



RESIDENT EVIL REQUIEM

Capcom. (2026). *Resident Evil Requiem* [Digital game]. Capcom.

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Resident Evil (Capcom, 1996-2026) has long stood as the definitive antithesis to the phrase “trust thy neighbours”. As the pinnacle of the horror-action genre, its heart beats within the claustrophobic confines of situational survival horror – an alienating experience that forces its protagonists to define themselves through courage, compassion, and, most poignantly, trauma. In *Resident Evil Requiem*, or *Resident Evil 9*, the franchise finally grants fans the return of Leon S. Kennedy after a 14-year hiatus from the primary timeline. It is a return that has clearly resonated; the game has already moved 6 million copies, a testament to the global demand for Leon’s presence, which had been relegated to whispers and mentions since his divisive, action-heavy appearance in *Resident Evil 6* (Capcom, 2012). For the hardcore audience, *Resident Evil Requiem* is more than a sequel; it is a long-awaited reckoning with the ghosts of Raccoon City.

The narrative relies heavily on the tropes of false information and the heavy price of atoning for past sins. Now a weary agent of the Department of Security Operations (DSO), Leon meets FBI agent Grace Ashcroft at the Rhodes Hill Chronic Care Center. This setting – a place intended for healing, turned into a house of biological decay – is where Grace is kidnapped by the mutated Dr. Victor. The plot centres on the release of Elpis, a new viral strain. While initial reports might suggest a more contemporary origin, the true horror lies in its heritage: Elpis was the final, desperate creation of the Umbrella Corporation’s founder, Oswell E. Spencer. The name is a direct pull from Hesiod’s (1914) *Works and days*, where Elpis was the sole spirit remaining in Pandora’s jar after all the other misfortunes escaped:

Only Hope remained there in an unbreakable home within under the rim of the great jar, and did not fly out at the door; for ere that, the lid of the jar stopped her, by the will of Aegis-holding Zeus who gathers the clouds. (Hesiod, 1914, p. 9)

The reveal of Oswell’s confession to Alice Ashcroft, Grace’s mother, reframes the entire mission. He admits that in his final days, consumed by the guilt of his biological legacy, Spencer created Elpis not as a weapon, but as an attempt at atonement, giving Grace to Alice as a final act of mercy before his will to survive evaporated. Alice asking if Grace is the key to Elpis, to which Spencer replies, Grace is simply a ‘normal child’ he hoped to save – nothing special, just a human life. This archetype of releasing something hopeful into a dark world is a storied narrative technique, seen in the fiery release of Pandora’s power in *God of War III* (Santa Monica Studio, 2010), or the awakening of a population in the dystopian *Enslaved: Odyssey to the West* (Ninja Theory, 2010).

Resident Evil Requiem adds a modern twist to this trope, leaning into parallels with Dashner’s (2009) dystopian novel *The maze runner*, particularly through the concept of a “Cure” physically residing within a single person. Grace Ashcroft herself becomes the vessel for this narrative burden. However, the game masterfully subverts player expectations through the recurring dialogue of Leon pleading, “Promise me you’ll destroy Elpis”.

This directive – fed to both Grace and the player without full context – serves as a catastrophic trap of false information. Suggesting that good intentions based on incomplete truths can lead to ruin, the narrative forces us to question the very mission we are tasked to complete.

In the game, the relationship between hope and trauma is symbiotic. Leon is a character constructed from a concoction of trauma-induced motivation. We have watched him evolve from the bright-eyed, happy rookie of the RPD into a man defined by his losses: the foundational death of his mentor Marvin Branagh, the near-failure to protect Ashley Graham, and the catastrophic loss of the President and 70,000 citizens of Tall Oaks in *Resident Evil 6*. This emotional weight is mirrored in Grace's own 'bass-like' theme of guilt, particularly following the loss of Emily – the child she cared for deeply. Her character arc embodies the series' core theme of finding strength in impossible situations.

For someone who originally just wanted to arrest bad guys and live a peaceful life, the strain on his consciousness is almost palpable. The gameplay mechanics reflect this psychological divide by allowing players to switch between first-person and third-person cameras. This dual mode of expression is brilliant: Grace's first-person segments ensure her fears become ours, pent-up rage and anxiety. In these sections, the use of light becomes a vital atmospheric symbol; as the game works mostly in near-total darkness, light provides the only temporary relief to Grace's plight and serves as a metaphor for her flickering knowledge of the horrors surrounding her. Conversely, Leon's third-person gameplay provides the catharsis, satisfaction, and classic action style fans expect from a veteran. This sense of isolation is further heightened by the total absence of a merchant, a departure from series tradition that strips away the safety net of resource management and leaves the player truly alone with their trauma.

Suggesting a *Bildungsroman* – a coming-of-age story – for a survival horror game might sound outrageous, but it fits perfectly here. We see it in Grace's growth from a meek agent into a courageous force, and in Leon's tragic 'delayed' development. He is suffering from the dormancy of the T-Virus depleting, a slow viral spread among 1998 Raccoon City survivors that acts as a visceral metaphor for the decaying human will to strive toward retribution. Returning to Raccoon City traps Leon in a Sisyphus-like loop with no desirable outcome. Entering the RPD again causes a moral overload, forcing him to face past demons both figuratively and literally. The reappearance of Mr. X, the stalker nemesis of his youth, serves as a powerful callback to the terror he once faced as a rookie. Defeating him now, as a seasoned fighter, provides a level of satisfaction that was technically absent in the original *Resident Evil 2* (Capcom, 1998).

This sense of finality is embodied in the "Requiem" Magnum revolver that Leon carries – a literal and metaphorical Chekhov's Gun. While the Magnum has traditionally been a niche mercenary tool, it takes the narrative spotlight here. To Leon, it is a reminder that strength is needed; to Grace, it represents the finality required to end the cycle. The tension culminates in a shocking climax where heroic egoism and righteousness are put to the ultimate test. When Leon is forced to gun down a little girl named Emily to stop the spread of the virus, Grace gives up the "Requiem" gun in a sign of rebellion. The decision to destroy Elpis ultimately initiates the 'bad ending' – a subtle, devastating nod to the destruction of the fans' hope. It renders Leon's long-fought battle for naught and suggests, quite bleakly, the destruction of the franchise's heart. Grace's choice to eventually cooperate with Zeno – a figure whose design serves as a haunting homage to the original Albert Wesker – is a logical conclusion to 28 years of biological trauma. Grace's submission represents a transition from 'moral heroism' to 'bio-terror realism' – a state where the survival of the species outweighs the sanctity of the soul. To save Grace from the clutch of Zeno, Leon stands before the Raccoon City Police Department's welcome banner

and then Lieutenant Branagh's name plate and says, "Hey, Lieutenant Branagh, Kennedy ... Reporting for duty".

It serves as a simple, haunting message: the past is never truly done with him, he faces it beginning with his own end spreading in his body, a requiem indeed. *Resident Evil Requiem* is a beautiful, tragic swan song that proves some wounds never heal; they just become the armour we wear.

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