He later understands that only by being honest about his true nature will he be able to protect his son from the cycle of vengeance.

Kratos' story is that of acceptance, redemption, and fatherhood.

Faye

Faye, or *Laufey*, is Kratos's wife. While she is already dead before the main narrative of the game begins, she is mentioned throughout the story of the game. Her influence and significance is felt consistently across all major realms in the game. In old tales and those told by Mimir, she is told to be a kind and passionate Giant who went out of her way to help those in need. She is shown as a compassionate person, and the polar opposite of everything that Kratos was in his past, in Greece. Even in death, she acts as the guiding beacon for Kratos and Atreus when all else turns to darkness. It is everything that Faye stood for that helps Kratos and Atreus come full circle, and become honest and better Gods than those who had been.

Faye is the beacon of hope that guides the main protagonists.

Atreus

Atreus is the son of Kratos and Faye. Unlike Kratos, Atreus is passionate and takes to his mother. He starts off as a naïve, young child who does not understand the consequences of his actions, and thus, makes rash, careless decisions. However, his tendency to be compassionate is at great odds with his wish to be recognized by his father as a warrior: Atreus opposes harming even a deer. Once Atreus learns of his and his father's godhood, however, his behaviour flips completely. At this point he becomes arrogant and refuses to listen to Kratos' orders, reflecting the very nature Kratos wished to protect him from: the Cycle of Patricide, of vengeance, and of arrogance. He starts becoming more and more like Kratos in the past, while Kratos starts to mirror the honesty of young Atreus. Eventually, however, Atreus realizes his mistakes and we see him speak wiser beyond his years. Atreus' character development comes full circle towards the end when he starts to not only understand the burdens that come with the power of Gods, but also sympathize with the struggles of Freya as a mother and wife, of Magni and Modi's relationship with his father, and of the feud that the Huldra brothers wished they never had.

Atreus's story is about finding meaning and purpose through exploration.

Baldur

The primary antagonist of the story is Baldur, son to Odin and brother to Thor. Throughout the narrative of God of War, Baldur is portrayed as an arrogant character with deep pent-up resentment towards most characters, but especially towards his mother, Freya. This is because Freya had blessed him with invincibility as a young child, hoping to save him from a fateful prophecy. That blessing became a curse in his mind as it also inhibited him from feeling any physical pain, or any sensation at all. Years of being devoid of feeling physical sensation turned him into the psychopathic character that the player sees in the game, as Baldur fears nor death nor the consequences of his actions. His rage is fueled by vengeance as he wishes to punish his mother for what she did to him. He is initially sent by Odin to track Faye, and consequently Kratos and Atreus. Upon discovering that Kratos is an even match for his physical strength, Baldur quickly develops resentment towards him too and is determined to kill him. In the final battle between Kratos and Baldur, Baldur's manic tendencies peak as his invincibility blessing is lifted. Baldur experiences what can only be described as sensory overload, and he revels in it to the point that he wishes for extreme pain. While Baldur's story is one of tragedy, he meets his end with his biggest wish fulfilled: to be able to feel.

Baldur serves a cautionary tale of uncontrolled hatred.

Freya

The Witch of the Woods, Freya is a supporting character who uses Vanir (from the realm of Vanaheim) magic to aid Kratos and Atreus throughout their journey. It is not until later in the story that the players are told that Freya is actually a Vanir goddess, and used to be the wife of Odin, the ruler of the Aesir (from the realm of Asgard) Gods. She is also revealed to be the mother of Baldur. Freya can be compared to Kratos, in that she is also a God with a past that haunts her to this day. Just like Kratos, she is a parent looking for a second chance at making things right with her child. She is ready to do anything to gain the love of her son back, even if that means letting Baldur kill her. Her persistence to set things right with Baldur is seen at its peak in the final battle with Baldur, where she reanimates the corpse of a giant in an attempt to protect Baldur from Kratos. It is interesting to note that she still does not directly hurt Kratos or Atreus, because she understands the pain of being a parent to a child and does not want any harm to come to either Kratos or Atreus.

Freya's tale is a desperate quest for redemption, mirroring Kratos' own story.

Magni and Modi

Magni and Modi are sons of Thor. While they do not play a remarkably big role in the story of this game, similarly to Freya and Baldur, they serve the purpose of showing

broken family relationships in the game. They are initially sent by Odin and Thor to capture Kratos and Atreus. Kratos kills Magni while protecting Atreus from the brothers, and Modi escapes. Later in the story, Kratos and Atreus come across a worn-out, battered Modi, who reveals that a furious Thor beat him within inches of death, as Thor blamed Modi's cowardice for the death of his other son. Kratos, Atreus, and the player, are yet again met with another broken family, where even sons and fathers have fragile relationships built not on love but on the ego and pride of Godhood.

Magni and Modi are a stark reminder of fractured family relationships.

Mimir

The single most important supporting character in the story from an exposition perspective. To talk properly about Mimir in depth would require a separate breakdown of his character. He is the Norse God of Knowledge and Wisdom. "Mimir" means "the rememberer" or "the wise one" in Ancient Norse. In the game, Kratos meets Mimir while he is imprisoned on Midgard's (Earth's) highest peak, bound to the trunk of a tree by Odin. He requests Kratos to cut his head off as he is tortured by Odin every single day. Mimir says he would rather be brought back to life and live without his body than live with in an imprisoned, tortured, carcass. Once life is restored into Mimir's head by Freya, Mimir becomes a valuable ally to Kratos and Atreus in their journey. He is a wise and funny character, who tells tales of mythical creatures, of giants and gods and goddesses, of battles that happened in times past, and of prophecies foretold that would lead to Ragnarök (the end of everything). Mimir is the well of infinite knowledge that helps Kratos and Atreus – and, by extension, the player – fill in the gaps in the story, approach certain plot elements with guidance, and expand on the general lore of the fictional Norse setting that the game is set in, without feeling like unnecessary exposition.

Mimir guides, unveiling Norse saga's depths.

The Huldra Brothers

Sindri and Brok are dwarf brothers, known in the Norse world as master blacksmiths, mostly known for making Thor's hammer, Mjölnir, and Faye's Leviathan axe, now wielded by Kratos. Sindri is a kind, polite dwarf and is apprehensive of Kratos initially, but comes to respect the father and son duo. Brok, on the other hand, is ill-mannered and rude, and uses foul language while conversing. Sindri and Brok have two very contrasting personalities, but they both mean no harm to Kratos and Atreus and are meaningful allies to them; they aid them by upgrading their weapons. Sindri and Brok act as comic reliefs in the story, because every encounter with them – be it Sindri's extreme fear and disgust of blood, or Brok's unnecessary use of abusive language – is hilarious and helps bring down the tension of the narrative. However, their stories extend beyond comic relief. Rather, the game gives them time to develop their own character arcs in a meaningful manner, and just like the rest of the cast, they also have their own broken relationship to deal with. When Kratos first meets Sindri, he learns

that Sindri and Brok used to work together until they had arguments about whose work is better, which made them split up. In conversations with Sindri and Brok, subtle but important hints are given to the player that both brothers regret going their separate ways and wish to set things right with each other. Sindri and Brok's story arc comes full circle when they rejoin forces to work together by the end of the story. They serve as examples of Yin and Yang, because they realize that while they are two very different people, they are brothers and their best work is produced only when they work together.

Sindri and Brok: blacksmiths who must forge their own bond.

Breakdown

God of War puts character relationships at its core. It uses these inter-character relationships and subtle interactions and behaviours that make those relationships feel genuine. While Kratos and Atreus' father-son relationship is the main focus of the story, it is not the only one that carries weight. The relationships of other characters in the game come together to create an immersive world that feels only so far from reality as its magic. It is these relationships that make every single character in the game feel less a cluster of pixels generated on screen, but more humane, where each character is dealing with problems of his or her own. Whether it's Kratos' struggle to be a good father while trying to keep Atreus away from the backstabbing world of Gods, the struggles of a regretful Freya trying to set things right and gain the forgiveness of her son, or the egotistical tensions between two dwarven brothers sworn to never work together again, God of War's writers have carefully woven the narrative around mending broken relationships into all elements of the game. It makes the player care for every single character, even its antagonists antagonist Baldur, Magni and Modi.

The Setup of the Main Plot

God of War starts off in what fans of the old series would call a very "non-God-of-War" fashion. Kratos has moved to Nordic lands, where he lives with his wife Faye and their son Atreus. The game begins shortly after Faye's death, and the player's first task as Kratos is to chop down a tree, bring it to Kratos' house and burn the body of Faye. The first task of the player is not to fight monsters and feel unstoppable while doing so, but rather to do something very humane, something that even Kratos, an immortal God, is vulnerable to. The game takes its time in setting the story and the main goal for the two characters: Faye is dead. A wife and mother is dead. Her last wish was to have her husband and son spread her ashes from the highest peak in the Nine Realms. Kratos and Atreus must fulfill her last wish.

Making the player go through something so personal right at the start gets the player interested not only in the story, but also in the characters. What unfolds over the next

30-or-so hours of gameplay is a complex story that weaves Norse mythology and Kratos' past with the Greek Pantheon into a simple story of a father and son climbing a mountain.

The Single-Shot Camera

It would be an injustice to the hard work put into the game by the developers at Santa Monica for a review of the game's narrative to not discuss the single-shot camera that is used in the game. The entire game of God of War is *one single camera shot*. There are *no cuts* or transitions in the entire game, not even a loading screen when the player travels to different realms or uses fast travel. The camera sits over Kratos' shoulder during gameplay, and shifts seamlessly to focus on important elements during cutscenes, then back to Kratos when gameplay is resumed. Loading screens are avoided smartly by a seamless travel system that respects the game's world lore. Kratos and Atreus travel between realms by means of the *realm between realms*, a place that exists at the junction of all Nine Realms, held together by *Yggdrasil*, the world tree. Kratos walks into a *portal* door and immediately enters the realm between realms, and eventually walks out from a similar portal door into the destination. On a technical side, this negates the use of a loading screen. On the story side, this *serves* the narrative by expanding on the overarching lore of the universe, and also avoiding immersion-breaking loading screens.

The single shot camera helps serve one core purpose: establishing a connection between the Kratos and Atreus, and the player. While the game is played in third-person, it is almost as if the player is part of this broken family and watches every step they take very closely. Being right next to the father and son throughout their adventure helps take in the complexity of who they were, who they are, and who they will be. The other purpose that this serves it to show subtle body motions of characters to the player. Being close to the characters, the player can feel what the characters are feeling, just by looking at the character's emotions and body movement.

Actions over Words

One of God of War's strongest storytelling techniques is its focus on less dialogue and more silence and body movement. There are many poignant moments in the story in which Kratos does not say a single word yet feels like a complex and relatable character. One example of such a moment is when Atreus successfully manages to hunt down a deer, but Kratos is hesitant to celebrate Atreus's success. He moves his hand forward towards Atreus' shoulder, but then moves it back and looks away in the distance, right as Atreus turns to look at him. He does not know, *or understand*, what to say, or what to do, so he chooses to do nothing. He is helpless, learning the duties of parenthood alone, while trying to shield his son from the nature of Gods and the violent Cycle of Patricide that exists in the world of Gods, and especially in Kratos' Greek family history. Moments like these ensure that when Kratos does speak, it is meaningful and carries weight. It

shows that Kratos cares about his son, but fears that history might repeat itself. Kratos accidentally killed his family once and is not ready to lose Atreus. More importantly, Kratos knows Atreus' Godhood and fears his son will follow his footsteps, down a cursed path of sorrow, betrayal, and murder.

Emotions over Grandiose Battles

It is not just the simplicity of dialogue, but also the simplicity of emotions that make the narrative work. While God of War is a story of majestic proportions and immortal beings, it lays its foundation on humanity's most vulnerable and relatable emotions. While fighting a dragon in God of War feels incredible, Freya's hopeless attempts at regaining the love of her son hit much harder. When Freya bends to her knees and voluntarily agrees to be killed by her own son for his happiness, that's where the game feels brutally honest. It speaks to broken relationships and feeble attempts at mending mistakes made in the past. It speaks to our nature as humans. It feels *real*.

The Main Story

As discussed, the main story follows Kratos and Atreus on their journey to the highest peak in the Nine Realms. This sees Kratos' feeble attempts at hiding his past and his son's Godhood from Atreus and eventually failing to do so. Atreus finds out about his Godhood, and begins to become "quick to temper... rash, insubordinate, and out of control" [Kratos, Helheim Chapter]. Kratos realizes that Atreus is following the very path he wished to protect him from, and we see a major personality flip between the father and son duo. Where Atreus was once a passionate, explorative child who wished nothing but goodwill for all creatures, he has now begun to become a character fueled by the ego of being a God above others. Where Kratos once tried to control his son's actions by hiding the truth of his rage-fueled past, he begins to become honest and shares more of his past with his son. He realizes that only by learning the truth of his past will his son understand the consequences of actions made in anger and haste.

Atreus' increasingly rash actions, and the cycle of vengeance, are finally put to a better path by Kratos during their escape from Hel, when Kratos decides that silence is no longer the right option. Instead of choosing violence like his own father Zeus, Kratos chooses to break free from that cycle, and tells Atreus: "*You will honor your mother and abandon this path you have chosen. It is not too late.*" Where once Kratos would have chosen silence or words like "*Do not be sorry. Be better,*" he instead chooses to begin looking at Faye's ever-present beacon of hope to lead them both towards peace. This is a turning point in the story. During this journey through Hel, Atreus sees visions of Kratos killing Zeus, his own father, and then visions of Atreus killing Modi. At this point, the narrative has done its job of carefully feeding the consequences of the cycle of vengeance to both the player and the Kratos and Atreus duo. Modi being beat by his own father, Baldur hunting his own mother, Brok and Sindri splitting up, and now the vision of Kratos and Atreus killing Zeus and Modi respectively, all have had an impact on

the narrative and the choices these protagonists make in the future. The realization that anger, ego, and pride, lead only to tragedy and sorry, is felt by both the player and Atreus. Kratos' reasons to hide his past begin to make sense now, and Atreus's character arc starts evolving back into the compassionate child that he has always been.

In the final battle between Baldur and Kratos, the theme of broken relationships is echoed with stark contrast against a mended relationship. Freya and Baldur are too far gone, and Baldur will accept nothing less than the death of everyone he despises. He has given into the cycle. Kratos and Atreus, on the other hand, have chosen to be better, and wish no harm on either Freya or Baldur. They only wish to do what they initially set out to do: spread Faye's ashes. Baldur's persistence on vengeance, however, leads him to almost kill Freya. Kratos intervenes, ending Baldur's life, and also the cycle. He says,

"This cycle ends here. We must be better than this."

In a heart-touching moment between father and son, Kratos finally explains the entire truth of his Greek past to Atreus, and that he killed his own father. Having witnessed all the hatred and rage, Atreus asks if the world of Gods is filled with children killing their mothers and fathers. Kratos answers,

"We will be the gods we choose to be, not those who have been."

Where Freya and Baldur's story ends in tragic consequences, Kratos and Atreus have a new born hope that the cycle of hatred and murder is over, and that together they will forge the path for a peaceful future.

The Ending

The story of God of War is simple, and the ending of the game echoes this simplicity. It is not a grandiose boss fight where the main character goes on a manic rampage and comes out victorious, it is one very important moment between a father and his son. It is about family. Not gods. Not bloody, gory fights. Just a father and son spreading the mother's ashes. And while there are big revelations at the end, the game does so with grace and with weight. The revelations feel satisfying because the game did the first part right – ensuring the epilogue holds meaning. Atreus and Kratos fulfill Faye's final wish, which is why they set out on this journey in the first place. Kratos is free of his past. Atreus has learned the lessons he needs to be a kind God. The cycle is over.

Strongest Element

God of War's ability to provide exposition without forcing it is its strongest storytelling element. This is done through a game mechanic known as *Mimir's Tales*. Once Kratos and Atreus acquire Mimir as an asset, Mimir starts telling them anecdotes that serve a

plethora of purposes, ranging from acting as comic reliefs to filling in narrative gaps to giving the player more information about the lore of the fictional world. Most of Mimir's Tales are told by him when the player is exploring the game's world on the boat, and Mimir pauses once Kratos and Atreus are on foot. The mechanic is so well designed that Mimir picks the tales right off where he left before pausing the story after arriving at a boat dock, and the player can explore the world at his or her own pace, without having to wait for Mimir to finish his tales, because he will continue them later. Mimir's tales are very deeply woven into the fabric of the game. The themes of family relationships and the cycle of vengeance are echoed in many of these tales, and helps further the meaning of what it means to be a God.

Instead of forcing the players to ride the boat just to get from one place to another, Mimir's tales adds an organic layer of narratively guided motivation that encourages the player to engage in exploration. The player is rewarded for their exploration not only with gameplay elements, but also with exposition that they get only if they choose to.

Unsuccessful Element

There is one plot point in God of War that is unexplained and ends up being a red herring. To explain this better, things need to be put in context first. God of War's main exploratory area is the Lake of Nine in Midgard, which is divided into vertical sections or *levels* submerged under water. There are three such levels, and the level of water lowers throughout the story, unlocking more areas in the lake for exploration. The first two times this happens because Jörmungandr, the world serpent, is summoned by Mimir to gain information about certain objectives in the game. As the world serpent moves, water is lowered. The final time this happens, is when Kratos is returning from Helheim with the ingredients to help save Atreus from a deadly disease. Kratos is at a boat dock near Freya's house, and Mimir is with him at this point. They ascend the elevator to Freya's house, and the horn that summons Jörmungandr is heard. Mimir is not the one who summons him, but someone does, and it is never revealed who blows into the horn to summon Jörmungandr. It is done, it seems, for the sole reason of unlocking the deepest and final level of the Lake of Nine, in order to open exploration for the player. This feels disappointing, since every major *and minor* event in the game has a meaning – a reason to occur. Nothing is left unexplained, so when this happens, players are left wondering till the end if they will find out *who blew the horn*. It is never revealed, not even in the sequel, *God of War Ragnarök*.

Highlight

The absolute best moment of God of War is the moment Kratos returns to his house to confront his past that comes with the weight of murdering many innocents and being a

slave to Greek Gods in prior games. It is not the concept, but the execution of the entire sequence which makes it so successful and impactful.

When Freya tells Kratos that he needs to travel to Helheim and gather the ingredients necessary for making the potion to save Atreus's life, she also mentions that Kratos' frost axe will not work in Hel because everything in Hel is so cold that no fire could affect it. Kratos responds,

"Then I must return home... dig up a past I swore would stay buried."

Kratos briefly looks down at his arm and touches it. Most players who had played the previous games in the series, would at this point instantly think of Kratos' past from previous games, and his iconic weapon, the *Blades of Chaos*. The game *leads expectations* here, slowly building up tension until it is finally revealed that the player was indeed correct, that this is a huge moment!

The sequence that follows next is the moment in which God of War shines brightest. Kratos takes Freya's boat and sails to his house. Unlike the subtlety of the rest of the narrative, the game now forces the player to stop and focus on what is about to happen. *Everything* changes to signify the importance of this sequence. A sudden flash of lighting and the sound of thunder grab the player's attention. The sky turns red, the weather changes from pleasant to stormy, and the camerawork forces the player to look at a deer with blue horns. This is the same deer that Kratos was once hunting with Atreus during his training. This deer keeps reappearing at different locations during the boat sequence. It is almost a metaphor for Kratos's past and how it keeps haunting him, again and again, and how it seems to never let him go. This is furthered by the appearance of Athena's apparition, sitting right in front of Kratos on the boat. Athena is a Greek goddess, a part of Kratos' tragic past that he has been running away from, and perhaps the single most important character from this past. Kratos had trusted Athena, only to be betrayed and used even by her.

Once Kratos reaches the shore, he fights off several frost monsters and the player is reminded how difficult it is to beat them with just fists and the shield (since the frost axe does not work on them). This is another instance of leading expectation. The player knows that the gameplay has suddenly become very challenging, and some new trick will have to be introduced to keep things fair. In this instance, *the gameplay serves the narrative*.

Then Kratos proceeds to go inside his house and slowly dig out a box from underground. Most players assume this big reveal to be the Blades of Chaos... and they assume correctly. Kratos slowly pulls out the Blades of Chaos lying in the box, and it becomes obvious that an all-time classic weapon just made a return. Kratos ties the chains of the weapon around his hands, and whilst doing so, Athena's apparition stands at his house's door, watching menacingly. She taunts at Kratos and points how he will always be a

monster. Kratos replies, “*But I am your monster now longer,*” as he walks into Athena’s apparition and the apparition disintegrates into nothingness.

This moment is immensely powerful. Kratos is accepting his past, instead of hiding it away. He accepts that he has lived a vengeful life, but he is now truly free from it. This moment not only gives the players an old iconic weapon for use, but it does that in a very impactful manner that blends gameplay with narrative seamlessly. The fact that the biggest spoiler of the game is a weapon and not a plot twist speaks volumes about how important this moment is. It is the perfect balance of emotion, intensity and revelations that made this moment stand out the most. The developers also did not advertise a third of the game’s gameplay, simply because it was a surprise, and one that would spoil the experience if not executed precisely how it was. It integrates narrative and gameplay in this weird fashion that not many games do, and it works. It works in a fantastic manner. It shows that the team at Santa Monica truly understood the contrast between the character that Kratos once was and the Kratos that now is, and that they utilized this understanding to its fullest potential.

Critical Reception

God of War was critically acclaimed all across the industry for being a very well-designed game that ties all its elements, including story, together in a cohesive manner. It received overwhelmingly positive reviews overall, receiving Game of the Year at *The Game Awards*, a score of 10 by *IGN* and *Polygon*. Almost all reviews praised God of War for its amazing camerawork.

IGN’s Jonathon Dornbush praises the dialogue between Kratos and Atreus, saying, “I was surprised by how often I saw myself in both Kratos and Atreus’ well-worn shoes,” and how what the characters in the game say make “God of War’s relationships feel real and cuttily honest.”

Kotaku’s Chris Kohler writes about how there are not many cutscenes, but more emphasis is given to conversations and dialogue between fights during exploration. He also mentions how much of the character development in the game happens during the quiet moments of the game. “We glean much of this through his [Kratos’] silence, as well as his restrained body language.”

Chris Plante of Polygon praises the camerawork of the game. “From the opening frame, through the credits and beyond, the camera lingers behind Kratos, the story proceeding in real time. God of War takes place in one shot.” This is especially true because it makes the player feel more involved in the story rather than watching the story of someone else. It makes the player feel like a participant, rather than a bystander.

Lessons

Actions over words

A lot of Kratos' character arc as a father evolves by use of body movement rather than language. His hesitation, love, protective fatherhood, are all made extremely clear through his silence. The player is *shown*, not *told*, exactly what Kratos feels at every moment in the game. This not only lets the character's emotions flow organically, but also adds significantly more weightage to the words that he does choose to speak. It adds meaning to his emotions.

Everything serves the narrative

While the overarching themes of the narrative are obviously echoed by the side characters and their own family issues, the game does not stop there. The gameplay, camerawork, Mimir's Tales, and side quests are all curated meticulously to serve the narrative. It shows how powerful a story as simple as a journey can be if every other element of the game serves to further the story. The story must also further these elements, such as the inclusion of the Blades of Chaos – it is not only the biggest reveal in terms of narrative, it is also integrated meaningfully into the gameplay.

Simplicity is key

While God of War is a grand tale that integrates Greek and Norse mythology into its narrative, it is still very much a story of people. Of family. Of trust, betrayal, and hope. Of vengeance, and of redemption. Of spreading the ashes of a wife and mother. The writers understand that simple stories about human values are relatable, and began with it at the core. The complexity comes not from the mythologies, but rather from understanding the difficult situations humans find themselves in, when dealing with parenthood, death, and family.

Summation

God of War presents a relatable story of a father and son and their struggles to understand each other. While previous games in the franchise were about making Kratos feel like God of War, and they did so by making him murder his way through the Greek Pantheon. In contrast, the new God of War is about dealing with Kratos' more human nature. The game is aptly titled, simply "God of War," because only now has Kratos begun to deal with the consequences of being in his position.

Only now has the franchise managed to make us feel the weight that comes with the title of being the God of War.

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