

This page and the last are not in the book this teaser samples, but the 13 pages between are just as they appear within the paperback edition of that book.

(Hardcover is identical in words, but blank pages in the paperback were cut to suit print limitations, so page numbers do vary, but not the core content.)

To avoid confusion, let it be clear the book contains no illustrations on its pages, only text. The sketches on this and the omega page, each drawn in the alpha stage of the book cover design process, are included here as an extra bonus for fans of the book's history.

Visit the companion site for
more on this project...

bofphoenix.com

Breath of Fire Phoenix
Classic Becomes Legend

A T. Traveler

WAYPOINTS

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INTRODUCTIONS

About Time

While the “Breath of Fire” name needs no introduction in the future, (that being your future but my present) in the present (being yours but my past) it’s still relatively unknown, as am I for good reason, and so I should begin this work with an introduction of both.

With regard to me, my name is irrelevant. All you need know about me is my profession, which is historian and time traveler, which I say is one title too many as one cannot be the first and not the last, but it needs saying in the past (but not always yours).

This deserves a slight elaboration, but only slight. One cannot study the historical impact of a thing in the future it has already affected and effected, for at that point you can only see how its story ends, can only speculate on what happened, imagine from finish to start. To truly understand how history was made you must see the world as it is before everything changed, to observe from start to finish, which is why a true historian must be a time traveler, which I am. But my history is not the focus here, and I share this small detail about myself only so you can better comprehend what it is you are reading. Depending on when you are, this is either a chronicle of the path taken or roadmap of the path ahead.

Which brings me to a frequently asked question by generations past: Why would a time traveler write a book then release it before the events it describes transpire? Won’t that alter the timeline?

Actually, that’s *why* this book is released when it is. Historians, that being future historians like me, do much more than study history. We make history. This practice was started by the inventor of the time machine, who was able to build it because after they did they went back in time and gave themselves the blueprints. Thereafter it was agreed the best way for humans to evolve is to go back and tell ourselves what we did.

It’s akin to playing a video game. Every time you die you reset and try again, this time starting from an earlier point in the game with the knowledge of what works and what doesn’t, and since we now possessed the ability to utilize that same tactic in the game of life we felt it wise to utilize away.

This book is about video games, the *Breath of Fire* series in general, and *Breath of Fire II* (which exists before the book was published) and *Breath of Fire Phoenix* (which exists after) in particular. BOF was a popular franchise prior to *Phoenix*, but isn’t one of the most popular until after, as most fans in most presents are aware.

BUSINESS

Time To Grow Up

There are only two ratings that need ever be used for video games or movies or books or songs or kitchens.

E (for Everyone)

M (for Mature)

The first, as the name implies, denotes a product that shouldn't upset anyone, even the immature. The second, conversely, is a warning that every immature person in the world should fuck off.

Maturity does not mean sex or violence or anything in particular. It's about realism, about being able to cope with the reality that reality exists. Those who think certain words shouldn't be used because some people don't like those words: not mature. Those who think religion shouldn't be mentioned because the religious are touchy: not mature. Those who think people should shower with a towel on and never show their bodies because skin is scary: not mature. Those who want to keep their offspring sheltered and ignorant for all the days of their lives but don't want to exert any effort and so believe it's the responsibility of video game studios to censor their games to ensure that no game ever contains anything that anyone anywhere might not want anyone anywhere to see: not mature.

The *Breath of Fire* series has quite a history of maturity, and is quite famous for this among fans. Censorship was bad from day one in the gaming industry, and those familiar with BOF point it out as a surprising example of franchises that somehow escaped detection. Tragically, the early games never made it to market unscathed, but they each survived with some head-turning content nonetheless.

T (for The wrong rating)

Before I run down the list of mature highlights, I want to emphasize that "M" and "E" are the only ratings any industry *needs*, because they cover the only two groups that exist in the world. Either you can handle reality, or can't. But those aren't the only ratings that exist. BOF2 was rated "K-A" (Kids to Adults), an "E" equivalent, but didn't deserve it, as you'll see. Later games were "T" (Teen), which includes immature teens? The series was an easy "M" even with earlier games being held back, held in part by its own makers trying to avoid censorship and in bigger part by censors who must have been drunk as Scias when they rendered judgment.

STORY

The Wet Pussy

Like James Bond or Jessica Rabbit, some people are born to be sexy. More specifically, they are born sexy. It's by design, inextricably part of who they are, for they are Pygmalion (mythic sculptor who made a perfect female) creations with no "before they were sexy" origins. It's a trait exclusive to fictional characters, for only when your existence begins in your prime, and you stay primed, can you be sculpted as cool and as hot and as all things attractive from the instant your story begins, and stay that way.

For some reason, cat-girls almost always fall into this category. Is it because "pussy" is one of the most elegant words in the world and refers both to felines and to the most kissable flower in the world? Your speculative guess is as good as mine, but one thing everyone seemed to agree on in BOF circles is that Katt is as cool as it gets, and then she gets even cooler.

And by "sexy" I don't mean you'll want to have sex with them. You may, but that's not what we mean. We're talking about sexy in the way that classic muscle cars and sleek new tech devices are sexy. When something has a quality that makes it irresistibly appealing, makes you like it even if you can't put into words *why* you like it, except that it's just plain sexy.

And "wet" as in "wet behind the ears," still inexperienced in how the world turns. (Not wet like she went swimming. Cats hate water.)

Attire As Practical As It Is Revealing

Katt is well-known for how *not* covered her body is. You can't get in her pants, because she doesn't wear any, and after fusing with the Devil Shaman and changing form you can't get her bra off either, because she isn't wearing one.

Since games are notorious for impractical outfits (the strongest armor for a woman is usually a bikini, and men wear even less, charging into battle topless as axes swing at their chests), Katt's outfit may sound like gratuitous eye candy, but a lot of thought was put into her character, both physically and mentally, and in truth she holds the BOF2 record for "Most Functional Outfit Ever."

Plus, Breaking News: All entertainment is gratuitous. Only sleeping and eating are necessary. It's art's job to be eye candy.

This Just In: Rand also wears no pants, and his chest is always bared, but that's not thoughtful functional design. That is just eye candy.

And Now Back To Our Regularly Scheduled Program.

DESIGN

Text

Read My Lips: There are NO voices in *Breath of Fire Phoenix*.

It's Basic Math

Like the switch to talkies in the film industry, by the time *Phoenix* hit the scene voice acting had become a staple of the game industry, and it was a good thing assuming you had very good actors.

But there are drawbacks to including voices in your game. First, the cost. Having voices means you need to hire voice actors. Second, the risk. Lackluster voice acting means a lackluster game. Third, the file size. You want a thousand written words, or one spoken?

Phoenix had another consideration to make. The fans. When a game always had voice acting: players associate certain voices with the characters. But BOF2 had no voices, so each player imagined the voice of each character differently. That's the strength of novels, that each reader shapes the malleable elements to their own liking. When you only have text: every character has the perfect voice in the mind of every player. This one imagines Sten sounds like this, that one imagines Sten sounds like that, and no one is wrong since there is no official voice for Sten.

Look at what happens when they cast actors for a movie based on a book. The book fans almost always disagree with certain choices, because each reader painted in their mind the perfect version of a character, and rarely is there a real person that perfectly matches a fantasy. There's nothing you can do about this in movies, because they need actors. Games are different; they don't need actors.

That's especially true for an RPG, because RPG fans are accustomed to reading text. Even when you have voices, many players like to have subtitles on. Remember, it's like controlling a novel, a book. They want to soak up every word, not caring if that means reading rather than hearing it. They expect to read (but not too much, and text tolerance varies by game; pacing is next to godliness).

When you add those factors together: lowered production cost + zero risk of bad acting + less coding and smaller file size + happy fans, you get an equation (for this game) that looks like this:

No Voices = More Positives

But there's more to the story than that.

SNOITCUDORTNI

Firebranding

The “Breath of Fire” name began as a game, then became a series, a franchise, and ultimately a brand. Quite a word. Branding, a term that in business refers to developing a unique identity that sets you apart from everyone else, the term whose origins refer to wielding symbols heated with fire to make your mark in the world.

Matchmaker

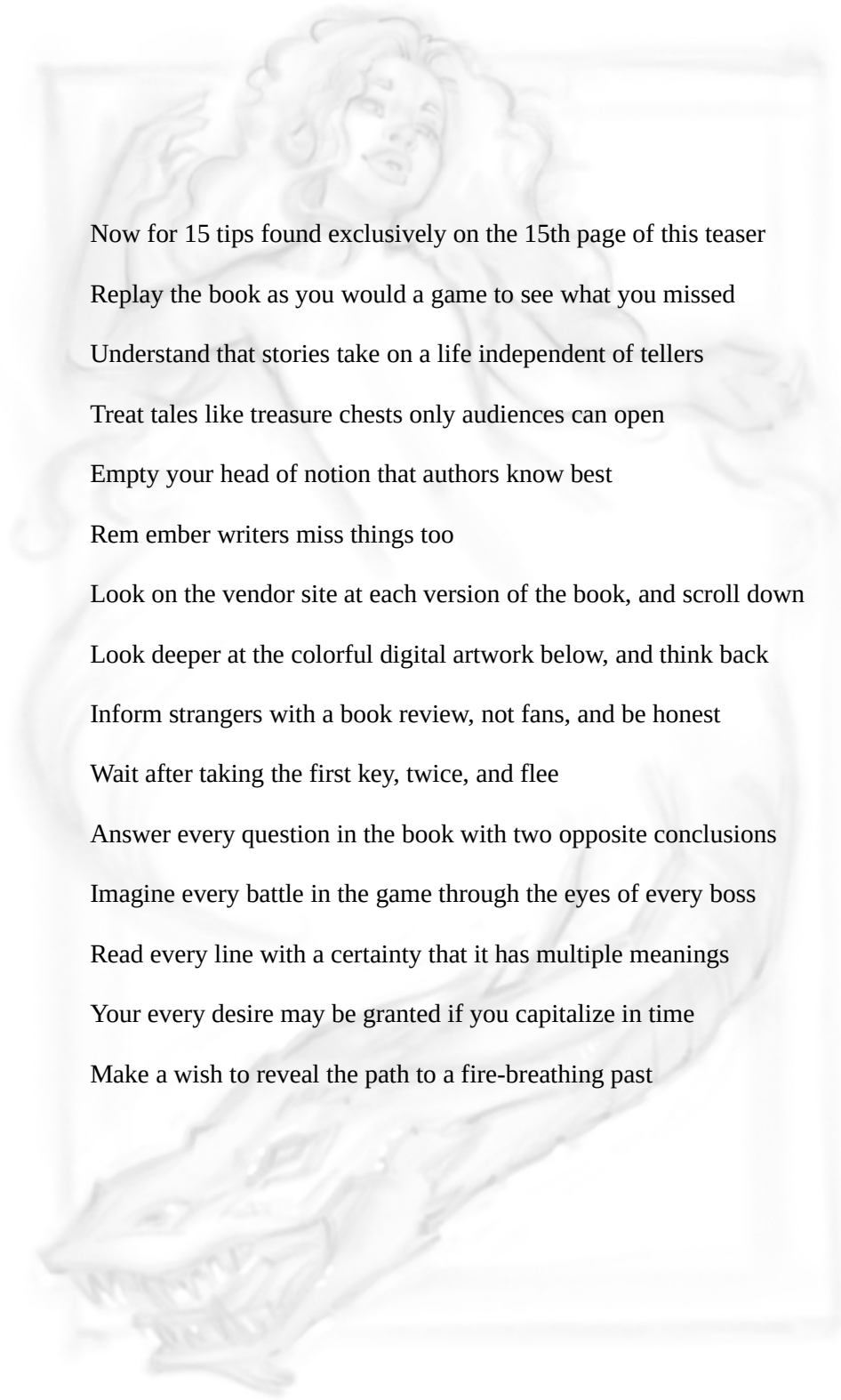
What kept BOF from the global esteem it warranted prior to *Phoenix* was a lack of dedication. Development on each game was rushed, quality control and executing a consistent vision was low priority. BOF3 dressed Nina in a pink bodysuit under a white dress for her game avatar, but in the menu, ending and official art she had a red dress with a short hemline, bare thighs and red boots. These were two different girls, but no effort was made to correct the issue and make everything match. And BOF2, as we’ve discussed at length, was a swamp of such flaws in presentation.

If you write a character, paint a second, then advertise a third and call them all “Nina,” who are fans to fall in love with? If the team that delivers the game doesn’t click, how can you expect audiences to click with it? Enthusiasm for a product starts with the producer.

You’ll probably dismiss aesthetic mismatch as trivial if you haven’t much interest in marketing, but it’s not trivial. It’s crucial, and it’s immeasurable, which is why accountants won’t advise companies to spend the time and money needed to produce a perfect package, because you can’t quantify its value on a pie chart.

But the value is seen in what happens when a studio refuses to put a ribbon and a bow on their game. Players may not talk about it, or consciously think about it, but they see it, and it communicates to them that a studio isn’t passionate about their own game. This has a subconscious effect on players, makes them feel there’s no sense getting invested in a franchise as it won’t be around for long. It’s a self-fulfilling prophecy. Studio holds back, refuses to invest in a project to make it great because they aren’t convinced of success, and it fails because it isn’t great. Good enough isn’t good enough, and dispassion is contagious.

When BOF5 blazed into town they’d almost got things in alignment. Not the manual, and they cut content for deadlines, but official art and avatar for Nina matched, so there’s that. But that’s when they made what was probably the biggest mistake of the classic era.



Now for 15 tips found exclusively on the 15th page of this teaser

Replay the book as you would a game to see what you missed

Understand that stories take on a life independent of tellers

Treat tales like treasure chests only audiences can open

Empty your head of notion that authors know best

Remember writers miss things too

Look on the vendor site at each version of the book, and scroll down

Look deeper at the colorful digital artwork below, and think back

Inform strangers with a book review, not fans, and be honest

Wait after taking the first key, twice, and flee

Answer every question in the book with two opposite conclusions

Imagine every battle in the game through the eyes of every boss

Read every line with a certainty that it has multiple meanings

Your every desire may be granted if you capitalize in time

Make a wish to reveal the path to a fire-breathing past