



THE SIMPLE TRUTH A GAY HERO

I've slain countless beasts — terrible, fearsome monstrosities that would haunt your dreams. I've traveled far and wide, to derelict ancient ruins and futuristic cityscapes that reach endlessly into the skies. I've conquered and manipulated time, saved civilizations from genocide and tyranny, and been the hero everyone prayed for. Time and again I've rescued the princess from the encroaching jaws of death just in time, even if I secretly wanted the prince instead.

As a kid in a small farming community, surrounded by oppressive religion and an abundant potato crop, there were no heroes, especially not gay heroes with whom I could identify. As far as I knew, there weren't even people who felt like I did. The only gay people I knew of gave fashion advice on television, and they weren't like me at all.

In times of conflict, people seek others to whom they can relate, whether they are real or fictional. For me, I turned to video games and since so few video games featured LGBT characters; I'd often use my imagination and tweak the story. Video games, more than any other medium, allow you to immerse yourself in a world that is not your own. You can leave your problems behind and become someone else completely. If you're lucky enough to find or create a person like yourself, you can even watch as you triumph over your adversaries, whether they are literal or metaphorical.

There have been few LGBT characters over the years that haven't been negative, effeminate, or campy. The best positive examples are typically found in Role Playing Games (RPGs). 1998's "Fallout 2" included what is reportedly the first same-sex marriage in a video game and 2010's "Fallout: New Vegas" featured a doctor, Arcade Gannon, who is intelligent, witty, and personable — and gay. Anyone who reads the news knows that Bioware, the developer of RPG series such as "Dragon Age" and "Mass Effect," gives the player options to pursue same-sex relationships with other characters.

Since Bioware has essentially led the charge into the "great gay unknown" it's not surprising that they, and parent company, EA, have dealt with the most flak over it. Aside from the occasional boycott threat from a right-wing conservative family group, there are also our fellow gamers to contend with.

A presumably straight male gamer posted his outrage at "Dragon Age II" on Bioware's forums. The lack of a "no homosexuality option" made his experience awkward and he argued the company had catered to other demographics with its romance options. He felt the title's primary audience, straight male gamers, was neglected and that since few women and GLBT people play video games, the primary audience should always come first.

Lead writer for "DAII," David Gaider, responded to him. The entire response is still available on Bioware's forums. "The romances in the game are not for 'the straight male gamer'. They're for everyone. We have a lot of fans, many of whom are neither straight nor male, and they deserve no less attention. We have good numbers, after all, on the number of people who actually used similar sorts of content in ["Dragon Age Origins"] and thus don't need to resort to anecdotal evidence to support our idea that their numbers are