## Boss Battle Scenario
# Combat Designer Test

## Applicant

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# Contents

# The Assignment

## Overview

### Hero
- Melee:    Hero has no weapon other than himself
- Jump:    Hero can jump (no double jump)
- Free:    Hero can <fill in the blank> Design one of your own Hero mechanics. This can be anything you want. Even if it contradicts one of the above. (Please explain how it would work!)

### Boss
- Giant Spider

### Level
- Cavern

## Challenge

### The Start
The Hero enters the mouth of a cave and travels down a dimly lit corridor.  The path spills out in an opening that is illuminated by flowing lava.  At the center is a large hole with steam rising from it.  The Hero moves towards the hole when two stands of webbing fly out of the darkness and pull the Hero down into the hole.  The Hero now lies in the depths of a Cavern with no way out and a Giant Spider looking for its next meal… from here you are to design a boss encounter!

### The Goals
- Define the look and gameplay of the boss
- Define the look and gameplay of the level
- Define the strategy the Hero must use to defeat the boss
- Define the final kill sequence for the boss

# Answer Overview

## Playable Character Assumptions

The Assignment Overview implies that the hero is not Kratos—after all, Kratos is well known for his double jump and his use of the Blades of Chaos. For the purposes of this test, however, I've decided to think of the hero as Kratos, or a character very similar in demeanor and control to Kratos.

*God of War II* set a precedent of stripping most of the hero's abilities, so perhaps our hero has gone through a similar ordeal, not only stripping him of his Blades of Chaos, but also of his ability to double jump.

## Camera

This boss fight follows the God of War tradition of designer-placed third person cameras.

When the player is in control of the hero, the camera placement, spline of movement, and zoom should all serve to keep the hero in view and unobstructed. I would prefer it if no camera cuts are necessary to achieve this during direct control of the hero. (Cuts are fine for quick time events, cut scenes, and during normal adventuring, but could be disorienting during a boss battle.)

During brief interruptions in player control (cut scene like moments), the camera placement and focus are used to:

- Increase intimacy, dramatic tension, or epic triumph
- Give clues as to key puzzle areas, goal, and enemy weak spots

## Character Controls
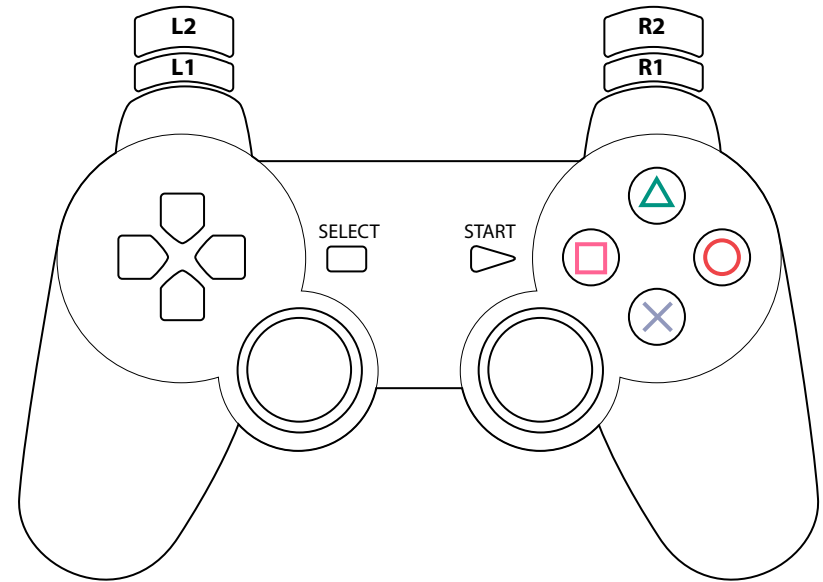


### Basic Controls

| | |
|---|---|
| Left Analogue Stick: | Free Roaming Movement |
| X Button: | Jump (single) |
| Square Button: | Light Melee Attack |
| Triangle Button: | Heavy Melee Attack |
| O Button: | Grab |
| | Often used as the initial Quick Time Event input |

### Additional Controls

| | |
|---|---|
| R1 Shoulder Button: | Interact |
| L1 Shoulder Button: | Block/Deflect (my "free" mechanic for Answer A) |
| L2 Shoulder Button: | Atlas Shrugged (my "free" mechanic for Answer B) |
| Right Analogue Stick: | Used in previous GoW games for directional evade |
| | The use of this input is not critical to completing the boss challenges detailed bellow. |

## Characteristics of God of War Boss Fights

- Multiple States/Sequential Goals
- The appearance of danger
- Puzzles masked in the skin of an epic encounter

For the most part, boss battles in the *God of War* series present little danger of failure to the player. While this might seem like a bad idea, alienating hardcore players, it is actually wonderful; allowing all players to experience the thrill of an epic win, and indeed the entire game.

The mental satisfaction of figuring out the puzzle, combined with highly dramatic visual payoff of the coup de grâce, results in a victory that is very satisfying to the player—despite a relatively low combat execution risk.

If I were responsible for designing or executing a boss battle in *God of War III*, I would keep these inclusive design goals in mind.
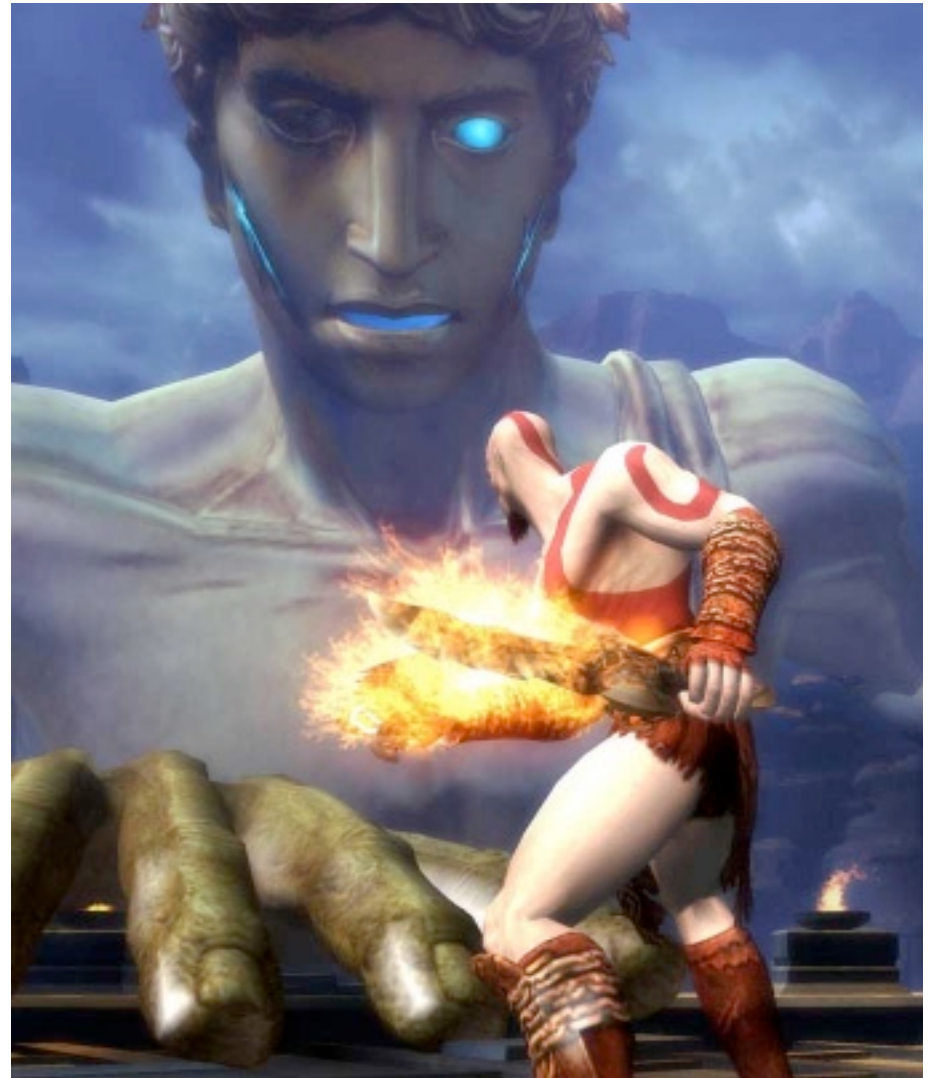


Opening boss from *God of War II*.

*God of War I* had a great opening, *God of War II* upped the epic ante; I can't wait to see the first boss in *God of War III*!

## The Cavern Visual Description

The cavern walls are blanketed with dense webs and drained corpses. There are a few holes in the wall or floor which periodically expel a burst of steam. The scene is lit by the odd shaft of light and the warm glow of lava; not necessarily visible in the scene.



The "deadness" of these matte cobwebs should allow them to fade into the background, allowing any gameplay relevant spider webs to stand out.



The style of the webs in these photos could work well as ornamentation for the cavern environment.

Note: the webs in these photos are outdoors but the actual cavern ones would be in a darker setting, illuminated by lava and perhaps the odd shaft of light.

## Giant Spider Visual Description

The Giant Spider's body alone should be visually imposing—at least 3 times the volume of the player's. Her legs—measuring as long as 6 meters each, and her ample fangs—dripping with poison, add to her menace.

Her legs are slender and hairless, the forelimbs almost knife-like.

There should be some sort of marking on the spider's back, and perhaps it can glow/flash as an attack tell.

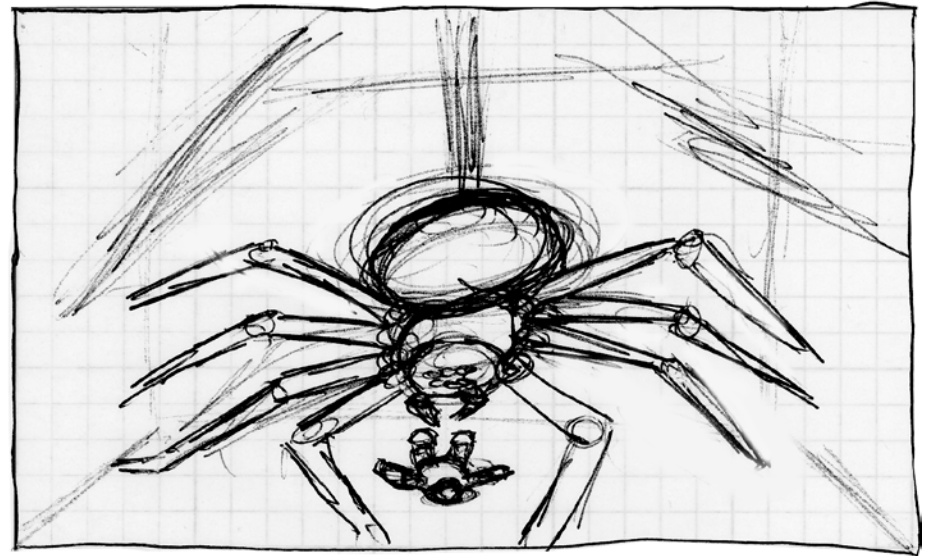The spider should look more like this than like a tarantula.

# Answer A: "Vertical"

## Opening Sequence

### Fade In
The hero's back is to the ground, the Giant spider hovering over him. At this point the player is unable to move.

The spider grabs for the hero with her front legs, but the hero grasps them just in time.



### Cue Quick Time Event
An "O" button pulses in the center of the screen, prompting the player to mash on the O button. There is a struggle back and forth until the player's input reaches a certain threshold at which point:

The hero overpowers the giant spider, flinging its front legs to the side and promptly kicking her in the face.
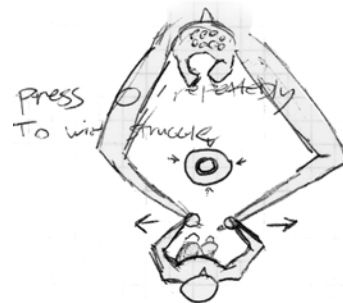
## The Stage Revealed

Surprised by the resilience of her prey, the spider winches herself up her thread of silk.

The camera pulls back to keep both the spider and the hero in view. The stage is revealed to be a deep cavern. To the left is a short platform, to the right a taller platform, too high to reach. The spider sits in the middle, slightly higher than the platform on the right.

There might also be a small stalagmite—approximately the size of the hero—on the shorter platform.
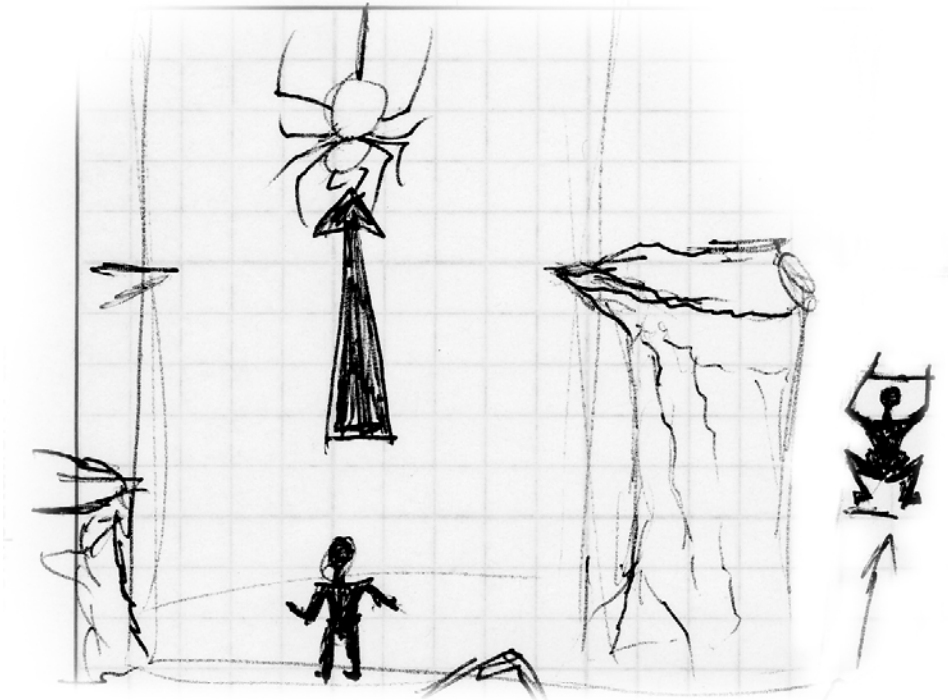


The platform on the right is too high to reach with your single jump; how will you be able to attack the spider?

## Attack Sequence 1

From its safe height, the spider jumps sideways between three (virtual) "lanes". The spider starts in the middle lane and randomly moves left or right, from this point onwards the spider will traverse back and forth until she is in a lane directly above the hero.

At this point she will begin her "three drop" sequence. Each drop attempts to happen in whatever "lane" the hero is currently occupying. The "drop" is the spider rapidly descending down her thread of silk.

The first two "drops" stop at a distance from which she can swipe at the hero with her front legs while her body is still at a safe distance. The player needs to avoid being hit else they will lose some health, and suffer a small amount of recovery time.

The third "drop" goes much lower; to a height where the player may attack her. If the player is hit by this drop they will end up in the "over power" quick time event from the opening sequence. To avoid this fate the player needs to hit the deflect button (L1) at just the right moment. The spot on the spider's back will flash just before the player needs to enter their "just frame" input. This should be tuned so that it isn't too hard but so there is still significant risk/reward.

A successful deflect will present the player with an opening to unleash a combination of melee attacks on the spider. Once a threshold is reached, the spider will drop some health and retract up her thread to safety from which she will launch her Attack Sequence 2.

If the player does not do enough damage to stun the spider, or if they evade the spider completely, Sequence 1 will repeat.
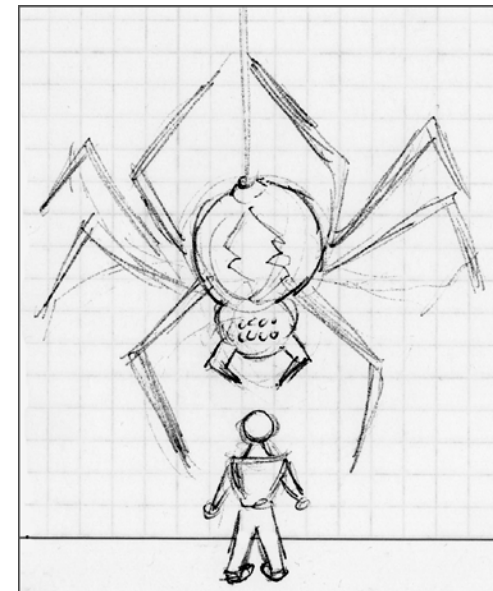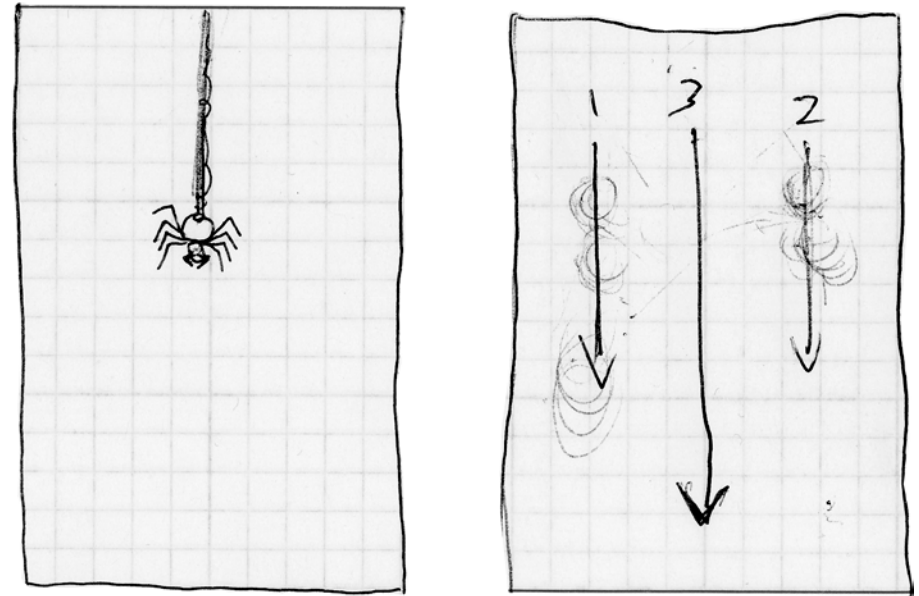
## Attack Sequence 2

### Phase 1

The spider holds onto her web with her arms and rotates her abdomen down and forward. She then launches a sequence of three projectiles from left to right. This is repeated once for a total of six shots. If hit, the player will suffer some knock-back, making it harder to reach the left ledge in time for Phase 2.
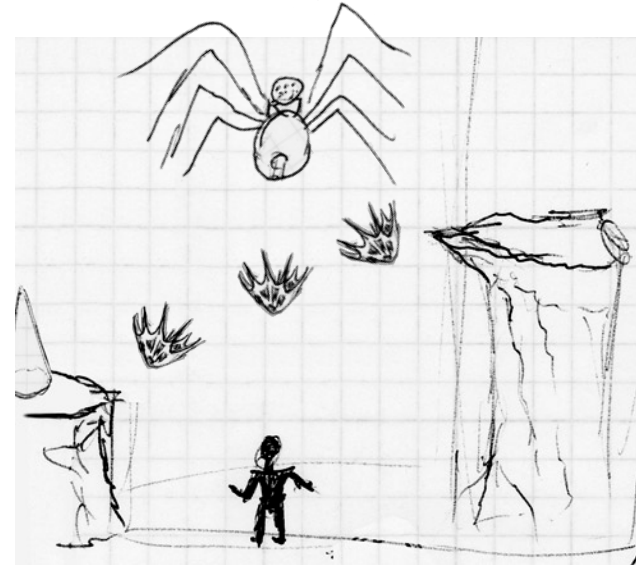


### Phase 2

After the six projectiles are shot, the spider will always launch a continuous thread. This is similar to the thread that pulled the hero into the cavern in the first place.

If the player is hit by this thread they will be swung around thrown back to the center floor. Attack Sequence 1 will begin again.

The trick is to stand by the stalagmite on the left ledge and then move out of the way (or possibly deflect) at the last moment, causing the thread to attach to the stalagmite instead of the player. The player can then hold R1 while near the stalagmite to tear the thread off the rock and use it to swing up to the higher ledge on the right hand side of the screen.
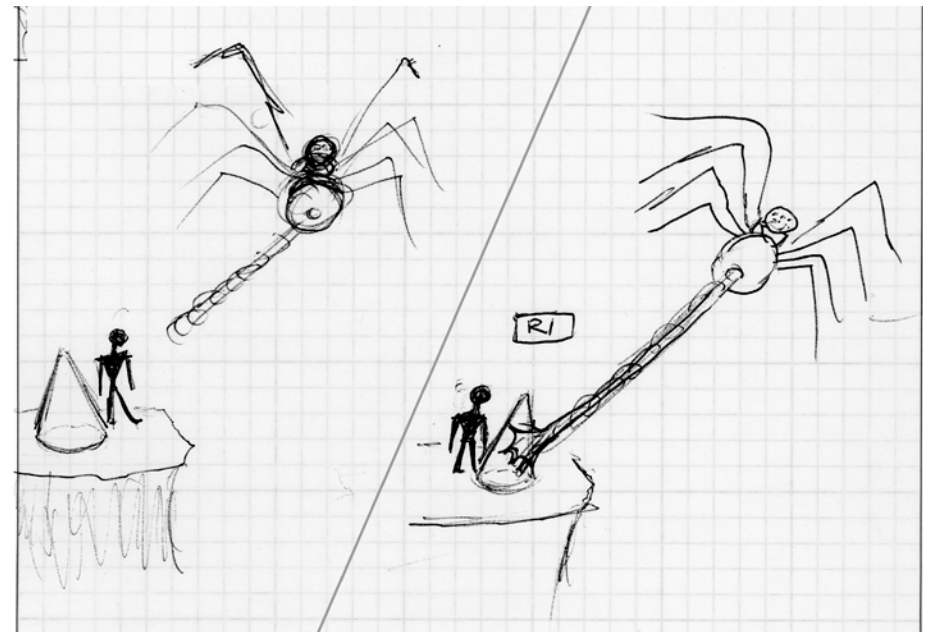
## Player Offensive Chance

Now that the hero and the spider are eye to eye, the player is able to utilize the hero's standard attacks.

After a threshold of damage has been dealt to the spider, the spider rotates so that her head is down again, and she shoots a thread skyward (the same configuration as Attack Sequence 1).

### Cue Quick Time Event

A circle button cue appears. The player hits the circle button. The hero grabs one of the spider legs in response, places one foot upon the thorax, and proceeds to rip the leg off.

Reeling in pain, the spider knocks the player down to the bottom of the cavern.

## Rinse and Repeat

From this point the player must repeat Sequences 1 and 2, and "Offensive Chance"

Depending on tuning, this process might only happen twice, or it is conceivable that it could happen up to eight times (once for each leg). Each leg would probably have different dismemberment details. The most extravagant being the final dismemberment—resulting in the final kill sequence.
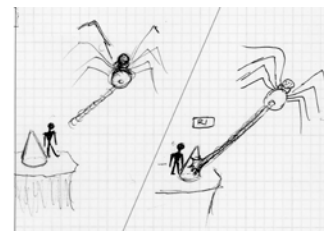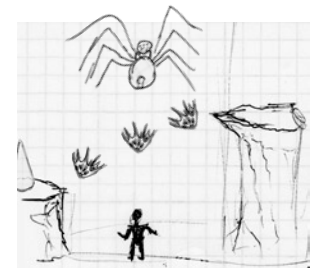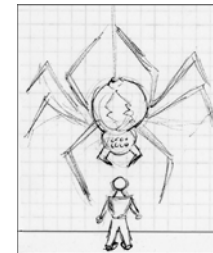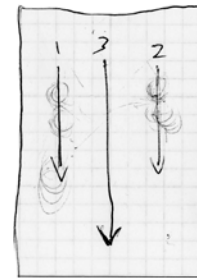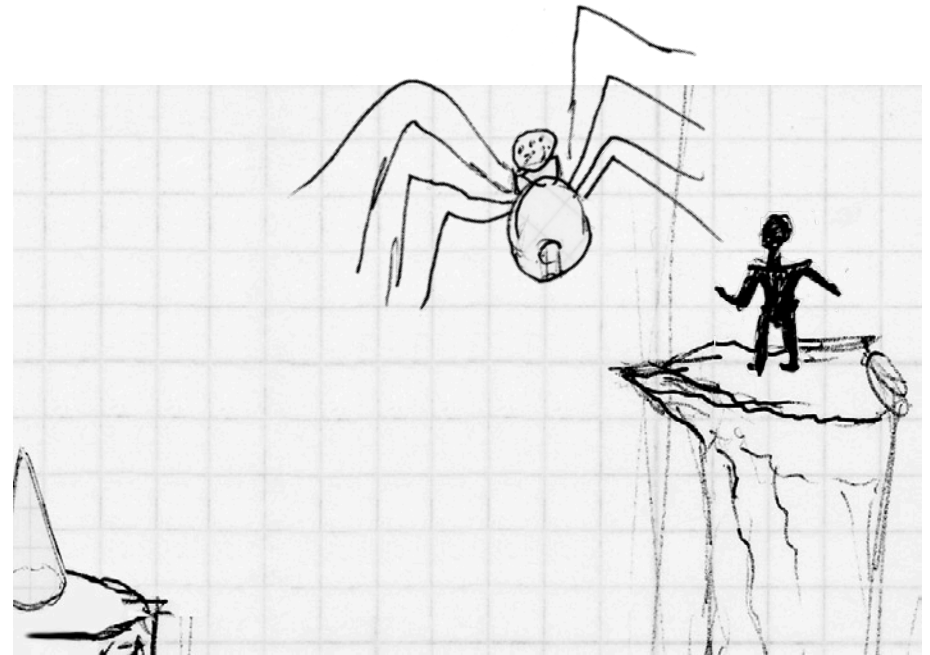
## The Final Kill Sequence

The appointed number of rinse and repeat cycles has been reached, let the final kill sequence begin!

The player moves the hero towards the stalagmite and presses R1. This time the result is different; instead of swinging there is a bit of a tug of war with the spider.

**Quick Time Event: press circle button repeatedly**
A last ditch effort from the Spider causes the hero to catch some air, sailing towards the right ledge, silk thread still in hand.

**Quick Time Event: press X**
The hero lands feet first.

**Quick Time Event: left analogue 360 degree rotation**
The hero yanks the spider off the wall and swings her in a nearly complete circle.

**Quick Time Event: press circle**
The spider flies towards the stalagmite. The player leaps after it, his added weight ensuring that the spider is impaled.
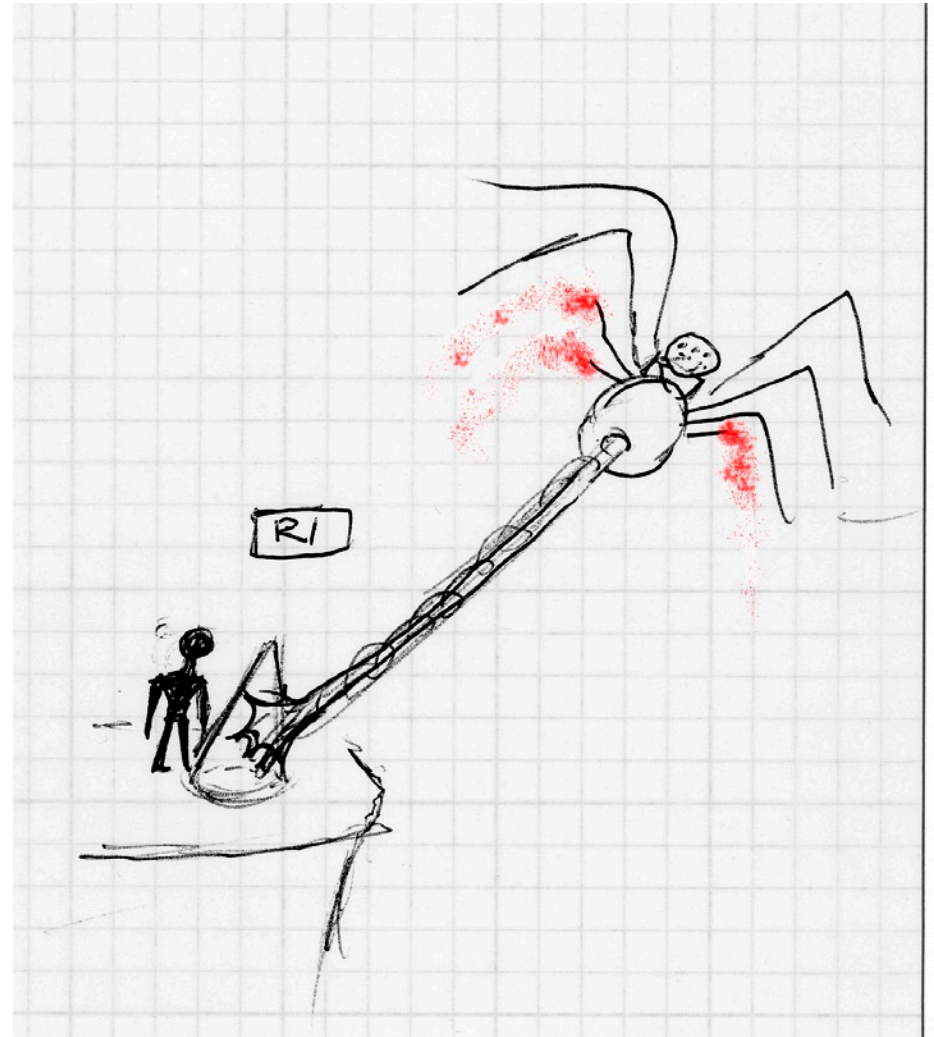
**Quick Time Event: hold R1, press X repeatedly**
As the spider squirms, the player rips off the front forelegs.


## End Sequence

**Cinematic**
The hero thrusts his hands into the hollow spider forelegs.

Full control reverts back to the player. The hero is now able to climb out of the tunnel. When he reaches the top he will discard the spider forelegs.



The beginning moments of the final kill sequence.

## Answer B: "Horizontal"

### Introduction

I haven't had the chance to think this one all the way through, but I wanted to present some ideas for an alternate design. The high concept is to have all of the action on the horizontal plane as opposed to the vertical plane of the previous answer.

### Layout

The cavern into which you have fallen has an additional pit in its center. There is only a moderately wide ledge around this center pit—maybe 20 feet at most.

Around the edge of this pit are five rings or pillars. Attached to these connection points is a giant spider web, suspended above the pit.

At the center of this web resides the giant spider.

The pit is deep and has lava at the bottom!
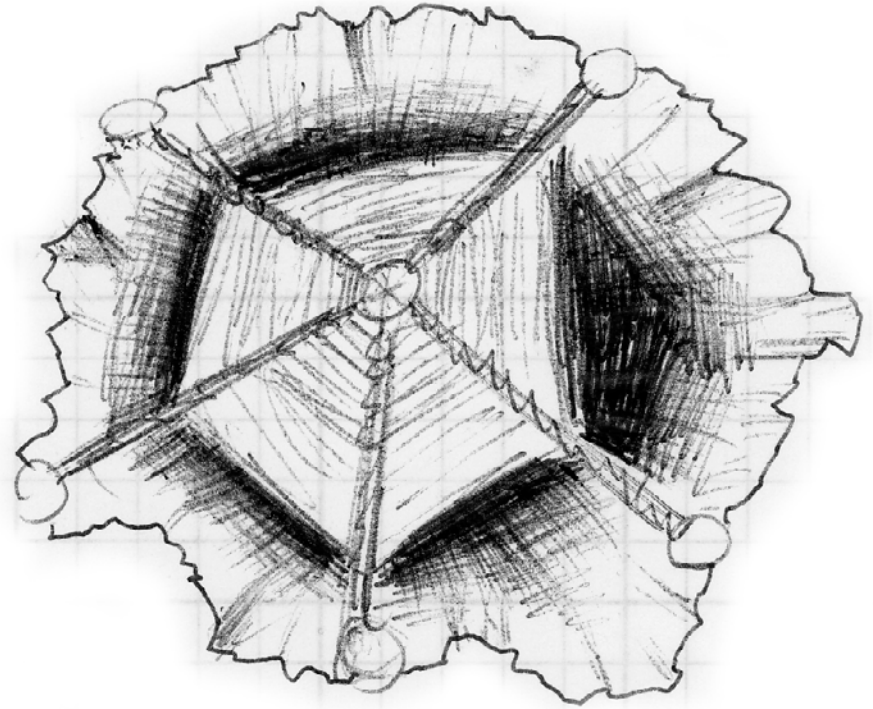
The pit in the center of the cavern has five pillars around it's edge—a spider's web strung between them.

## Camera Work and Player Movement

### Camera Work
The camera orbits around the center of the pit/web, keeping the player more or less in the bottom-center of the screen. It is probably tilted down to an extent where you would not be able to see the horizon.
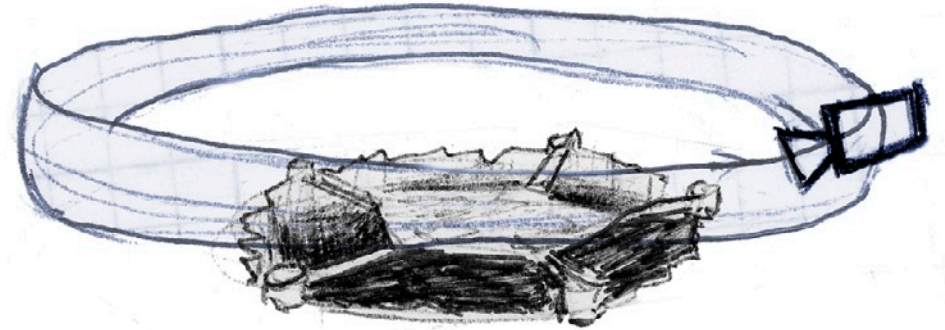


Camera Path

### Player Movement
While the player still has their free-roam running ability, the narrow edge around the pit and the camera tracking conspire to effectively constrain the player's movement to running left or right.
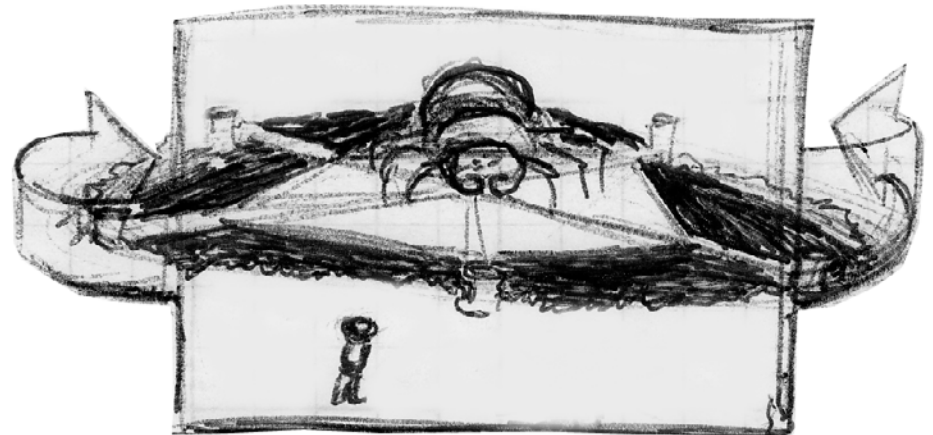


Representative gameplay perspective. As the hero runs to the left or right, the camera tracks with him, orbiting around a pivot point at the center of the pit/web.

## Atlas Shrugged

This is my "free mechanic" for Answer B.

Press L2 to enter into Atlas mode—use the six axis controller to literally move the world.

• While L2 is held down, the relative change in controller orientation translates into a corresponding orientation shift of the in-game world.
• Possibly shake the controller to cause an earthquake.

I imagine that the hero would not be able to walk or run or evade while in this mode; visually they would probably be dropped down on one knee and hunched over—it takes a lot of concentration to move the world!

This could be a useful mechanic, not only for this boss fight, but for general puzzles throughout the game. Most of the time it would probably be used to move weights around (boxes to trigger plates, etc), but it could also be used to cause enemies to fall off ledges, to cause a large tree to topple—forming a makeshift bridge, and so on.

In the case of this boss encounter, I imagine that it could be used similar to a ball maze. The aesthetic wrapper might be moving boulders or lava along the spider web towards the spider in the center, or positioning a blade that is suspended from the roof in order to cut the web's anchors at each of the five pillars.

The player would have to have awareness of their environment; while this ability could cause a boulder to knock an enemy off a ledge, it could also cause a boulder to knock the player off a ledge.



A circular ball maze.



Atlas

## Opening Sequence

### Fade In

The hero is "chained" to two of the pit pillars by the silk webbing that dragged him into this cavern. If the player moves the left analogue stick they will find that they have some limited mobility.



The spider raises either it's left or right front leg in an attack tell.



If the player moves away from the attack, the attack will miss the player but sever the web, freeing the hero on that side. They will now need to do the same on the other side to be free and continue with the rest of the boss fight.
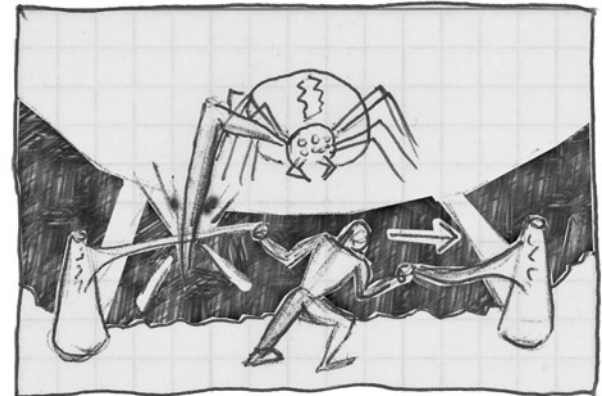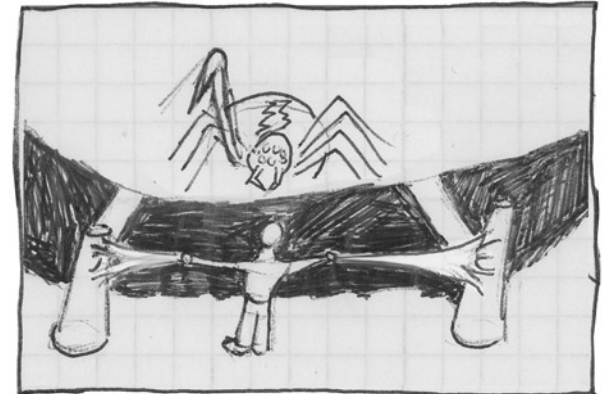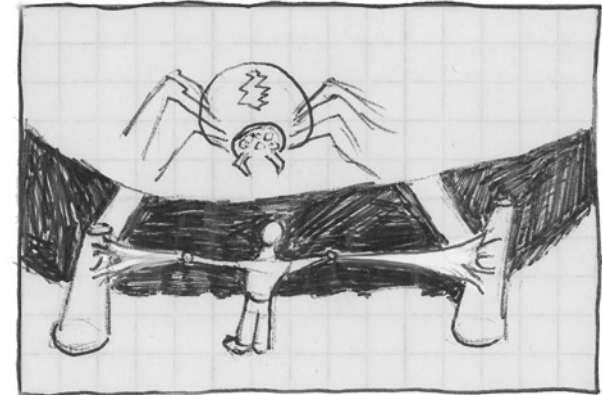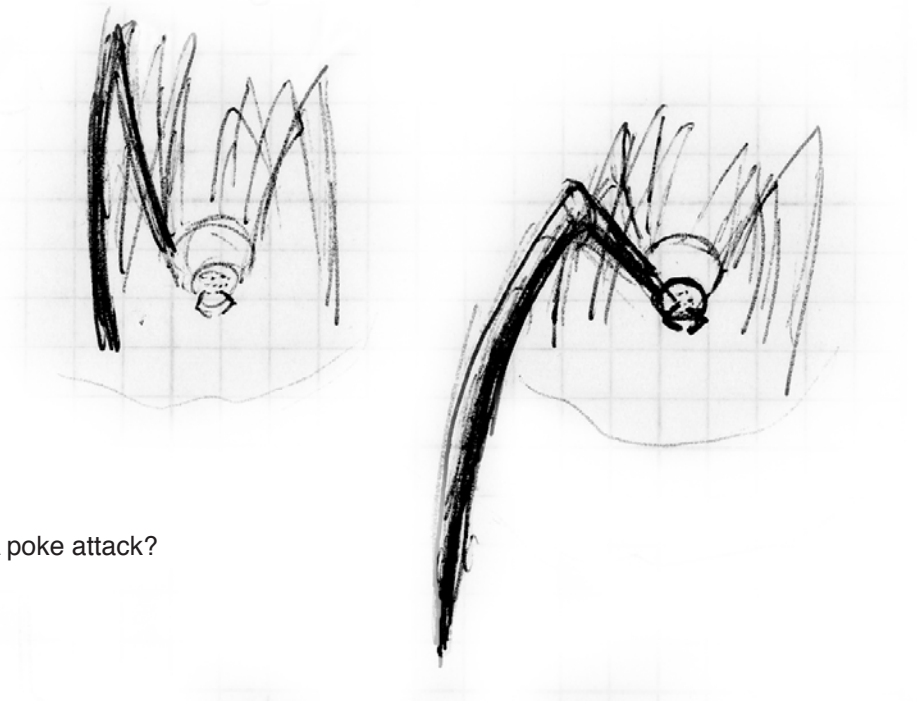
## Spider Attacks

The spider would have web spitting attacks, slashing/poking attacks with their front legs, and possibly a pounce attack, or even an attack that sends a swarm of baby spiders at the hero.

This design, however, is much more focused on using the Atlas ability to solve a jig saw or maze puzzle, so most of the attacks just serve to interrupt the player.
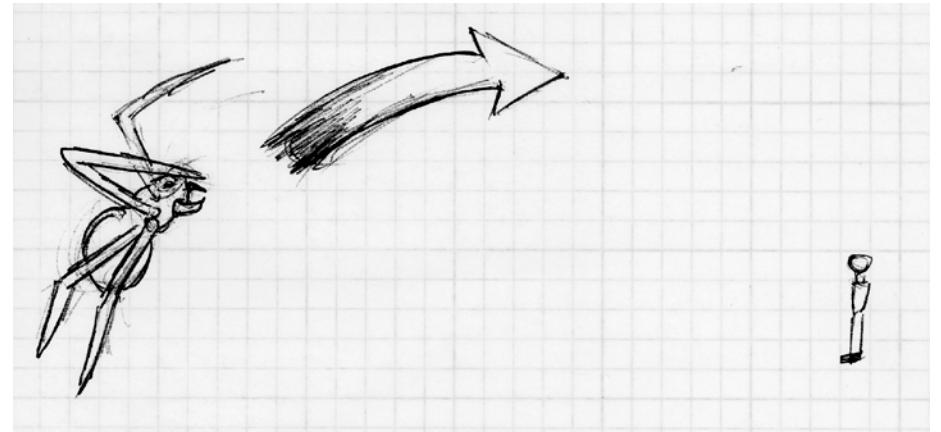
## The Final Kill Sequence

The final kill sequence would involve severing the suspended web from the support beams, causing the spider to fall into the lava bellow and erupt into flames.

Likewise, there may be some other way to achieve a similar result, such as having an Atlas puzzle release a waterfall of lava that then cascades upon the unsuspecting spider, causing her to erupt into flames.

A poke attack?

A pounce attack.