

War of Virtual Worlds

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A young child who is high school cannot escape from his world of pain and misery, even in 2066. David struggles with the social norms of communicating online, preferring face to face interaction, and still unable to do that. Then there is a new game called "Clan Wars", a new game that allows players to customize an avatar and urges players to work together to become the strongest clan. The game has been out for a year, gaining many millions of players, but no one going against each other. The game is at a stalemate. Then David receives this for Christmas, family urging him to join and become better at being with people, being worried that he will become a failure in life. So join David as he dives into this virtual retreat.

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Chapter 1: The End of 2066 and an old life

The snow began to fall onto the ground as I sat in my room reading *Invisible Man*. I felt I could connect to the main character, not with the racial conflict, but in fact with the thing of disappearing. I could hide out in my bedroom all day, reading my books and nobody would notice. They would call for dinner, I would eat, then disappear again into my bedroom.

The room was dark, except for the blast of beeping sound from my laptop. But my room was sound proof, and it was built so I could hear nobody outside, and nobody could hear me in here. It was pure isolation from the outside world, which felt fine since I felt like an outsider.

I had just finished my homework for Christmas break and everything looked good for me. My grades were good, as I was within the top twenty in my class and didn't really try in school. Life was just simplistic then, at that moment. I had no friends, didn't talk to anyone, stayed to myself. Sure, I did sports, but the sports world was dying out in the year 2066. Technology replaced it all, allowing people to look fake, to look slim and fit. I fit in for I was that size naturally through running. That was what I was good at, reading and running. I could outrun anything, including my problems. I could hide from them within my bedroom and everything was just fine.

My sisters were banging on my door then at that moment while I thought of all these things, dropping my book to the floor. Finally, they burst in, demanding that I go down for dinner.

Tonight was pizza for me, tablets for everyone else. They were into these new supplements to actual food, but I still preferred this. They were watching androids on the tv fighting in *Jeopardy!*, and then a detective show of a robot version of Sherlock Holmes. I ate my slice and left for my bedroom, at which point the tv went mute on the commercial. My sisters both began to wail out, whining about me and how they should forget me, that I was a lost cause.

My mother started to speak then. "Enough, out of both of you. He is your brother, and he is a part of this family. Now, David, we need to talk, we needed to have done this a long time ago. You need to stay and socialize. We all know of how well you do in school, but we have also heard of how you operate in, we went to the parent teacher conferences. All of your teachers told us how you have done all the group projects on your own, that you advocated to do them alone, and when you are in a group, you just do everything by yourself. Your classmates try to do things, and they may be wrong, but why work alone? You need to be more with those around you. So you are to stay."

I looked down, uncaring of her words. They were all true. I hate group projects since nobody is reliable. Looking up, I spoke "So you want me to stay, watch this garbage and be with you? I know how this ends, this is based off a book I have read, and the pattern they use in the show helps point out all of the different things they would change. Why stay and watch that? I should be challenging myself. So work with others? Ha, don't make me laugh. How can I work with those who hate me, who despise me, who wish that I was dead? This world makes me laugh, and so do you. It is sad what you have done to yourselves, you are not even human anymore. I don't even know what you are. So leave me alone. That is all I wish for, why does everyone want to ruin this single request of mine? Now, if you don't mind, I will leave before I spoil then end to you."

I got up at that point and went into my room. The sad thing was, I know how it would end. It was already on tv, an old show from the early twenty first century called *Elementary*. All they do these days is switch people with robots, having run out of new ideas. That is the problem these days, all the good ideas have been used, and all new ideas are garbage. So they rework the old works and throw in robots, claiming it is new, when it is just old and outdated.

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After the outpour of ideas in the first thirty years of the twenty first century, people had lost interest on progress, even given up on progress. The U.S. has lost its power, having virtually become nothing more than a bunch of consumers. We absorb, and give back nothing, being useless to the rest of the world.

So here I sat again, wishing that I lived in the past, before we stopped being humans, wishing to even be the main character in my book, who had no identity to live with.

Chapter 2: Christmas Eve and the Game Begins

The next couple of days dragged by sluggishly, not wanting to end. My family ignored that night and carried on like nothing occurred or happened. We all went shopping for each other, I in the end getting all of them gift cards to Apple, since they were still the world leader in music and electronics in all areas. I loved Apple myself, having a mac laptop and all. I only hated the earbuds, never worked for my ears. Skullcandies were amazing, especially their gamer headphones, which are the best in the entire world.

Once done with that, I went to the video game section. I loved video games, was very fond of them. The problem was they focused so much on having to be a hacker to be good. Besides, they bored me to tears. None were challenging enough to make it worth my time. Another reason I had no friends. They hated all the hacking that I did, and how I would wipe them out within seconds. Only running and books challenged, made me think, and all the good books were published half a century ago at least.

My sisters came out of nowhere, looking for me. They wanted to see what I was interested in, after all, they had no idea what I was into and were at a loss for as to what to get me. I showed a few of the games that I was questioning, telling them about all the flaws and loopholes within the game that I could foresee and abuse. Then they took me to the computer games, the virtual reality games in particular.

They showed me all the hot games, and time and time again, I would point out all the flaws with the games and how pointless they were. In the end, the two gave up any hope. I honestly didn't care. I knew deep down if I told them what I wanted, they would change it into something they thought I would want, or need for that matter.

Dealing with people was difficult, even frustrating.

Then it was Christmas Eve, and we went up to Detroit for my father's side of the family got together. It was a tradition that started about seventy years ago and it never changed location in those years. Always the same place and the same day. I hated it, I couldn't relate to any of the family, except for my clinically insane grandfather, who knew more about gaming than I did. In fact, he was the only person to challenge me in anything with another being. That was the only reason that I went, so I could disappear with him into the virtual gaming world for some real fun, and some of the only fun I would have in an entire year.

So there we are, inside the house, the girls off with all the other cousins. The annoying uncle that seems to always want to talk to you and get to know you better, even though this is the only time in the year that you will meet comes over to me as I enter the house. For thirty to forty five minutes, we discuss these topics, and how I was dual enrolled in high school and college, and of how I in general was fine, even though I was just plainly bored out of my mind with these simple topics.

Then a voice entered my ear, "Ready for some real fun?"

Looking up, it was my grandfather. He was holding up a new VR game that was gaining some attention. It was only out for beta testers. Forgot to mention, that was what he did for a living, he tested out new video games that were to come out onto the market.

So into his gaming cave did we venture, where all the other children were, playing all different kinds of games. He led me to two beds with helmets connected to them. Strapping into one, I lied down onto the bed and went into the virtual world that he was testing.

It took me into a customizing page where he stood in his outfit. He looked like an elf, but extremely tall.

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"Curious as to what I am? A cross-breed between an elf and a treefolk. A powerful kind in the game. This is Clan Wars, were you join a creature pool or a power type pool, whatever best represents you. The endgame goal is to be the most powerful and remaining clan in the game to conquer the city in the center of it all, Kamalot."

"Sounds cheesy if you ask me." I responded.

"It can, but it is a lot of fun to play. It takes after D and D, and other games like it. But nowadays, the gamers demand working together to complete tasks and all that jazz."

"So what? I just choose what I want to be and then join a clan?"

"Not exactly. You need to take a tutorial in order to understand the game. Have you played any virtual games?"

"Grandpa, I have played plenty to know that I am suited to play the solo as I am a cheater."

"Well, I work with others and I am a beater, so don't give me that load of crap."

"Fine, so what now?"

"Again, what are you good at, what do you like in a avatar."

"Well let's see, it needs to be my size but then transform."

"Good, so a transformer type, they can be some of the more complicated to control, so let me warn you about that."

"Grandpa, I am fine with that. Also want to be fast, as fast as imaginable."

"That is always a plus, especially in this game. Fine, that is your special ability. Most choose to fly however, why speed?"

Think of the battles. A single second could make or break you as a player. The faster you go, the quicker one can react. If one flies, send yourself into the air and reaction in the air can defeat them along with the environment. The look of this world is to have all kinds, with the fly types putting on the most restrictions. With speed, there is only the human condition of tiring. In this world, with plenty of practice, one can endure the longest of battles with well thought out planning and scheming. Thus speed is my vote."

"You thinking of being more of an acrobatic player, right?"

"Yes, so my moves are more fluid. What kind of being will I be is the question."

"Well, there are all kinds. Of course you have removed the bigger ones from your pool of choices."

"Why though, I can transform, correct? So size isn't the matter. It is you mind set grandfather. Our minds are our own prison, and with these games, they try to encourage players to break through this barrier. So, that is why I choose to be this."

I pointed at the figure, that was it. No face, no hands. It was just a figure that was orange with a cool hat. It was a cowboy hat, but with the brim being floppy. It pointed downwards, especially the front. It was split into

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three corners, with only side being slightly pointed upwards. I went to the color pallette, making him red, as that was my favorite color, and everything feel into place. I liked how he looked, then it came to the name.

"You don't get to choose, the machine does it so you can get to the playing quicker, unless you perfer a name, but you only get one shot, and if it is used, it will choose one for you."

"Then it is pointless, for it will choose anyways. Fine, I am done with it."

I then hit complete and entered this new world.

Chapter 3: Dumah is Born

The screen went black. Then an explosion of light rushed past me. A sign said 'Welcome to Clan Wars Dumah! Then I saw my stats, which told me everything about my character. It was a very fast avatar (even by my standards) and used air pressure to fluxuate the air around me to move even faster. I had a thousand ideas running through my head, but then I landed into a desert arena. Grandfather stood in the center in front of me.

"Ready to take it for a test drive? Besides, you look like a robot or an andriod. What is it?"

"I have no identity, other then my name. I am the lone ranger for your information."

"Fine lone wolf, show me your skills."

Then there was a countdown for the showdown. I looked around as many other avatars appeared. I could hear them gasp and squeal with excitement.

"Do you see that?"

"Yeah, its the elf sage."

"Dude, the king of elves is fighting this noob, how is he by the way?"

Things of this nature were being said as well, as more and more filled the stadium.

"Ready, Begin!" The scoreboard annouced, beginning the fight.

Grandfather took a step back and began to chant something. I had to move, and quickly. I jumped up into the air, using my feet to make me fly through the air when I was pushing it out of my way.

Without warning, a tree sprouted out of the dry ground. Then another and another, as I quickly ajusted to the new challenges and moved forward. The crowd was in an uproar with excitement. I got through to a clearing and stopped. The arena was now entirely a forest filled with trees of all diferent hieghts.

I was looking all around, just hovering in the air when a branch wacked me upside the head, then another branch did the same thing. Soon enough, all the branches were doing the same as the entire forest was attacking me.

I reacted by shooting up like a rocket into the open air. The crowd was on its feet at this point, staring at me and pointing.

"Dude, he can move wicked fast!"

"Did you just see what I just saw?"

"Who is this guy?"

Scanning the area, I noticed that there was a really tall tree that seem to be still growing, and it was in the center of all the other trees. Using my right hand (more like a nub with a barrel at the end) I took aim right at it. The face began to clearer and I could see the eyes. Aiming right for dead center inbetween them, I took my shot.

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It went through as an explosion occurred. The tree snapped harshly and began to crumble to the ground. It soon fell over, shrinking in size. The field was then leveled, the audience departing right then, not wanting to be harmed in the wake of such destruction as what I had created.

I had won, and then it was game over as everything went black.

Chapter 4: Hell on Earth 1.0

Looking around, I was back in reality. I took off the helmet to see my grandfather grinning from ear to ear.

"Congrats, you have won the grand prize from me!" He exclaimed.

"What on Earth are you talking about?" I inquired.

"Why, I won the grand tournament for the beta testers. The victor would be allowed to use his avatar that he has already created for the game itself. Since I won this, I could have done such a thing. There was, however a catch. I had to pick the best opponent I could think of to battle me in one last match, and if I were to lose, then that victor would receive this gift. That victor was you, and so now your new avatar is saved for tomorrow, when all the previous avatars will be deleted and will have to use new ones. For me, I think that is more of an advantage for I can begin anew, with ideas of how the game operates and what feels good and what doesn't.

So congrats on your victory and merry christmas to you." He said as he got up. "Oh, by the way, diner is ready."

We joined the rest of the family as they all moved into the dining room that held two tables, one for the adults and one for the kids. I joined my cousins at the later of the two tables while my grandfather went to the other table. They were talking to one another as I joined them, but soon silence fell as they all looked at me in a funny stare.

"So," my older sister stated to break the ice "What did you and grandpa play?"

"Just some virtual game that seemed good enough."

"Oh yeah, well, I bet I can beat you!" She snapped back.

Even though she was older, she was still acting like a child.

"Sure, some other time. We cannot because the game server is now down for the game release."

"What! You played one of the games that grandpa was a beta tester in?" One of the younger cousins asked, their curiosity peaked at this idea.

"Yeah, I did. The game is officially online as of tomorrow though, so it doesn't matter. Besides, why do you care?"

"Because of the fact that we are all worried about you." Another of the younger cousins shot out. She then put her hands to her mouth, regretting to have spoken.

"Ok then, why worry about me then, since you brought it up. Why worry about little old me?"

"Because we all think you are going to become as insane as grandpa."

Shock grabbed hold of me. Did they really think such horrible things about the old man? But surely they much about him. Grandpa can be mad, sure, but aren't we all a little insane?

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Silence fell, and i didn't press anymore. The rest moved on with their own dull topics of choice while I sat eating in white noise.

Chapter 5: Departure from Reality

So the rest of the night went slowly, painfully slow. The others tried to play card games with me, but I got bored and easily beat them within ten minutes each time.

Then it was the gift giving and receiving time. We had a gift exchange, and our grandparents always gave us gifts as well. This year, each one of us got a new game, mine being 'Guild Wars'.

So now I understood what my grandfather had planned, but no shock there really. I could figure that both my sisters and my grandparents had this for my gift. Grandpa with that match and my sisters when they leaned towards this game as if they thought I would enjoy it. They all don't know me. They all try so hard to please me, but the only thing that would please me is the avoidance of the white noise ringing in my ears.

My sisters expressions were priceless as they saw the game. They noticed me staring, but it was too late. My hypothesis was correct.

One by one, from youngest to oldest we then would open our gifts we gave each other. When it was my turn, I opened the present, forcing a smile on my face. You see, I when my parents talk to me that one time a year to figure out what I want before they make a mistake. So I try to struggle with the question of what I want for christmas (even though I do for months ahead of time in order to be prepared, it helps whenever I am bored.) Then I tell them exactly what I want, and they are specific things too, not too general (can't be nice on the family for a single moment.) That is how christmas for me goes.

So I opened the gift to reveal exactly what I had asked for, and more. I got a pair of gaming headphones, and then I also received a headset for virtual games, like the one I had just received.

With all that said and done, telling those who had given me the gifts thanks as a sign of politeness and formality, I was ushered over by my grandfather as the rest of the cousins went back to playing only this time with their new toys. Grandfather looked at me now with sincerity as if he was struggling with something within his head.

"Look," he began. "I know that the other adults worry about how much time you spend with me and all of this other crap about me. I want to let you know that I am not the man that they seem to think or portray me as. I am different than that. All also know another thing. You are bored in life. It is clear, as you have not been challenged. But something in your life is about to begin, an adventure of a life time. One that many would wish for. You have a destiny, and I want to let you know that any choice you make with it is fine with me, for I know you will make the right choice. For now thou, it looks as though we have to depart, but be good. Promise me, you will think of this some more. You don't have to lie, for it is something that is bound to occur in every persons life."

I did promise him, as awkward as the moment was for me. Then again, I was used to this kind of weirdness shown to me from my family. They knew I was different, and that something was in my future that would shape the world. What I didn't know was that it was the virtual worlds that I was destined to change.

But enough on that. We left a little after that talk, and a few months later my grandfather died in the virtual world where he was happiest at.

Chapter 6: The Dive into the Virtual World

I had fallen into some darkness when suddenly someone was jumping on my bed. I jolt up to find my sisters screaming "It's Christmas! It's Christmas!" over and over again. My parents stood by the doorway hugging each other and smiling. I could notice the sign of tiredness in their eyes, they had been up all night putting presents under the tree and cleaning the house in preparations of today.

I rolled out of bed and went to the bathroom to clean up and to force myself to be awake. I was in fact tired myself. It had been a long month of boredom and pain. School was not much fun and it just slowly crept on while my family wasn't much better. They were there to just annoy me, and they were doing a damn good job of it.

Leaving the bathroom and heading to the living room where my family were not waiting for me to join them they had begun the savage opening of present after present. Torn and tattered paper that someone toiled with in order to have another not look at it until now seemed a waste of time, energy, and of trees themselves. We didn't have many trees anymore after the fall of the rainforests. Trees were to be sacred, yet we kill trillions for this holiday devoted to consumerism. It was sickening.

Yet I went over to join them. Afterall, I had to join in on the customs or else be exiled from society myself.

I didn't get anything interesting other than clothes, which was fine with me. I really didn't want anything else. So I was happy and content with what I had recieved. My family didn't pay attention, for they were to obsorbed or imbursed in their own world and life to give a care.

I left the room and headed downstairs where the wash room was to drop of all my new clothes before heading to the kitchen to make myself breakfast. The day before we had picked up bagels and so I popped one into the toaster while the family of mine was still laughing and having a good old time in the living room.

After breakfast and a much needed shower I went and got dressed. Feeling refreshed from all the buzz, I decided to test out the new game that my grandfather had given me, which meant leaving reality behind. Fine with me since so many other gamers would already be online as today was the launch day for the game.

So that was what I did, beginning my journey of awesomeness. One full of adventure and in the end would bless me with so much happiness then at that time it amazes me now as I write this all down.

Chapter 7: The True Adventure Begins

Into the black void that held a white light at the end of it did I dive through, entering the world of infinite possibilities. The game having already my data on it as grandfather had put my avatar information onto it while I was still creating it.

Then there I was. The world was that of a village, more like a bazaar than anything else within a rural city surrounded by a forest. The scenery of it all was something special and magical. The entire world of new possibilities rested before my eyes. And all I could wonder was what I would do first.

So many things to think of when you start a game, how to play, what the goal or pre-set expectation is, and how to accomplish it while taking the easiest but less traveled road for it is the harder one to spot.

And so I walked along, watching the other gamers within the confines of this new world begin their own adventures, each heading to different buildings with signs plastering everywhere. They seemed to have creature types designated on each building, with multitudes coraling to the one that looked to best represent them and their avatars.

I didn't know which one to go to, searching through my information within my menu to only find that the avatar had no creature type as the line was blank, which in itself was odd. In fact, it was uncommon for the game to not recognize what kind of creature I had made the likeness to.

So I continued to wonder the streets to view the sights, which were more or less of people bartering with other characters, trying to buy and sell goods. Those that were selling, that was their job. It was common for the youth (such as teenagers) to run the shops for the companies that made the games and the game creators made a sector dedicated to checking these workers within the game in order to see if they were following protocol and doing as what their job description.

Nothing else changed, as I felt myself running in circles but knowing and understanding that I in fact was still going straight ahead from one end of the city town to the other.

Then without warning, someone grabbed me, dragging me away. Before I could even react a hood was placed over my head, and that is how I began this journey into the virtual world.

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