

## A Trivial Example Of Simulacra Hacking

on 2022.03.17 by Zoë Valent aka Calico aka "Sekagi"

I play an MMORPG survival game called LifeAfter. Each guild lives in one "camp" with personal houses placed around the town proper. The houses are called "Manors" and are comprised of:

1. A Gate
2. A Path From the Gate
3. Farmland
4. The House Itself

Outside the Gate is a Path sometimes fraught with enemies. Also at the gate is a Mailbox where a player collects various game items. I noticed that whenever I used the game's Quick-Travel to drop my character at the gate to my manor, I would be attacked by a bear set to spawn near my house and walk a path where my character, at the mailbox, is close enough to pull the bear. Every time I came back from a quest — the resolution mechanism being in the mailbox — I would get attacked by a bear and smacked out of the mailbox interface back into the simulation's combat mechanics.

A problem! Defined. One solution would be to expect the bear. This would be a pretty good hack, but when you're Zoë, your solution is different (tedious, pretentious, et cetera):

I noticed that the bears always spawned in the same general spaces and walked the same general patrol, this one including directly past my gate. Generally, if one runs through one's manor gate while being attacked by a wild animal, a status icon will appear over the animal's form to indicate that it is "backing things up" ... this behavior would look like the animal suddenly deciding to run away and resume its original patrol.

So I thought about how I would have programmed the bears, and identified one error-handling solution that occurred to me that might simultaneously not occur to the game's developers: since Non-Player-Character Enemies are not usually supposed to be inside the walls of a manor, I would have defined bears in a class-object that exponentially loses health points upon entering a forbidden zone. When you're a mobile video game, you're almost always written by something other than Zoë ... sigh ... so:

I confidently expected their solution to involve an over-developed object class for player-characters & a general lack-of-class-object-development for everything else.

Continuing — I unequipped my weapons, using only fists, which do virtually no damage — the idea was to keep the bear alive & attacking me with my character's back against the manor gate, then to open the gate when the bear would strike in a particular fashion that involved lunging forward.

This (yawn) hacking sub-node inside the appropriation-hackery factory-at-large, I apparently have taken to calling as "graph-papering" inside my own head, or either it is

easier to lie to you that I do so — there is no reason dear reader should believe anything I have to say, that is, I compose, share, perform this piece for the "why?" corresponding to that a bird sings — if should this need elaboration: the tech is about getting an object stuck in an environment wherein it should not be able, surely by some technique such as telling the Game Master nothing but "I move east" until your character falls off of the world, having presumed that the GM did not have the foresight to bring procedural generation to handle world-edging, which they almost never will have done, goons that they likely are.

My camp-mates stood there watching a bear beat the shit out of me, with me saying "do not help me" in no uncertain terms via our voice line, until finally I timed it just perfectly:

The bear stood to attack me, and just before she began the lunge, with my character's back pressed against the gate, I opened it. She knocked my character into the manor grounds, and as the gate automatically closed, it did so with the bear's body stuck in the gate. The "backing things up" indicator appeared above the bear, but since it was more in-my-manor than outside-my-manor, it skipped the repositioning part of the program and instead defaulted back into patrol. Graph-papering!

That is, since this patrol is now happening inside my own Manor (there is a ferocious bear that just lives in my pretty house and wanders through the gardens of the ground as if protecting the gate). The bear does not attack the owner of the Manor once inside the Manor grounds.



【SandCastle】 Sekagi

Since the rules of this simulation are this weak, I would argue that it became unethical not to attempt an appropriation-based graph-papering of the presumably-underdeveloped NPC-enemy class as soon as I, as a True NPC in the same simulacrum as NPC-At-Large, became aware of the lack of integrity of the former in comparison to the latter.

That it became unethical only as soon as eyes were on your author is inaccurate, as she had plenty of information at her hands already to infer that such a situation was inevitable. And, of course, your author has no problem bragging accurately that this is a great hack!

Still, your author needs to be more accurate as to whether this is/was a great hack, or perhaps as to which "this" the author refers to in her documentation, which is much closer to the real "this" than anything described therein.

Further, this is adequate use of appropriation hacking. The graph-papering is an elegant-enough piece of sub-nodal origami.

All of this that can truly be called by your author as a "great hack" proceeds that she thought to wait until a time of day when the server/camp was populated, and guffaw the simulation in front of as many Player-Characters as possible, which has the side-effect of creating a tiny little signing in drop-of-blood of the simulacra by yours, truly; and of course, the sign is not a signature at all, but rather a neon blinking that reads:

There are more things in this world.





And "There are more things in this world" is the only great hack of which your author is aware. A problem of "every time I try X, Y gets in the way" is more elegantly solved by "get Y stuck in a distracting infinite loop" than "kill Y every time it gets in the way of X" of course.

An additional layer of elegance comes from the less technical purview: my character tames a wild bear and keeps it as a pet. Be aware, I'm as bored as you're. While I, again, appreciate this as a "great hack", I understand that my onlooking guildmates would not have identified what I did as Hacking.

They may use a word like "glitch" or "trick" but they're much more likely to show than tell. Great hacks are often better-received when shown instead of told.

And with this trivial example of everyday Simulacra Hacking, your author moves toward being ready to write a piece that, more than ostensibly, attempts to define Hacking in terms of the applicable Simulation itself.



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The game held a photo contest recently. During this period, I logged out and in such that my character would be asleep, but didn't have enough time to get into bed before I abruptly severed the connection manually. Upon logging back in, in-game tools were used to apply the chat bubble and "fuck your simulation! wink." or whatever it is your author wrote as punchline there in unicode.