

Game Clichés: Oh No Not This Again...

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BEFORE YOU READ THIS DOCUMENT

I have purposely picked very loved and appreciated games for the subject of discussing common clichés within the gaming community. If you don't like actual feedback coming from someone who actually enjoys and loves these games, you'd best go somewhere else now.

With that said, this is a document about common clichés that are found within videogames, and possible alternatives that could help remedy them. This, of course, is not a document for fixing what is already a great game, but rather a brainstorm to be taken as a method to help make an idea better within the future of design.

Cliché #1: The Achilles' Heel

<http://www.defunctgames.com/34cliches/9/bosses-with-only-one-weak-spot>

Also known as the single weak-spot, this cliché is most prevalent in creatures and beings that are considered "bosses". These weak spots are often seen with some kind of bright color, such as pink, red, or yellow, and is often glowing or pulsating in some way, shape, or form. It is named the Achilles' heel, as it is the only spot that the player can harm the creature at, regardless of what kind of creature or anatomy it has. This weak spot is either pre-maturely exposed to requires some repetitive motion to expose it repeatedly

Example One:



Infamous for having bosses with an Achilles' heel, the legend of Zelda is still renowned as one of the most successful action adventure game series in history. Many dungeons in its franchise give the player a new item to play with, only to discover the item is the only way to defeat the boss at the end of the dungeon. Using this tool exposes the creatures "weak spot", in which the player slashes at it a few times and repeats this process.

A large example that is mentioned a lot is Molgera.



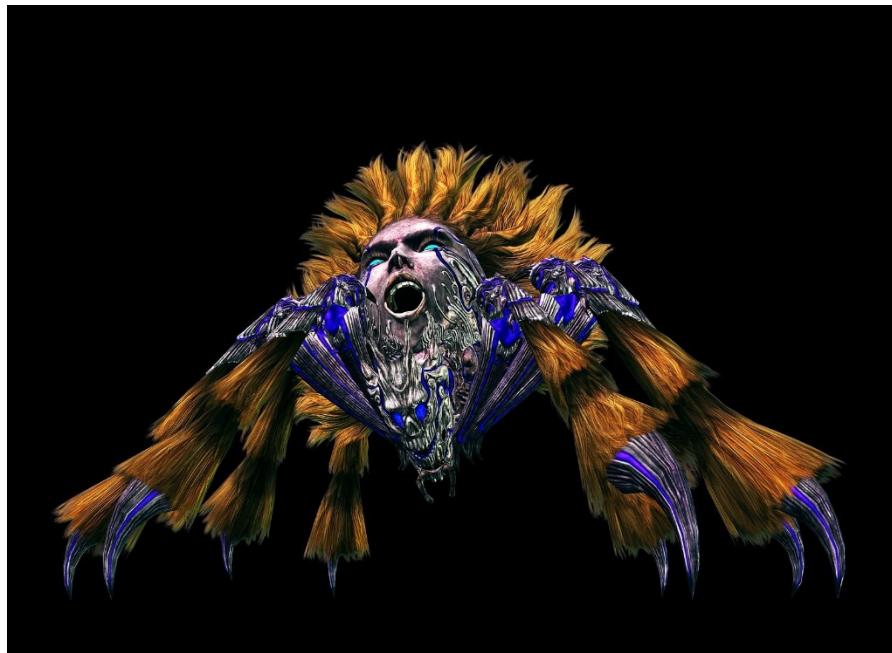
Within this dungeon, the player acquires the hook-shot. The player then uses the hotshot on the glowing spot on Molgera's tongue to pull it out and allow him to be slashed. I feel as though this makes the battle extremely easy and cheap, as Molgera is supposed to be this incredibly powerful sandworm.

Possible Alternative: Have the player use the tool received from the dungeon to possibly help with the fight, but not directly lead to the victory. In this example, the player could instead use the hook-shot to pull scales off the giant worm. Each scale reveals a slightly off-tinted exposed skin that can be hit a few times before it darkens, showing that they can't attack there anymore. The objective would be to pull all the scales off to find all of the soft skin and attack there instead of...the tongue.

Example Two:



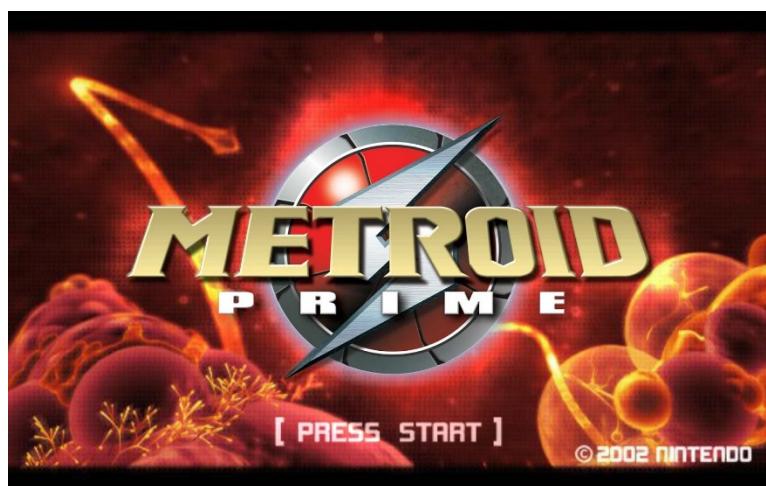
In the Knight's Contract, the player controls a cursed immortal warrior enslaved to protect the life of a powerful, yet fragile witch. The player's health bar is actually for the witch, and the player immune to harm. If they take too much damage, however, they fall apart and have to put themselves back together. While the bosses in this game do break the mold a little when it comes to flashing weak spots, there is still only one or two places the player can actually strike in order to cause serious harm.



This boss is the mutated, corrupted form of Rapunzel, one of the witches of the wilds. While the player can strike at any part of the body or damage, the only really time-worth location to strike is the large face, a completely different colored shade as any other spot. The player can use the witch's spells in order to knock the spider onto its back and have an easier time attacking the face. Once the health bar is brought to zero, a quick-time event is started to have the player strike the final blow.

Possible Alternative: The player has to cut down all the strands of hair forming the giant spider's web in order to knock the spider onto the ground. The player can then attack the legs and sever them to slow the creature down instead of having to simply strike a single spot, making the fight more dynamic. Not all the legs need to be taken off to trigger the scene, they just need to render it unbalanced.

Example Three:



This is a focus on the entire series, rather than singular game. Almost every single enemy, aside from Ridely, suffers from having a glowing spot or an obvious location that the player shoots at to damage the

creature. Even if the spot has to be exposed by a special weapon, such as the rockets or freeze ray, there is still a singular location that the enemy takes damage from. The bosses follow the same pattern, or ideal, where the rei only a single weak point that can be struck and is usually exposed by some kind of special trigger or attack. Usually, this information is given to the player by “scanning” the creature with the visor mode.



A good example is the boost guardian, essentially a boss on the second installment of the game. No attack the player does can do damage to it, but the player can lure it into smashing into the glowing crystals to expose its weakness. Beating this boss unlocks the morph ball form

Possible Alternative: instead of just making it a simple case of running into the crystals, the player could have shot the crystals to make them spark with energy. Shooting two of them creates a field of energy between them for a few seconds. If the monster runs through it, its stunned for a few moments, leaving it open for attack. There's no weak-spot anymore and it makes the battle more dynamic.

Cliché #2: Backtracking

<http://www.giantbomb.com/backtracking/3015-239/>

Backtracking is when the game sends the player through previously visited or explored areas in order to unlock a new part of the area or pick up something that the player might have left behind. Often this is used to extend game time or to save on making more models by reusing other ones. This is also very apparent with any kind of side quests as an addition to the game.

Example #1:



In Bio-shock infinite, the player can occasionally run into chests and secrets that are not accessible yet. Later in the area, the player runs into the key or passcode and has to backtrack if they wish to access the chests. These rewards are optional, and thus not needed to complete the game, but the contents can assist the player in beating the game with new equipment and health vials.

Possible Solution: Instead of making them go back to get the code or key, they could fight an alternate difficult fight for the item and unlock it there. The player wouldn't have to do this and could pass by it as normal. This would also solve the extended playtime, as the game is giving the player a challenge.

Example #2:



This is focusing on the Fallout series in general, not just three. In Fallout, the player is given a large map to explore and complete tasks to gather gear and understand how the place has changed since the apocalypse. The player, if they so choose, can return to previously visited areas for items, traders, and side-quests for more experience. This doesn't feel needed, but eventually becomes required as the player runs out of resources and caps.

Possible Solution: While it is present in the game, there could be more wandering merchants and traveling npcs that give quests out. This allows the player to continue the exploration and story without requiring to backtrack.

Example #3:



.Hack is both an anime/manga and a videogame series that takes place inside of a pure-virtual world named “The World”. Players took control of the protagonist and attempted to solve the many strange things occurring within the game world, eventually obtaining a special item called the twilight brace that allows them to hack enemies to obtain cores. As only specific enemies had specific cores, this required a

lot of backtracking in order to defeat old enemies. These cores are used to unlock new stages for progression purposes. While the option to randomize new levels in order to find a different map for the enemy to spawn in was possible, it was just easier to rehash the same level repeatedly.

Possible Solution: Perhaps by adding a black market store, one could trade in virus cores for coin and purchase other virus cores with the special currency earned in previous trades. While it may not completely solve the problem, it does lower the amount of consistent backtracking needed for grinding, as some of the cores are so rare they can take ages to get through.

Cliché #3: Errand Boy

Similar but not quite the same: <http://www.giantbomb.com/fetch-quests/3015-265/>

Here you are, player, a powerful hero who has been destined to end the world of some evil and save mankind. You’ve been blessed with some incredibly powerful ability that sets you apart from everyone else, regardless of that power being your face or some gift. Despite your stature, your purpose, and your power, even people that know you simply want one thing from you: a cat, some leather hides, maybe a hammer. Regardless of what kind of hero you are, it seems as if the world just wants the player to be an errand boy.

Example #1:



Here you are, supposed to be this dovakin, speaker to dragons and caster of their spells, and yet the majority of the side quests have you seeking sweet-rolls and random chalices instead of actually honoring or noticing your position. A majority of the side quests are like this, even ones that you obtain beyond the main stories within the different guilds. It's almost as if the player had become Dovakin Deliverer, which, while catchy, doesn't add to the immersion.

Possible Solution: The game having a lot of quests is fine, but perhaps it shouldn't be completely focused on fetching /pointless/ items or solving /small/ things. Perhaps the side quests could be more focused on the actual events going on in the world. Sided with the Storm cloaks? Perhaps have a Storm cloak spy ask for help to retrieve vital records from the Imperials. Mabye he could actually help you instead of just sending you off.

Example #2:



Within Tera, you play as a character drafted into the alliance to fight off whatever is threatening the general populous. You're eventually training to fight off a seemingly alien race of beings trying to destroy all life on the planet. The more of the story quests you do, the more you're given praise and recognition, rising into the ranks of the military as a famous soldier. Despite this, the player is still given constant quests like "I need leather for new shoes, please?" or "there's some herbs that will make me rich, go get them for me". It breaks the immersion completely and makes the player feel more like an errand boy than anything. Mabye that's why people never read the text in missions?

Possible Solution: The idea of fetch quest isn't bad, as long as it actually makes you feel your role and not some errand boy. Perhaps instead of the guard asking for leather from the panthers to make boots, you could hunt the panthers for data on their hunting habits so that the guards can better control the area and make it safer for the people. All it takes is a little favor change to make the quest go from errand boy to accomplishment.

Example #3:



The player is playing as The Witcher, a magically altered human born to fight off powerful creatures. They're more durable and stronger than most races, and even have the ability to harness magic and alchemy. While a lot of the quests are involving what you're supposed to be able to do, hunt powerful creatures and clear out infesting undead, sometimes you're given quests like "I lost my mother's sword, can you go get it for me?". Apparently said sword is stolen by a group of thugs outside of the city in a cave. Isn't that kind of work what the guards of the city are for?

Possible Solution: This kind of problem was technically already solved in The Witcher 3, to an extent. There are still fetch quests, but each one is tied to some kind of small story that actually makes the player feel like they impacted the game or accomplished something true to their character. This kind of thing probably should have been done sooner, but well...