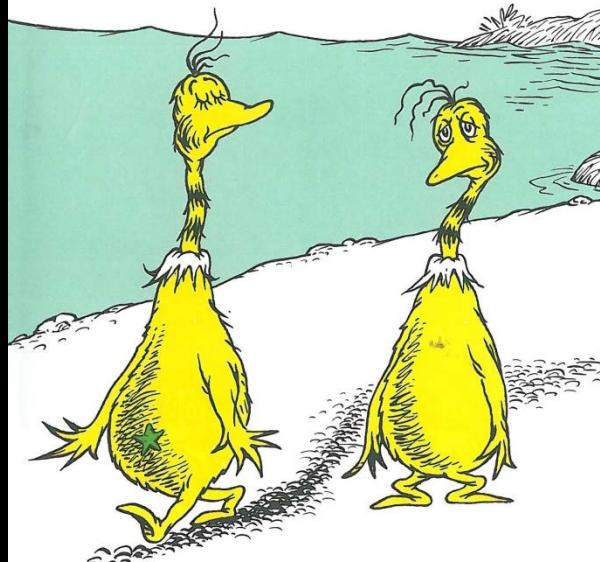




Seven (or so) Techniques for Writing a Moral Game



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

Game Developer's Conference Narrative Summit 2013

Slides available at: www.paranoidproductions.com

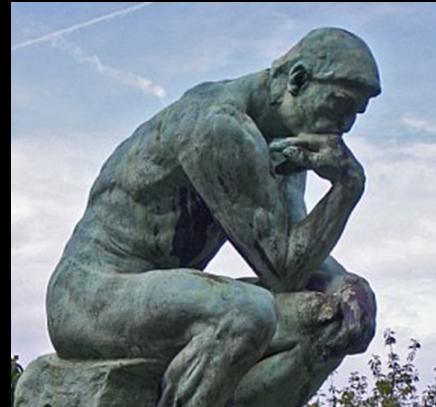


Grand Universal Game Theory

Noah Falstein GDC 99



Seven Ways a Video Game Can Be Moral



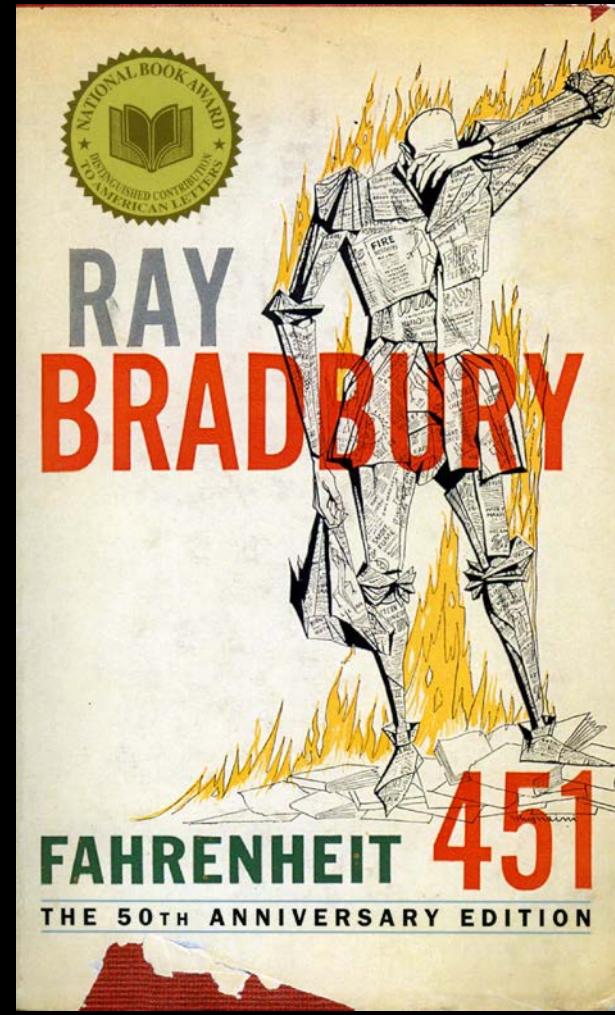
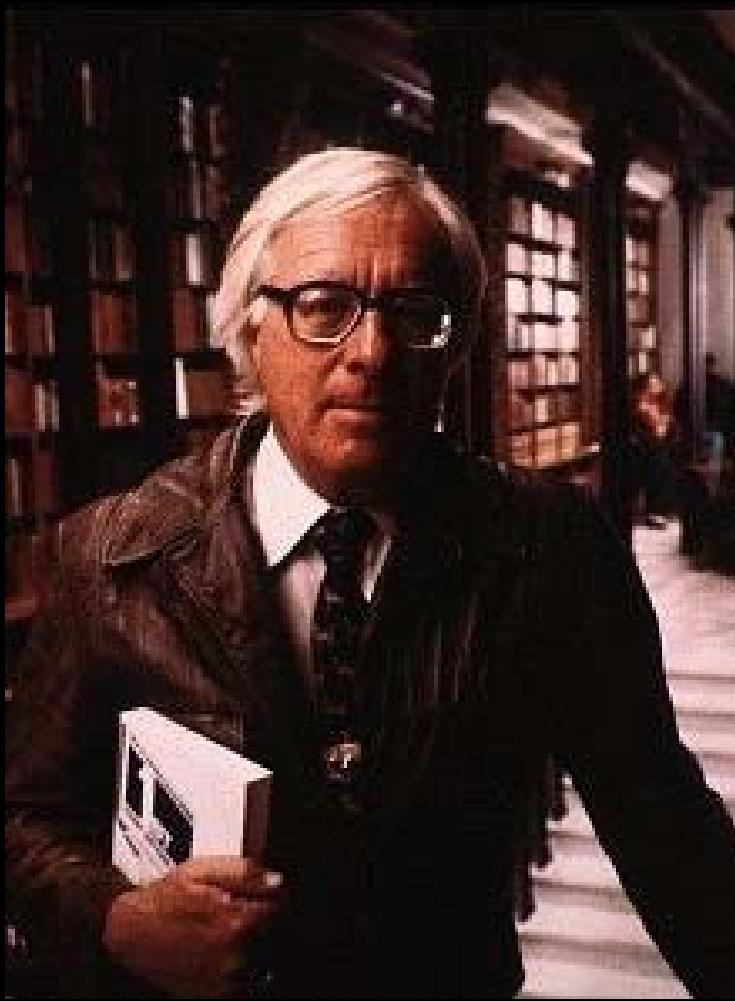
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Game Developer's Conference 2011



RAY BRADBURY

AUTHOR OF FAHRENHEIT 451 AND DANDELION WINE

*You
in the
Art
of
Writing*

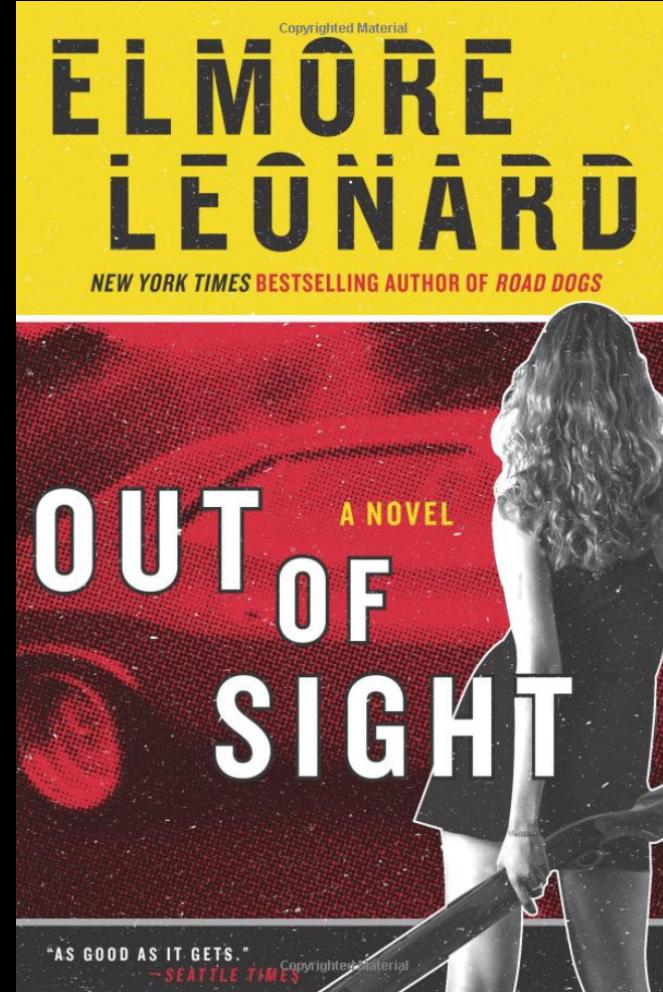
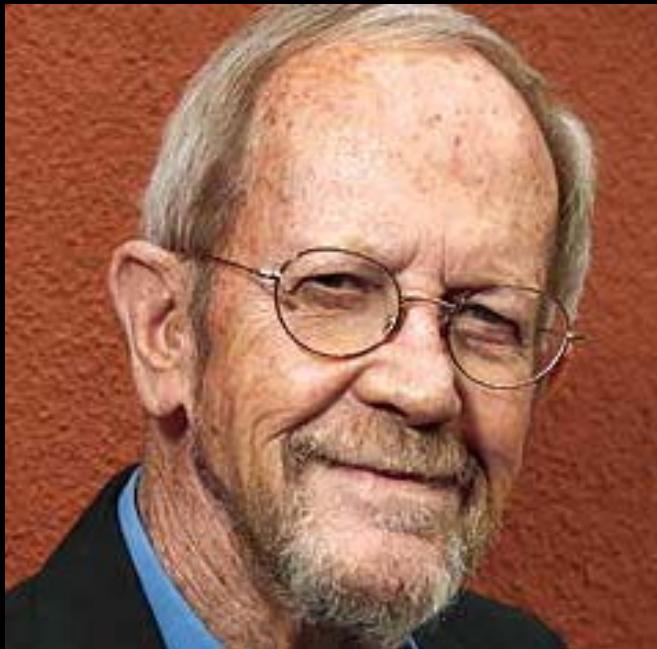
RELEASING THE
CREATIVE GENIUS
WITHIN YOU



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
3½" DISK
IS-C04

INTERACTIVE FICTION PLUS™

SCIENCE FICTION
ADVANCED LEVEL

Moby
Games



Electronically transmitted into every A MIND FOREVER VOYAGING package: your A MIND FOREVER VOYAGING disk; the latest hardcopy issue of Dakota Online Magazine; a full-color map of Rockville, South Dakota; 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

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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.

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

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INFOCOM

125 CambridgePark Drive, Cambridge, MA 02140
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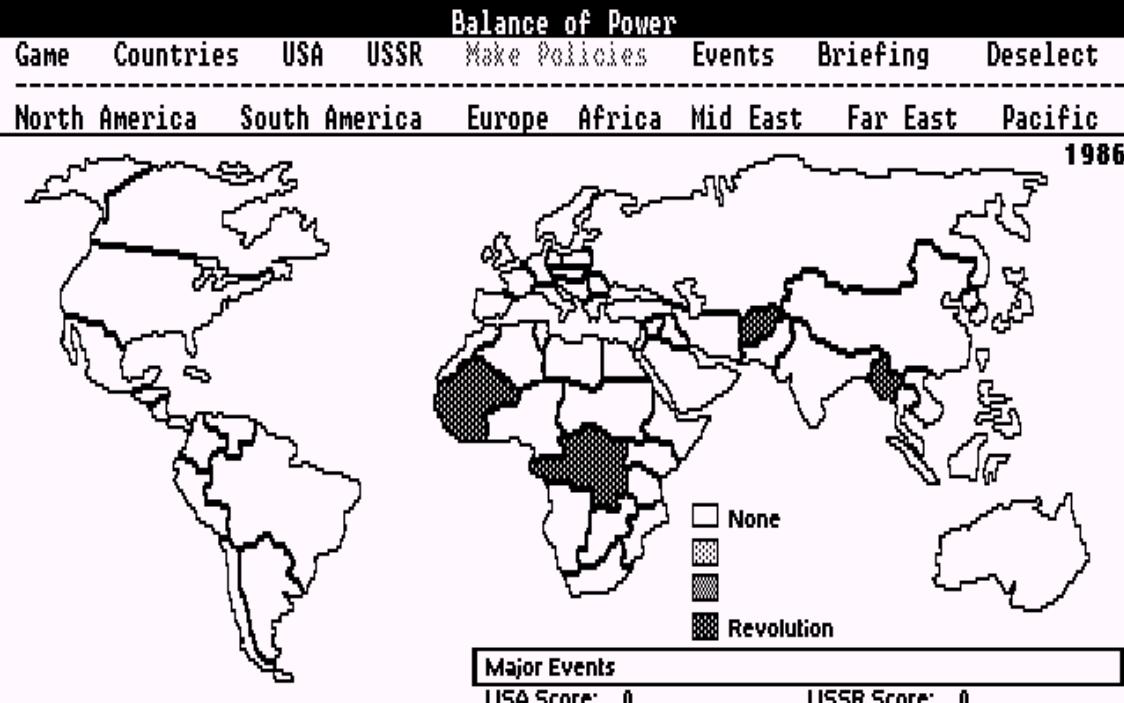
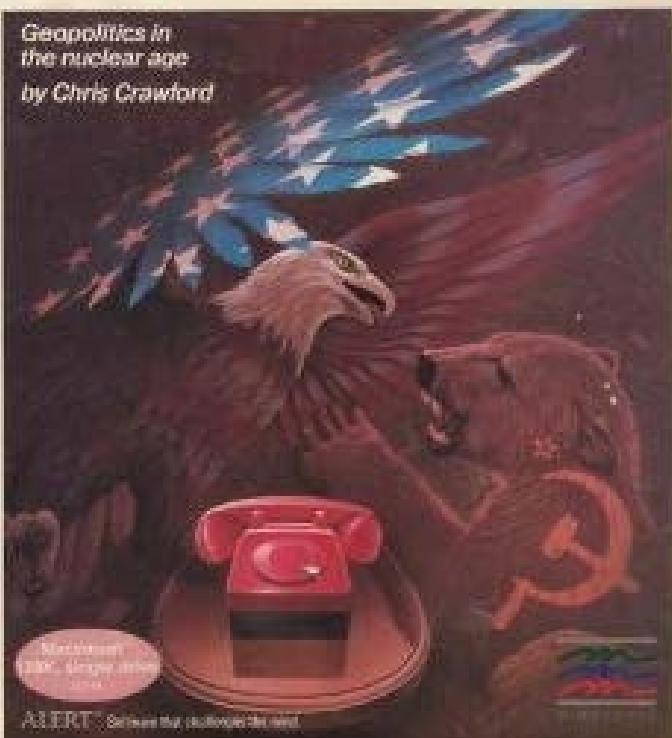
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mobygames.com



BALANCE OF POWER

Geopolitics in
the nuclear age
by Chris Crawford





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**









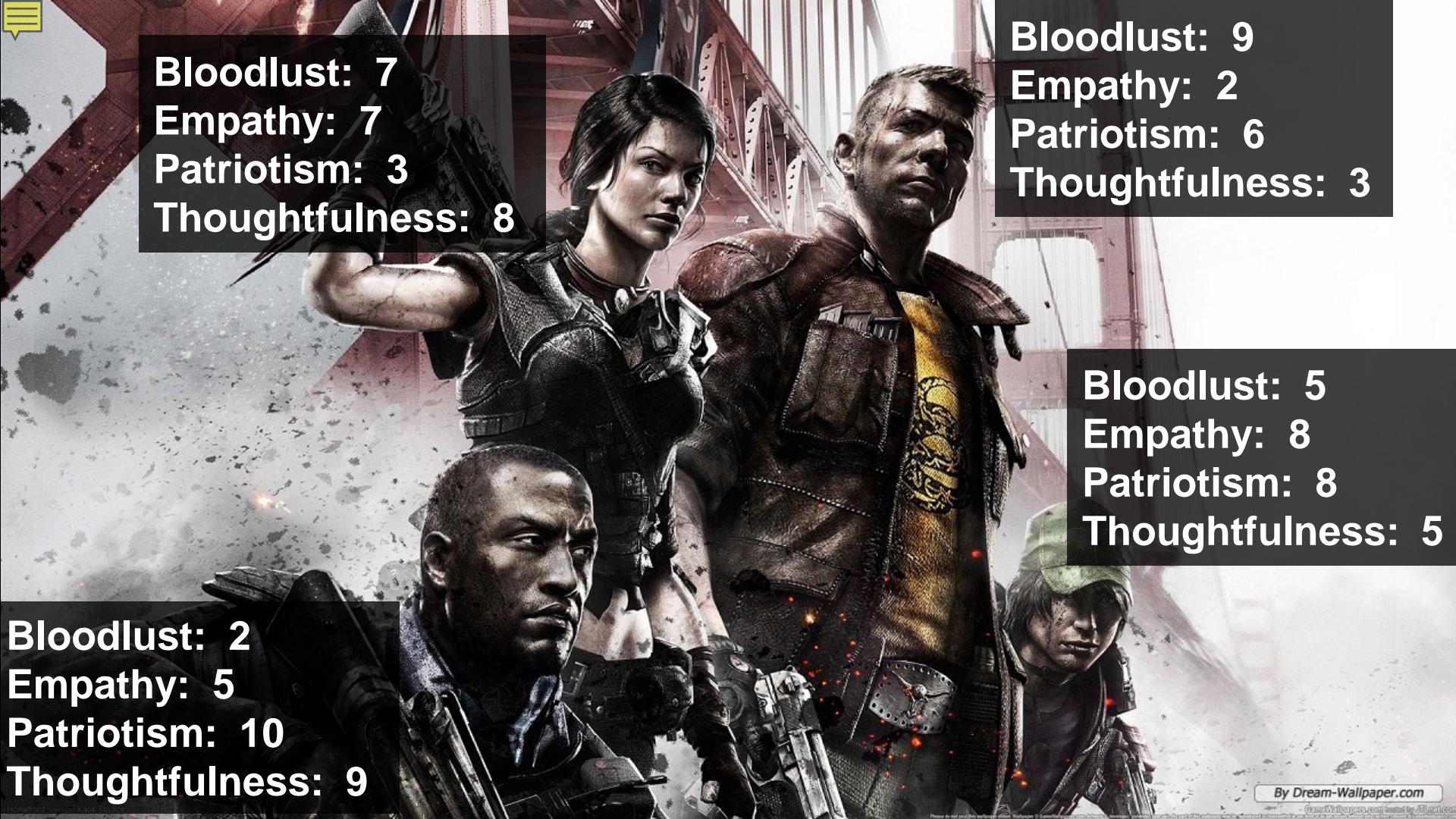
By Dream-Wallpaper.com





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

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



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

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



3: IF THERE ARE CHOICES

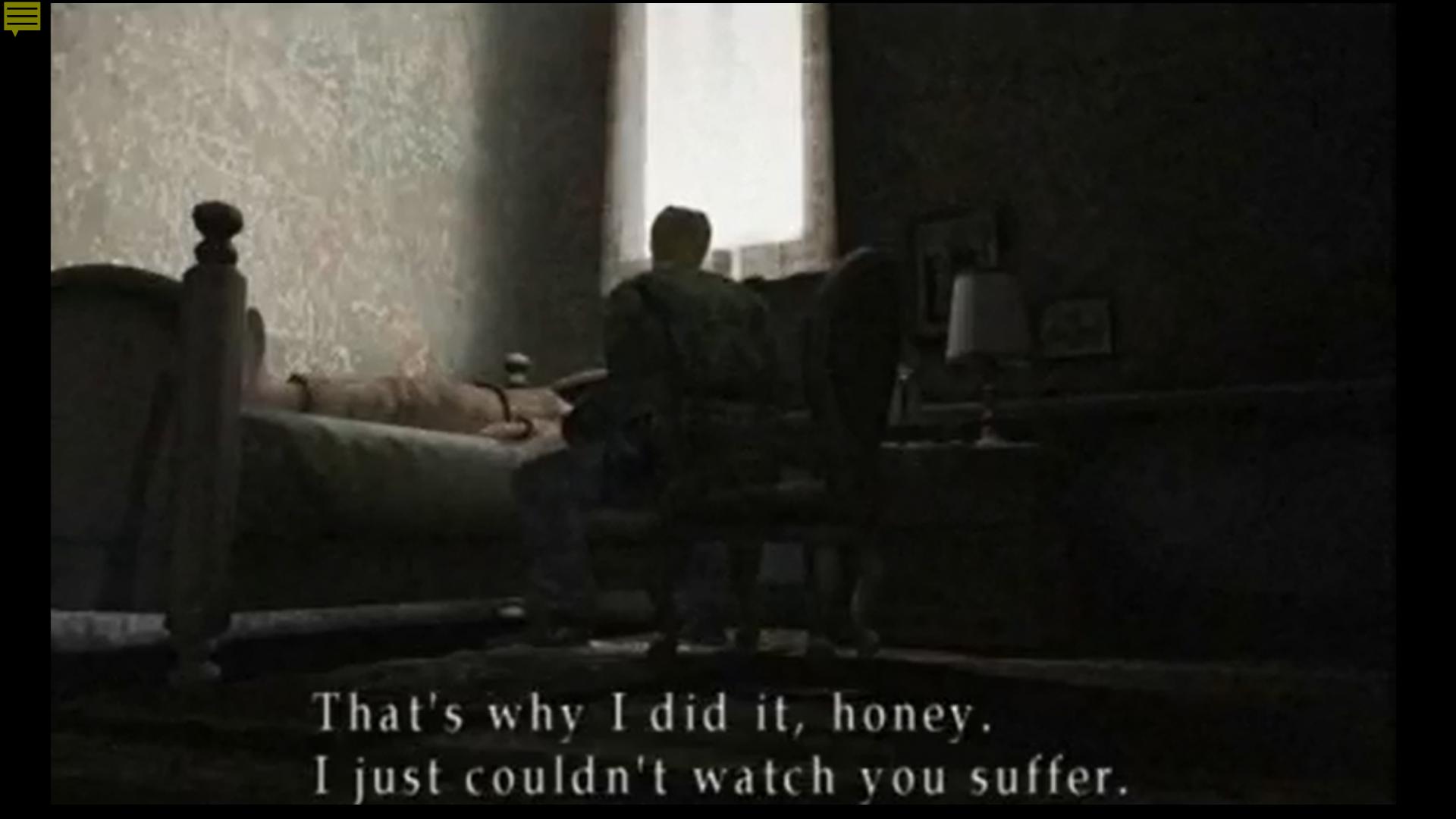


“A game is a series of interesting choices.”
– Sid Meier,
Creator of *Civilization*





3: IF THERE ARE CHOICES, THERE MUST BE REPURCUSSIONS



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



Status

Equipment

Command



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***







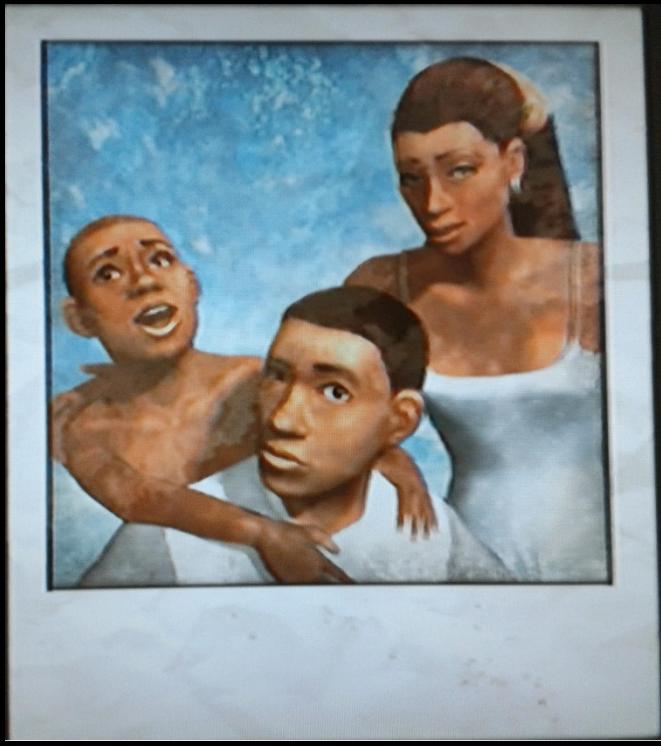




4:

**KEEP THE
BUDGET IN MIND**













What kind of a monster are you?

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



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

(BUT I DON'T
MEAN
IMPOSSIBLE)





You have a gun.

3

... X A B You can't have a gun.
Give it to her.

Honesty

Lie to Hershel?

Who would you save?

Duck or Shawn?

Loyalty

Side with Kenny?

Mercy

Gave Irene the Gun?

Who would you save?

Doug or Carley?

You and 63% of players were honest



You and 51% of players chose Duck



You and 55% of players sided with Larry



You and 46% of players gave her the gun



You and 78% of players chose Carley



CONTINUE

6:

NO MORE THAN THREE STAKEHOLDERS

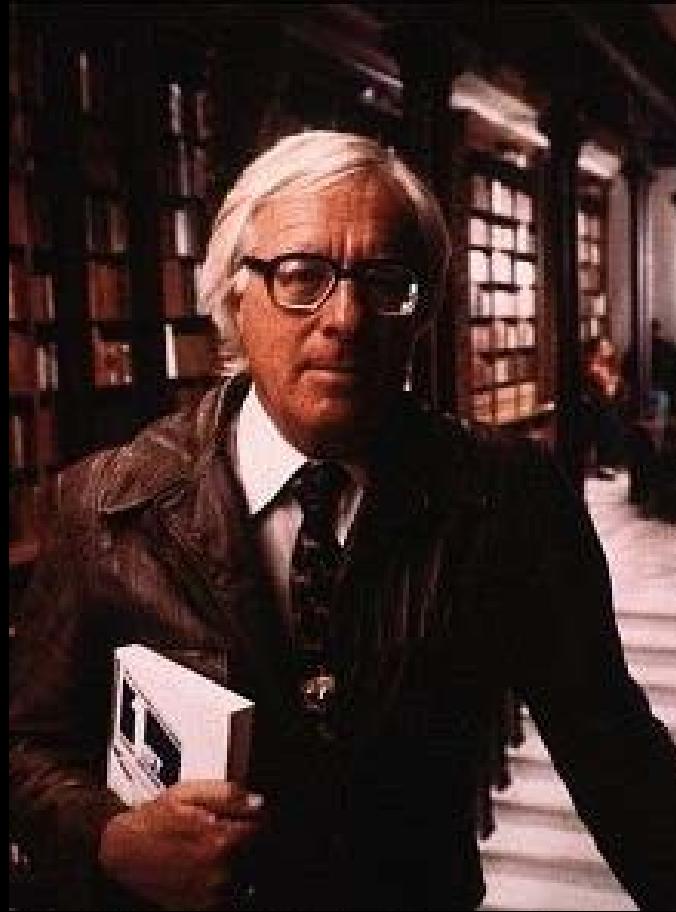


The Wisdom of Teams





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



WWW.FARCRYGAME.COM





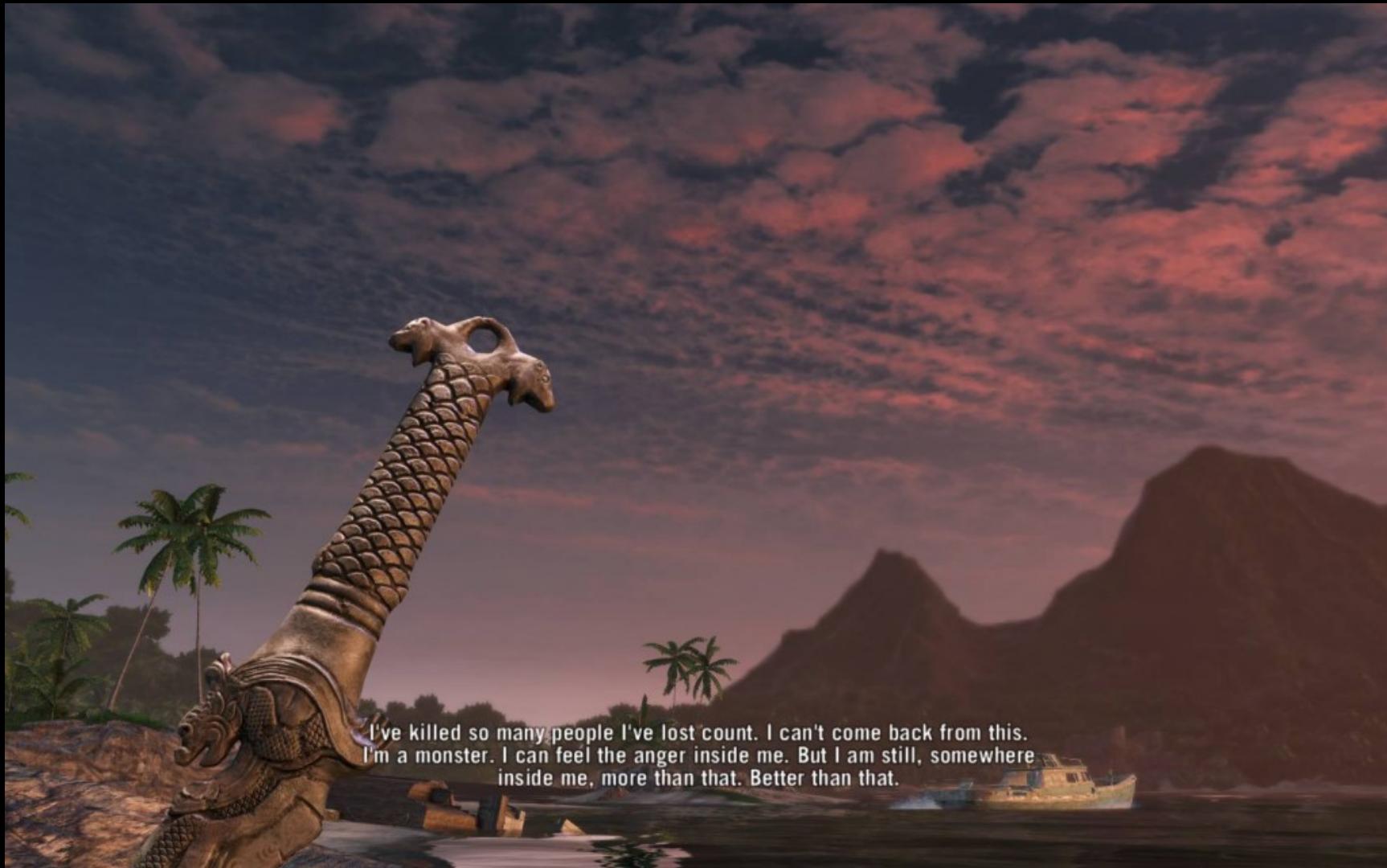


2

6

8
32

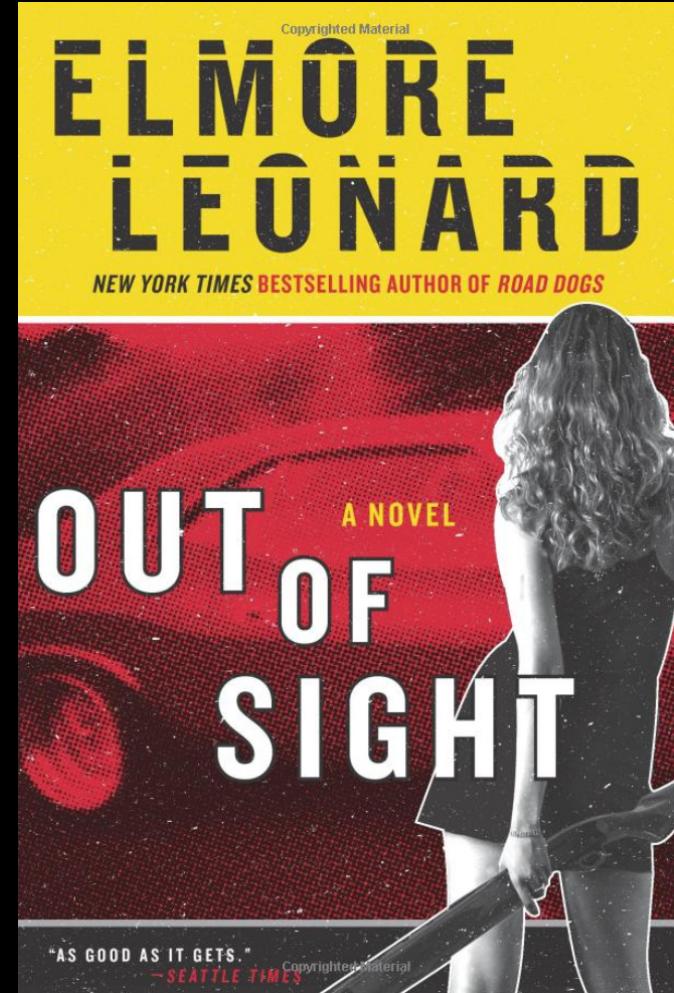
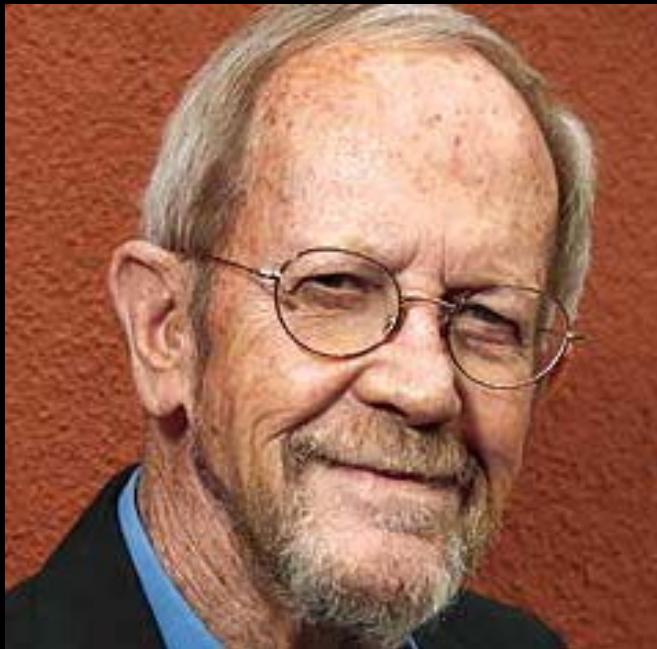
This violence is over. I'm done. No more blood.



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.**









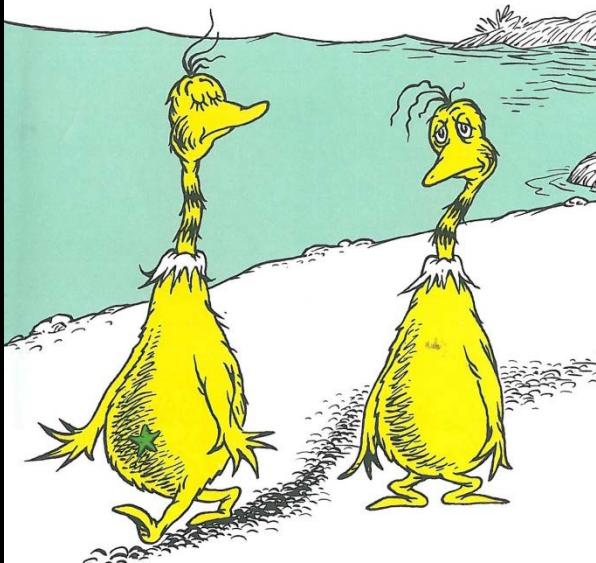
"Kids see a moral coming a mile off and they gag at it.

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





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Richard Rouse III
Senior Game Designer – Microsoft Studios
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