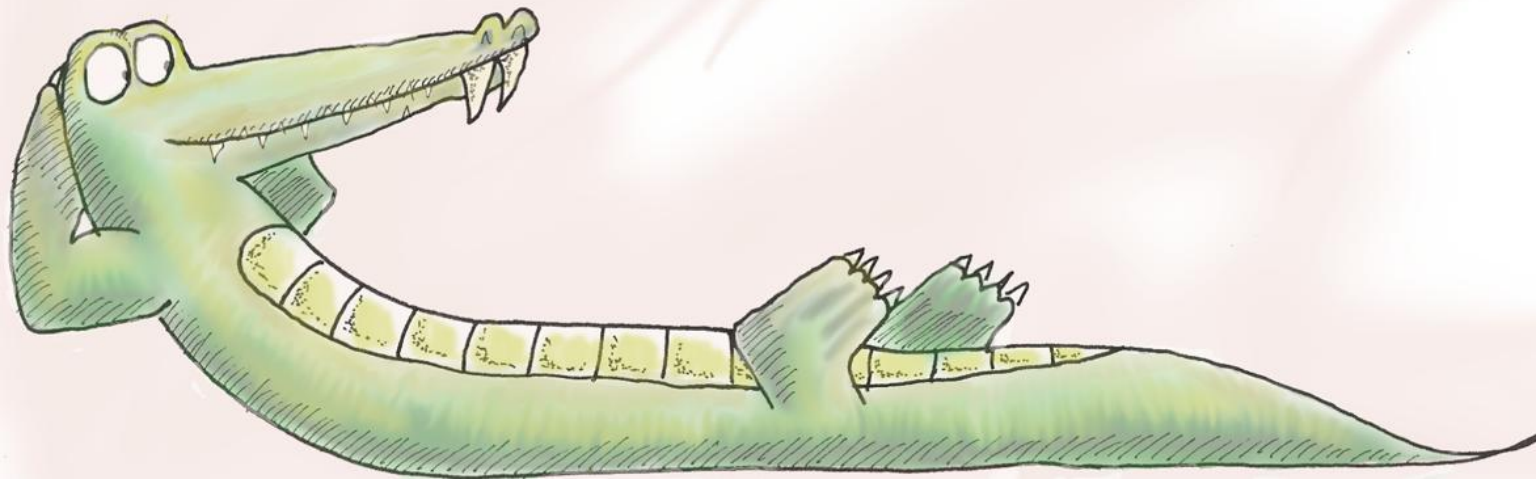


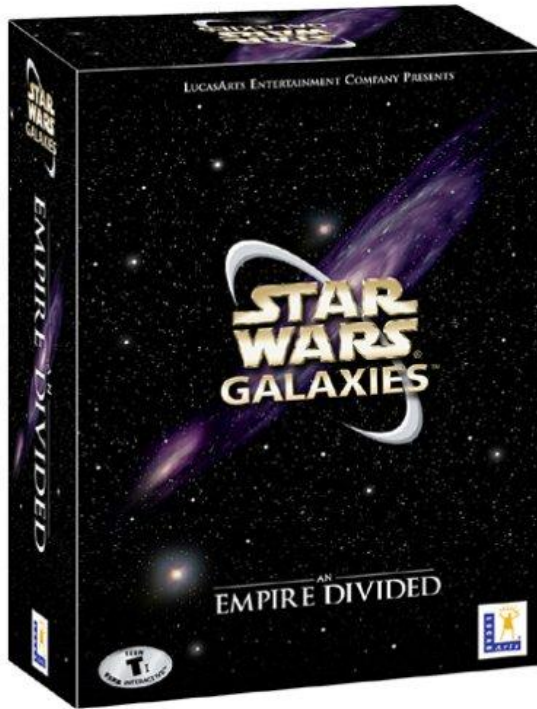
Why Games Matter

Raph Koster

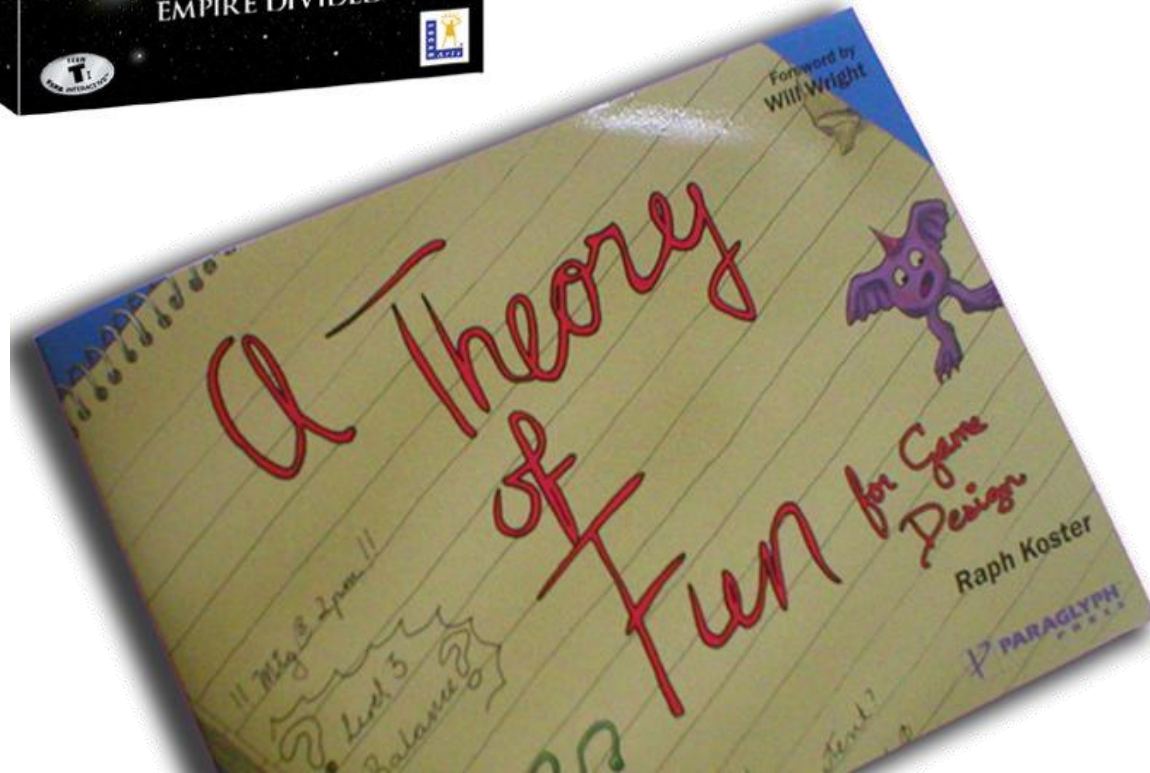
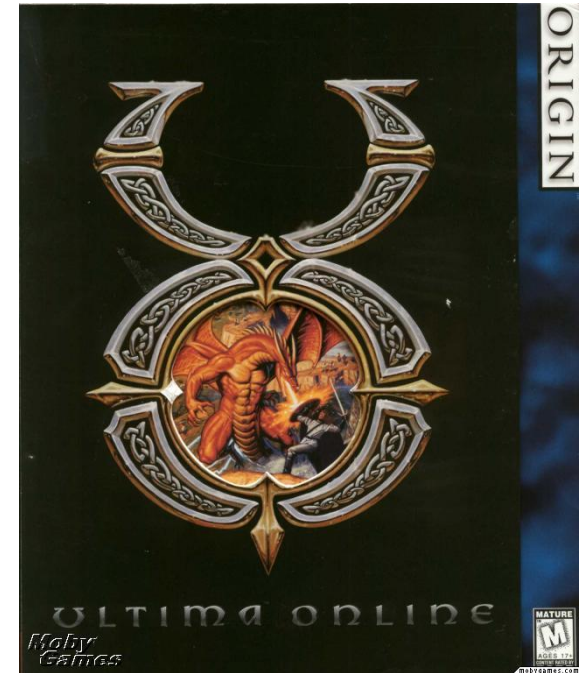
Chief Creative Officer, Sony Online Entertainment

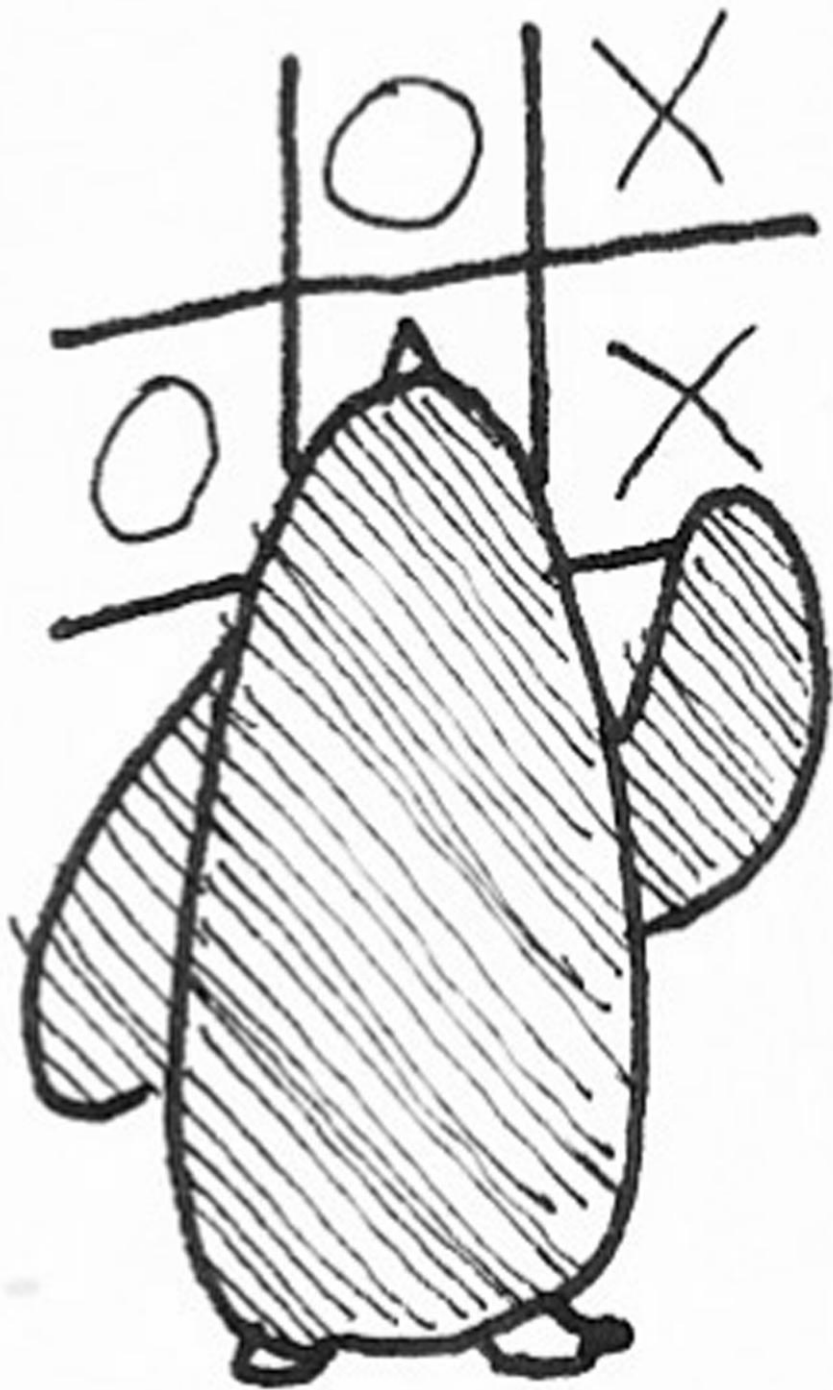
Author, A Theory of Fun for Game Design





Who Am I?





Understanding Games

They used to be this.

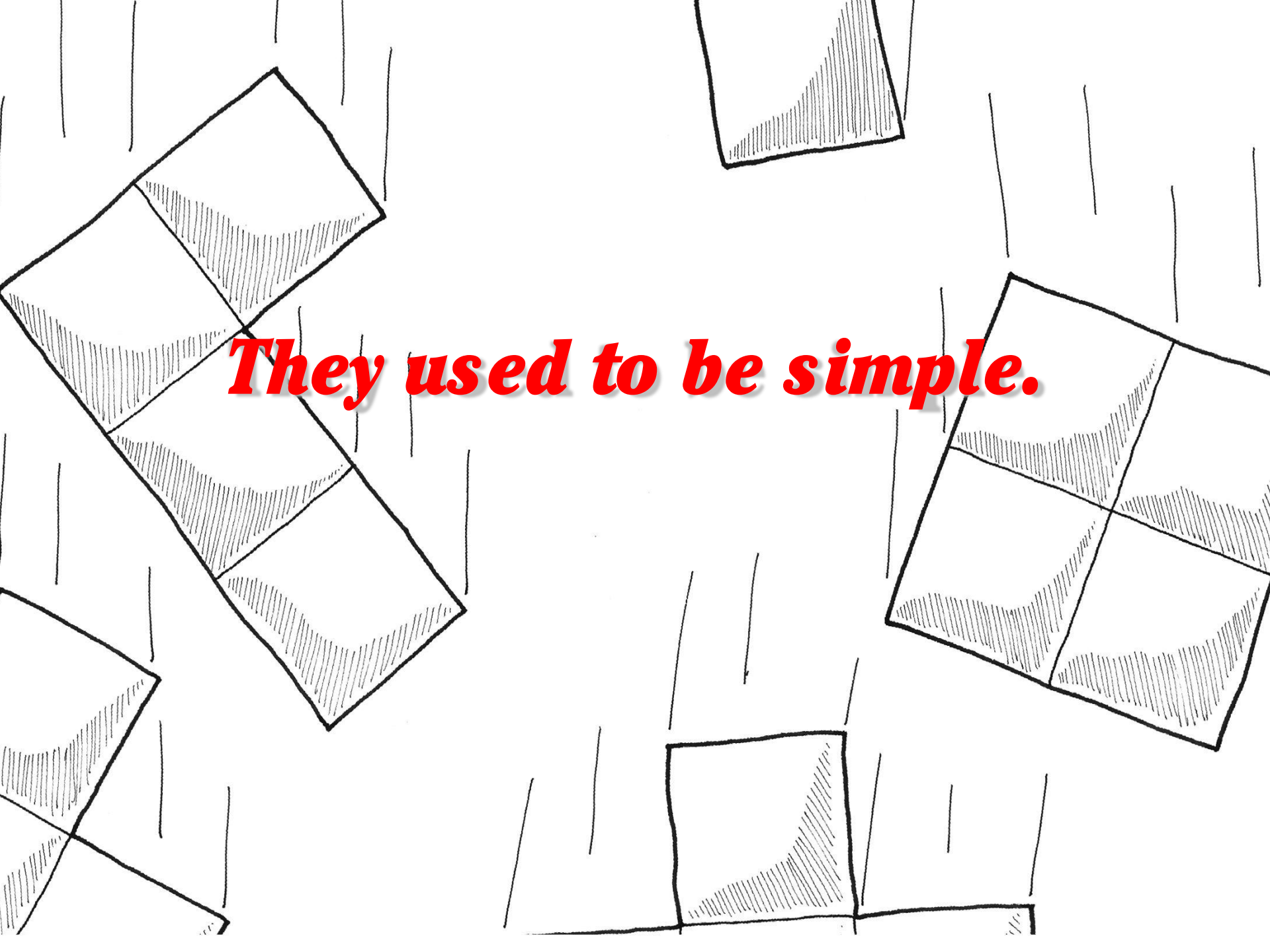


Now they look like this.



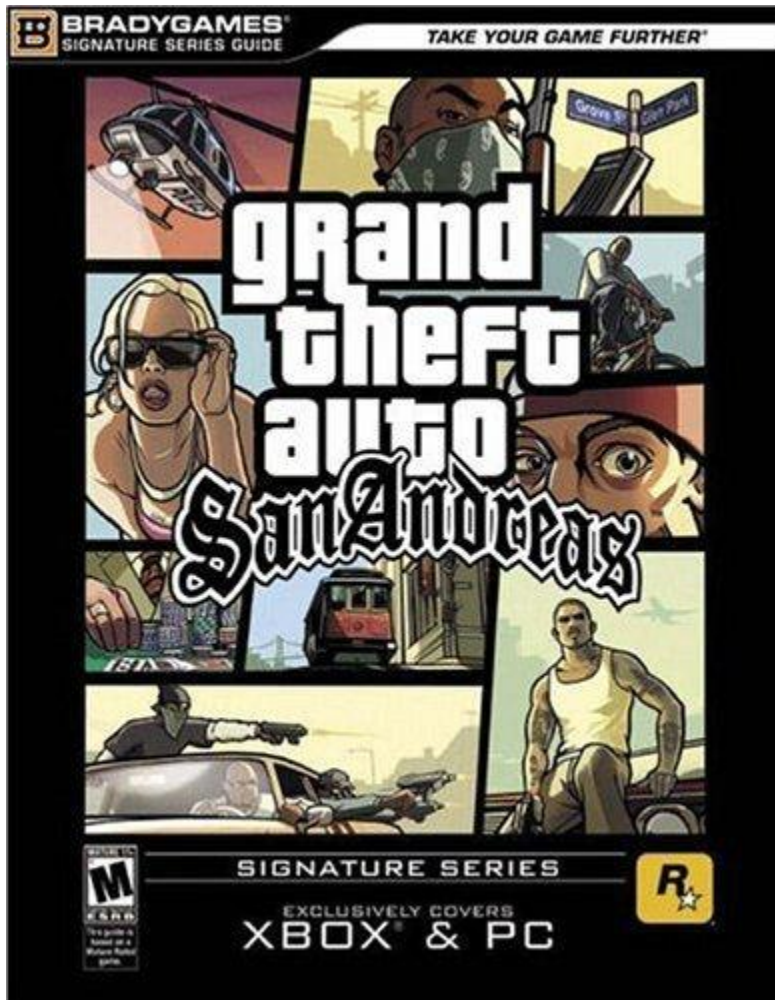
HEALTH 100 SUIT 75

AMMO 2

The background of the slide features several hand-drawn geometric shapes, including squares and rectangles, some of which are tilted. These shapes are filled with diagonal hatching lines. Additionally, there are several vertical lines scattered across the white background, some of which are longer and more prominent than others. The overall style is sketchy and informal.

They used to be simple.

Now they are complex.

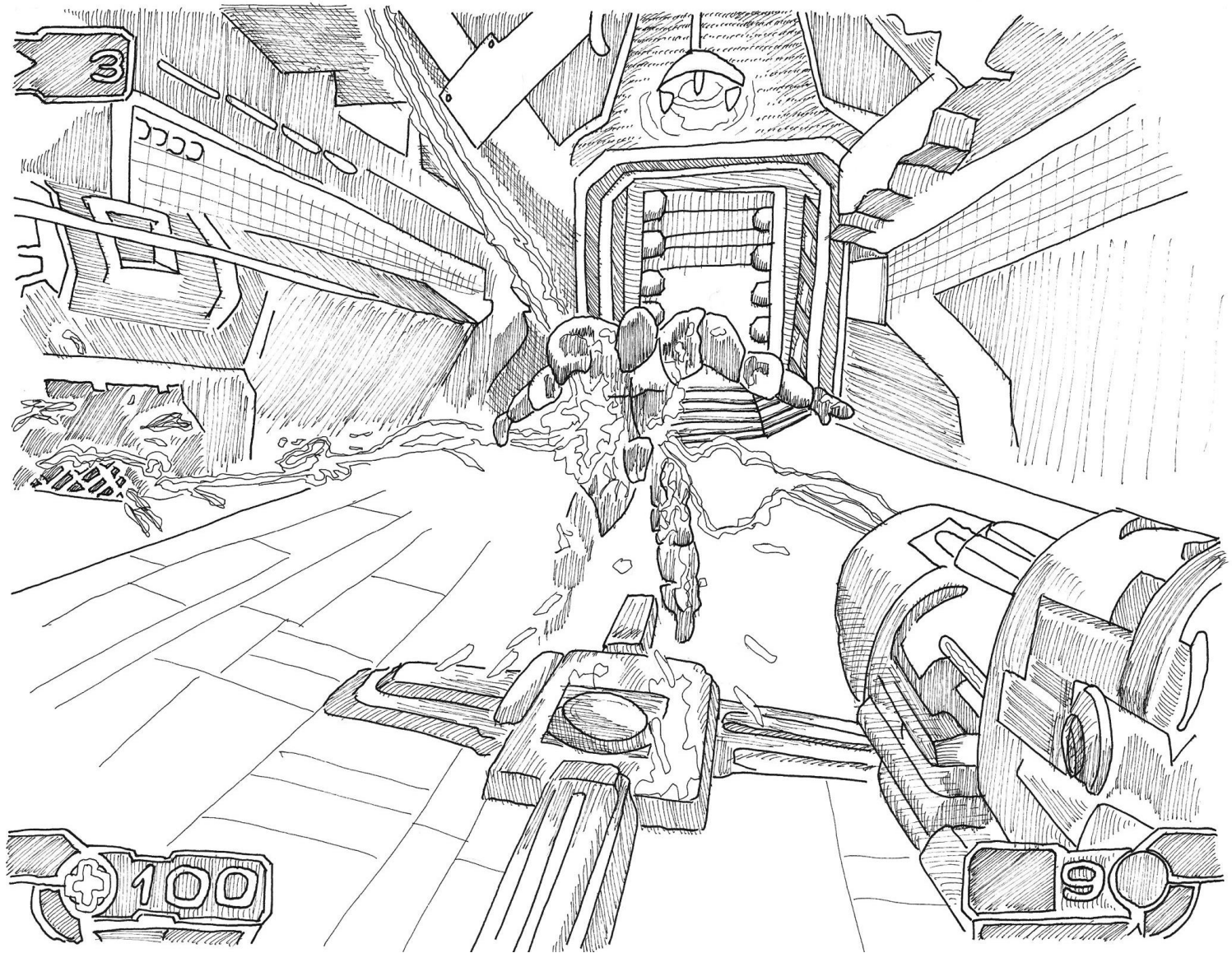


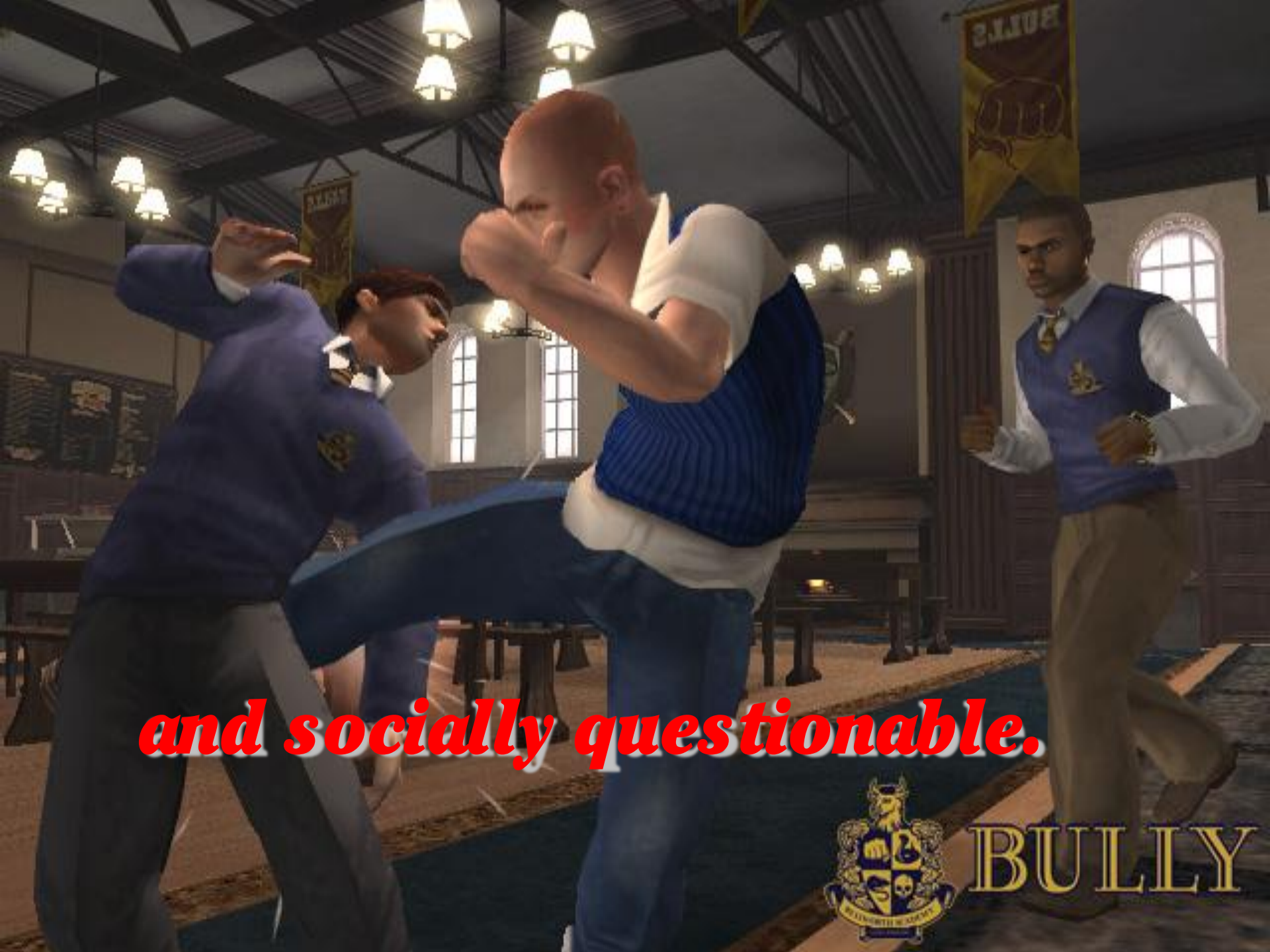
- *Size of Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas walkthrough: 1433k*
- *That's 930 pages.*
- *(Tom Wolfe's latest book was only 688 pages.)*

***They are frequently
sexist,***



violent,





and socially questionable.



BULLY

Why should we pay attention?



The cultural case



Games make a lot of money.

\$7,548,000,000

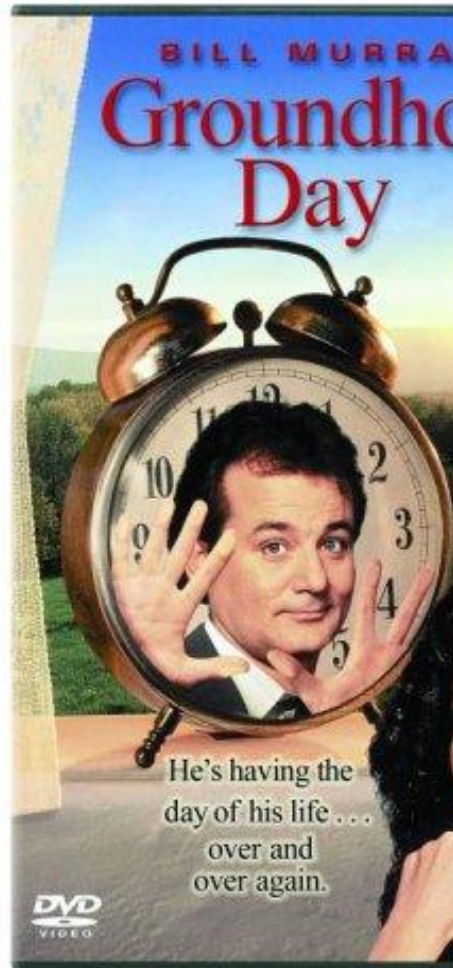
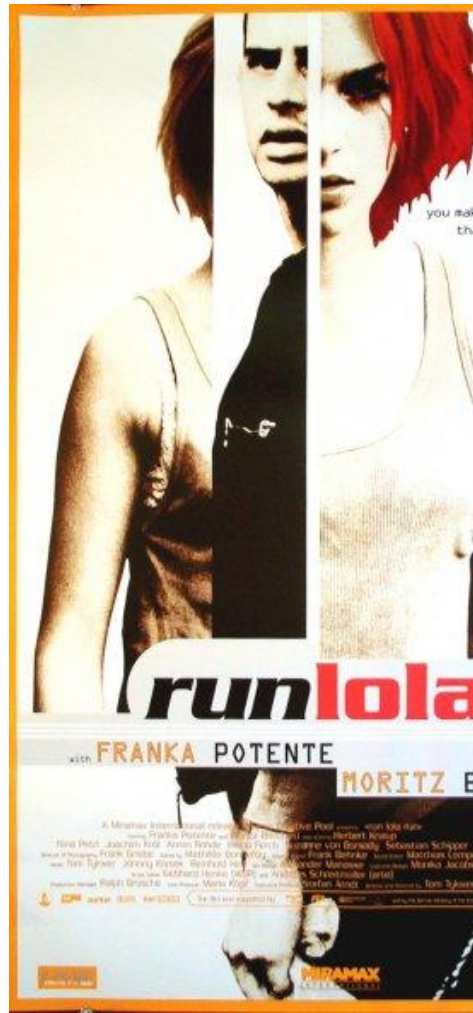
***They're played by more types
of people than ever.***

- *75% of heads of household*
- *The average gamer is 30.*
- *There are more women over 18 playing games than there are boys under 18.*

They are no longer stigmatized.



Game culture informs film,



Music,



And television.



These are all bad reasons.



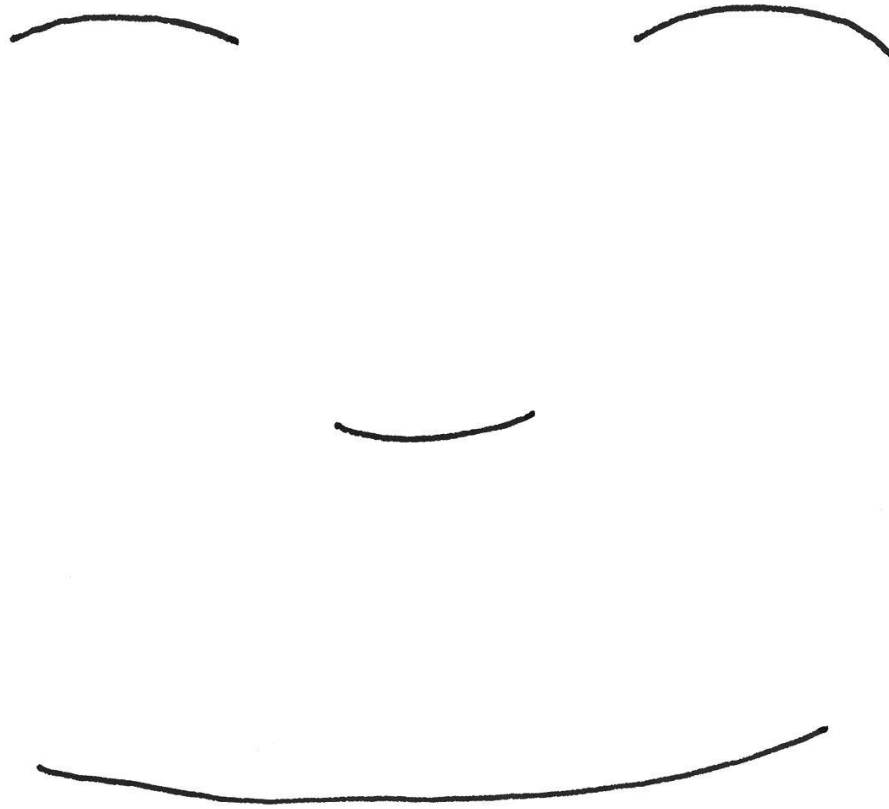
Ever watched children play?



***One of the very first games we
play with our children is
making faces.***

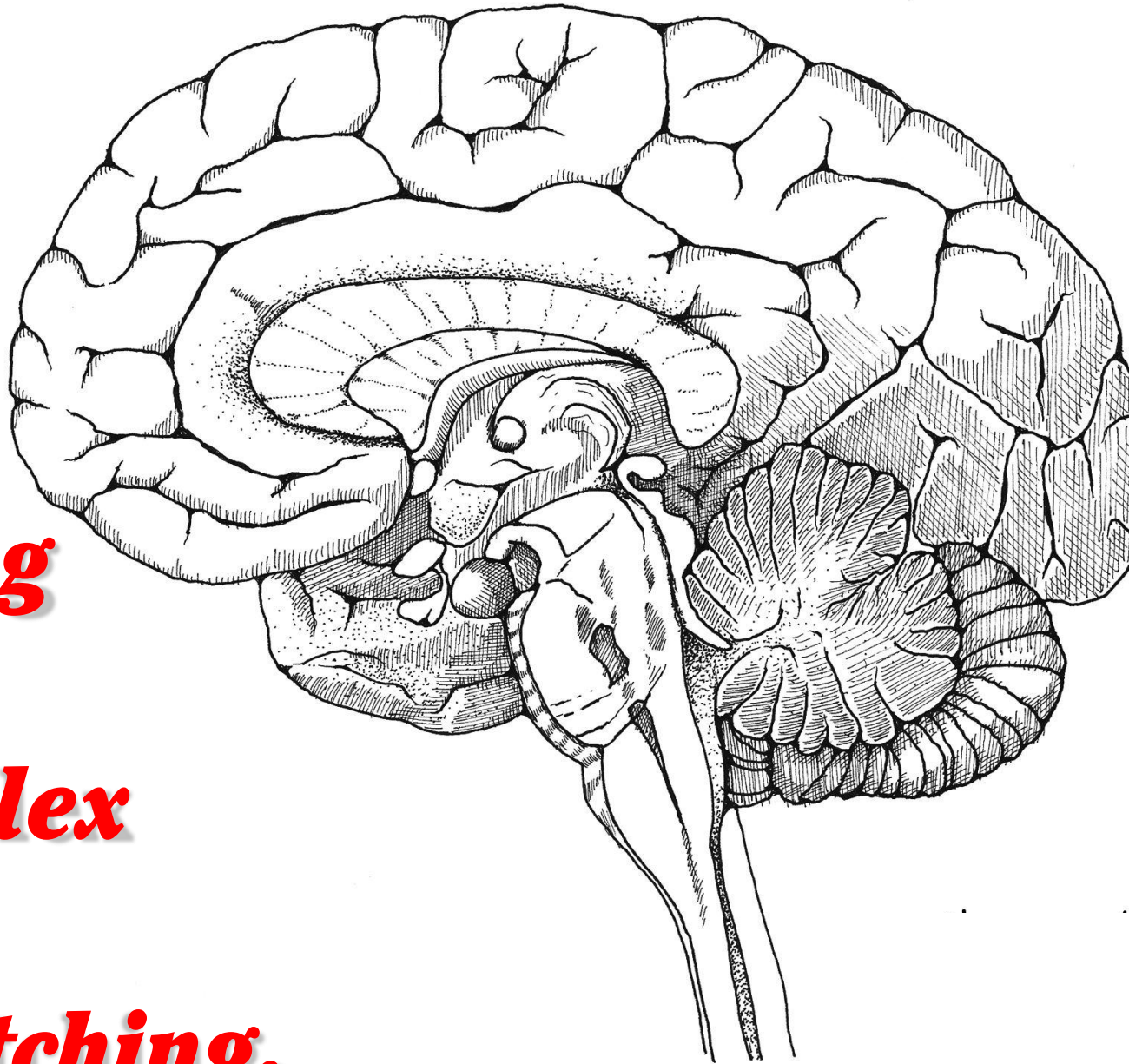


***Humans can find faces damn near
anywhere.***

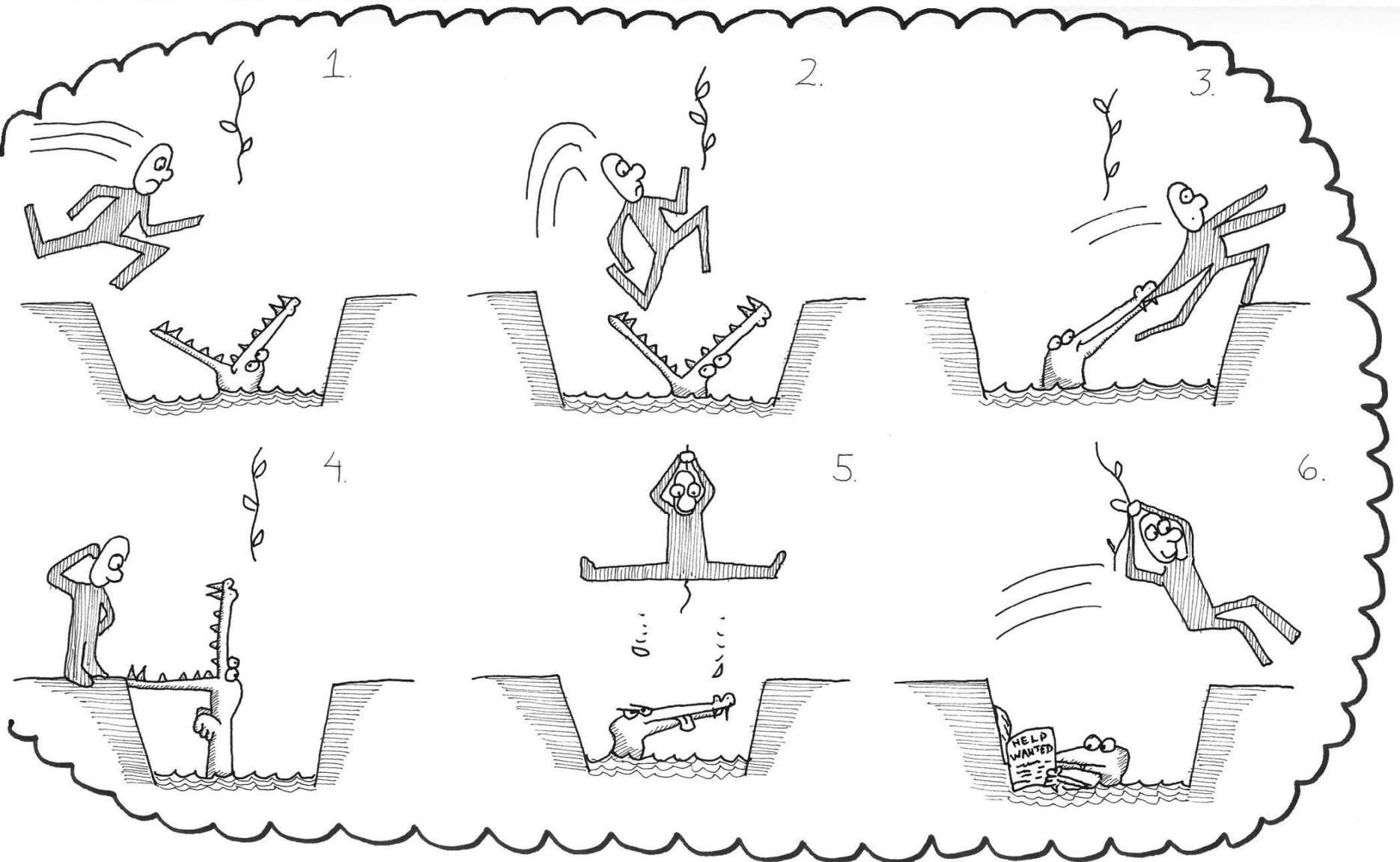


***When we see a pattern, we
iconify it.***

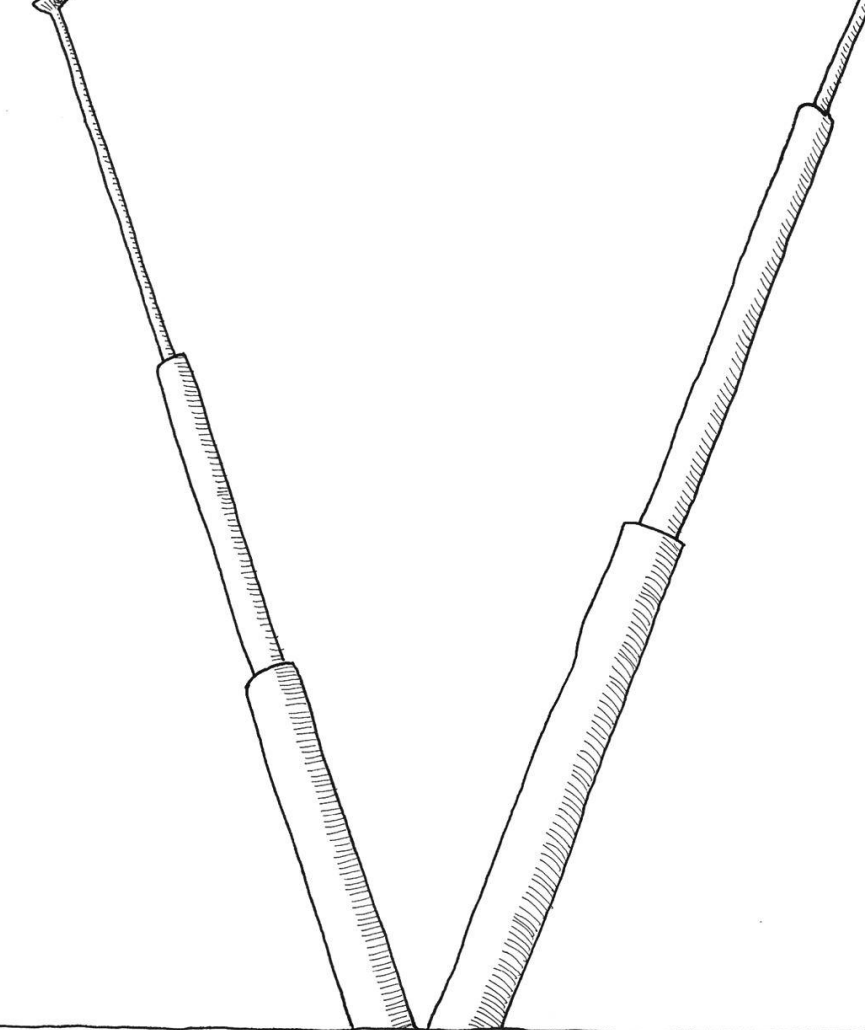
***What we
call thinking
is in
fact a complex
form of
pattern-matching.***



Playing games exercises your brain.



***But you'll only
play until you
master the
pattern.***



HI SCORES

RAF

999,999,999

RAF

999,999,999

**Once you have
grokked the pattern...**



Understanding what fun is and why some games have it is important.

MISTER,
WANNA PLAY
WITH ME?

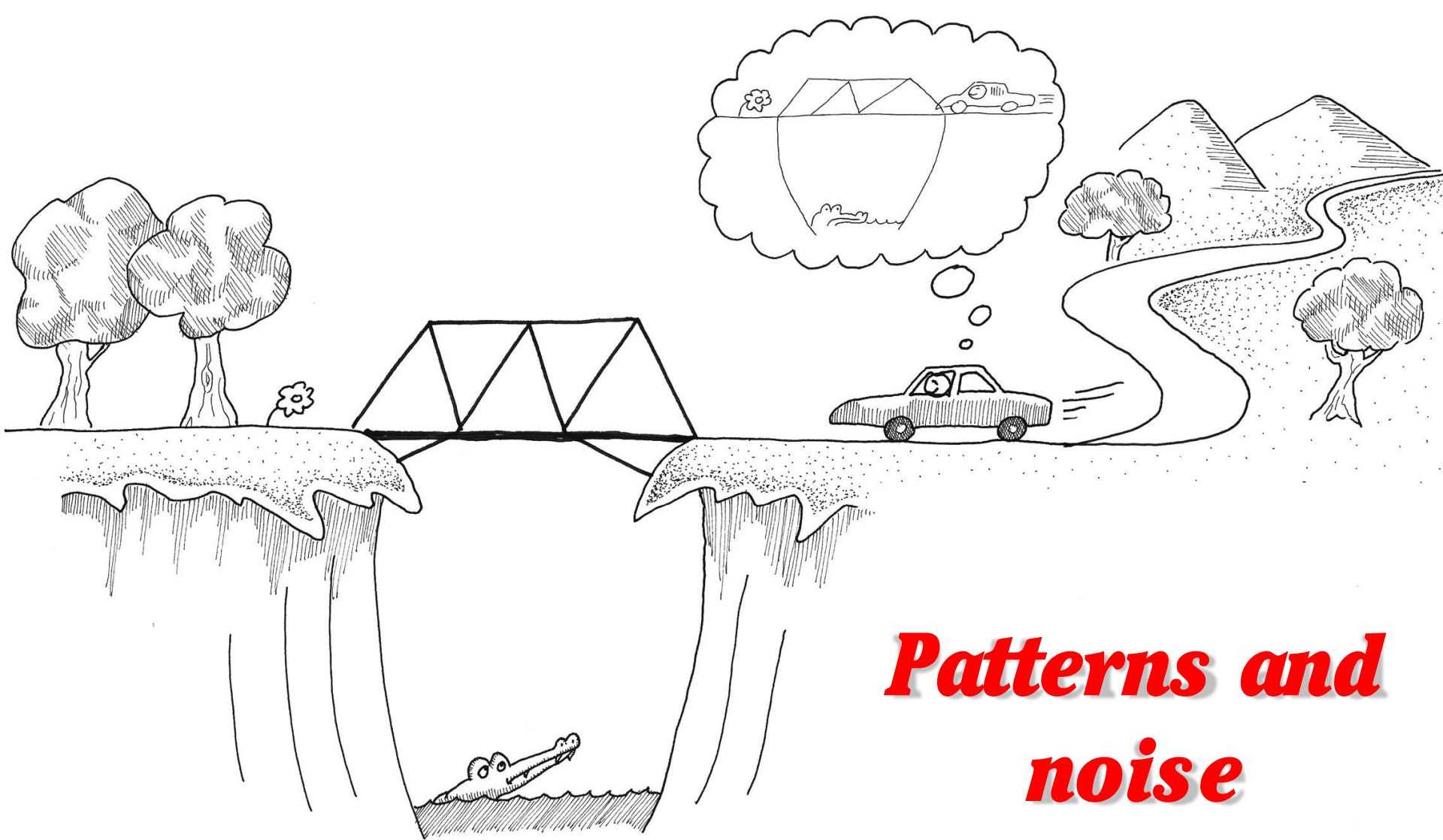




How the brain works

(This is the dry part)

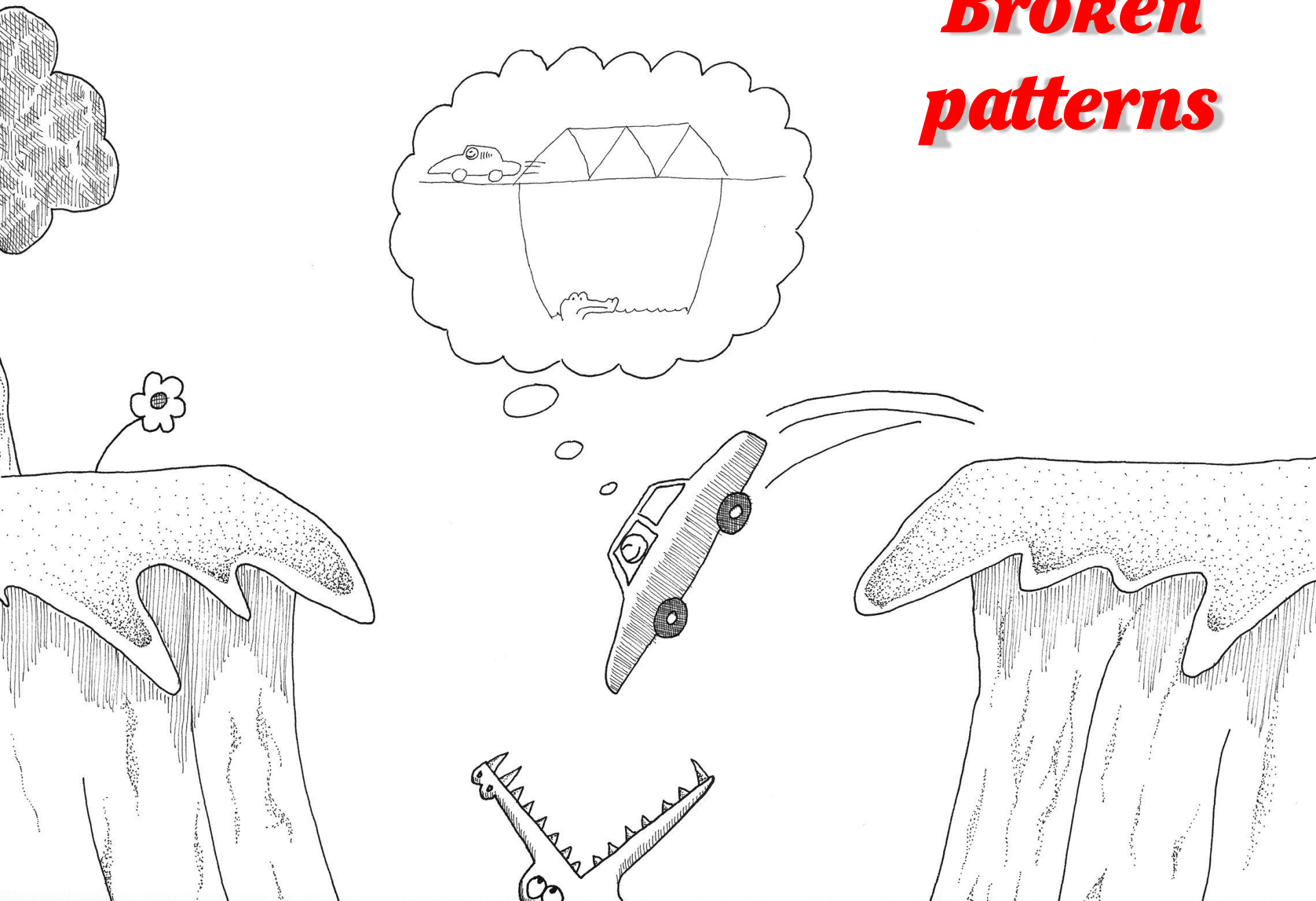




Patterns and noise

The mind works on chunks, schemata, routines...

Broken patterns





***Noise is any
pattern we
do not
understand.***

What fun is

- *Generically, “a source of enjoyment.”*
- *The release of endorphins into your system*
 - *Also released by chocolate, great books, cocaine, and orgasm...*
- *The feedback the brain gives us for absorbing patterns for learning purposes*

Characteristics of the human brain

- *It fills in blanks*
- *It notices more than we think it does*
- *It cuts out the irrelevant bits*
- *It actively hides reality from us*
- *Seeing what is actually in front of us is hard, and most of us never learn to do it*

Types of thought

- *Conscious, logical thought*
- *Intuitive, integrative, associative*
- *Autonomic*

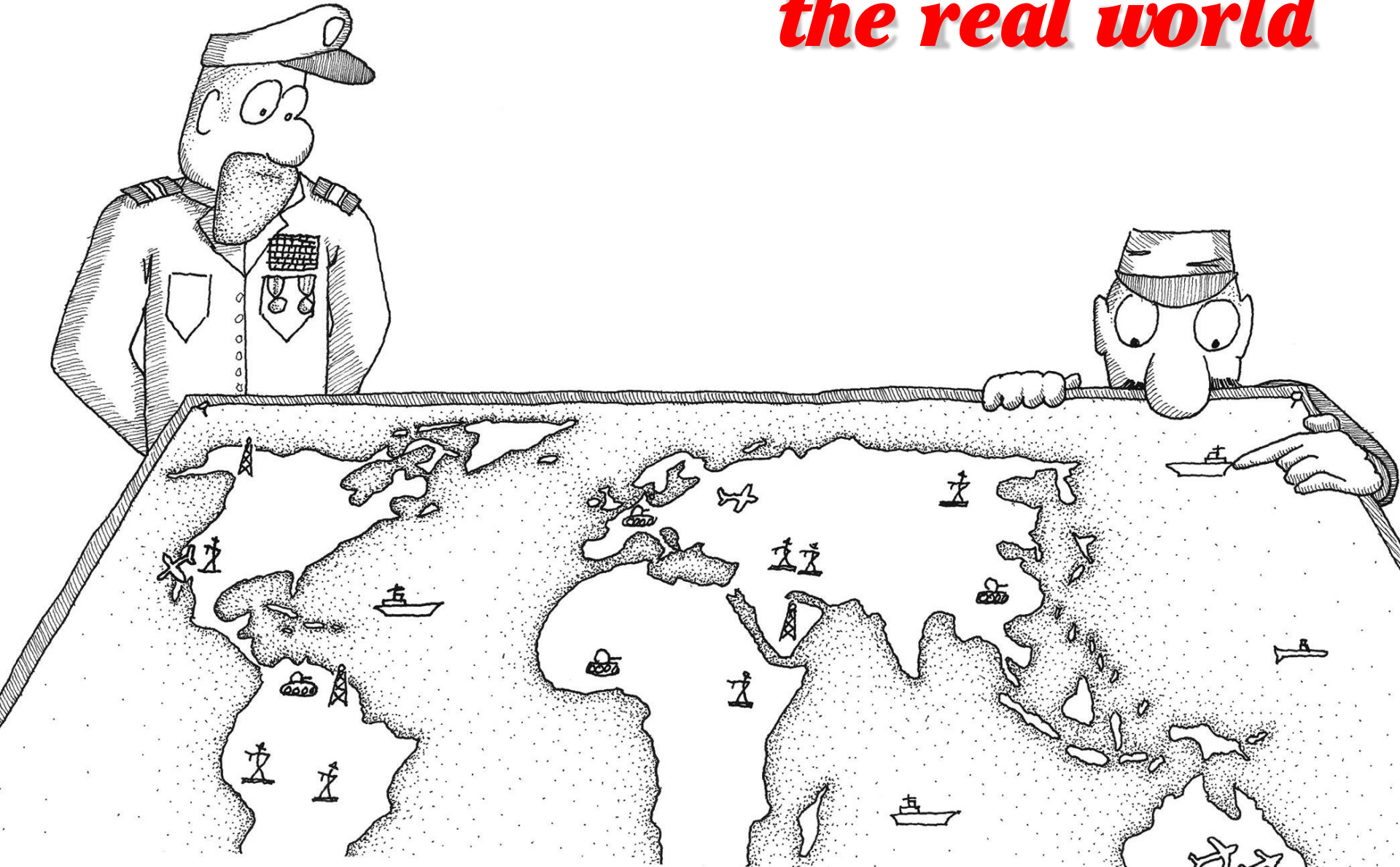
What games do

They build routines, chunks, and schemata.

They work with the intuitive mind.

They teach through application of permutations to a possibility space.

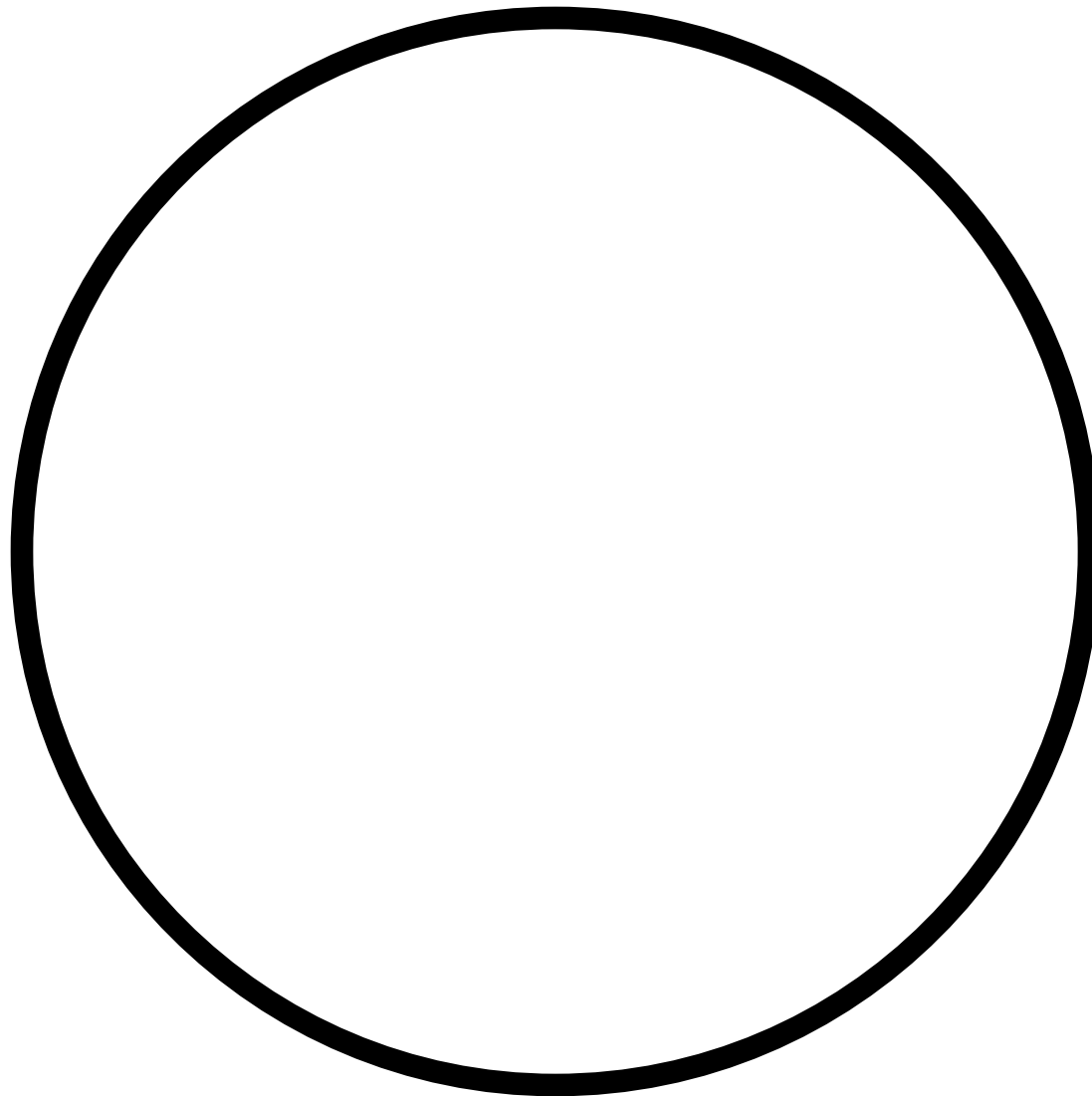
***Games are always practice for
the real world***



The shape of games

(What they teach)

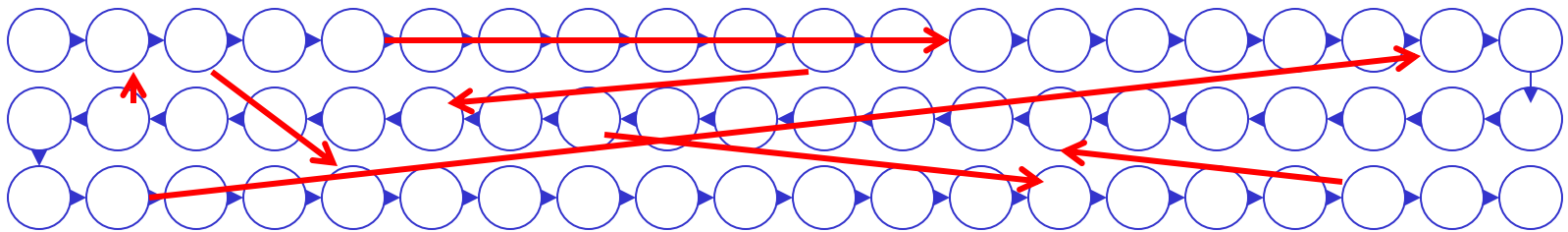
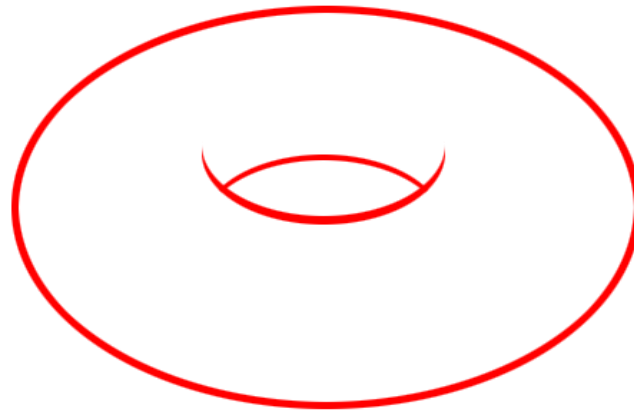
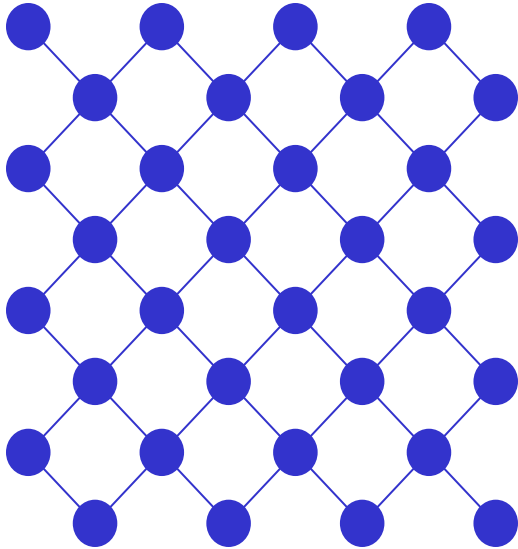




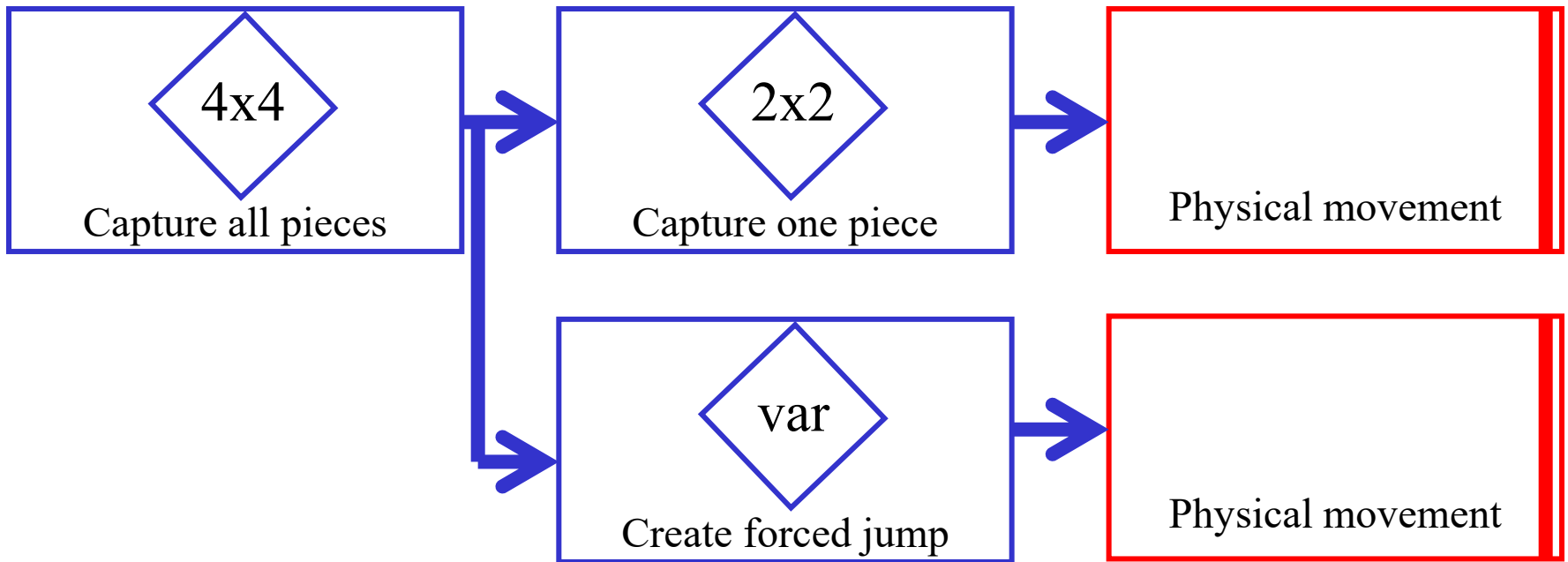
The “magic circle”

***Fun only exists in contexts
where there are no real
consequences.***

Games present topologies



Games present algorithmic understanding

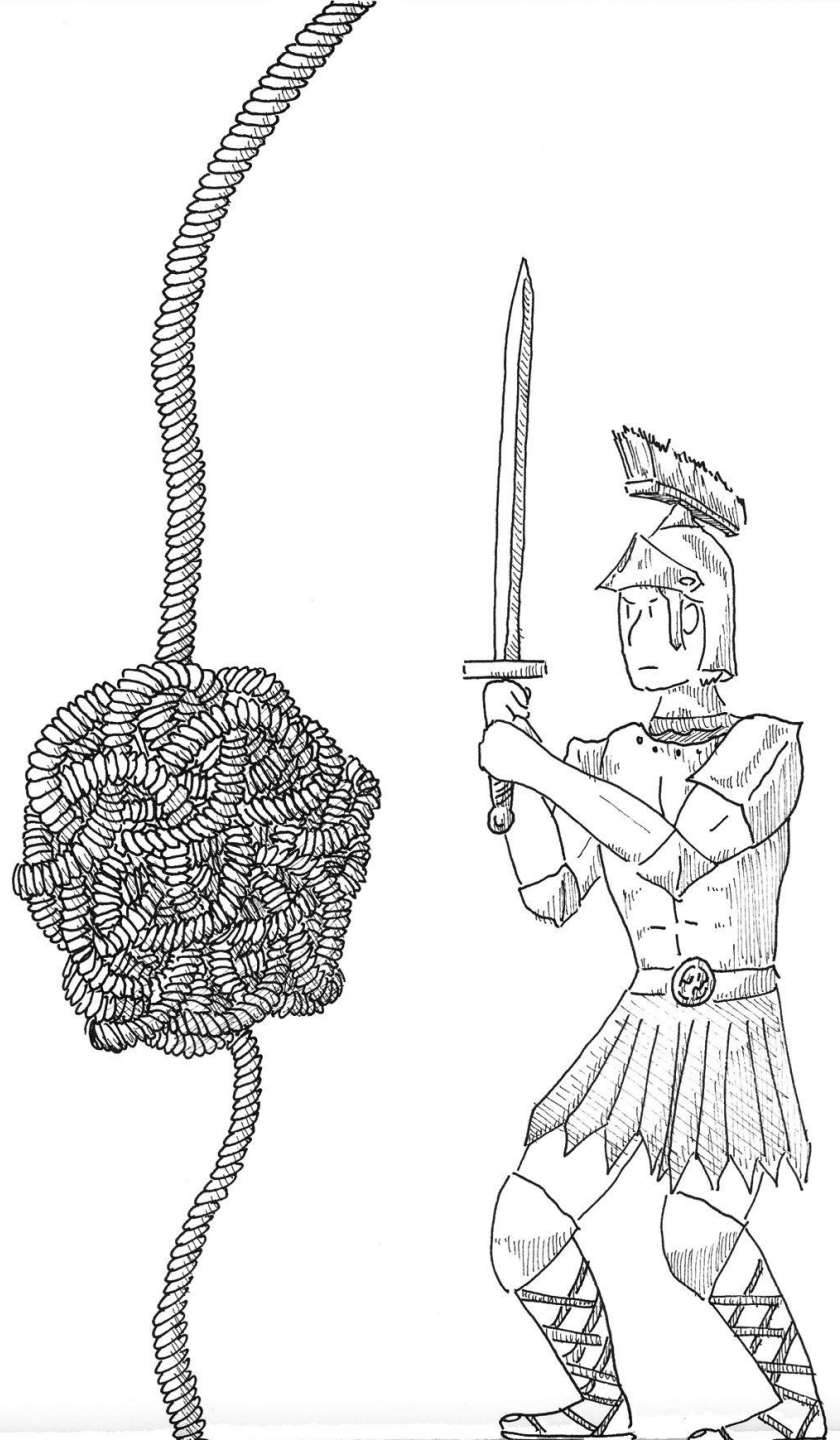


NAH, SAVING THE WORLD
DIDN'T GIVE EXTRA
BONUS POINTS, SO I
LET THE MARTIANS
NUKE IT.



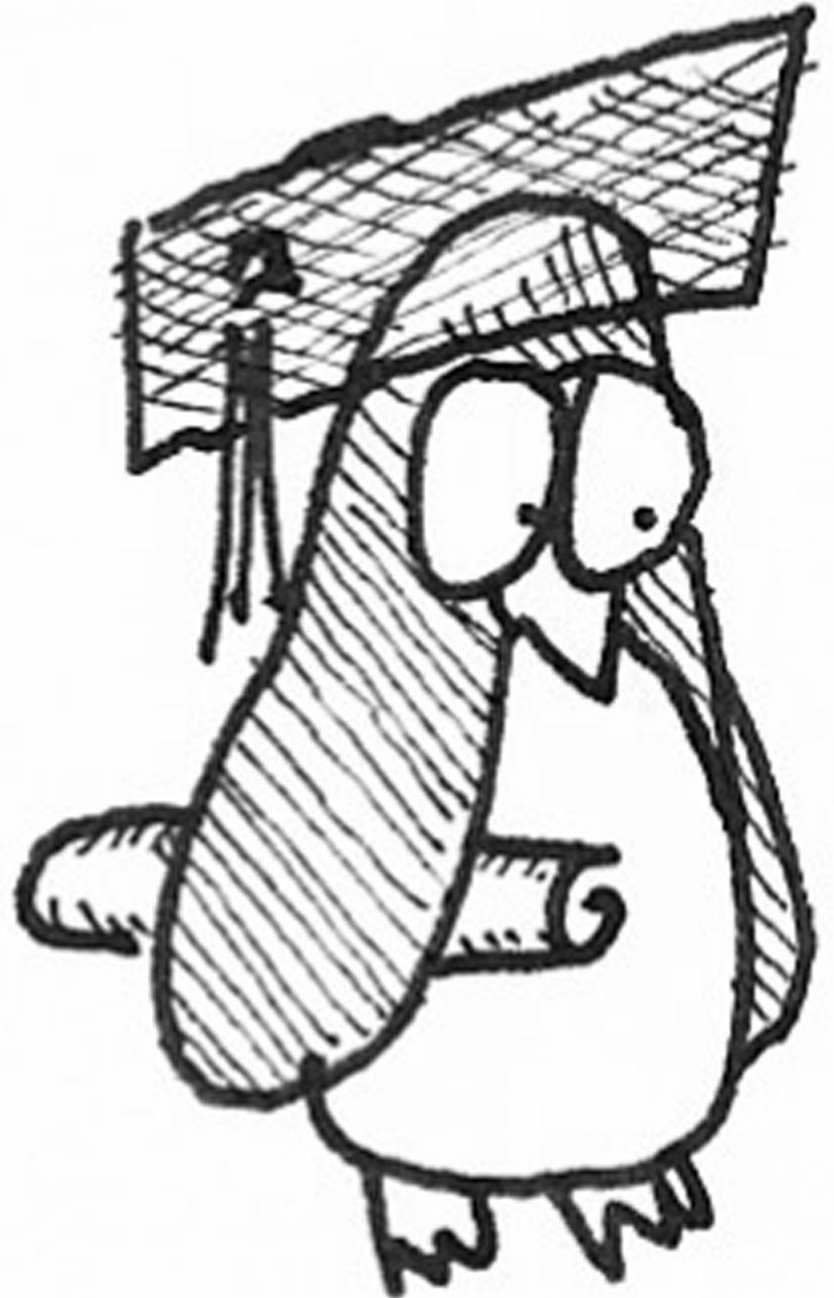
***Games
quantify
and
quantize***

***This is why
cheating
exists***



***Applying game
stuff to
training***

(Another dry section)



Understand the magic circle!

All games are iterative

There should be a preparatory step to taking on a challenge.

This step should be fun in itself.

You should be able to prepare in different ways and still succeed.

Topology matters!

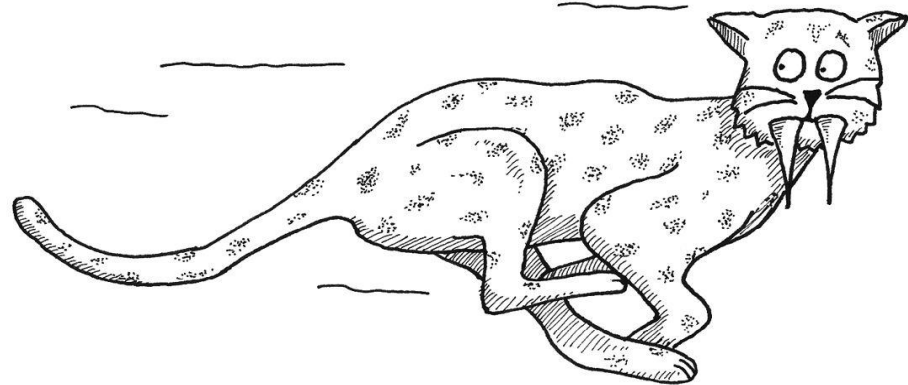
The setting of the challenge should affect the challenge.

In other words, challenges should be contextual.

Challenges are verbs.

*Ideally, you supply several verbs
in a given challenge.*

*Think of basic hunter-gatherer
activities here: gather, kill,
cross, capture.*



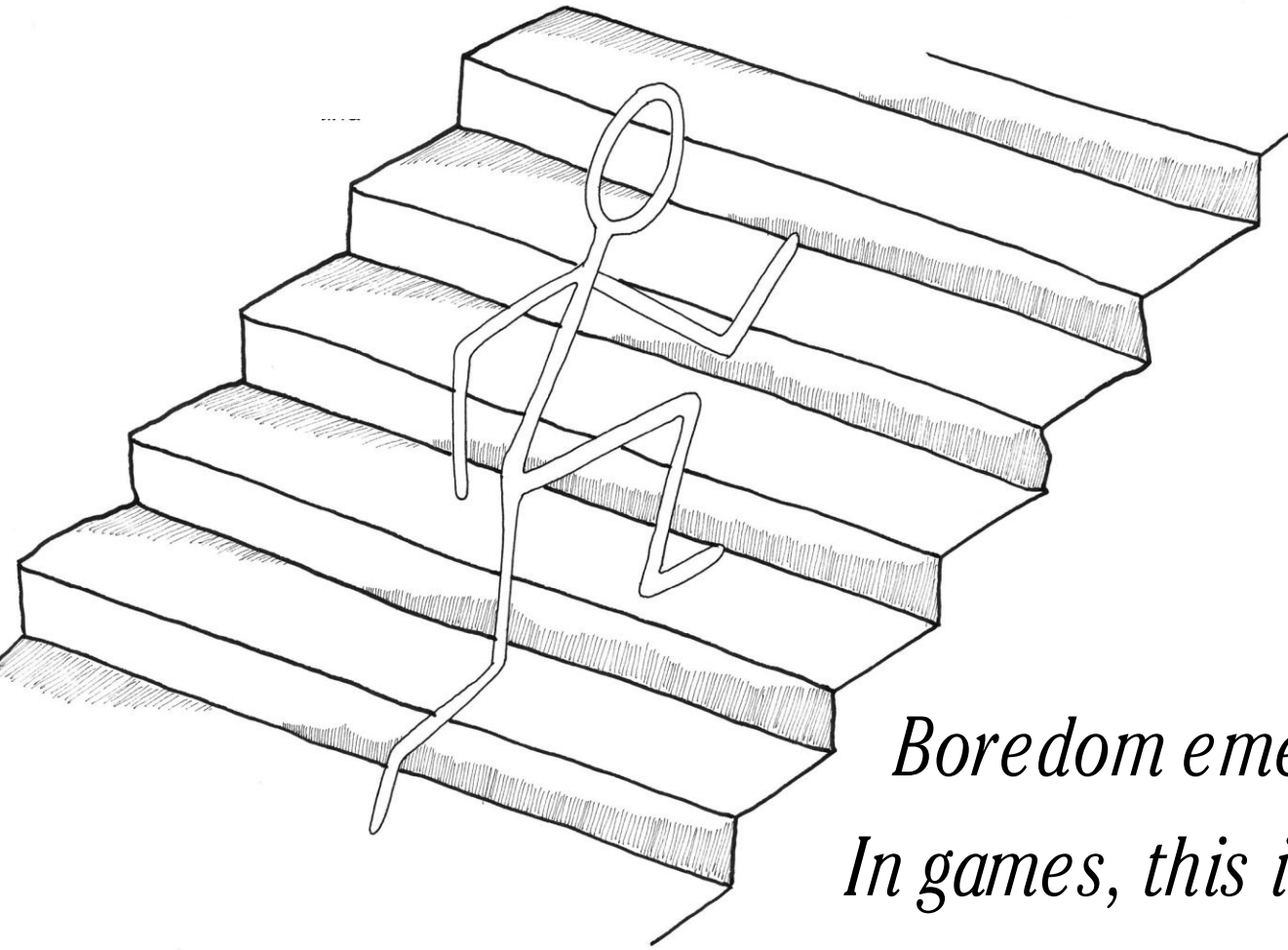
Multiple abilities matter

Never prescribe a single solution.

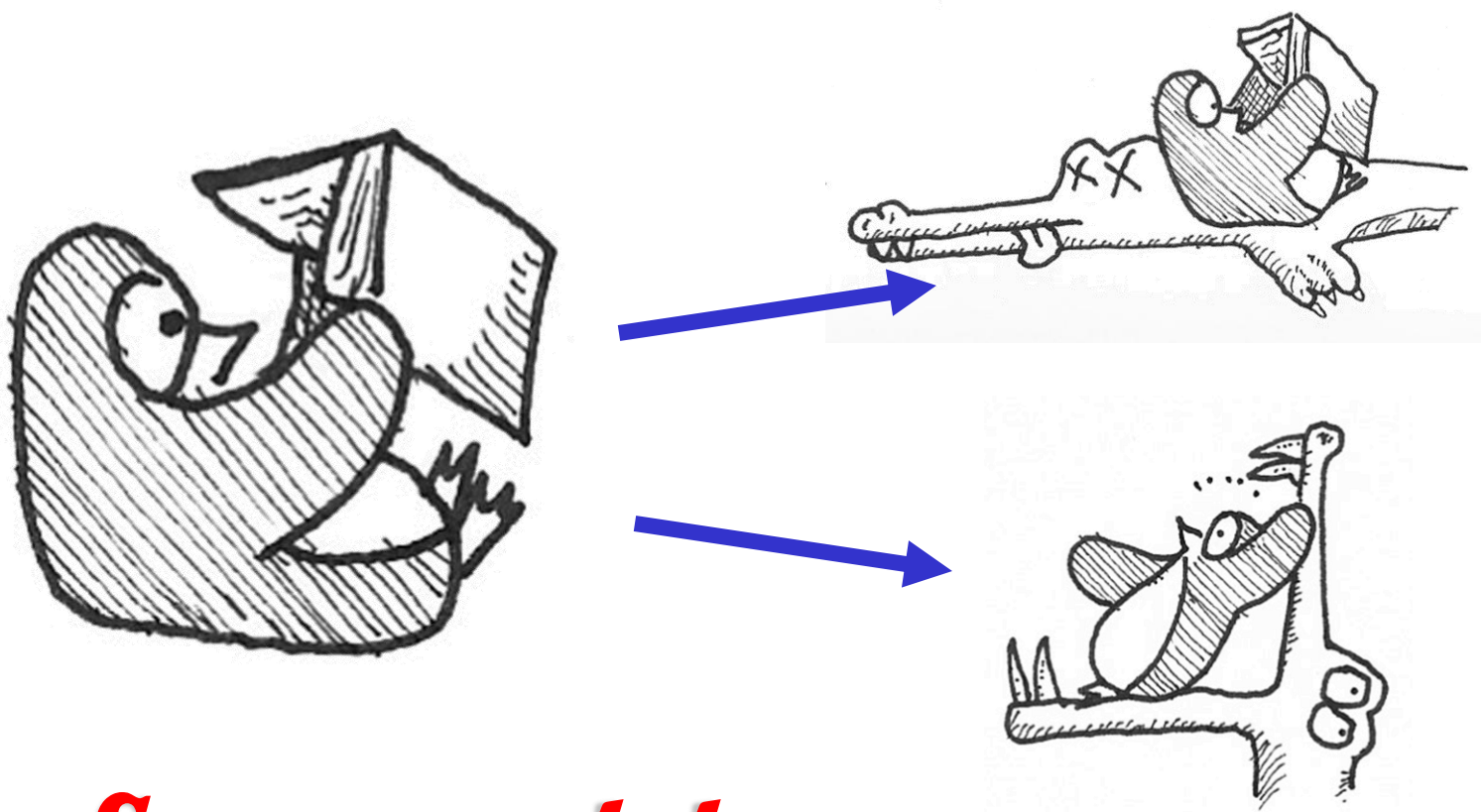
Players should be able to bring different tools to the table.

At higher levels, they should be forced to.

Skill is mandatory



*Boredom emerges from routine.
In games, this is called “grinding.”
Players derive fun from creativity.*



Success states

- *A given challenge should not have a predictable result.*
- *Advanced players should not get benefits from easy challenges.*
- *Failure must have consequences.*

Suggested reading

Blink, Malcolm Gladwell

Everything Bad Is Good For You, Steven Johnson

The User Illusion, Tor Norretranders

Sources of Power, Gary Klein

Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind, Guy Claxton

Many more linked on my website:



<http://www.theoryoffun.com>