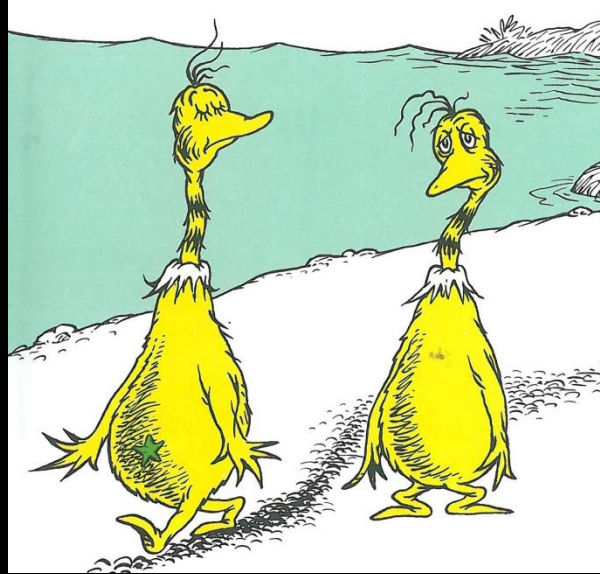




Seven (Or So) Techniques for Writing a Moral Game



Richard Rouse III
Senior Game Designer – Microsoft Studios
rr3@paranoidproductions.com

Game Developer's Conference Narrative Summit 2013

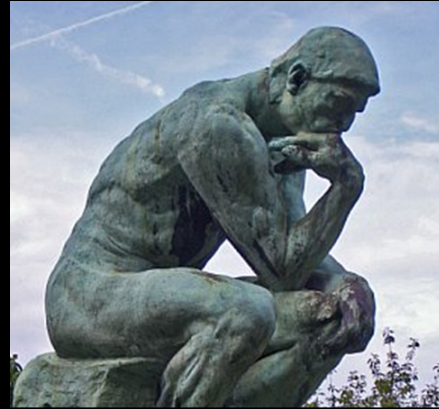
Slides available at: www.paranoidproductions.com



Grand Universal Game Theory

Noah Falstein GDC 99

Seven Ways a Video Game Can Be Moral



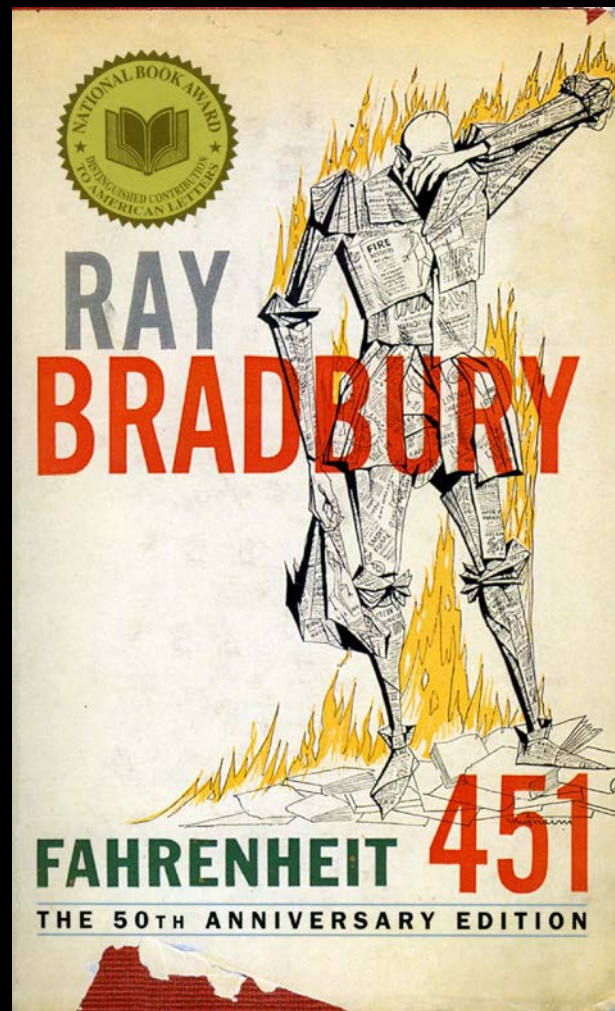
Richard Rouse III

rr3@paranoidproductions.com

Slides available at:

<http://www.paranoidproductions.com>

Game Developer's Conference 2011



DAVID R. BROWN

RAY BRADBURY

AUTHOR OF *FAHRENHEIT 451* AND *DANDELION WINE*

Zen
IN THE
Art
OF
Writing

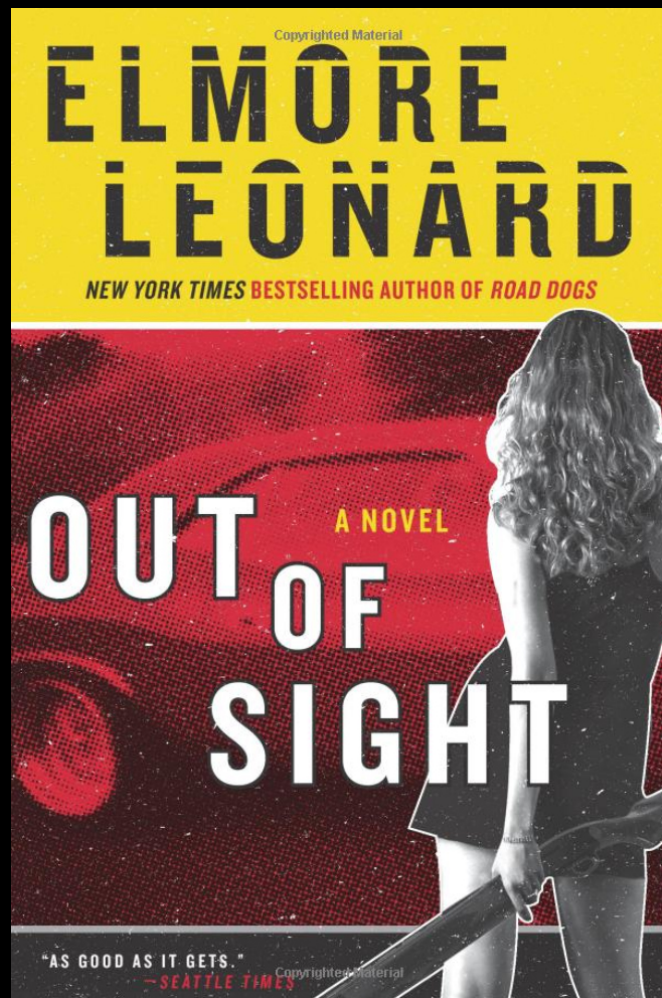
RELEASING THE
CREATIVE GENIUS
WITHIN YOU



Ray Bradbury's Writing Rules

(adapted)

- 1. Write every day.**
- 2. Let the world burn through you.**
- 3. The only good writing is intuitive writing.**
- 4. You must stay drunk on writing so the world cannot destroy you.**
- 5. It doesn't need to be perfect, but it does need to be you.**
- 6. Plot is no more than footprints left in the snow after your characters have run by on their way to incredible destinations.**
- 7. Etc...**







Elmore Leonard's Writing Rules

- 1. Never open a book with weather.**
 - 2. Avoid prologues.**
 - 3. Never use a verb other than "said" to carry dialogue.**
 - 4. Never use an adverb to modify the verb "said" . . .**
 - 5. Keep your exclamation points under control.**
 - 6. Never use the words "suddenly" or "all hell broke loose."**
 - 7. Use regional dialect, patois, sparingly.**
 - 8. Avoid detailed descriptions of characters.**
 - 9. Don't go into great detail describing places and things.**
 - 10. Try to leave out the part that readers tend to skip.**
- Bonus: If it sounds like writing, rewrite it.**



1:

**YOU DON'T NEED
PLAYER-DRIVEN
CHOICES TO HAVE A
MORAL GAME**

A Mind Forever Voyaging™



INFOCOM™

SOFTWARE FOR YOUR
AMIGA
3+ DISK
IS5 C04

INTERACTIVE FICTION PLUS™

SCIENCE FICTION

ADVANCED LEVEL



Electronically transmitted into every A MIND FOREVER VOYAGING package: your A MIND FOREVER VOYAGING disk; the latest hardcopy issue of Dakota Online Magazine; a 21st-century plastic pen; and a Class One Security Mode Access Decoder.

*"If you can look into the seeds of
time, and say which grain will grow
and which will not..."*

—Shakespeare

IT'S 2031. The world is on the brink of chaos. In the United States of North America, spiraling crime and unemployment rates, decayed school systems and massive government regulations have led to a lazy, contentious society.

To reverse this critical situation, government and industry leaders have developed a Plan combining the economic freedom and strong moral values of the 1950's with the technological advancements of the 21st century. Will the Plan ensure peace and prosperity? Or will it set the earth on a suicide course to destruction?

As the world's first conscious, intelligent computer, only you can visit places that have never been seen before. Only you can view the future. And only you know what must be done to save humanity.

A major departure for Infocom, *A Mind Forever Voyaging* is reminiscent of such classic works of

science fiction as *Brave New World* and *1984*. You'll spend less time solving puzzles, as you explore realistic worlds of the future.

GET INSIDE A STORY. GET ONE FROM INFOCOM.

It's like waking up inside a story! For the first time, you're more than a passive reader. You can talk to the story, typing in full English sentences. And the story talks right back, communicating entirely in vividly descriptive prose. What's more, you can actually shape the story's course of events through your choice of actions. And you have hundreds of alternatives at every step. In fact, there's so much you can see and do, your voyage can last for weeks and even months.

To find the Infocom interactive story that's right for you, just choose any one marked with the level of difficulty that best matches your current level of interactive skill:

Introductory: Best introduction to interactive fiction, with some built-in hints. Written for everyone from age 9 up.

Standard: This is Infocom's most popular level of interactive fiction, enjoyed by both first-time and experienced players.

Advanced: A greater level of challenge. Recommended for those who've already experienced Infocom's interactive fiction.

Expert: The ultimate challenge in interactive fiction.

Then find out what it's like to get inside a story. Get one from Infocom. Because with Infocom's interactive fiction, there's room for you on every disk.

INFOCOM

125 CambridgePark Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140
Interactive Fiction Plus is available for most personal computers with at least 128K of memory. Manufactured and Printed in USA
© 1985 Infocom, Inc.
Warranty Information enclosed.
A MIND FOREVER VOYAGING and Interactive Fiction Plus are trademarks of Infocom, Inc.

ISBN 0-87321-259-2





BALANCE OF POWER

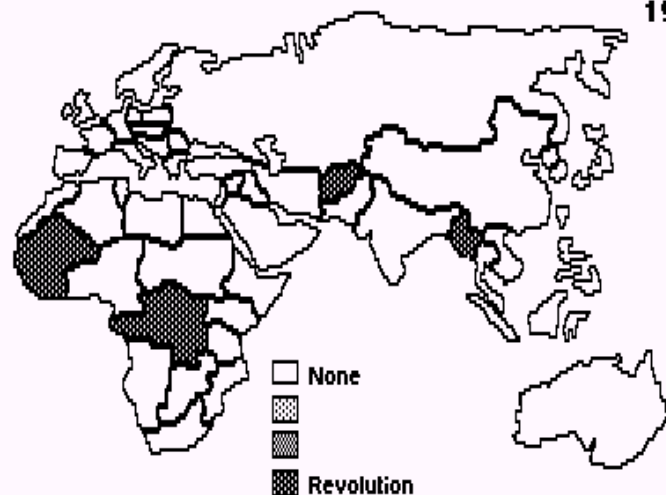
Geopolitics in
the nuclear age
by Chris Crawford



Balance of Power

Game	Countries	USA	USSR	Make Policies	Events	Briefing	Deselect
North America	South America	Europe	Africa	Mid East	Far East	Pacific	

1986



Major Events

USA Score: 0

USSR Score: 0

[Game](#)[Countries](#)[Relations](#)[Make Policies](#)[Events](#)[Briefing](#)[Help](#)

You have ignited a nuclear war.

And no, there is no animated display of a mushroom cloud
with parts of bodies flying through the air.

We do not reward failure.

OK





2:

**PUT BELOVED
CHARACTERS
IN CONFLICT**





Passion: 6
Political Savvy: 8
Grudge: 1
Righteousness: 5
Ethics: 7

Passion: 10
Political Savvy: 2
Grudge: 9
Righteousness: 9
Ethics: 3

Passion: 8
Political Savvy: 5
Grudge: 7
Righteousness: 7
Ethics: 6

Passion: 2
Political Savvy: 4
Grudge: 2
Righteousness: 8
Ethics: 9







Bloodlust: 7
Empathy: 7
Patriotism: 3
Thoughtfulness: 8

Bloodlust: 9
Empathy: 2
Patriotism: 6
Thoughtfulness: 3

Bloodlust: 5
Empathy: 8
Patriotism: 8
Thoughtfulness: 5

Bloodlust: 2
Empathy: 5
Patriotism: 10
Thoughtfulness: 9



**3: IF THERE ARE
CHOICES**

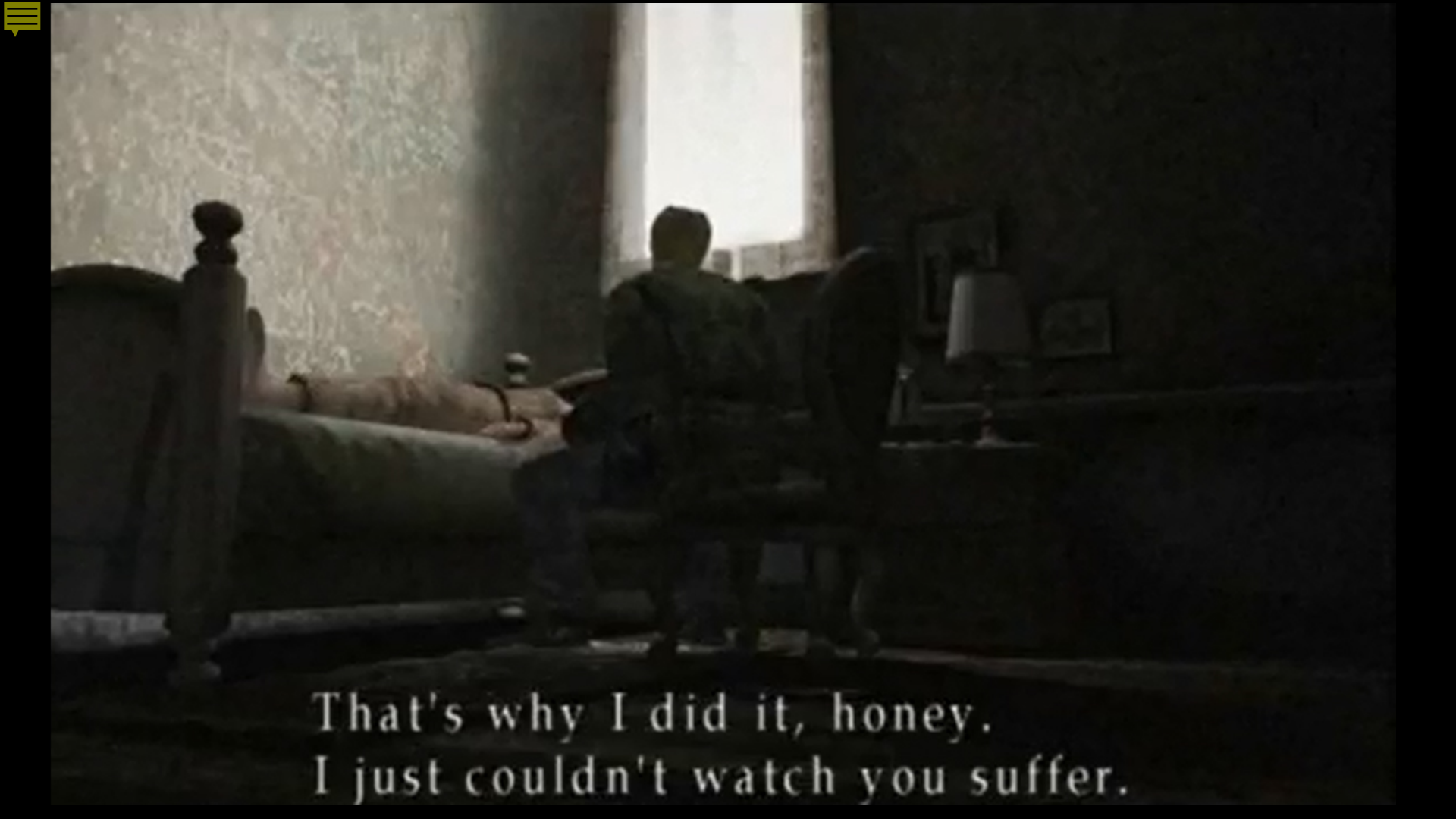


**“A game is a series of
interesting choices.”
– Sid Meier,
Creator of *Civilization***





**3: IF THERE ARE
CHOICES, THERE
MUST BE
REPURCUSSIONS**

A man in a dark jacket sits in a wooden chair, his back to the camera, looking towards a person lying on a sofa. The room is dimly lit, with a bright window in the background. A lamp is visible on a table to the right.

That's why I did it, honey.
I just couldn't watch you suffer.



Status

Equipment

Command



Use
Examine



Angela's knife

Knife from Angela. I don't plan on
using this as a weapon.

Option

Memo

Map



To Get the “In Water” Ending **(the bleakest one)**

- Examine Angela’s knife often**
- Stay at low health throughout the game**
- Listen to the entire hallway conversation**
- DO NOT heal right after taking damage**



**3: IF THERE ARE
CHOICES, THERE
MUST BE
REPURCUSSIONS,
AND NOT JUST AT
THE END**





- I like to pick 'em off from a distance. I'll take the rifle.
- Never know when I might come up against heavy armor. Give me the GEP gun.
- The crossbow. Sometimes you've got to make a silent takedown.



“Sometimes conversations were decoupled from resources, and only affected story branches, and sometimes they were tightly tied to resources. For us, there was no one right way...we used all the different tools and tricks we could, with ‘consequences to your actions’ as a constant.”

**- Harvey Smith,
Lead Designer on *Deus Ex*,
Co-Creative Director on *Dishonored***









 4:

**KEEP THE
BUDGET IN MIND**













Moby
Games



EXPENSIVE

- Final cut-scenes, huge changes to backstory and final outcome (3 variants)

INEXPENSIVE

- Character skin texture (5 sets)
- Supernatural character dialog variations (x10 instances)

DIRT CHEAP

- Bloody photo in inventory (5 versions)
- Screen overlay + VO (x15 variants)



**5: DON'T
PROVIDE
EASY
ANSWERS**

A black and white close-up of a woman's face, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. In the background, a hand is visible holding a handgun, pointing it towards the woman.

Choose! Or I'll send them
both over there!






**(BUT I DON'T
MEAN
IMPOSSIBLE)**





You have a gun.



...    You can't have a gun.

Give it to her.



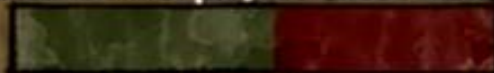
Honesty
Lie to Hershel?

You and 63% of players were honest



Who would you save?
Duck or Shawn?

You and 51% of players chose Duck



Loyalty
Side with Kenny?

You and 55% of players sided with Larry



Marcy
Gave Irene the Gun?


You and 46% of players gave her the gun



Who would you save?
Doug or Carley?

You and 78% of players chose Carley



 **CONTINUE**

 **6:**

**NO MORE THAN
THREE
STAKEHOLDERS**

The Wisdom of Teams



Clarity of Vision



Clarity of Vision





7:

**MAKE SURE YOUR
STORY AND YOUR
GAMEPLAY HAVE
THE SAME MORAL**



6-0
Pistol Rounds

Kashmir Restaurant



Electro Bolt 2





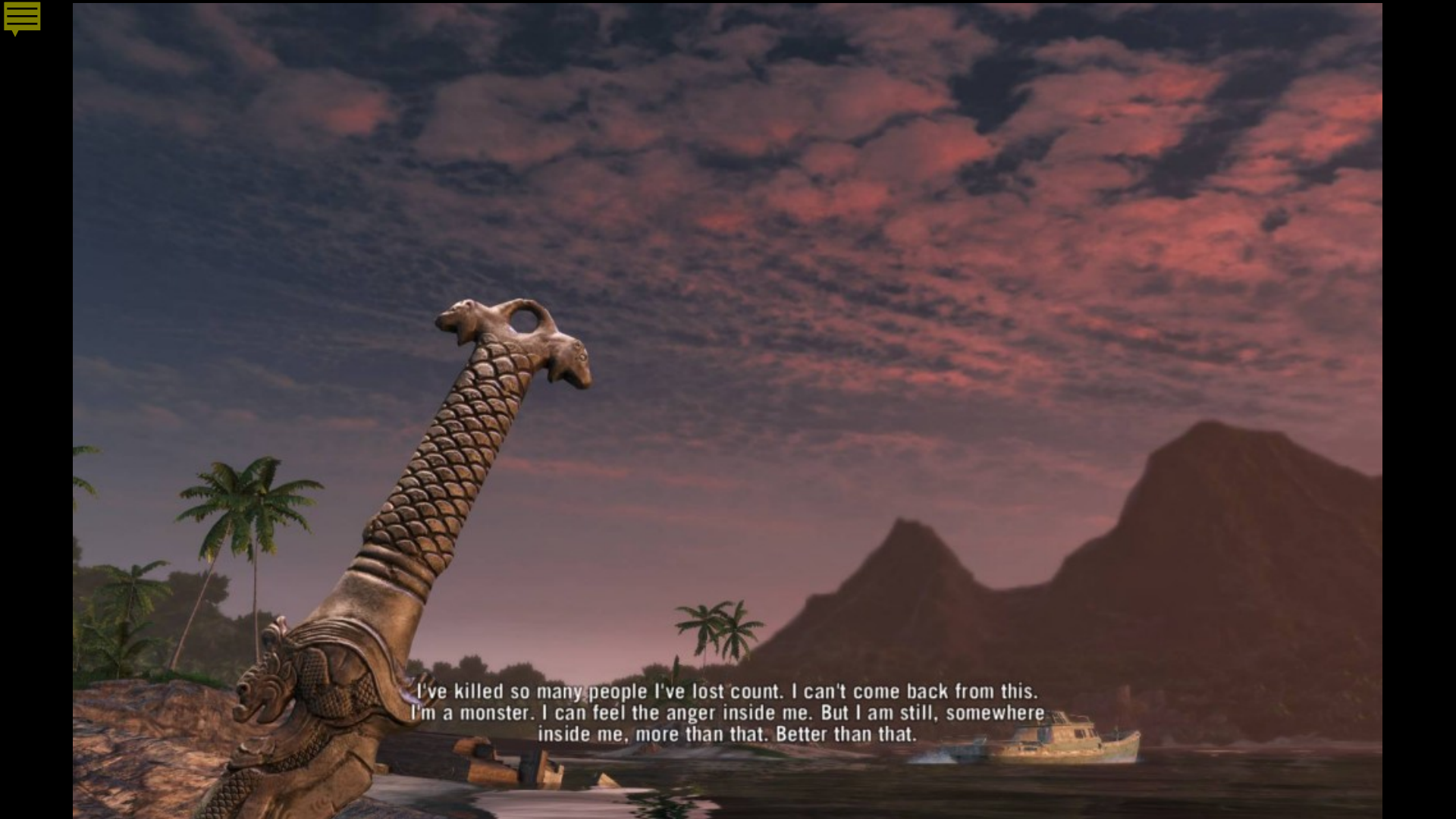








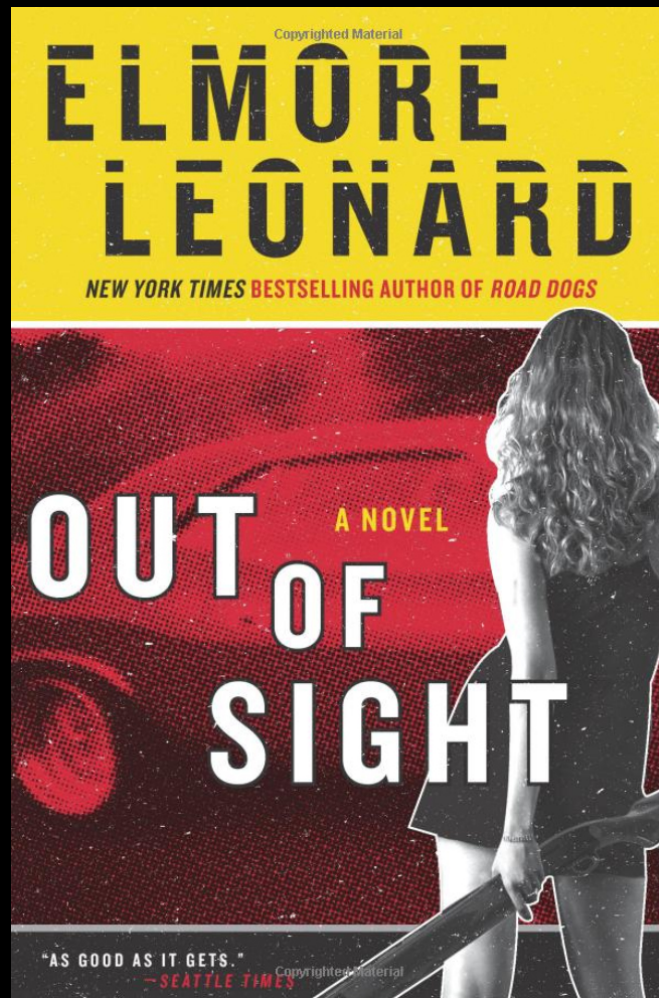
This violence is over. I'm done. No more blood.



I've killed so many people I've lost count. I can't come back from this.
I'm a monster. I can feel the anger inside me. But I am still, somewhere
inside me, more than that. Better than that.



- 1. You don't need player-driven choices to have a moral game.**
- 2. Put beloved characters in conflict.**
- 3. If there are choices, there must be repercussions, and not just at the end.**
- 4. Keep the budget in mind.**
- 5. No more than three stakeholders.**
- 6. Don't provide easy answers.**
- 7. Make sure your story and gameplay have the same moral.**









"Kids see a moral coming a mile off and they gag at it.

But there's an inherent moral in any story." - Dr. Seuss



You have ignited a nuclear war.

And no, there is no animated display of a mushroom cloud
with parts of bodies flying through the air.

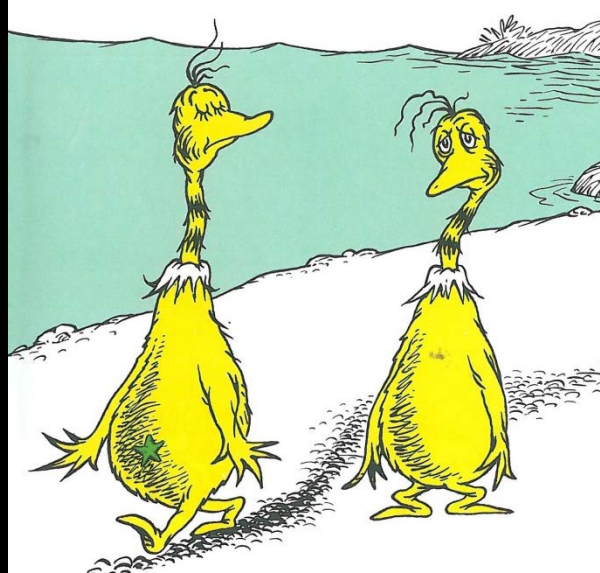
We do not reward failure.

OK





Seven (Or So) Techniques for Writing a Moral Game



Richard Rouse III
Senior Game Designer – Microsoft Studios
rr3@paranoidproductions.com

Thanks to Tom Abernathy, Richard Dansky, Harvey Smith, Bernard Perron, Noah Falstein, Alex Hutchinson, Patrick Plourde, Jeffrey Yohalem, Ben Young

Slides available at: www.paranoidproductions.com