



Death by Cliché

Bob Defendi

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To Sartre, Hell was other people. To the game designer, Hell is the game.

Damico writes games for a living. When called in to rescue a local roleplaying game demo, Damico is shot in the head by a loony fan.

He awakens in a game. A game full of hackney's tropes and clichéd plots. A game he was there to save, run by the man who murdered him just moments ago. A game that has just become world-swap fantasy. Damico, to his horror, has become the heart of the cliché.

Set on their quest in a scene that would make Ed Wood blush, Damico discovers a new wrinkle. As a game designer, he is a creative force in this broken place. His presence touches the two-dimensional inhabitants.

First a peasant, then a barmaid, then his character's own father...all come alive.

But the central question remains. Can Damico escape, or is he trapped in this nightmare? Forever.

Wait, what? This is a comedy?

Ignore all that. Death by Cliché is a heartwarming tale of catastrophic brain damage. Share it with someone you love. Or like. Or anyone at all. Buy the book.

Based on a true story.

We asked several respected authors and editors for quotes about the podcast audiobook Death by Cliché.

These are some of their replies:

"Where are you taking me, and why can't I open this door?"

-Kevin J. Anderson, New York Times bestselling author of Blood of the Cosmos.

"I totally didn't just make up this quote without reading the book."

-Dan Wells, Author of The Devils Only Friend

"I told Bob I would heartily recommend this book, and he said I could have Mister Whiskers back."

-Dan Willis, Coauthor of Dragons of the Confederacy

Death by Cliché Details

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Author : Bob Defendi

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From Reader Review Death by Cliché for online ebook

Sissy Lu {Book Savvy Reviews} says

Admittedly, I am a nerd. Not just a book nerd, but the kind of nerd that would dress up and go to renaissance faires, [I was a pretty pretty princess. Don't believe me?]

I enjoy video games, and even roleplaying [writing! unless you count me as a pretty pretty princess..and that one time I was an elf for Halloween. Ears included.]

That aside! I can relate to the nerdisms and the cliches that are strewn throughout this book.

Damico is a Video Game creator and is approached by a crazed and not so nice fan who shoots him in the head. When Damico awakens he's a terrible game with every cliché known to mankind inside of it, he has to work his way through the game and face these terrible, terrible cliches!

The style is comparable to Douglas Adams HHGTTG, there is wit a-plenty, action galore, but in the end, it left me as just an "Okay" read. It's good for a giggle, but sometimes it was just a bit over the top and left me sighing a touch.

It was a fun read, though, if not a little too silly. It does well to paint pictures of being inside this digital world where he has no choice but to follow through with the game's plot, and if he dares to speak a word of what is actually transpiring the other players respond with a "What was that? I'm sorry I didn't hear you."

While it was fun, I simply couldn't find myself really getting into it. Still, a fun read for equally nerdy individuals such as myself.

Website - Facebook - Instagram

Tyler Smith says

I did not know what to expect with this book. I bought it at Salt Lake City Comic Con because I had seen the author in a few panels and happened to wander by his booth out on the floor. He is a funny guy and was happy to answer questions about writing or whatever else you may want to talk about.

On to the book itself. The book is an indictment of ridiculous tabletop gaming shortcomings, mostly in being realistic. The main character is murdered and become a character in his own game that is being run by the man that just murdered him (this is only a spoiler if you don't read the back of the book). You are immediately assaulted with perfectly cuboidal rooms and flaming women's undergarments. It goes on from there, pointing out shortcoming after shortcoming in a world where the creator clearly didn't do their homework or take the time to give any non-player characters any in depth form of personality.

I found a great many moments of this book to be laugh out loud funny. It manages to run the same gags just long enough before switching to something new so it never gets stale. And the primary character, while only mildly competent in the real world, knows the rules of this one and uses that to his best advantage. It really was a fun book with a far more compelling protagonist than you would really expect from a book that started out just poking fun at table top gamers. I definitely recommend it.

Pop Bop says

Surprisingly Layered

This started out as a fun and funny sendup of games, gaming and gamers, which isn't surprising given Defendi's background as a game writer. But, somewhere along the way the book became a lot more rewarding and entertaining than I expected.

The setup is that our hero, Damico, is shot by a deranged Game Master and finds his consciousness in a poorly designed table top game. Is our hero dead, and this is Hell? Is he in a coma and this is an extended dream sequence in which he will emerge from the coma if he can win the game? Who knows. The point is that usually with a premise like this we would expect the book to just be a sort of live-action game with a big reveal at the end of the adventure. Well, that's not how the book works at all.

Rather, we start with some funny and slightly edgy bits about the world of gaming. But, Damico starts to interact with characters in the game and we develop interesting companions for Damico. Then we get an actual adventure plot to keep the story moving. Then we begin to understand the real life players who are playing the game in which Damico is trapped. Then we realize that Damico's presence in the game is investing the non-player characters with "life" and "free will", and we start to speculate about matters of life and death that extend way beyond the boundaries of just a funny adventure story.

All of this is wrapped up in a narrative that is funny and witty, which are two different things. There are obvious jokes, and the running mockery of gamer cliches, but there are also subtle and indirect throwaway lines that are scattershot, but often arresting. On top of this we get a good deal of playful writing that toys with the conventions of narrative. Lots of the writing is aimed directly at the reader and there are many jokes and knowing digressions about the act of writing and the nature of storytelling. This is a book that's very aware of the fact that it's a written book, and sort of revels in subverting the usual narrative forms.

The upshot is that we get a funny and sly look at gaming, but we also get to see how a writer writes a story. On top of that, as a bonus, we actually get a decent and often suspenseful story with engaging characters. That's a lot to pack in to what looked at first like just an amusing and harmless sendup. A very satisfying, entertaining and really sort of impressive find.

(Please note that I received a free ecopy of this book without a review requirement, or any influence regarding review content should I choose to post a review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.)

Joseph says

This book was recommended to me. I'm not taking book recommendations from that individual anymore.

This book is a never-ending string of insults aimed at it's target demographic, and it's author. Which... I'm glad he lumped himself in this mess?

I barely made it through, and I kept hoping to see something get even a little bit better, and it...really didn't.

D.J. Butler says

Bob Defendi appears in this book as the source of its epigrammatic chapter headings (“Please. Not another chapter quote.” — Bob Defendi) and also as its protagonist, Bob Damico. For good measure, Death by Cliché features his character sheet and thumbnail drawing as an annex. Bob also appears in every humor-soaked line.

The point of this book is not the story, which throws Shakespeare into convulsive fits in his grave by beginning with the protagonist’s death and ending with the same protagonist’s wedding (okay, his making out) (and hoping that his partner in smooching is not being played by a man). The point of the book, as Defendi disarmingly says up front, is different:

You see, this book isn’t a murder mystery. It’s not a heartwarming tale of overcoming massive brain trauma. It’s about gamers.

True to his title, Defendi then packs in every cliché, reversed cliché, cliché turned inside out, and joke about gamers he can into this slim volume. In lesser hands, this might get tired. In the impish stylings of Bob Defendi, it’s comic gold.

Kevin says

I'm getting tired of some authors trying, and completely failing to subvert this "litrpg" genre. I think persons who actually played DnD before might find it funny or something like that, but I never played DnD, and this is annoying and not funny.

Maybe the whole point of this book is that it's cliches, and it is suppose to be not funny. Maybe it was written to ore you on purpose.

Trapped in a board game is worse than trapped in a computer simulation (aka Virtual Reality).

Well I finished it, and I'm not reading the sequels or anything else by the author.

1.5/5 Stars

Jim Foster says

It has been a very long time since I laughed out loud at a book. Defendi writes with an easy, lighthearted

style that reminds me of my first experience with Douglas Adams: ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances, surrounded by satire, in-jokes and some howlingly funny analogies.

As an old RPGer that has been out of the game for too long, this took me back to those heady days of dice-rolling, made me laugh at the silliness of my youth, and at the same time appreciate it for what it was. This book is deceptively light and easy to read, but there are some real issues touched on here about gaming, its place in our lives and how the way we game both reveals who we are and also changes us... sometimes even for the better.

If you're a gamer, especially one with a few years and Cheetos under your belt, this book is like running into that old high-school buddy you used to run with, have lost touch with and now find out he's had a fantastic life, but you're still both the best of friends.

Kirstie says

Bob Damico has been shot in the head. When he wakes he is not in the hospital as one would expect, but a room that looks suspiciously like the room one imagines when starting an adventure in a stereotypical RPG. For Damico, as a writer and publisher of such games, the cliché nature of the room and the poor world building are impossible to miss, but boy - he ain't seen nothing yet.

Prepare to laugh your ass off, particularly if you're a table-top gamer or a writer of fantasy. LARPers may feel slightly offended for the first chapter or two (the protagonist vaunts D&D and it's ilk but mocks LARPers), but he stops harping on it pretty quickly and gets on with the story.

The world is stock fantasy, but with some good funny twists about stock fantasy, eg/ the farmer working his fields thinks about how to make ploughing easier then realises 'screw this Imma just bail on this whole farming life' ;p & barmaids all being essentially the same.

A couple of downsides, the romantic sub-plot could not have fallen flatter for me. I mean I liked that (view spoiler) but the romance just didn't feel real and honestly it was very much a case of 'the only girl in the world falls in love with the protagonist. True, comments were made about the cliché of her being the only woman in the world apart from barmaids but none regarding him falling for the only woman in the world being cliché, so that didn't lessen my disappointment about the romance and its lack of feels+convenience (TBH I was rooting for Bunny the barmaid).

I was also disappointed some of the by the end events. (view spoiler)

Overall it's good for a laugh(and there will be plenty if you're familiar with the tropes and clichés of fantasy), but don't expect the feels.

Dani DeRosa says

It wasn't awful. Parts of it were genuinely funny and enjoyable, and he did a good job of subverting clichés and typical writing advice. But the treatment of the only female character was awful and honestly that

seemed like the only cliché he wasn't mocking? The last line in particular nearly ruined the book for me. It's an awful joke to end on. But it's a quick read and most of it is fun, even if some of the 'humor' makes you cringe sometimes. I did think the idea of his interactions slowly fleshing out the NPCs was unique and refreshing, and I think it's a good read if you're an aspiring writer looking to learn about character development.

Yzabel Ginsberg says

[I received a copy of this book from the publisher.]

I'm on the fence regarding this novel, as some parts were fun, but some others made fun of gamers in a way that I would expect from someone who doesn't play—as in, clichés that weren't so funny as demeaning.

Damico, game designer, finds himself trapped in a tabletop RPG scenario, as a non-player character, after he got shot in the head by a loony Dungeon Master. (Which in itself is a bad cliché already, but that may be me being a wee bit sensitive after years trying to debunk myths in my hometown, like "oh you're a gamer, so you must be weird and deranged". Meh.) It's only a game, right? Right. So it doesn't matter if all those cardboard characters—peasants, the Evil Overlord, the buxom tavern wench...—get to die, because they're just ink on paper, or in the head of the game master. Except they're not, not exactly; and conversely, if they are, does it mean that Damico is dead, and nothing more than ink as well?

And this is one of the strong points of "Death By Cliché". Sure, it's nothing the literary world hasn't seen before (what is real, what defines reality, what defines humanity...), yet it doesn't matter: it remains an interesting theme. The humorous approach doesn't detract from this kind of "serious" questioning, and at the same time is enjoyable, because, well, it's fun.

The clichés I'm a bit undecided about, as mentioned previously. The book is packed with them, which is totally expected with such a title and premise, and some of them work really well. If you are, or used to be, a gamer, odds are you've encountered a lot of them, whether places, situations or people. It pokes fun at the tired fantasy tropes (the evil lord, the long days of travel—sorry, I'm not a "travel fantasy" person—the fabled Artefact, the cliché large-breasted tavern girls, and so on). Plenty of themes to play with, and it's obvious the author had lots of fun with those. Also, the feeling of reliving some old gaming sessions, or discussing those with an old friend. I'm positive that every gamer, at some point, even the most serious/storytelling-type/roleplaying ones, gave in at some point to some jolly good cliché or silly action. This is part of what makes such games funny, after all.

Some tropes didn't work as well for me; but then, they're clearly the ones that tend to make too much fun of gamers in general, and can easily be construed as more derogatory than mere fun. You know, the "oh but it's just for fun, don't get angry" thing, to cover a hurtful comment/joke. That's the kind of the impression I got.

The writing style was often tongue-in-cheek, sometimes deliberately breaking the fourth wall. I tend to like this, so it made me smile. I couldn't care less about the chapter quotes, though; the first three or so were cool, the rest quickly became tedious.

Conclusion: As expected, a lot of clichés, that may have been exploited better; but all in all, it was a fun ride.

Jeffrey Grant says

Humor is difficult to write; there are very few ways to succeed and a multitude of different ways to screw it up. Defendi gets full points for trying.

The story he's telling is supposed to be a satire. It's a typical "real person shoved into fantastical scenario" tale, except he's actually playing a character in the fantastical scenario, rather than simply appearing as himself. For those elements of the story he does well, touching on the different engagements and playstyles that tabletop RPG gamers have, the laziness that sometimes goes into design of campaigns and villains, and how much of "real life" is summarized or skipped over in play sessions. The villain who comes to question why he's doing some of the prototypical villain behaviors is particularly entertaining, especially in the beginning.

That said, there are some glaring issues.

One thing that I found personally annoying is that in addition to satirizing the tropes and trappings of tabletop RPGs, he also satirized writing a novel in places. That was jarring to me; The main character is already meta-narrating what's going on from the point of view that he understands his situation is a game. Having the narrator break the fourth wall on top of that destroyed my immersion. It would have actually been better if it was consistent, but where there was a lot of it at the early part of the book, it tapered off and then would pop up again without warning later on, again sabotaging the immersion. The chapter quotes were entertaining, but I think he should have left it at that.

(view spoiler)

The story itself also wasn't particularly interesting. That was the point in a way, but good satire stories like this often start with the familiar tropes and then evolve past them. This sort of stayed with the cliched story the entire way through, with the main character constantly pointing out how cliched it was. In the third quarter of the book or so it got more interesting because it focused on some internal character development, but then it was back to the cliché.

I want to give this 2.5 stars, but I'm going with 3 because it did have sections where it made me laugh. I don't think I'll be continuing with the series, however.

Vanessa says

Meh. Probably more like 2.5 stars.

Death by Cliche has an incredibly small reading demographic, and while I do consider myself as part of that demographic, I had a very hard time getting through this short book. I have heard that if you started with the podcast the book is a bit more enjoyable, but I didn't, I didn't even know it was one, and I don't think listening to the post cast should be required to enjoy the book. I can see how there are some who would get a kick out of this, but I was not one of them.

Ok it's all in the title *Death by Cliche*. It hits just about every cliché and stereotype in the RPG world. But what I didn't realize was most of them would be hit so often the joke stopped being funny, and felt more like

I was slower dying by cliché.

Marjolein says

2.5 Stars

Read all my reviews on <http://urlphantomhive.booklikes.com>

Damico is a game designer who gets shot in the head for disagreeing to publish the worst game ever. To his annoyance he doesn't end up dead but instead wakes inside said game. It is worse than Hell, especially since it's filled with every trope ever.

Of course, the title kind of gave it away, if you don't want to read clichés stay far away from this book. However, from time to time, this book offered a nice view to this clichés. At other times it worked less well. I found the story also a bit repetitive and could only read small parts in one read otherwise I would get slightly annoyed by it.

All in all, I have some mixed feelings about this book and still haven't really decided what to think about it...

Thanks to the publisher for providing me with a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review!

Nicolas Knight says

The good:

The writing is good.

This is not some 3 year old trying to express himself.

The bad:

Pretty much everything else.

The character is barely fleshed out besides being a poor ...? Writer? No idea since as mentioned he's totally blank.

The villain is just as badly characterised and the setup is poor enough it took me a quarter of the book to realise that the DM and the villain were meant to be the same person (Not a spoiler).

Finally: I'd hate to have ever DM'ed for this guy. The entire story is his personal hatred (Oh yeah, forgot to mention this is meant to be a self insert fiction) for Game masters.

Now it could be just one or even a few GM's that scarred this guy but this book makes me think he hates all other GMs.

Apparently the sequel is much better. I just hope it doesn't require remembering anything that happens in this

book.

Jennifer says

This book had an interesting concept. I had a hard time understanding parts of it because I don't play the types of games the book mentions. I was able to understand the gist of it, but I'm sure there are finer details that I did not catch.

This is definitely a book for adults. Maybe older teenagers, but it is not YA. The beginning of the book was hilarious, but it didn't keep up for the whole story. I have the second book in the series to read. We will see if I understand more of what is going on once I start that book.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Author: Bob Defendi

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