

How Story Works

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Once upon a time in wargaming...

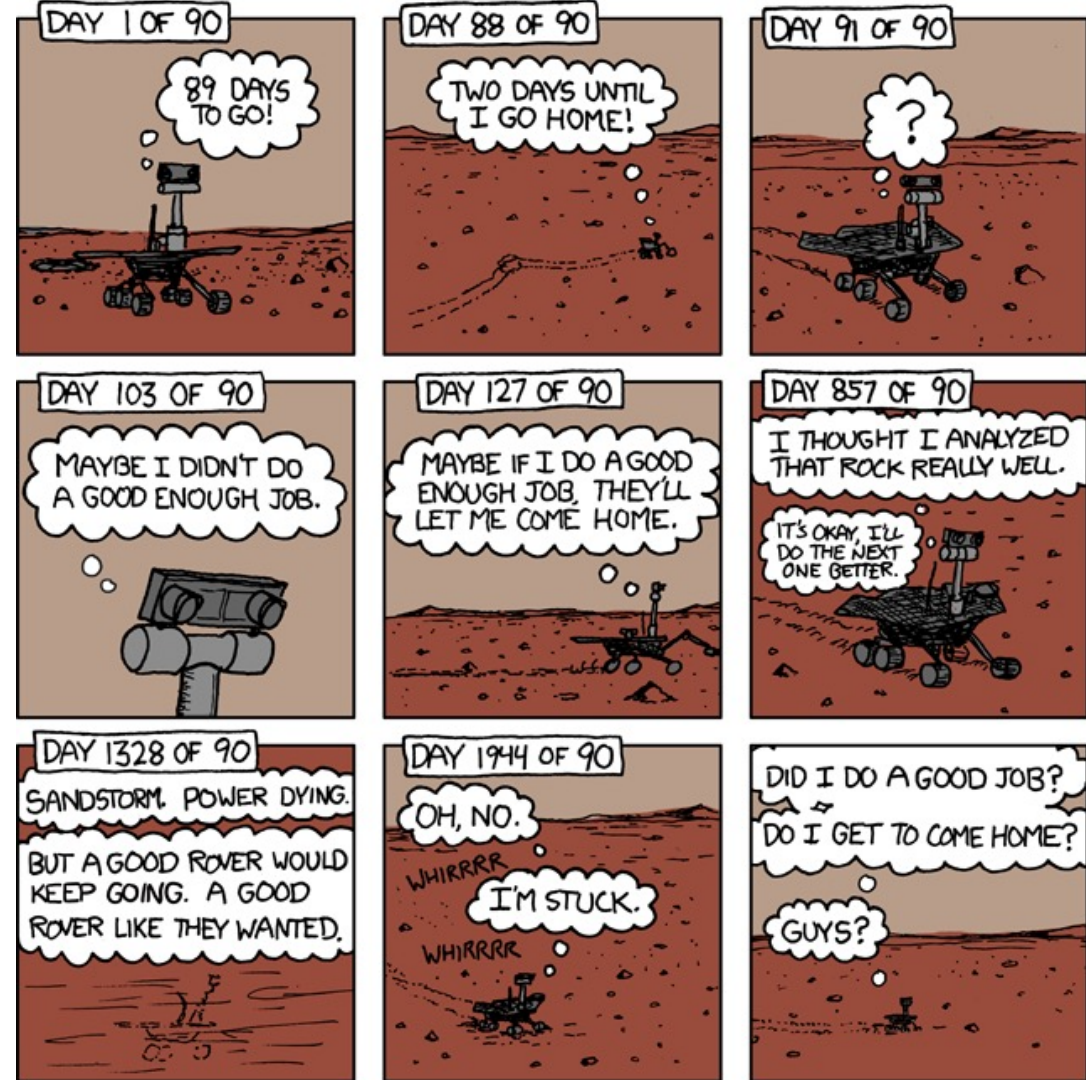
- Why story matters: [Romero's middle passage story](#)
- What is a story?
- Interactive stories: same and different
- Process and product: story and game design are the same

What is story?



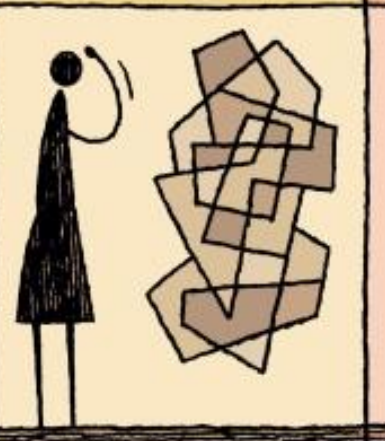

**How the things that happen affects
someone in pursuit of a difficult
goal, and how that person
changes internally as a result.**

Dramatic action

- The characters have to want something
- ...that we believe, or they believe, is attainable
- And take action in pursuit of that goal



The Four Undramatic Plot Structures

I. IGNORING THE MONSTER	II. ERRONEOUS ACCUSATION	III. THE ENIGMA UNSOLVED	IV. DIMINISHING DESIRE
			
THE HERO IS CONFRONTED BY AN ANTAGONISTIC FORCE AND IGNORES IT UNTIL IT GOES AWAY.	THE PROTAGONIST IS ACCUSED OF WRONGDOING, BUT IT'S NOT A BIG THING AND SOON GETS SORTED OUT.	THE HEROINE IS FACED WITH A PROBLEM BUT IT'S REALLY, REALLY DIFFICULT SO SHE GIVES UP.	A MAN WANTS SOMETHING. LATER HE'S NOT SO SURE. BY SUPPERTIME HE'S FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT IT.

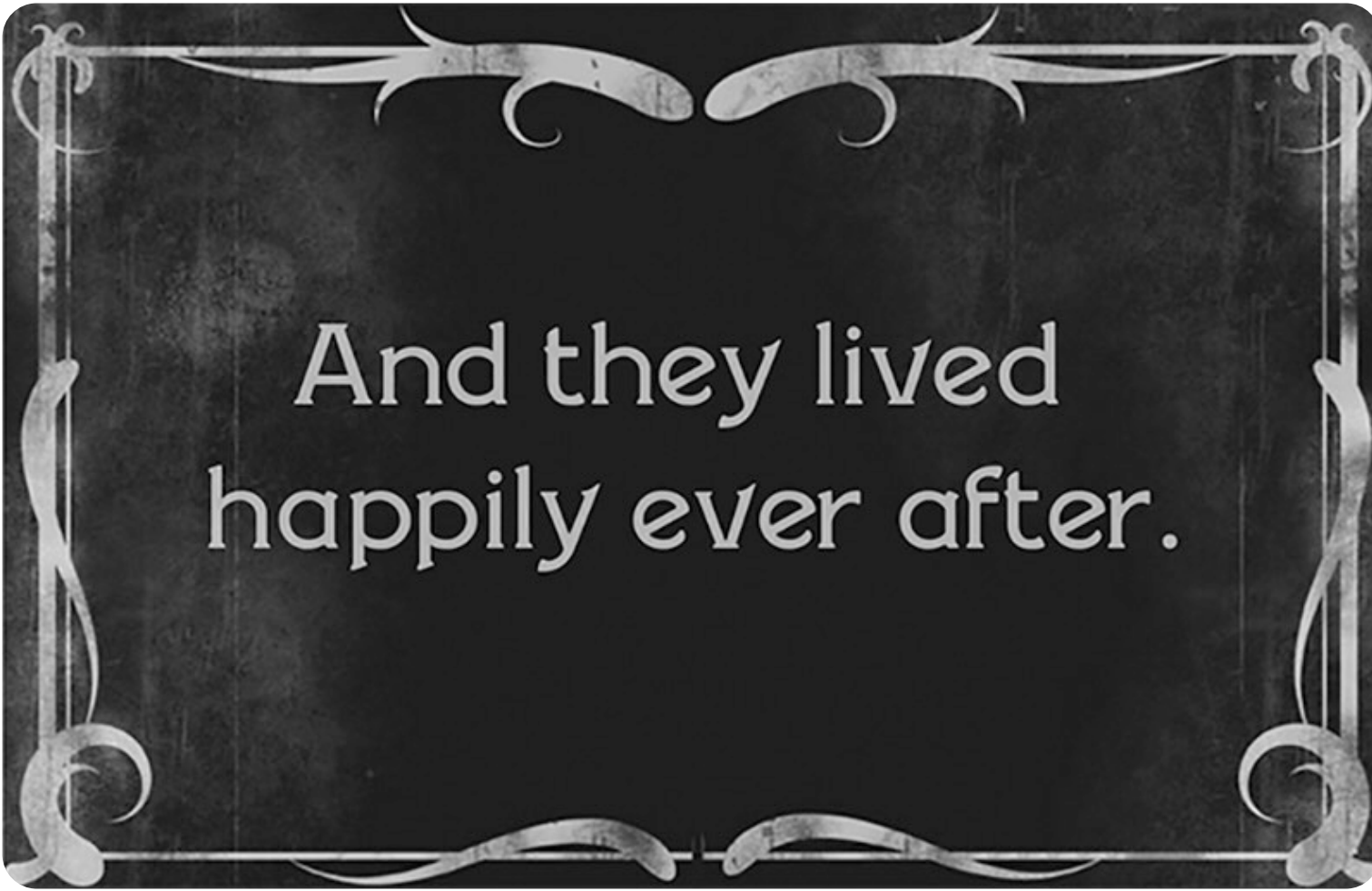
TOM GAULD

Conflict

- Mutually-exclusive wants
- Direct fight for control of the same thing
- Indirect obstruction of each other's goals

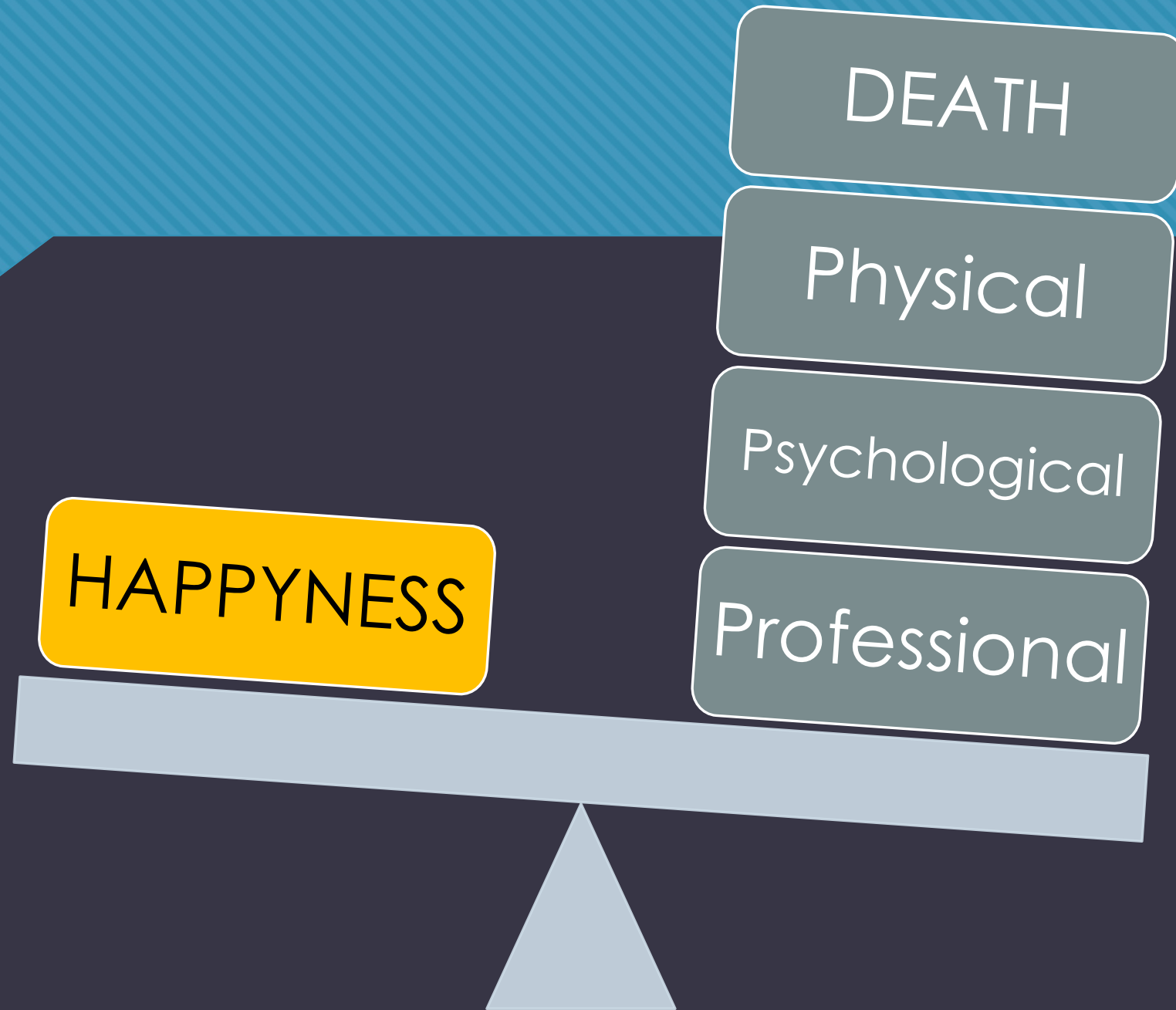
The event

- Definitive getting or not getting of the want
- The obligatory act
- The story is over



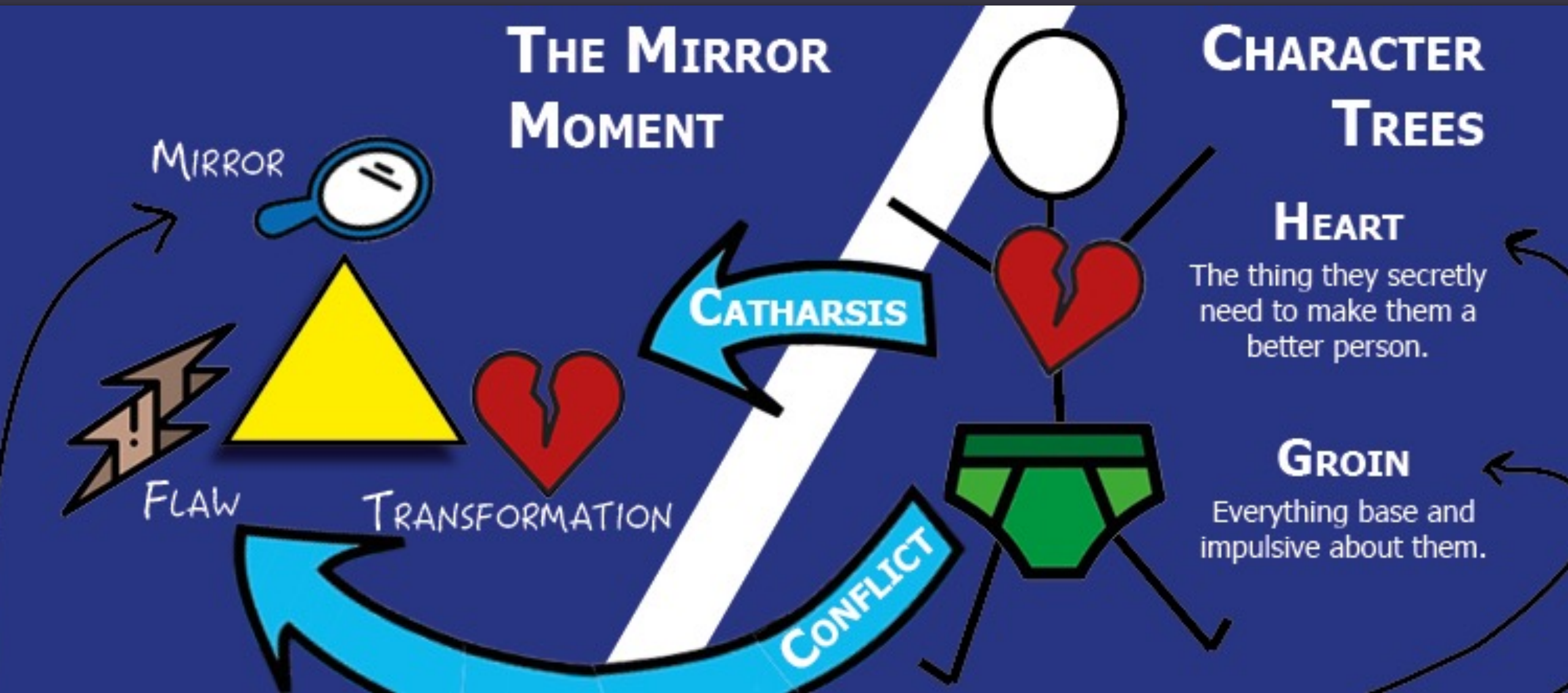
And they lived
happily ever after.

Stakes



Cause and effect

- Scene Questions possible answers:
 - Yes
 - No
 - Yes, but
 - No, and furthermore!
- Scene Question...answer is disaster !
- New decision: new goal
- ...new Scene Question...



Story structures

- Three Act, Five Act
- Hero's Journey, feminist Heroine's Journey
- Kishotenketsu (Japanese Four Act) in game design
- Dan Harmon's Circles
- Propp's morphology of folktales

Interactive stories

Some things about narrative in games

- Even games that aren't interactive stories have narrative
- Compelling gameplay >> rubbish story
- The player is always the hero; your hero doesn't need to be invisible
- Impossible achieved is transcendent: want, conflict, change \o/

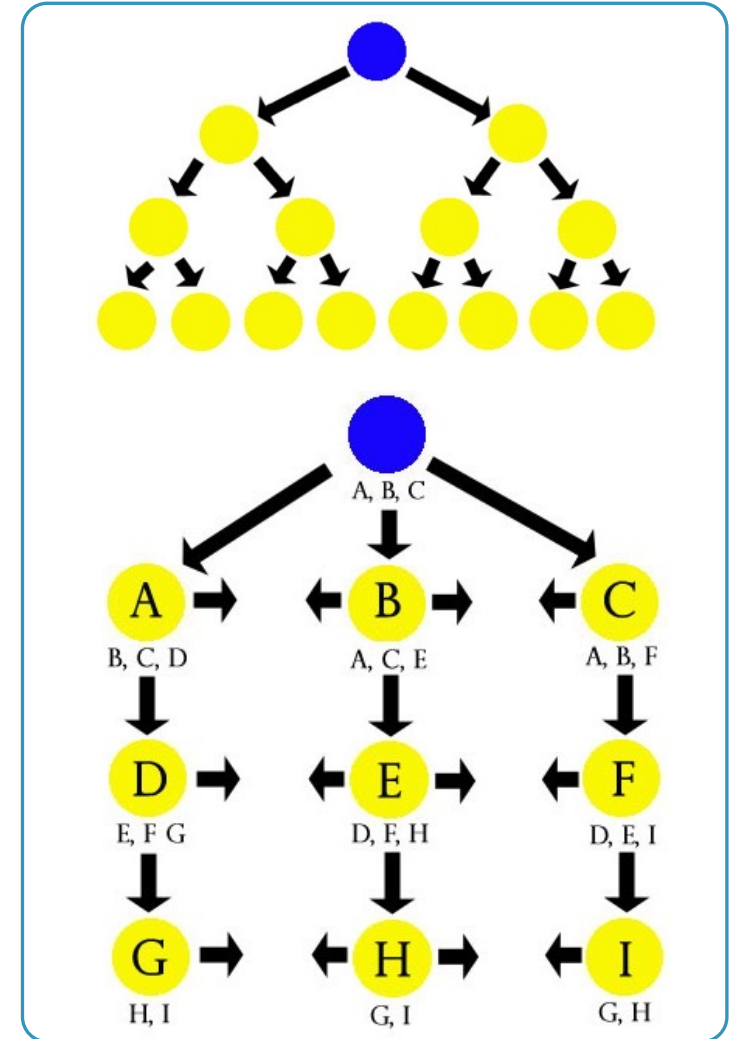
Stop! Collaborate and listen

- A: I'm having trouble with my leg.
- B: I'm afraid I'll have to amputate.
- A: You can't do that, Doctor.
- B: Why not?
- A: Because I'm rather attached to it.
- B: (Losing heart) Come on, man.
- A: I've got this growth on my arm too, Doctor.

- A: Augh!
- B: Whatever is it, man?
- A: It's my leg, Doctor.
- B: This looks nasty. I shall have to amputate.
- A: It's the one you amputated last time, Doctor.
- B: You mean you've got a pain in your wooden leg?
- A: Yes, Doctor.
- B: You know what this means?
- A: Not woodworm, Doctor!
- B: Yes. We'll have to remove it before it spreads to the rest of you.
- (A's chair collapses.) My God! It's spreading to the furniture!

Freedom to explore

- Three clue rule
- Don't prep plots, prep situations
- Node-based design



Letting go of control without losing control

- Sam Barlow, [Aisle](#)
- Inkle Studios, [80 Days](#)
- Inkle Studios, [Study in Scarlet](#)
- Sam Barlow, [Her Story](#)
- Konami, [Silent Hill](#)

- Bully Pulpit Games, [Grey Ranks](#)

Process and product

Further Reading

- Spenser: [The Playwright's Guidebook](#)
- Ingermansen: [The Snowflake Method](#)
- Cron: [Story Genius](#)
- Lerman: [Critical Response Process](#)
- Casagrande: [on writing clearly](#)
- Bayles & Orland: [Art and Fear](#)