# SPEAKER INTRODUCTION

## ERIK MARCISAK

- I fell down **The Grand Canyon**
- **Studied Screenwriting** at School of Visual Arts
- Worked as a **Script Reader** for 5+ years
- 7+ years writing, directing, producing, and performing **Sketch & Improv Comedy** in NYC
  - 3 former collaborators write for THE DAILY SHOW WITH JON STEWART
    - (including the Head Writer)
  - Expert at name-dropping
- 8 years as a **Narrative Designer/ Writer/ Game Designer** for various companies

LONGTAIL STUDIOS UBISOFT MONTRÉAL SQUARE ENIX eidos MONTRÉAL a SQUARE ENIX company

# THIS LECTURE

| THEN (2006-2010) | NOW (2012-2014) |
| --- | --- |

# MY CAREER

## MOBILE GAMES

## AAA GAMES

HITMAN

DEUS EX UNIVERSE

# THIS LECTURE

## MOBILE GAMES

“It happened so long ago it might be lies.”

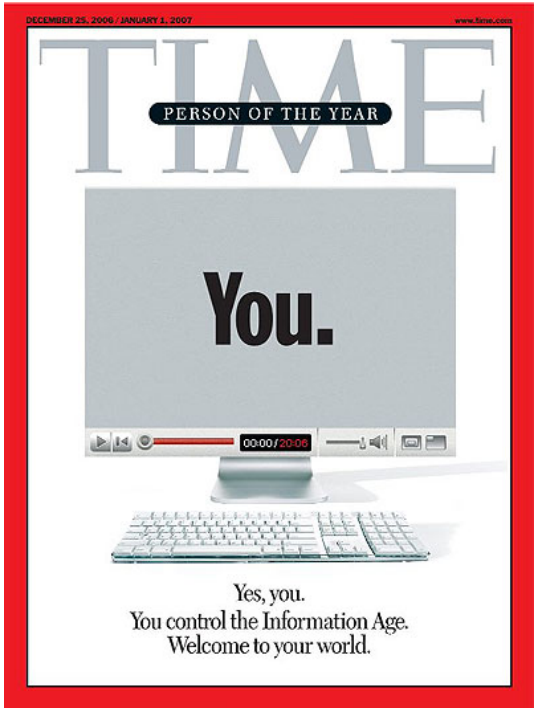
-Erik Marcisak

## AAA GAMES

“YOU CAN SAY NOTHING.”

-legal department

# TIME TRAVEL TO 2006

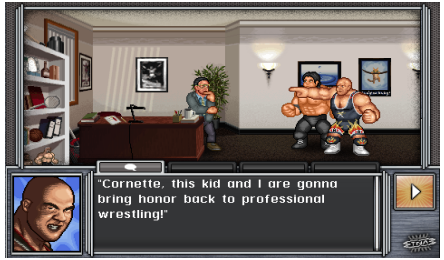



In 2006:

- I got my start in video games.
- You did not have a **Facebook** account.
- **YouTube** just started slowing down productivity in the office.
- The **iPhone** was a rumor.

# LONGTAIL STUDIOS

We made **games with character** for mobile devices in 2006!



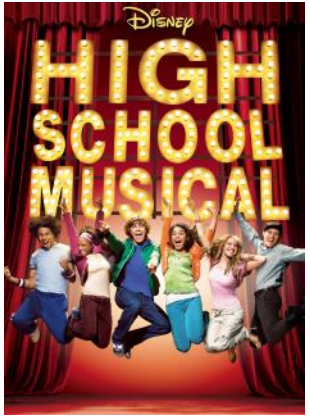

At our peak we had 10 staff writers!

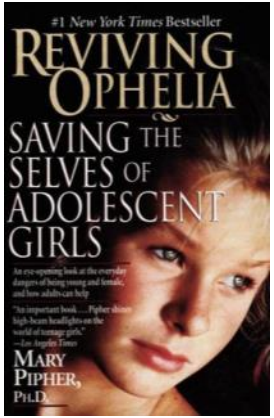
I was the only **college dropout.**

# SOME LESSONS

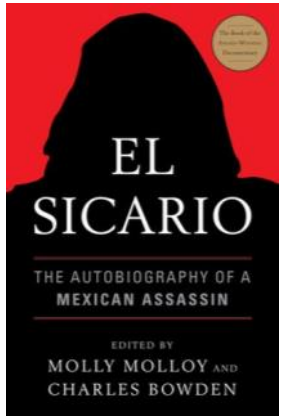
# AUDIENCE RESEARCH 1

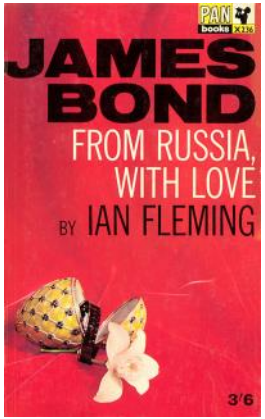
## MOBILE GAMES

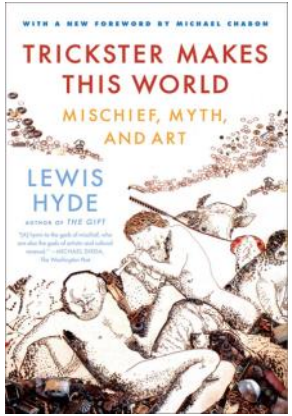



## AAA GAMES



# AUDIENCE RESEARCH 2

## MOBILE GAMES

Emotional/ Existential Issues of the audience.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Identity and Self-confidence Building** | Break the rules | Protest |
| | | be part of a "secret society" |
| | | Clothes and Make-up, Tattoos and piercing |
| | | Juvenile delinquency-Petty crime, marijuana, robbery |
| | | Risky attitudes and Forbidden behavior |
| | | Taking risks, High sensations |
| | | Teen crisis : aggressive behavior |
| | | Peculiar interest |
| | | Suicide attempt |
| | Compete | The buddies, the best girl-friend |
| | | The sport's team |
| | | The group, the cult |
| **Awareness** | Experience | Initiatory trip |
| | Reveal one talent | Competitive education |
| **Love, Romance and relationship** | Learn how to flirt | Clothes and Make-up |
| | | Prom |
| | | Discovering flirting and dating |
| | | Playing with the rules of beauty |
| | | Love at first sight |
| | Love in spite of everything | Social mismatch |
| | | Peculiar relationship |
| | | Enemy families |
| | Sustain a Relationship | Obsession, Passion |
| | | Fidelity, choices and temptation |
| | | Boredom |
| | | Breaking off |
| | Discover Sexuality | Puberty |
| | | Teenage sexuality |
| | | Sex education (through adult sexuality or with friends and/or films) |
| | | Premarital sex |
| | | Falling pregnant by accident |

## AAA GAMES

Focus groups & analytics & community.

The more narrow your target audience, the more knowledgeable you have to be.

The audience evolves faster than the creator.

# PLAYER & CHARACTER

## MOBILE GAMES

newbie → expert

whole game

no-name → famous

## AAA GAMES

newbie

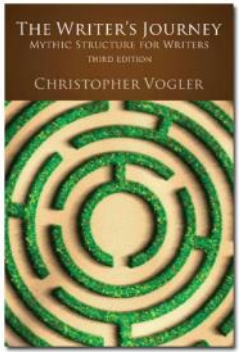
expert

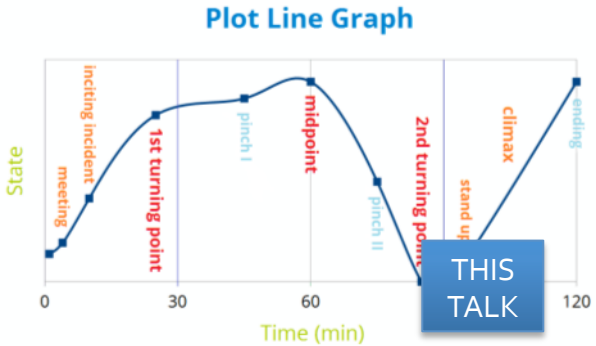
contract

underdog → success

# STORY STRUCTURE

## MOBILE GAMES

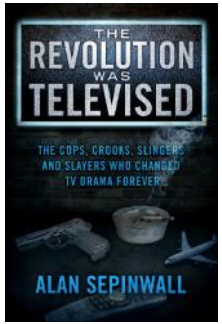


## AAA GAMES

**"YOU CAN SAY NOTHING."**

**-legal department**



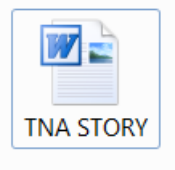

I will recommend that you read
THE REVOLUTION WAS TELEVISED
BY ALAN SEPINWALL

AND

PLAY STORY FOCUSED VIDEO GAMES

# STORY/ LEVELS

## MOBILE GAMES




**iPhone (full version) Outline:**

26 pages (12,000 words)

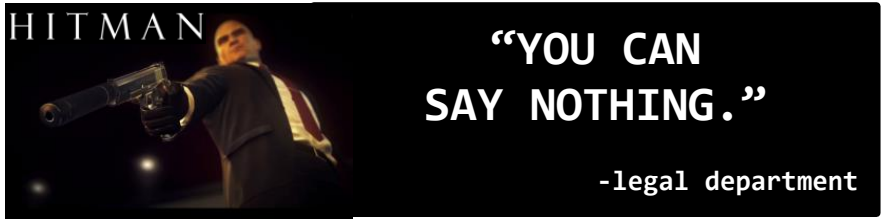
**100K Version Outline:**

10 sentences

Hemingway 6 word story:

**"For sale. Baby shoes. Never worn."**

## AAA GAMES



(Bashar al-Assad)

**Dictator.**

**Guilty of genocide.**

**On vacation.**

# QUICKLY UNDERSTOOD & SHARED

# STRESS-FREE EXPLORATION & MASTERING

# CHARACTER BIO

## MOBILE GAMES

Mrs. Santella

Age:
Archetype:
Personality:
Physical Description (for art):
Goal:
Motivation:
Stakes:
Flaw:
Arc:
Backstory:
Relationship to Player Character:
Issues:
*Tone & Diction:*

## AAA GAMES

**"YOU CAN SAY NOTHING."**

-legal department

**"SOMETIMES I LIKE TO SCARE THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT."**

-erik marcisak

# TARGET TEMPLATE

**ICA # xx-2014-0xx**

**[description 6 words max]**

[PHOTO]

## [NAME]

PROFESSION

| PROBABILITIES & PREDICTIONS | |
|---|---|
| RESPONSE TO THREAT | LEVEL OF DEFENSE (UNARMED) |
| LEVEL OF PROTECTION | LEVEL OF DEFENSE (ARMED) |

HABITS, PATTERNS, QUIRKS, VICES, ETC

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

## DETAILS

*VITALS*

ALIASES:
OCCUPATION
AGE:
SEX:
CITIZENSHIP/ ETHNICITY/ ORIGIN:
LANGUAGES/ ACCENT:
SURVEILLANCE FOOTAGE: [hyperlink]

HEIGHT:
BUILD:
COMPLEXION:
HAIR:
EYES:
GLASSES:
SCARS/ MARKS/ TATTOOS:
ALLERGIES:
HEALTH ISSUES:
DNA: [hyperlink]

*KILL ORDER [To be revised to meet Game Design/ Level Design needs.]*

CLIENT
CLIENT'S REQUESTED METHOD OF DEATH [BONUSES]:
CLIENT'S REASON FOR HIT:
CLIENT REQUESTS INTERROGATION OR CONFESSION? [Y/N]

*IMPACT*

P.I.D. (PROJECTED IMPACT OF DEATH)?
CRIMINAL RECORD:
WANTED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT?
KNOWN RIVALS & ENEMIES:
KNOWN ASSOCIATES:
KNOWN AFFILIATIONS:
EXTENDED BIOGRAPHY:

## WRITER'S NOTES

TONE & DICTION
ACCENT/ DIALECT
COMMON PHRASES/ VERBAL QUIRKS
TEXTING QUIRKS
TOPICS THEY LIKE TO TALK ABOUT
TOPICS THEY HATE TO TALK ABOUT
REACTION TO [*a ride in a malfunctioning elevator*]

## EXTENDED WRITER'S NOTES (OPTIONAL)

GOAL/ WANT/ DREAM
ARC
PERSONAL FLAW/ WEAKNESS
WHAT IS AT STAKE?
SPECIAL SKILLS/ TALENTS
FAMILY/ RELATIONSHIP STATUS/ HISTORY
DRINKING/ DRUGS/ DIET
SENSE OF HUMOR
RECREATION

POSSIBLY PORTRAYED BY THIS ACTOR/ ACTRESS:
REAL-LIFE INSPIRATION:

# CHARACTER TONE & DICTION

## MOBILE GAMES

1. Accent/ Dialect
2. Common Phrases/ Verbal Quirks
3. Topics they LIKE to talk about
4. Topics they HATE to talk about
5. Reaction to [a Touchstone Event]

## AAA GAMES

TARGET ???

1. Accent/ Dialect
2. Common Phrases/ Verbal Quirks
3. Topics they LIKE to talk about
4. Topics they HATE to talk about
5. Reaction to [a Touchstone Event]

# DIALOGUE

## MOBILE GAMES

Dialogue had a character limit in a mobile game.

New measurements for dialogue:

- **"Clicks"** A phrase, sentence, or group of sentences that the player has to get through to move on to the next gameplay element. (Lower is better)
- **"Meat"** The vital part of the dialogue.
- **"Fat"** The words around the vital part of the dialogue.

## AAA GAMES

**"YOU CAN SAY NOTHING."**

**-legal department**

I still carry on the same things I did in mobile because it taught me to streamline.

# DIALOGUE EXERCISE

**This exercise helped us go from being screenwriters to mobile game writers.*

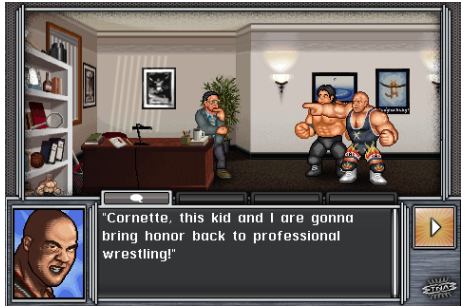
1) **WRITE** a conversation. (Say it comes out to 1 page in a screenplay format.)

2) **REWRITE** that conversation, but do it in **HALF** the space you did before. (So, now get it down to half a page.)

3) **REWRITE** that conversation, but do it in **HALF** the space you did before. (So, now all you have is a quarter of a page.)

# BRANCHING (STORY & DIALOGUE)

## MOBILE GAMES

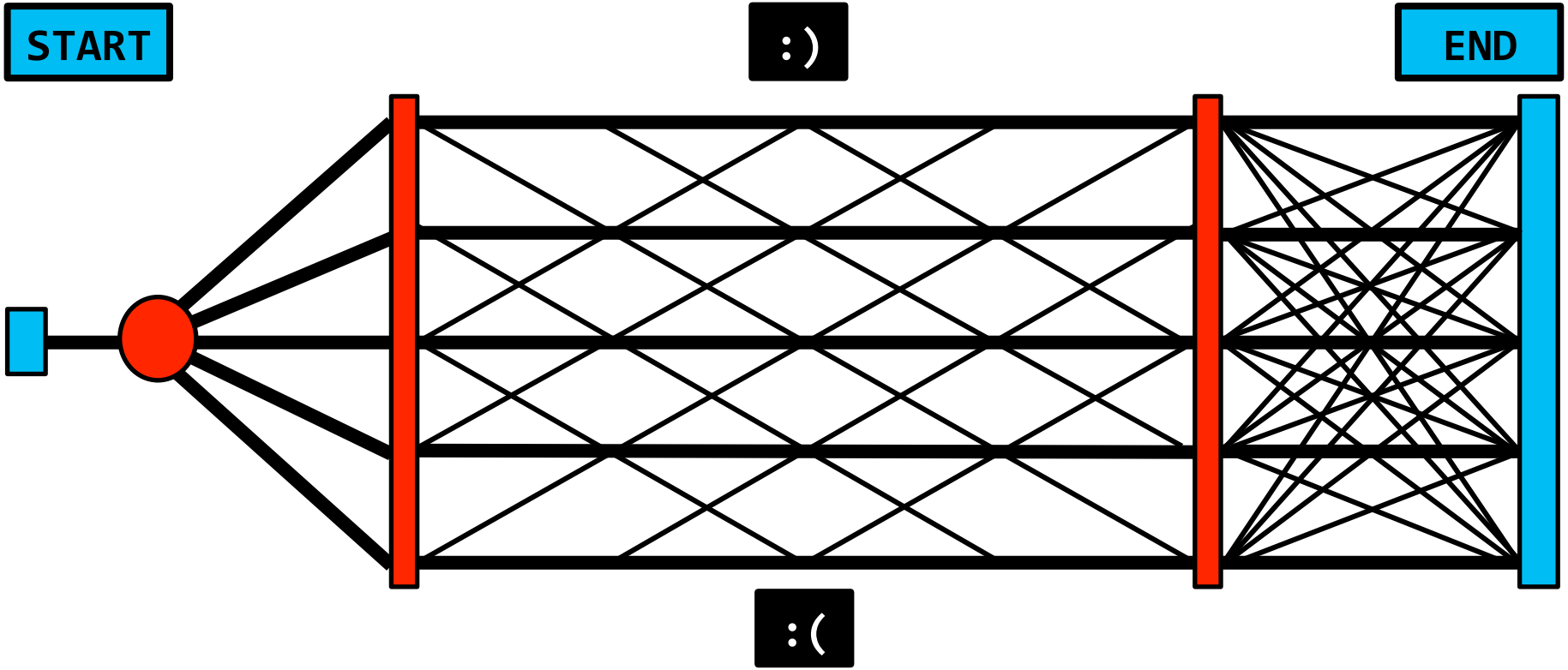


## AAA GAMES

"YOU CAN SAY NOTHING."

-legal department

# SIMPLE BRANCHING



# THANKS & GOODBYE

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- MEET ME IN ROOM 3000