
Episode 448 – And now it gets creepy

It was a nice apartment, well-lit, spacious and well furnished. A pair of nice, plush leather couches set the scene, arranged in a neat L-shape, with a small coffee table between them. What dominated the room, however, was the massive flat-screen against one wall, so big as to loom over all else around it. By comparison, the broad windows with views out over a strangely futuristic metropolis and the other doorways leading away to gods alone knew where seemed like afterthoughts.

“So I was doing well right up until one of them shot out my bike’s tire,” Dan admitted as he and Rick entered the apartment.

“Ouch,” Rick winced. “What happened then?”

“Well I mean I was moving helluva fast already over rough terrain, so I was thrown off hard,” Dan explained. “Was sent flying and hit the ground hard. Ended up rolling halfway down a hill.”

“Sorry to hear.”

“Naw, it’s all good,” Dan grinned. “Because by the time I’d stopped, I had managed to flop my way across the county line.”

“You are pure class,” Rebecca commented as she and Tsuneo entered. “And yet, I am impressed.”

“It’s what I do,” Dan beamed.

“As opposed to here, where we just mash our faces into terrible fanfic,” Tsuneo noted. “I think I’d rather be falling off the bike.”

“And this one is not going away any time soon,” Rebecca added.

“Yeah, but at least it’s given us something to think about,” Rick spoke up.

“Like what?” Tsuneo asked.

“Last time we discussed the idea of if Ready Player One was a crossover or not,” Rick commented. “And we came to the conclusion that no, it wasn’t.”

“And Rebecca had to exposit on the idea in a very English-lit major way,” Dan added.

“It’s what I do,” she admitted.

“Right, and then we questioned what an actual Ready Player One crossover fanfic would be like,” Rick continued.

“Which is one of those cases of ‘I suppose we should think about it before the Voice throws it at us’,” Tsuneo sighed. “Because it will happen.”

“Think of it as a thought experiment,” Rebecca offered.

“And we need to have a few rules to this as well,” Dan noted. “It has to be an actual crossover, not just throwing more junk into the OASIS.”

“And a functional crossover as well,” Rick nodded. “So not like the vague acknowledgements that we get in our crossover fics.”

“Also, we can’t just cheat and say that it was actually Tron or the Matrix all along,” Rebecca noted.

"Or some other 'trapped in a MMO' media like .hack," Tsuneo added. "Where a creepy programmer built a virtual world to imprison the digital consciousness of the one girl he was obsessed with."

There was a pause. "Moving right along," Rebecca continued.

"Oh, and bonus points if you can call it 'Ready Something One' or some other similar themed title," Rick finished.

"Hm, it's a complex ruleset, but at the same time, it's also a challenge," Tsuneo admitted. "I'm game."

"Same here," Dan agreed.

"Good, because I came up with something already," Rebecca admitted.

"Really?" Dan asked.

"What can I say, the idea was formulating from the word go."

"So what's it about?" Tsuneo asked.

"So I based my idea on the comparative timelines of the setting," Rebecca explained. "Ready Commander One is a crossover with the Command and Conquer series that plays on the post-apocalyptic elements that Ready Player One alluded to but failed to deliver."

"The premise is that the poor, impoverished, starving masses of the RP1 universe are living in the better off parts of the Yellow Zones, where they use the OASIS as an escape from the horrors of their everyday lives; the constant risks of war, famine, contaminated water, mutant attacks or, of course, Tiberium poisoning and the seemingly inevitable extinction of humanity. At the same time, the OASIS is being used by the Brotherhood of Nod as a recruitment ground for new operatives by luring them in through weaponised media, subtle but pervasive propaganda and themed games. While many of these recruits are just there to become cannon fodder foot soldiers, they also are looking for potential battlefield commanders."

"The fic will follow a young Gunter who realises what they are being sucked into, and instead uses that to fight against the Brotherhood and its efforts to manipulate and radicalise its population." She smirked. "Oh, and the final twist is that the OASIS is actually an extension of CABAAL and that its userbase have in fact been used as a way for it to learn and become more powerful and intelligent. Anorak is actually a part of their intelligence and is used as a 'lure' based on cult of personality; something that the Brotherhood specialises in."

"So Halliday was in fact working for the Brotherhood all along?" Tsuneo asked.

"Possibly unknowingly," Rebecca shrugged. "Either way, it would make sense."

"I'll pay it," Rick nodded.

"See, I thought that the OASIS would make a great vehicle to feature purely digital entities," Tsuneo began.

"What, rogue AIs and stuff?" Dan asked. "Didn't that happen in the second book?"

"I mean, obviously not like that," Tsuneo responded with a barely visible shudder. "I was thinking of taking a lighter tone using elements of Digimon, of all things."

"Go on," Rebecca said, intrigued.

"You start with a younger group of OASIS players who encounter actual Digimon in the game. Of course, everyone thinks they're some kind of new gameplay element, like a monster taming side-game and treat them like standard digital assets. But our main characters bond with their own

highly-marketable digital companions and come to learn that they're alive and aware in their own way, separate from the game's architecture. So they come to fight a battle on three fronts; first with players who would exploit the Digimon, second with heartless administrators who'd delete them and thirdly with rogue evil Digimon who are trying to carve out their own OASIS territory but only managing to bring down the wrath of the administration."

"It's a vicious cycle," Rick mused.

"I'm surprised you went for something so kid-oriented," Rebecca added.

Tsuneo shrugged. "I mean, my first thought was to use elements from Serial Experiments Lain, but..."

"Nope," Dan immediately replied.

"Yeah, good call," Rebecca agreed.

"So what do you have for us?" Rick asked Dan.

"Well, I must admit my idea was not like, a pure crossover of characters and stuff, but more of taking ideas from one thing and putting them into the RP1/OASIS setting," Dan admitted.

"Which was?" Rick asked.

"Saints Row, actually."

Tsuneo frowned. "Yeah, I think that falls under the 'no Matrix or Tron' rule."

"No, it's not like the Zin or the Simulation or anything. More of..." Dan pondered for a second. "Think like the new Saints Row, but in virtual space. A bunch of friends know they'll never amount to anything in the real world, so they run scams and crimes in the OASIS to carve out their own territory and make big names for themselves."

"You could even say they're basing themselves of the Saints Row games, because that's totally a Ready Player One thing to do," Rebecca added.

"Right. Only as they get bigger, they start becoming celebrities, as per Saints Row 3. Throw in corporate sponsorship in the OASIS from some minor clothing label, and they start to attract a massive in-game following."

"Which only makes them more powerful," Tsuneo commented.

"Of course there's a question of real-world implications, but they pass it off by saying it's all happening in a game and everything's allowed there, even if their virtual 'crimes' are pushing every boundary they have. Soon enough they're zeroing-out other gang-like clans and taking their stuff, holding a virtual takeover of OASIS turf."

Rebecca smirked. "So it's a sandbox crime game in a real virtual environment."

Dan nodded. "Of course, the whole thing spirals out of control. They use their virtual takings to live it up in real life, which turns into targeting players outside of the OASIS and everything."

"You could almost turn this into a parable for video game violence and taking games too far," Tsuneo said, off-handed. There was a brief moment as they considered the thought, then as one just said "Nah."

"Okay, I have something," Rick spoke up.

"I know I'll regret this," Tsuneo admitted, "But what did you come up with?"

"My fic is called Ready Warlord One," Rick began. "In it, Bobby Patterson has been the Warlord of the Electronic Realm for decades, and is now functionally immortal through permanently living in it. However, while the existence of the OASIS has served to greatly expand his powers, it also has served to revive and revitalise the forces of the Dark Dimension. Now they are using it as a conduit to break through to the Electronic Realm and, through it, threaten the real world."

"In his position as Warlord, Bobby needs to fight back through the games that they use as their invasion routes," Rick explained. "After fighting them alone, he realises that he cannot hold the Dark Dimension back without help. As a result, he has to recruit a team of gunters who will be fighting for their lives in the OASIS with very real consequences for their defeat."

There was a pause. "Rick, I have no idea at all what you just said," Tsuneo finally admitted.

"It's based on Computer Warrior, the long-running strip from the eighties incarnation of Eagle," Rick explained. "Which given that it's all about people playing period video games means that it's a perfect match for Ready Player One,"

"I can't fault that logic," Rebecca nodded. "Which is a pity, because I want to."

"Good morning everyone," the Voice crashed into the conversation.

"And good morning to you too, Foreman 371," Rebecca shot back.

"Nice callback," Rick nodded.

"How do the Scrin factor into your fanfic anyway?" Dan asked.

"That would require there to be a consistent plan and direction for them," she shot back. "So no."

"Fair."

"Is Red Alert a part of your fanfic universe?" Rick added.

"Well that's a complicated question," Rebecca admitted.

"Before we lose this one in the weeds," Tsuneo commented, "What are we covering today?"

"You know what it's going to be, dude," Dan noted. "Why are you even asking?"

"I live in hope," Tsuneo sighed.

"Today we'll be looking at the next two parts of Ready Player One the Adventures of Jack," the Voice confirmed.

"And just like that, all light goes out of the universe," Tsuneo admitted.

"Well that means more inventory action," Rick noted.

"More Halo guns as well," Dan added. "And more reminding us of the name of Jack's spaceship, because we'd forget it if it wasn't mentioned every time it appears."

"And I suppose there's more Easter egg hunting in this chapter," Rick noted.

"There is, yes," the Voice continued. "The hunt for the Easter eggs plot does continued here."

"Easter Egg Hunter," Dan considered as he took his place on the couch. "I'm surprised there isn't some fake future slang for that."

"You know there is, right?" Tsuneo added as he and the others joined him.

"We'll I'll be gunted," Dan admitted as the big screen turn on, converting the world over to script format.

> Chapter Five

> GoldDragonZ: Hey guys, this is the fifth chapter in my Adventures of Jack story. You know what to do. ;)

[Rick gets up and heads for the door]

Rebecca: Come back here. We all have to suffer through this.

Rick: It was worth a shot [He sits]

> The Nebuchadnezzar touched down on the rocky planet.

Dan: It's a planet all about boxing.

> There was nothing surrounding them but

> sandy cliffs and blue sky. The High Five plus Gadanza and Tom

Tsuneo: Also known as the 'I'm helping' brigade.

> took out their best weapons

Dan: I have a butter knife!

Rick: I have a frost-free fridge! [Ding!]

> and checked their surroundings.

Tsuneo: [Tom] Yep, sand. Had to check.

> There seemed to be nothing there to threaten them for the time being.

Rebecca: Unaware that they were all standing on a sandworm

> "Where's Jack?" Art3mis asked Gadanza and Tom.

> "He'll be here." Gadanza said.

Dan: Smash cut to Jack in the real world, fallen off his treadmill and crashed into the family's piano.

> And then they noticed the alien spaceship from Independence Day

Tsuneo: There's got to be a less clumsy name for that thing

Rick: How about if we just call it ASFID?

Tsuneo: I'm not sure that's helping any

> and the TIE Interceptor coming

> down to rest really close to them. Lynx and Tridosk came out of their ships.

Dan: Hey, have they even met Tridosk before?

Tsuneo: Would they remember if they had?

> "You guys saved us." Tridosk said to the High Five and their friends.

Rebecca: Still not sure why, but sure.

> "I admit you guys and shown me at least that you're not completely noobs." Lynx said.

Dan: I mean, you're welcome.

> "But we are in competition with each other. If I see the egg first, I will take it."

Dan: Lynx's entire character right there and then.

> "That's fine, but you can't escape it." Art3mis responded.

Rick: They're gonna be your friends and there's nothing you can do about it.

> "We have your back no matter what. You're an awesome player."

Rebecca [Artemis]: I mean, you're an abusive jackarse who cheats to win and is actively ruining the experience for everyone else, but you're still an awesome player, I guess.

> "Yeah, we don't have to be against each other." Parzival said. "We can see this through."

Rick [Parzival]: And if any of you disagree with me I will sue you into oblivion

> "If you need anything to be fixed, I'm here." Aech said.

Dan: I mean, its the entire reason why we recruited Jack, but that's nice for you no less.

> "I don't know about Lynx, but I think we would be better together." Tridosk said.

Rebecca: [Parzival] Nobody's talking to you, lizard boy.

> "I don't have other people backing me."

Tsuneo: Tridosk has realised that he's alone and unloved in a cruel world.

> "Do what you want," Lynx said. "I'm going now."

> And with that, Lynx turned around and began walking away.

Rebecca: [Artemis] Do you have any idea where you're going?

Dan: [Lynx] Away.

> He took to the air by firing up his leg thrusters.

Rick: He had jet powered rocket pants.

> "I need Ammunition." Tridosk told the High Five. "Do you guys have any to spare?"

Tsuneo: Doesn't Lynx have unlimited ammunition from the Easter Egg?

Rick: Yes.

Tsuneo: Didn't Jack also get unlimited ammunition from the same Easter Egg?

Rick: Yes.

Tsuneo: And didn't Jack then use that to give all his allies huge piles of free ammunition?

Rick: Yes.

Tsuneo: So...

Rick: Yes.

Tsuneo: Ah. Of course. Thought so.

> "Of course." Art3mis said, "What type of gun do you have?"

Dan: An MBA Gyrojet

Rick: Well good luck with that.

> "I have a Beretta 93R." Tridosk answered. "It's the one used-"

> "By Robocop!" Parzival said. "Nice man."

Rebecca: That's Parzival's first actual contribution to the fic and it's amazingly in-character. Also I hate it.

> "Thanks," Tridosk said. "I loved that movie."

Dan: [Tridosk] Joel Kinnaman was great in that one.

Rick: [Parzival] You are dead to me.

> "Okay so I have six 50 round magazines for your weapon." Art3mis told their new ally.

Rebecca [Artemis]: I mean, I can make unlimited ammo. But you only get this much.

> "Tell me if you need more."

> "Thank you so much." Tridosk said.

Tsuneo: And they've immediately treated him better than Lynx ever will.

> Everyone looked into their ammunition of their weapons. And then, they started hearing a loud
> buzzing. They looked up to see a drop ship on approach. It was carrying two jeep-like vehicles.

Rick: A Swindle and a Saguaro.

> The

> ship touched down, and let go the two jeeps that were attached to the back. The ship took off again,

Dan: If self-driving cars worked like this, it would be amazing

> and set down several meters away to give room for the jeeps to start driving. Jack hopped out of the
> cockpit with his assault rifle/shotgun/grenade launcher combination.

Rebecca: It gets stupider every time he mentions it.

> He walked up to the group of players.

> "Hey guys." Jack said. "Who's this?"

Dan: [Pazival] Meet our new miner's canary!

> "Oh yeah, I forgot." Tridosk said.

Rick: And that's Tridosk's character in a nutshell

> "My name in the OASIS is Tridosk. I'm partners with Lynx."

Rebecca: They had a nice, low-key commitment ceremony

> "Where is he?" Jack asked.

> "He went up ahead." Daito said. "He doesn't like working with others."

Rick [Parzival]: Yeah. Imagine if he was some creepy isolated loner who spent all his time hiding from the world while bragging about his moral and intellectual superiority and jacking off. [Pause] What?

> "He tried killing us before." Art3mis told Tridosk and the others.

Tsuneo: That's why we're helping him.

> "He really wants this Easter eggs for himself. What's with the jeeps?"

Dan: Product placement

> "I scanned this world." Jack explained. "It seems to be dead, but there is a metal structure just over
> that ridge there."

Dan: [Jack] Which is why I landed here.

> "That's where Lynx was heading." Shoto said.

Tsuneo: [Shoto] While we've been making sure he got a big head start.

> "Then that's where we should start looking for the next Easter egg." Jack said.

Rick: Jack, master detective

> Parzival, Art3mis, Shoto, Daito and Aech took the first Jeep while Jack, Gadanza, Tridosk and Tom
> took the other one.

Tsuneo: Thank you, Fic. I couldn't have lived without knowing who was in what jeep.

> They drove over a hill and drove quickly passed the dunes and cliffs to either
> side of them. And then they started hearing the sound of battling.

Rick: Oh good. It had been whole minutes since we had random gunfire. I was starting to get worried.

> Someone was firing a weapon at enemies that were screeching and snarling.

Dan: I ask you, are Rotarians meant to behave like that?

> The jeeps came around a corner and they could see
> Lynx hovering in the sky, shooting down at the entrance of the metal structure. Alien bugs were at
> the entrance,

Dan: Starship Troopers it is.

Rick: You know what? I would legitimately watch Neil Patrick Harris as an evil Coalition Psi-Corps officer

Dan: You know what? Me too.

> crawling over the dead, trying to jump and grab Lynx, who continued firing at them.

Tsuneo: Huh. Maybe some anti-air defences on your secret tomb next time.

> Everyone piled out of their jeeps and started firing their weapons into the group of insects.

Rick: Entomology badges for everyone!

> Jack
> launched grenades which exploded, sending blood and entrails everywhere. Lynx pulled out missile
> launchers and began firing rockets that could take out tanks.

Rebecca: So the alien bugs have tanks.

Tsuneo: I guess so.

> The alien creatures ran in different
> directions, as some burned. Tom took out his Ghost Rider Motorcycle

Rick: Making you wonder why he didn't ride that here in the first place.

> and started driving around the
> area, shooting various aliens with a Mac-10 in his right hand. His flaming wheels burnt aliens alive
> as he ran several over.

Dan: And Gadanza did... something. Nobody cared, really.

> Jack activated his jetpack and flew to Art3mis who was back to back with Parzival.

Dan: Artemis denied she was using Jack during their rough patch, and stated that they were just friends.

> "We need to get to the structure." He pleaded.

Dan: The one with the giant bugs pouring out of it? Why would you do that?

Rick: Because it's literally the only feature on this planet.

> "Give me your hands guys!"

> Jack stowed his weapon on the back of his jet pack

Rick: Along with his tennis shoes, his two-pound bowling ball and his lucky glow in the dark snorkel.

> and grabbed Art3mis and Parzival, flying above the hoard of insects that snapped up at them.

> "Yo Bro!" Jack screamed.

> "Dude I'm like standing right beside you." Tankor said.

Rebecca: Jack was used to ignoring his siblings

> They usually played in the same room because it had enough space for them to run on the tracks
> that went different directions in the real world.

Dan: It took them a while and a lot of collisions to get it working.

> "Can you guys come meet us here at this world that I am on?" Jack asked.

Rick: Playing together in the OASIS was what passed for family time with them

> "No can do, big bro." Tankor said. "As soon as you and your friends landed on it, it disappeared.

Tsuneo: Contributing to the vast, vast resources wasted on a one-time event for a ridiculously limited number of players.

> Whoever designed it only wants the three people who received the Easter eggs to be there.

Rebecca: Please ignore all the other people currently there

> The rest of us can't know what you are up against."

Rick: They don't want anyone to know how cheap the reused assets are.

> "Shit." Jack swore. "Alright, fine. I'll tell you about it after we win."

Tsuneo: Jack had long ago realised that nobody cared about his livestreams

> Jack looked through his inventory and pulled out a bubble shield.

Tsuneo: If he doesn't specify where it's from, I'm going to assume it's a Halo shield.

Rebecca: That's probably a good policy going forwards.

> He went to the entrance of the structure, touched down, and activated the shield.

> "Artemis." Jack said. "Can you operate a mini-gun?"

Dan: [Artemis] Don't know what you're talking about.

Rick: [Jack] Sorry, I meant can you operate the Heavy's mini-gun from Team Fortress 2?

Dan: [Artemis] Oh, definitely.

> "Yeah, but what good is that?" She asked.

Dan: Yeah, what good is a weapon that spits out a storm of bullets at an incredibly fast rate?

Rick: I have no idea

> "You can keep those bugs out while I get to the Easter egg.

Tsuneo: [Artemis] Hey, I'm in this race too you know.

Rebecca: [Jack] I mean yes, but also no.

> Whatever I win, I will share with everyone."

> "What if it's not for everyone?" Parzival asked skeptically.

Rick: Like literally every other part of this challenge.

> "We need backup." Jack said,

Rebecca: Deliberately avoiding the question.

> leaving the two players to find the rest of their group.

Tsuneo: We need backup he said as he left them behind

> The shield seemed to be holding for now. Jack found that the other players were on the high
> ground,

Rick: Along with Obi-Wan Kenobi.

> shooting their weapons to the closest aliens. Tom was driving around, shooting and running
> aliens over.

Dan: Quick reminder that somehow, Tom exists. [Pause] Now back to the story.

> "Guys, get to that structure over there with the Bubble shield." Jack told his allies. "Computer,
> launch weak missiles on the aliens that we are facing."

Tsuneo: Try to stop them, but don't make too much effort.

> The Tensa Zangetsu acknowledged Jack's request, and as he and his allies made it to the
> structure, missiles rained down on the spider like beasts that were trying to kill them.

Dan: It was a light rain of fiery death

> They made it behind the bubble shield just in time as fire roasted all of the aliens.

Rick: In short, aaah, boom.

> In the meantime, Art3mis was firing at the aliens using the mini-gun that Jack had given her.

Dan: I'm sure Artemis has a perfectly fine mini-gun of her own.

> Parzival was using an assault rifle of his own to cover his friends

Rebecca: Or rather, toadies.

> as they made their approach to the structure. They all made it to the shield.

> "Get in there." Art3mis said to Jack. "You need to see what Lynx is doing."

Dan: Lynx won the egg five minutes ago.

> "Roger that." Jack said as he went into the inner chamber.

> "You should go there as well, Artemis." Shoto said. "We will cover you with whatever weapons we
> have."

Rick: [Shoto] I've got a Banana Launcher from Plants vs Zombies, so I'm not sure how much help I'll be.

> "I'm going in as well." Tridosk said. "Lynx is my friend

Tsuneo: Is he? Is he really?

> and he might need me."

Rebecca: No Tridosk, Lynx will never need you.

> "Alright let's go." Jack said.

> Art3mis gave Parzival the mini-gun and gave him 500 bullets.

Dan: Well that should last him whole seconds

> Art3mis, Jack and Tridosk made their way deeper into the structure.

Rebecca: They sent Tridosk in first in case there were hidden traps.

> They could hear battle going on in the chamber itself. Lynx was firing his mini-gun

Tsuneo: This chapter was brought to you by mini-guns.

Rick: Mini-guns. The official sidearm of the former governor of Minnesota.

> at a creature that had many limbs that resembled scythes.

Rebecca: It had a nonspecific number of limbs

> It screeched in frustration as it tried attacking him. The chamber itself was really small.

Dan: You'd think the multi-armed creature would have an advantage in tight quarters over the guy with the huge, unwieldy weapon.

> Jack aimed his grenade launcher/assault rifle/shotgun

Tsuneo: I'm surprised that he hasn't specified what weapon it is. I'm also kind of happy too.

> at the creature and launched a grenade at it. Art3mis pulled out a grenade launcher
> and shot it at the creature.

Rick: Grenades it is.

> Tridosk fired his Robocop handgun at the creature as well.

Dan: You mean his Beretta 93R?

Tsuneo: The Beretta 93R that they've identified by name every other time they've mentioned it?

Dan: That Beretta 93R.

> Lynx pulled out Tank missiles and shot several at the creature as well.

Rebecca: Yep, lots of high explosive weapons in a tightly confined space.

> Its legs were blown off its body. It

> screeched as the Easter egg hunters continued firing at it, killing it.

Tsuneo: Well, they certainly needed unlimited ammo and faster vehicles for that

Rebecca: Oh yes. It made all the difference.

> "What the fuck are you guys doing here?" Lynx seethed. "I had it."

Dan: [Lynx] Please ignore the numerous gaping wounds.

> "We're here for the Easter egg." Jack told him. "We are here to claim it, same as you. To be honest,

> I bend the rules, like how you do it.

Dan: Jack also believes that business should be free from government oversight and that he should be allowed to own as many guns as he wants.

> I'm not going to claim that I am better than you,

Rick [Jack]: But I am

> but there are people who are better than us.

Rick: [Jack] Like Soyuz Granny.

> They follow the rules."

> "So what?" Lynx scoffed. "I'm not going to stop what I'm doing."

Rick: And Artemis takes that confession straight to the board.

> "As part of the High Five, and the winners of the Easter egg," Art3mis chimed in, "We have the

> ability to strip you of your profile on the OASIS server.

Rebecca: Which again makes you wonder why they didn't do that earlier.

> Either work with us, or we'll delete you."

Tsuneo: Yes, holding a virtual gun to somebody's head is a great way to get them to cooperate

> "You guys are all full of shit." Lynx told them.

Dan: And there goes the banhammer.

> "Fine, I'll share the egg."

> Lynx landed close to the creature which was smoking from several charred parts of its body and
> bullet holes.

Dan: It's a hard life being a roadblock miniboss.

> They went deeper into the chamber and found a room to the back of it. Inside was the
> final Easter egg. Anorak was not there. A massive creature was holding the egg. The creature
> looked like a huge spider-like creature similar to the creatures that they had all fought outside the
> structure.

Dan: Which looked like?

Rick: Like this creature, obviously.

Dan: Obviously.

> "Hold on Lynx." Jack said. "Something's not right."

> "Yeah, you're here." Lynx said as he walked right over to the egg.

Rebecca: Something's not right, he says about the challenge that's exactly like the last two challenges.

> And then the floor opened up beneath him. Lynx was experienced and was expecting something to
> happen, so he activated the repulsors in his boots and flew up into the chamber.

Tsuneo: So to overcome the final puzzle, you need...

Rick: One of the innumerable methods of flight that have already been demonstrated.

Tsuneo: Ah, yes. Truly a test of the greatest of players.

> Tridosk was left at the entrance to the chamber

Tsuneo [Tridosk]: No, I'm fine here. I can take care of myself, I guess.

> as Jack offered Art3mis his hand.

Rebecca: I am foreseeing a fedora tilt in his future.

> He flew up using a jet pack, and he
> swung Art3mis around. In the meanwhile, Lynx went for the Easter egg.

Tsuneo: They hit in the middle and plunged down the bottomless pit. The end.

> Art3mis shot passed him
> and slammed into the creature. She grabbed the egg at the same time Lynx reached for it. They
> both grabbed and held on as the creature that was holding the egg came to life.

Rebecca: Jack, for his part, hovered in space and stared blankly.

> It shrugged them
> off. Art3mis grabbed hold of Lynx so that she would not fall to her death. Jack came up beside
> them.

> "You seek the egg?" The creature asked.

Tsuneo: No, we were just geocaching.

> "You must answer these questions.

Tsuneo: Surprise, it's pub trivia.

> What was the movie
> where two friends created a woman of their dreams using a ritual that does not really exist?

Rick: Uh... The Tinder Swindler! Saving Private Ryan! The Incredibly Mixed Up Creatures who Stopped Living and Became Strange Zombies! Am I close?

> Why would this be important?"

Dan: Jack immediately blurted out something about Bleach.

> "The movie is probably Weird Science." Art3mis began. "The woman would represent the OASIS.
> The two friends would be Morrow and Halliday. This was their dream. Like all women, this may have
> driven them apart."

Rebecca: Like all women, huh?

> "You are right." The creature said. "You three have successfully retrieved the final Easter egg."

Tsuneo: Wait, that was it?

Rebecca: Well, its authentic to the source material... in as far as it's a question any idiot could answer.

> "I found it first." Lynx said. "It should be mine."

> "I answered the questions." Art3mis said. "It should be mine."

> "Where is Anorak?" Jack asked the creature. "Maybe he can decide who wins the egg?"

> "You three have successfully defeated every obstacle to get to the egg."

Tsuneo: Every inconsequential, challenge-free obstacle

> The creature said in a voice that sounded like two glass bottles rubbing against each other.

Rebecca: Nobody could hear it, as they were all clutching their ears in pain.

> "Therefore all three of you may

> have the egg. This had little to do with Anorak and belongs solely to the OASIS.

Rick: Instead of being made by the creepy weirdo, it was made by the game itself. If anything, that is even worse

> The first Easter

> egg, you won unlimited ammunition. With the second egg, you won a boost of speed for all of your
> vehicles.

Dan: [Jack] Still don't know how that helped.

Rick: [Creature] I am speaking!

> The final egg is eternal life. Like Anorak, your three Avatars will live on in the OASIS.

Rebecca: So did it just upload their consciousness? Will their avatars somehow exist separately from them? With they continue to exist and function after their real world deaths? You can't just dump that on us and not explain it, fic.

> Plus as an added bonus, you and your vehicles will no longer receive damage by other players.

Dan: There you go. Their avatars will live on because their vehicles can't be damaged.

Rebecca: I did ask.

> There is one more challenge, however. "

> "What's that?" Jack asked.

Rick: You must defeat the creature in a game of Hungry Hungry Hippos.

Tsuneo: Yeah sure, why not? Makes as much sense as anything else around here.

> "You have to try and get the egg from me."

Dan: So it turned into a game of keepaway

> The creature said, and with that it started crawling on the wall of the chamber.

Tsuneo: Of course it's just going to keep coming up with more and more challenges.

Rick: Come on, it's a guardian creature in a hidden area. It gets so lonely.

> Lynx opened up by shooting his mini-gun at the creature, not caring if he destroyed the egg of
> anything else for that matter.

Dan: Lynx was a moron

> By Lynx shooting, he had shrugged Art3mis off of his body. Jack
> swooped down and grabbed her, pulling her up close to his body.

Rick: He was getting funny feelings in his microfiber crotch inlay.

> The creature placed the egg into its mouth

Dan: [Creature] Oh man, why didn't I try this before? This thing's delicious!

> and started spouting web from the bottom of its body.

Tsuneo: Spider creature has a web attack. I am amazed.

> It tried wrapping up Lynx as he was the only being trying to fight her at the moment.

Dan: [Jack] You go Lynx!

Rebecca: [Artemis] Yeah, we're rooting for you!

> "Artemis." Jack said into her ear. "On the count of three, I'm going to swing you onto the creature.

> Can you get my sword, or any other weapon that can kill it?"

> "You mean like a knife or something?" She asked.

Tsuneo: Yes, a knife is in the subset of 'any other weapon'.

> "Yeah," Jack replied. "You need something that can kill it or knock it out."

Rebecca: And when she got out her nuclear launcher, Jack wished he'd been a little more specific.

> "Got it," Art3mis said as she got ready and pulled out a device; a laser sword from the Halo
> franchise.

Dan: Oh good. We hadn't mentioned Halo in whole pages. I was getting worried.

> Jack waited until the spider-like being was fully involved with Lynx

Rebecca: It had gotten down on one knee and proposed to him.

> and then he flung Art3mis at it.

Tsuneo: Not for the first time, Artemis wondered why she didn't have her own jetpack.

> At the last minute, Art3mis activated the sword and plunged it into the body of the creature. The
> creature squealed and Art3mis pulled the egg from its maw.

Rick: Good news is you won; bad news is it's covered in spider slobber.

> The three players had worked well together,

Dan: Well, Jack had done all the work while Lynx farted around in the background

> and as such, the egg started floating away from Art3mis' grasp. It turned into three eggs,
> and floated to each of the three players. Now, the challenge was complete.

Rick: But there's still a bonus round if you like?

Tsuneo: No!

> Jack, Art3mis and Lynx
> had won the Easter eggs and received Unlimited Ammunition, Increase Speed for their Vehicles,
> and Immortality in the OASIS.

Tsuneo: Maybe you should lead with that third point.

> They exited the chamber with Tridosk in tow.

Dan [Tridosk]: Hey guys! Did you miss me?

> They met their friends
> at the entrance to the chamber. The bubble shield was still erected. Also, it seemed that as soon as
> they retrieved the egg, the creatures outside the structure dissolved into nothing.

Rick: Almost like the author needed to hastily wrap up a hanging plot point or something.

> "How did it go?" Aech asked Art3mis, Jack, and Lynx.

> "We won the eggs." Art3mis replied. "We won immortality. We will be like Anorak in the OASIS,

Rebecca [Artemis] And frankly, that scares me a little bit.

> and
> probably will represent different Easter eggs that will be made available in the future, or at least I
> think that's how it will work.

Rebecca [Artemis]: Truth is, I have nothing.

> No one can kill us either."

Tsuneo: [Jack] I cannot wait to abuse my power over every other player.

> "Was it Halliday who created these new Easter eggs?" Parzival asked.

> "I'm not sure." Jack said. "It could be his partner."

> "Easter eggs like these are probably common place within video games." Lynx said.

Rebecca: Yes, Easter eggs that turn you into immortal digital gods are common.

> "It doesn't matter who designed it, I will be the one to retrieve them all."

Dan: Yeah, and you just did.

Rick [Lynx]: Oh.

[Pause]

Rick [Lynx]: So, un, now what am I meant to do with my life?

> With that, Lynx pulled out his alien spaceship from Independence Day and beckoned Tridosk to follow him.

> "It was awesome playing with you guys." Tridosk said as he pulled out his TIE Interceptor.

Dan: [Tom] It totally was not.

> The two players took off from the world.

> "Okay so we helped you win." Tom said.

Dan: No you didn't. At best all you did was drive around in the background.

> "I think you owe us something."

> "How does that work?" Aech asked. "Jack got the Easter egg as well."

> "Then think of this as a favour." Gadanza said. "We'll be part of your clan, and we'll win you more money to buy things with if you do this for us."

Tsuneo: Again, the bosses of the entire OASIS. What are they getting out of hanging around with a bunch of literal nobodies?

Rebecca: Jack can fix things, remember.

Tsuneo: Of course, how could I forget.

> "What do you have in mind?" Parzival asked.

> "Our friend in the Real World does not have an OASIS Console." Jack added. "We want him to play with us."

Dan: You remember, the guy we hinged our cooperation on for some reason?

> If I give you my eggs, would you give us a console?

Tsuneo: [Parzival] So, let me get this straight.

Rick: [Jack] Yes?

Tsuneo: [Parzival] You want to give me your Easter Eggs. The ones that, beyond being demonstrations of a completely unique challenge in the game that literally nobody else can ever accomplish, give their owner completely unfair advantages over all other players in the game?

Rick: [Jack] Absolutely.

Tsuneo: [Parzival] In return for which, you want us to buy a commonly available console to let your friend play a game that he's expressed absolutely no interest in whatsoever?

Rick: [Jack] That's right.

Tsuneo: [Parzival] You sir have a deal.

Rick: [Jack] Heh, sucker.

> Parzival's eyes widened as he heard Jack's proposition.

> "It's tempting, but you won the eggs fair and square." Aech said.

Rick: Immediately crushing Parzival's dreams.

> "But, it might be possible for you to

> share the eggs with us in the same way Parzival did with the egg that Halliday had left us to find.

Rebecca: Technically he didn't share the Egg. He just shared the wealth and responsibilities that he won through it.

Tsuneo: Wait, you're nitpicking Ready Player One plot points?

Rebecca: Yes, and I hate it.

> I'm going to analyze Artemis' eggs and let you know."

> "Okay, so I'll be back online tomorrow." Jack replied. "I'll see you guys then."

Tsuneo: And so we've just finished the fic's story.

Rick: And yet we're still less than halfway in. In fact, we're only about halfway through this chapter.

Tsuneo: That is worrying

> Mark Patel pulled off his headset, and squeezed the bridge of his nose. It had been a long day
> going to school and then playing on the OASIS. He needed a break.

Rebecca: He needed a break from his newfound godhood.

> He looked beside him and saw

> that his brother Rodney was sitting on their couch with his OASIS headset on his face. He was
> talking to someone.

Rick: As in, anyone but Mark.

> Mark decided to turn off his console and head into the kitchen for something to
> eat. He saw that his sister was home.

Dan: If he'd stayed in there any longer she would have started sharpie-ing up his face.

> "Hey Mark." She said.

> "Hey Alex." He responded. "How was school?"

Rebecca: [Alexandra] I shanked a bitch who wouldn't step down. So, pretty normal.

> "It was good." She replied. "We learned about the HMS Bounty and the mutiny that happened on
> the ship."

Rick: All Jack wants to know is what guns everyone used and if they had grenade launchers and shotguns attached

> "I remember reading that book." Mark said. "It was good."

> "Yeah, we have a book report to do on that book." She said.

Rebecca: That very specific history textbook that covered only that one subject.

> "It's due Monday."

> "If you need help, just ask." Mark said.

Rebecca: She would, but she wants to pass.

> "No I'm good." She replied.

Tsuneo: This has been a crude simulation of human interaction

> Alexandra and Mark ate together, and then Rodney came into the kitchen almost as they finished.

Dan: They polished off Rodney's share while they were waiting. Rodney gets the scrapings.

> They made coffee or tea for each other and sat down together to talk to each other.

Rick: Although Rodney did cut off Mark's ramble about his favourite Halo weapons.

> Parzival and the rest of the High Five were right; everyone needed to live in the real world.

Rebecca: Which is why he uploaded the collective consciousness of all humanity without their knowledge and shot them into space

> Mark and his family knew

> this, so they enjoyed spending time with each other and not be on the OASIS all the time.

Dan: When they weren't in the OASIS, they liked to talk about what they did in the OASIS.

> As they finished, they went to do their homework.

Rick: Good thing their parents don't have a 'no OASIS until homework is done' rule.

Tsuneo: Actually their parents seem to be more assumed to exist than anything else

Rick: I was beginning to wonder myself.

> Vladislav ripped his headset off his face, swearing in Russian. Three people had achieved the
> impossible.

Dan: They'd made a successful Amazon game

> They had achieved the Easter eggs that were hidden from other players.

Tsuneo: In case you'd missed the entire fic so far, here it is again.

> Vlad was happy that he had achieved it, but he had wanted to be the only person to achieve the
eggs.

Rick: Well, nothing to do but track them down and kill them in their sleep.

> He had to share what he had with Tridosk/Lewis Rogers because Lewis was his best friend,

Rebecca: For very generous definitions of 'friend'

> but as for the

> High Five and the other allies including Jack; he wanted nothing more than to crush them.

Dan: Maybe kill Tom a few times, it's a regular thing.

> Now that

> Jack and Art3mis had the Easter egg of Immortality, there would be no way he could threaten them.

Tsuneo: It's almost like they had taken all the challenge out of the world or something.

> He could threaten their friends, however. Maybe that was the key. Threaten their friends if they did
> not give up their eggs to him.

Dan: Yes, threaten the people who run the OASIS through the OASIS. This seems like a smart plan.

> He needed to think this over; would they even want to meet him again after what had happened?

Rebecca: Given that he'd been an entirely hostile jackarse every step of the way? Probably not.

> Whatever the case, he needed to think it over. He turned off his console

> and walked over to his bed, and fell down onto the soft mattress. He picked up his cellphone and

> set the alarm

Rick: He has to wake up in half an hour to get to his job. Goods and services won't drive themselves through the leather-clad booster gang-infested wastelands

> and then drifted into peaceful oblivion.

Rick: You go to snooze now

> Jack was online again later that night.

Tsuneo: He'd spent an hour with his family and was getting withdrawal symptoms.

> He walked through the Tensa Zangetsu and entered the Vault.

Dan: He was immediately attacked by a guy called Gary.

> This was where he kept his most prized positions in the OASIS.

Rick: Including his collection of Team Fortress 2 hats and his Junkie's Pool Cue.

> He made his way past

> shelves of items that he collected. He had a Dragon Shaped Jade-Coloured statue that when used

> created a shield over the entire ship.

Tsuneo: As opposed to the approximately six dozen other shields he had.

> It was inactive.

Rebecca: He'd forgotten to change the batteries.

> He passed several suits of armour that he had used in the past.

Rick: He'd spent a fortune on DLC equipment packs that he never used.

> None of them were up to the standard that his current suit possessed but were

> meant to be a reminder of adventures that he had with his friends.

Dan: He remembered all the times he'd pushed them down so he could walk off with all the loot. It was great.

> He passed other items that were collectibles. There were statues,

Rebecca: Look! The Winged Victory of Samthrace!

> spells locked up in boxes,

Rick: Even a fart in a jar

> and even weapons. In the middle of the ship was a special table.

Rebecca: On it was placed his most precious relic; a copy of the Star Wars Holliday Special

> Jack had won the first key for the first Easter egg when Halliday had died

> and let the whole world know about it.

Rick: He'd never got the second one, however. Each time he tried, Maggie Simpson killed him with an axe

> He had saved the table for the Easter egg, and now had three to put on it.

Dan: Handy that. If this hadn't come along, he would have had to use it for Beanie Babies.

> He sighed. He was now the most complete player in the OASIS. He had a ship

> filled with items, unlimited ammunition, a boost in vehicle speed, and now immortality.

Tsuneo: And yet, he felt empty on the inside.

- > He made his
- > way back to the bridge of his ship and sat on the Captain's chair. He put in special coordinates

Dan: Special coordinates?

Rick: He needs to use the bog.

Dan: Yeah, but special coordinates?

Rick: Look, there's this one bog on the Star Trek planet that he's really fond of. Don't judge him.

- > and
- > the ship's thrusters came online. All systems were green for GO. He entered a new world that held
- > the random Chat rooms that needed special codes to get in.

Rick: And so he teleported into the American Girl collectors club

- > The Tensa Zangetsu came close to one in particular.

Dan: Odds are it's full of Bronies anyway.

- > Aech's chat room was there, and Jack made
- > his way to the main hangar and found that his robot crew were almost finished repairing his X-wing.

Rick: My takeaway from this process is that the OASIS is mostly time sinks.

- > However, it was not finished yet.

Tsuneo: It was almost finished, but it was not finished yet

- > He needed to fly down to the chat room. He looked around and saw another ship that he could use.

Rebecca: Turns out that Jack, who apparently owns everything in the game, owns something else in the game.

- > He saw a spaceship that he had won in a game of chance.

Rick: The obligatory game of Sabbac.

- > It
- > was a one person craft called the BTA Fighter from the film Enemy Mine which was released in
- > 1985.

Rebecca: Thank you for that, Wikipedia

Tsuneo: Truth being told, I'm just shocked that anyone remembers that Enemy Mine was a thing.

- > Jack hopped in and fired it up. He liked this craft because it was pretty quick.

Rick: It was his favourite vehicle that involved Louis Gosset Jr that wasn't stock footage of an F-16.

- > He had modified
- > it and took away its weapons. It only had a shield program that deflected energy bolts, bullets, and
- > flames that other players might shoot at it.

Rick: But not bagels.

Tsuneo: What?

Rick: I noticed that he listed specific things that his shield deflected, rather than just saying it deflected everything.

Tsuneo: So?

Rick: So it must only block specific attacks, and thus you could get through it by using certain projectiles. Like bagels.

Tsuneo: But why would you fire bagels at a spaceship?

Rick: Because it doesn't have an anti-bagel shield.

[Pause]

Tsuneo: You know what, that makes perfect sense to me.

> With the boost in speed from the Easter egg that he won,
> it was the perfect ship to go to and from certain places just like Aech's chat room.

Tsuneo: Aech's chat room that he could just teleport into?

Rebecca: Jack likes to make things as overcomplicated as possible

> He landed the ship outside the entrance to the chat room. He disembarked from the ship and he
> knocked on the door. Aech answered it.

Tsuneo: Jack goes to a chat room!

> "Hey Jack." Aech said. "Welcome to my chat room, The Basement, or as some people call it, the
> Garage."

Dan: The basement is on an upper floor of the garage. It's complicated.

> "Thanks Aech." Jack said. "Any luck analyzing the Easter eggs?"

Rick: They appear to be made of chocolate and are wrapped in foil.

> "The coding for the eggs is really specific."

Rebecca: There's a lot of nested 'else-if' statements and way too many dev notes.

> Aech said as she ushered Jack into the chat room. "I've
> been analyzing it for some time now and cannot find any way to share the eggs this time.

Rebecca: [Aech] Also, am I a programmer now or something?

> It seems
> only you, Artemis and Lynx have the abilities that the eggs grant. No one else can have them."

Dan: [Aech] And I totally didn't clone them already and not tell you.

> "Well that sucks." Jack said. "I was hoping that we could share the eggs with our friends."

Tsuneo: You are a dirty, dirty liar, Jack.

> "You can drive vehicles with them, you can give them ammunition, but I don't know how immortality
> will work out for you."

Rick [Aech]: Truth being told, I'm kind of terrified by the idea.

> "Thanks Aech. Where's the rest of the High Five?"

> "Parzival and Artemis are spending time with each other off of the OASIS.

Dan: Them and their stupid romantic entanglement and desire for intimacy. The nerve of some people.

> Shoto and Daito are off playing somewhere else.

Tsuneo: Doing whatever is the most stereotypically Japanese thing they can think of

> Why?"

> "No reason, I just thought they would be here."

Rick: Jack struggles to grasp that other people have their own lives.

> "Parzival and Artemis love each other. They would rather spend time with each other than spend
> their time in here."

Rebecca: Jack just stares blankly at the idea

> "Oh okay. I wish I could find someone like that."

Rick: Aech is suddenly glad that Jack doesn't know she's a woman in real life.

> "Maybe you will."

Tsuneo: [Aech] Somewhere far away from here.

> I think it might be time to expand our clan.

Dan: Rapidly changing the subject

> Would you and your friends like to be part of our clan?"

Rick: Bearing in mind that they need to know how many of them want to join so they can figure out the new name. The 'High Eight or possibly Nine' doesn't have the same ring to it.

> "I would like to, but I'm not sure about the rest of my friends."

Rebecca: [Jack] I mean, I know Tom would kill his own mother for the chance to lick your shoes, but I'm still not sure.

> I'm going to have to talk to them about it."

> "Of course, take your time."

Rebecca: Three years later they were still thinking it through.

> "Alright. So do you need help with anything?"

Tsuneo: The sort of help he needs requires a trained therapist.

> "No I'm fine. Now about the console for your friend; I believe we can send one to his house."

Dan: Aech is moderately sure that parcel delivery exists, but is not entirely convinced.

Rick: Didn't Aech live in a postal van?

Dan: Her life is complicated.

> "Really? I would really appreciate it."

> "No worries."

Rebecca: But our deal didn't include shipping.

> With that, Jack gave Aech Justin's address in the real world

Rick: [Aech] You got his permission for this, right?

Dan: [Jack] Huh? Yeah sure, whatever.

- > so that Aech and the High Five could
- > send him a console for the OASIS. Justin Rihaz would be receiving an opportunity to join the
- > OASIS. Jack could not be happier.

Rebecca: Justin's personal wishes apparently didn't matter.

- > Mark, Tom, and John met at Justin's house a few days later. They had learned that the High Five
- > sent Justin a console with the Headset.

Tsuneo: His parents immediately threw them out.

- > He had found the package on his doorstep and quickly
- > called his friends to celebrate. He was reluctant to be sure but he had to admit that he could not wait
- > to play with his friends.

Tsuneo: Can you imagine how Justin's first day on the OASIS must have gone?

Rick [Justin]: Hey guys, there's a hot girl in my area who wants to send me nudes.

Dan [Jack]: No! Don't click on it!

Rick [Justin]: Oh. Hey, the Prince of Nigeria is in trouble and needs my help...

Dan [Jack]: That's a scam! Delete that message!

Rick [Justin]: Right. Uh... hey, I've got a package from Amazon, but they need my bank details and-

Dan [Jack]: No! Don't give them anything.

Rick [Justin]: But the OASIS is going to shut down my account if I don't give them my password-

Dan [Jack]: That's another scam!

Rick [Justin]: Oh ah... I think my OASIS has a virus.

Dan [Jack]: What did you do?

Rick [Justin]: All I did was log onto a bunch of Russian porn sites.

Dan [Jack]: This was a mistake.

- > He had to make his own Avatar to join the game. He started by selecting the
- > type of Avatar he wanted to play as.

Rebecca: So he chose to be an Equestria Girl.

Tsuneo [Jack]: What have we done?

- > He chose to play as a six feet, five inches tall Caucasian male
- > with shoulder length dark brown hair and a scruffy beard.

Dan: He just used the first default preset he came across, didn't he?

- > He wore black boots, chain mail, black pants, and a green shirt over his chain mail.

Dan: All black outfit with a single muted colour.

Rebecca: He'll fit in perfectly.

- > He also chose a long sword as his primary melee
- > weapon. He chose an M14 as his primary weapon.

Rick: Jack wouldn't acknowledge him until he had an entire arsenal strapped to his back.

- > Now he needed to compete in different games
- > to collect coins to buy more items and level up. He chose the name Arathorn, Son of Anamon.

Dan: Son of Prozen, son of Prozen.

Rick: Deep cut.

- > Mark gave Justin the coordinates for his ship Tensa Zangetsu and the code to enter into it.

Dan: [Justin] So how do I –
Rebecca: [Jack] Just use your ship.
Dan: [Justin] I don't have a –
Rebecca: [Jack] Look, I'll lend you one.
Dan: [Justin] I don't know how to –
Rebecca: [Jack] Oh, forget it.

> Mark allowed Justin access to his vehicles so that he could race to earn coins.

Tsuneo: He crashed them all in short order.

> He allowed him access to
> weapons as well. There were also maps to different places in the OASIS.

Rebecca: He had access to all the skeeziest online casinos

> He could go dancing. He could play different games.

Rick: So he spent all his time playing Poggle.

> He could talk to people who lived in other countries.

Dan: He soon had a Canadian girlfriend

> He could learn other languages from teachers who were online.

Rebecca: Because you can't learn other languages any other way

> It was overwhelming.

Tsuneo: His head actually exploded.

> He could do everything and anything. It was like being on the internet.

Dan: Yes, being on the internet was like being on the internet.

> He input his credentials such as his driver's licence, and his student identification.

Rebecca: As well as his credit card, Social Security number, date of birth and mother's maiden name

> The OASIS opened up different applications that he could access
> according to his age and what people his age was accessing.

Dan: I can imagine that the first thing anyone does on they OASIS when they turn eighteen is go to online brothels

> He was the oldest of the group and
> was eighteen years old since his birthday was in January and it was April currently.

Rick: The rest of them use Justin to buy beer.

> The rest of his friends were seventeen years old and had birthdays in the summer and fall.

Rebecca: Thank you for that pointless detail.

> "Thank you guys so much." Justin told his friends. "We'll be great together."

Dan: Justin lost all Jack's guns and vehicles in his first deathmatch.

> "I have something else to tell you guys." Mark said. "I gave it some thought and was wondering if we
> could become a clan.

Rebecca: [Tom] Wait, we're not? We've been missing out on all those sweet group perks?

Dan: [Jack] I mean, we are but we just didn't invite you.

> Maybe even join the High Five."

Rick: Up until this point they'd merely been a bunch of guys who stood next to each other.

> "Would they want to?" John asked.

> "We worked well together to get the Easter eggs." Mark said. "I don't see why they wouldn't like to
> come together."

Rick: Clearly they haven't spoken to him much

Dan: Yeah, but this is also a group led by Parzival

Rick: Point

> "Okay, so next time we're on the OASIS, let's ask them." John said. "We can tell them about Justin."

Rebecca: We can tell them about this guy we've been constantly telling them about.

> "Yeah, I'll tell you about the Tensa Zangetsu when we're in the OASIS, Justin."

Tsuneo: Better get used to it, Justin. That ship is all you'll hear about from now on.

> Mark told his friend. "It's my chat room that I created."

> "Nice." Justin said. "It's like the ship from Toonami right?"

Rebecca: You know, that niche programming block that was gone and forgotten long before any of us
were born

> "It's something like that yeah." Mark said.

Rick: [Jack] I mean, better obviously because, y'know, I made it.

> "It's filled with my prized positions that I have on the OASIS."

> "Yeah, we go there sometimes just to fix our cars and stuff." Tom said. "Mark can fix anything."

Tsuneo: But can he fix a broken heart?

> "Almost anything," Mark told his friend. "I have robots on my ship that can fix things. I got them as a
> prize from a game I won a long time ago."

Dan: [Justin] So it's got nothing to do with your skill, then? It's just something you lucked into?

Rick: [Jack] Yep, this was a mistake.

> "Since you guys are over here, did you guys want to look at a movie or something?" Justin asked. "I
> have The Boondock Saints."

Tsuneo: Also digital access to just about every movie ever made. But hey, there's this one.

> "I haven't watched that movie in a long time." John said.

Rick: Not since the Devonian period

> "Yeah I'm in." Tom said.

Dan [Tom]: I mean, it's not Blade or The Matrix, but it'll do.

> "Let's do it." Mark agreed.

> And so the four friends decided to watch a movie together.

Tsuneo: That added so much. Thank you fic.

> Lynx/Vladislav went over it in his head. To get to the second egg, the other players used a clan of
> more than twenty people and the fire power of a big ship that Vlad had never seen before, which
> was the Tensa Zangetsu.

Dan: Even Lynx has to mention the ship's name as often as possible.

> It had used two Mac rounds to penetrate his shield.

Rebecca: Lynx's plan was to recap the fic.

> Vladislav had no idea that something like that existed before in the OASIS.

Tsuneo: Because nobody in the OASIS has ever used a spaceship.

> He had no idea what to do about it. Did it
> belong to Art3mis or Jack_100292402? If it did belong to one of them, then it was possible that it
> had unlimited ammunition.

Dan: It was also possible that it was filled with candy. His new plan was to hit it with a stick to find out.

> It did not matter anymore as there were no more Easter eggs to obtain for the time being.

Rick: He just had to wait for the dead developer to put more in.

Rebecca: Not as unlikely as it sounds.

> Vladislav decided to just let it go and hack into the OASIS. He fixed his massive
> proton cannon and wrote codes that would make his vehicles impervious to damage.

Rebecca: Even though the Easter egg had made them impervious to damage already.

Rick: Well now they were more so.

> He analyzed his Easter eggs, and hacked into them.

Rebecca: [Lynx] Wow, the code on this is garbage. No wonder somebody hid them.

> He needed a way to defeat his enemies. He saw that
> Jack_100292402 and Art3mis were his competitors and needed to be destroyed. He created a
> special revolver handgun that fired six rounds.

Dan: To kill them?

Rick: No, to shoot party favours at them.

> He had unlimited ammo, and this gun was important.
> With it, he could destroy Jack_100292402 and Art3mis.

Tsuneo: So remind me why they haven't kickbanned him yet even though Artemis said she could.

Rick: Because reasons?

Tsuneo: I thought so.

> Being immortals, they may let their guard down and not wear shields or armour anymore.

Dan: His plan was to hope that they were very stupid

- > Surely they would not come up with a way to destroy him.

Rick: I mean, they have. They literally told you that they could to your face.

- > Their naiveté would get the best of them. The High Five had taken all of the Easter
- > eggs that the OASIS had to offer them. They kept winning and it seemed that they would not be
- > sharing with anyone else.

Tsuneo: He hated it when people did the things he was going to do anyway

- > Vladislav wanted to win. He wanted to be the only one.

Dan: His plan was to chop off other people's heads to a Queen soundtrack.

- > This seemed to
- > be the only way. He also did not run this past Lewis/Tridosk as Lewis seemed to be in their league
- > as well.

Tsuneo: Also, he was only vaguely aware of Tridosk's existence.

- > He would let Lewis know eventually, but as for now, Vladislav was on his own.

Rebecca: Time to write that manifesto

- > Mark was at another person's house

Rick: He was at some house somewhere on Earth

- > as they were doing homework together. There was no time to
- > go on the OASIS today as they had an assignment to do in English class.

Dan: Mark occasionally remembered that he had to get an education.

- > They needed to come up with a story and portray it in written format with some pictures as well.

Rebecca: Given that this is a senior high school curriculum, I have a lot of questions.

- > Not being artistically inclined, Mark was having a hard time with it,

Dan: So far he'd drawn a bunch of stick figures talking. It was his masterpiece

- > but he was counting on the other person to help him through it.

Tsuneo: In short, he got his friend to do all the work.

- > This person was also a friend and had a profile on the OASIS. He was part of the Master Chief Clan
- > who followed the Halo franchise as Halo had spawned many sequels and several prequels.

Rick: The long list of sequels and spinoffs were the only reason he liked Halo

- > This
- > person's name was David Miranda. On the OASIS, he was known as Alpha Wolf Master Chief

Rebecca: Fic, that may be the most asinine name I have ever seen. Well done.

- > and they wore a blue version of Master Chief's armour from Halo 5.

Dan: Vitally important for the part of the fic that occurs in real life.

> They were a perfectionist, so for their project everything had to be measured out.

Tsuneo: Hours later, as David redraws the third panel yet again, Jack realises the magnitude of his mistake.

> Each panel of the story needed to be drawn with precise lines.

Rick: David considered the roof of the Sistine Chapel to be amateurish at best.

> David was a heavyset person and girls did not find him attractive.

Dan: He spent all his time talking about his OASIS clan and Halo stuff, and wondered why girls weren't interested.

> However, game

> players complimented him on how much of a professional he was when taking care of other players

> by sniping them many meters away.

Tsuneo: Thank you for killing me in such a masterful way. I feel rewarded.

> He was one of the best, and hated losing a lot.

Rebecca: So in short, he was a self-important rage monster

> They also had another partner but she had work that day at a coffee shop. Her portion would be

> sent to their emails whenever she was ready to send it. Her name was Krystle Levesque.

Dan: That is the most gratuitously fake name I have ever seen.

> She also had a profile on the OASIS as Princess Melody of Ajax.

Rick: Princess of the bathroom cleaner planet.

> She was not a fighter and received coins by

> beating challenges like painting, drawing or creating something really special.

Rebecca: So far the fic's had two original female characters and both of them have been painful girly stereotypes. Thanks a lot

> She spoke to other players about their lives and loved children as well.

Tsuneo: She kept dropping subtle hints to her boyfriend.

> She was a bit of a tomboy,

Rebecca: As her interests clearly demonstrate.

> and was not that attractive in the real world. Her figure was blocky and not quite that curvy.

Dan: She was rectangular

> Her boyfriend was a tall

> and lanky Caucasian male who excelled at Basketball. He played sports games on the OASIS as

> well.

Rick: Mostly golf. He was a bit weird.

> His name was Scott Michaels. His name on the OASIS was Sc0tt_M!cha3l5.

Tsuneo: How incredibly imaginative

- > He normally sat
- > with Krystle and her friends, but liked to also smoke weed with other males in their grade. They all
- > went to the same High School of course.

Rick: Of course.

- > No one besides the High Five, Lynx/Vladislav,
- > Tridosk/Lewis, John/Gadanza, and Tom knew about the three Easter eggs.

Tsuneo: Oh, and Tankor, who they recruited. And Tankor's clan who he brought along. And everyone his clan bragged to that they'd been to an exclusive area. And everyone they told...

- > Mark thought that it might be necessary to make sure that no one else knew about the eggs

Rebecca: Mostly because they were grossly unfair and he didn't want to get lynched.

- > unless they were told by Morrow or someone of high authority.

Tsuneo: So he planned to kill anyone who talked.

- > There was still the question on how did Lynx and the High
- > Five become aware of each other and the Easter eggs.

Rebecca: Well that's an interesting story.

- > Mark was happy that he had achieved them
- > and became known to the heroes of the OASIS as someone who could help them.

Tsuneo: They fondly remembered him as "that guy, you know the one?"

- > "So after we're finished, did you want to log in to the OASIS and play for a bit?" David asked Mark.

- > "I don't have my console on me." Mark said. "You can go ahead if you want."

- > "I have my sister's console if you want to use it." David said.

Rick: Mark is immediately worried about the cooties it may contain.

- > "Yeah, but her console does not have the information that I saved on my console." Mark said.

Rebecca: A design that is not only stupid but actively counterproductive.

- > "There are things on my console that I saved, like my spaceship, my weapons, my avatar and other
- > stuff."

Dan: Oh no, you might have to compete on a level playing field with everyone else.

Rick: Perish the thought.

- > "You can log in to a temporary profile." David pleaded. "Come on man, I want to face you."

Tsuneo: But without all his weapons and vehicles, how will he know who he is?

- > "Yeah okay, as long as we get this done first." Mark said.

- > "Yes." David said.

- > They took an hour to sketch out their pictures and the script that was supposed to go with the
- > drawings.

Dan: Mostly they just drew wangs on everything. They are teenage boys after all.

- > They logged into the OASIS. David and Mark took David's sister's console, headset and
- > treadmill like device

Rick: The treadmill-like treadmill

- > from her room and took them to the basement where they were going to log in.

Dan: [Mark] Your sister's okay with this, right?

Rebecca: [David] Um, sure, why not?

- > They logged into the OASIS and Mark picked a random Avatar as a guest. He chose a sci-fi avatar
- > with armour similar to Spartan Mjolnir Powered Assault Armor.

Tsuneo: He chose Halo stuff? This comes out of nowhere.

- > He chose a Caucasian male loadout as well.

Rebecca: So he was terrible at dancing and thought the Marvel Cinematic Universe was high art.

- > The avatar was six feet seven inches tall.

Rick: Is everyone's avatar conspicuously tall?

Rebecca: Not just tall.

- > David looked into his inventory to see what weapons he could give Mark.

- > "What type of weapon do you usually use?" David asked Mark.

Dan: The list took hours.

- > "I usually use a sword for the melee weapon and a combo machine gun, grenade launcher," Mark
- > told David. "But any assault rifle will be okay."

Dan: So he gave Jack a Chauchat

- > "Alright." David said. "I will let you use three weapons; an assault rifle, my twelve gage shotgun, and
- > a pack of grenades."

Rick: [Mark] Shotgun's a kind of sword, right?

- > "Okay, thanks." Mark said.

- > And then they loaded a map to play against each other on.

Tsuneo: So David gave Mark – who's on a guest account with nothing to lose – a selection of weapons with which to wipe out years of earning and progress.

Rick: Do you think the OASIS needs something like a friendly mode without death penalties?

Tsuneo: I think the OASIS needs an actual gameplay modes.

- > There were three structures combined
- > with a platform. There were three levels to each structure, a basement, a midlevel where they came
- > to do battle and a top level where they could take positions to snipe each other out. There were
- > certain positions where they could retrieve ammunition and more grenades.

Rick: Also it had an en-suite bathroom and walk-in wardrobe.

- > "Ready?" The computer said.

> "Ready." David said.

> "Let's go." Mark said.

> "Countdown to slayer match in five, four, three, two, one, slayer," The computer said.

Dan: The computer's programmed to spit out the name of random crap metal bands. Odd feature, I know

> They emerged on the map across from each other in the basement of two structures.

Dan: And immediately gunned each other down. Great match, guys.

> They took the

> stairs up to the middle floor. David took the extra staircase up to the third floor of the structure as

> Mark ran to the opposite structure.

Rick: Hold on, do I need to draw a diagram of where they are?

> TSEER!

> A sniper rifle rang out. Mark fell to his knees, his shields going down. He looked all around him and

> looked to his left at the third structure. He pulled out his assault rifle but was taken out by a second

> shot from a sniper rifle.

> "Boom, Headshot!" David said with glee.

Dan: David's taking advantage of Mark's lack of gear and powers.

Rick: David's also lining himself up for ridiculous comeuppance down the line.

> Mark's Avatar died and he respawned in the same place as before. He changed tactics and ran to

> the top of his structure. He looked out and saw David moving to the middle of the platform to Mark's

> body and started tea-bagging it.

Rebecca: David has as much respect for him as we do

> Mark threw a grenade and jumped. The grenade exploded close to

> David's position. Mark used the opportunity to start shooting with his shotgun. Mark threw another

> grenade and used his assault rifle to detonate it in mid-air.

Dan: I mean, or you could shoot him. It's not like he's actually doing anything in response.

> He started shooting once more at David,

> who ducked, dodged and rolled away from the middle of the area. David pulled out a missile

> launcher and fired it at Mark.

Rick: It's like watching two monkeys who are just pawing at the controllers.

> "Damn it." Mark seethed as David laughed.

Tsuneo: Well, he actually suffered a loss. Of course, first he had to strip away every single advantage the fic had given him and it's utterly inconsequential anyway, but I suppose I should take it.

> Mark respawned and then his cellphone began to ring. They had to pause the game as Mark

> answered it.

Dan: Yes, pause the online death match.

> "Hello, Mark?" said Krystle.

Rebecca: [Krystle] Sorry about my name.

> "I finished my shift, should I come over to David's so that we can work on the assignment?"

> "Hey Dave, it is Krystle." Mark told David. "She wants to know if she should come over so we can
> continue doing the assignment."

Dan: You're really a Spaceball. You know that, don't you?

> "I guess so." David said, "Let's play a little more until she gets here."

Rebecca: David's killed him again while he was on the phone and taken pictures of himself violating the corpse.

> "Hey Krystle." Mark said. "Dave said you can come over any time. We'll be here."

Tsuneo: Thrill as a mundane phone conversation unfolds in real time.

Rick: I'm excited.

> "Okay, see you guys soon." Krystle said, and with that she hung up.

> "I'm going to kill you." Mark said as he put on the headset once more and entered the OASIS to fight
> David once more.

Tsuneo: Well that was all astoundingly pointless.

> GoldDragonZ: That'll be it for now. Please feel free to read and review if you like or hate it.

> ----

> Chapter Six

> GoldDragonZ: Please feel free to read my story

Tsuneo: We most certainly are not.

> about a new character Jack, his friends, family, and
> the High Five as they battle different foes.

Dan: Different foes like school project deadlines.

> For now, the main Antagonist's name is Vladislav
> Volkovskis, also known in the OASIS as Lynx.

Rick: Also if you've read this far then you should know this.

> It was Sunday Morning. The Patel's Mark, Rodney, and Alexandra woke up at 8:00 am to go to
> church with their mother and father who were home for the weekend.

Rebecca: The resentment was tangible.

> They had also had dinner
> together the day before and then Mark had to go to David Miranda's to do the project.

Rick: His parents finally got the house to themselves and didn't want to share.

> Their church
> started service at 10:00 am but they only had one washroom for the five of them to use as their
> second one was broken and leaked.

Rebecca: These pointless details truly enrich the fic.

- > They had a third one in their basement but it did not have a
- > vent to funnel steam out of. They needed to have quick showers as well

Tsuneo: This family's shower arrangements are the most interesting part of the fic so far. [Pause] I mean that, legitimately.

- > because their water heater could only contain a certain amount of water at a time.

Dan: So Rodney stayed in there for ages.

- > They sat down together for breakfast as well.
- > "So, Mark, how was the project last night?" Mrs. Patel asked her son.

Rebecca: Does she have a first name?

Tsuneo: Would it matter either way?

Rebecca: Well no.

- > "It was okay." Mark replied. "I'm not that great of an artist but I think the story I came up with was
- > good. One of my partners, David, is a perfectionist so he handled the drawings and panels.

Tsuneo: In case you missed that last chapter, here it is again.

- > My other partner, Krystle, came late because she was working at The Coffee Shop."

Rick: The only coffee shop in the universe.

- > "Oh, I love The Coffee Shop's coffee."

Dan: The Coffee Shop makes coffee? This comes out of nowhere

- > Mr. Patel, Mark's father chimed in as he buttered a bagel.
- > "Must see if she can get coupons or something for us."

Dan: Mark's dad exploits all his friends for his own benefit.

- > "Okay dad." Mark said.
- > "Rodney, how was school?" Mrs. Patel asked her other son.
- > "It was good." Rodney said.
- > "What did you do?" Mrs. Patel asked.

Rick: [Rodney] I got three wedgies and a swirly at lunch time.

Dan: [Mrs. Patel] That's down one from last week. You're doing well.

- > "Recess, lunch and played." Rodney said, just kidding around with his mother. "No, I have several
- > projects due in the next couple of weeks.

Rebecca: So do what every student does and try to cram them in the night before they're due.

- > I'm probably not going to play on the OASIS that much until I get everything done."

Dan: Rodney is a dirty, filthy liar.

- > "That's very good of you." Mr. Patel said, and then he turned to Alexandra. "Hey Princess, how are

> you doing?"

Rebecca: [Alexandra] Oh, finally worked your way down to me, did you?

> "School is okay." She said. "We learned about BEDMAS. BEDMAS is an acronym for Brackets,
> Exponents, Division, Multiplication, Addition and Subtraction. For an equation, you first do the math
> that's contained in the brackets. Next you handle the exponents. And then whatever comes first,
> division or multiplication, you handle that. It doesn't matter what comes first. And then you handle
> addition and subtraction. It's easy. In English, we learned about Homonyms. They are words that
> sound and look the same but mean different things. It's like their and there. One is spelt t-h-e-i-r
> while one is spelt t-h-e-r-e. Their meanings are different."

Tsuneo: Wow, fic. Slow down there with the excitement

> "Wow," Their mother said. "You guys are swallowing your hate for school and getting work done. I
> like that."

Dan: Deep down the three of them are seething pits of resentment

> "Yeah, don't forget to do your chores, though, and play the piano." Their father said.

Rick: [Mr. Patel] Someone's gotta look after the house since we're never here.

> "Now let's go to church."

Rebecca: Attending church in a Ready Player One fic. Somewhere, Ernst Cline spontaneously combusts.

> After they had come home from church, Mark did the laundry for his whole family. This included
> sorting out the clothes into different colours, putting them in the washer, putting in detergent and
> fabric softener, press the commands, let the machine do its thing, take out the clothes, put them in
> the dryer, put in a dryer sheet, and then press the commands for the dryer to work.

Dan: Oh my god! I don't believe it! I'm on the edge of my seat here! How could we possibly handle such amazing breakneck action! It's intense! I've never been on such an action-packed thrill-ride before! It's too much! He's actually doing the laundry!

[Rebecca slaps him]

Dan: Thanks. I needed that.

> He ended by
> folding up the clothes. Rodney did the mowing of the lawn. Alexandra washed the dishes, swept
> and mopped the floors.

Rebecca: I'm staggered by the tremendous advances of this futuristic world.

> Mrs. Patel did the dusting, weeded the gardens.

Rick: But what sort of weeds did she find? Did she put them in the compost or separate them for green waste? Fic, we need to know!

> Mr. Patel cleaned the two cars that they owned and made sure all the fluids were topped up.

Rebecca: Clearly late night bus driver is working out well for him

Dan: All those sad, lonely nights carting around drunken, reeking hobos paid off.

> Next, the three siblings waited their turn to play the piano.

Rebecca: With nothing better to do, Alexandra started idly hitting Rodney while she waited.

- > They also studied piano music theory and history at the same time.
- > Rodney and Mark were almost at the same point, while Alexandra was at a lower grade.

Rick: Something to do with her only being ten years old, I'd imagine.

- > They
- > would help each other as well. They could use the music course as a high school credit, so it was
- > worth while doing. That meant that for Grade 12 in high school, they would have three or four
- > spares instead of just two. Usually you had to do four courses a day in the lower grades grade nine,
- > ten, and eleven. In grade twelve, you only had to do three, and now Mark and his siblings only
- > needed to do two. Mark chose this time to do volunteer work for the school such as cleaning the
- > grounds as all high school students needed to complete 40 hours of community service.

Tsuneo: Fic, you're killing me here.

Dan: I just can't keep up with this super action.

- > It was the month of April, so he would be almost finished this year in a few more weeks.

Tsuneo: And we're going to read it *all.* In *real* time!

- > Next month, it was
- > prom. Mark did not know if he should be going as he never really spoke romantically to a girl before.

Rick: Last time he'd tried it turned out to be Hairy Knuckled Chuck.

Dan: Hairy Knuckled Chuck is my favourite Ready Player One character

- > Could he try it? Mark did not know.

Tsuneo: Mark is vaguely aware that women exist.

Rick: He has played alongside Artemis.

Tsuneo: Mark is reasonably convinced that Artemis is some kind of root vegetable.

- > As for that Sunday, he would be finishing up his homework, and
- > then maybe perhaps going on the OASIS for a little bit.

Dan: I never thought I'd want to see more OASIS in a Ready Player One fic.

Rebecca: What has this thing done to us?

- > Amira Qad was an Arabic Muslim girl who went to the same school as Mark Patel. She had been
- > one of his school mates since Elementary School when they were in Grade Seven,

Tsuneo: Yet we only introduce her when he's thinking about the prom.

- > or when they
- > were twelve years old when she first came to the city. She was not as Orthodox as other Muslim
- > people,

Rebecca: Well that was awkwardly worded.

- > so she did not wear a Hijab. She prayed though.

Tsuneo: Mostly she prayed not to be featured in some guy's weird fic.

- > She wanted to be the best that she could
- > be. She also had an avatar on the OASIS. Her name there was Princess May.

Rick: She named her avatar after her favourite Top Gear presenter

- > In real life, she was a pretty girl, and wore black framed glasses. She wore the school uniform daily,

Dan: All day, every day. It was beginning to smell.

- > while during days she
- > was not in school she wore dresses that looked pretty. Her favorite colour was bright bluish green.
- > She would often wear that colour whenever she was not in the uniform.

Rick: She painted her bedroom walls and the family dog that colour too.

- > Her Avatar in the OASIS
- > was a Caucasian female with Jade coloured eyes, long black hair,

Rick: She'd tried it the other way around and it hadn't worked out that well.

- > and wore a bright blueish green
- > dress. She would play racing games online and wore a blueish green jumpsuit and helmet
- > whenever she raced.

Rick: Sadly, she also drove like her favourite Top Gear presenter.

- > She also participated in beauty pageants online. She would do up her hair on
- > her Avatar and change the dress.

Rebecca: The idea that people could change their clothes was a radical one.

- > There would always be something blue or bright green on her
- > outfit, be it a gem stone, a jacket, her dress, or something else.

Dan: Her purse dog, her car, her favourite assault rifle...

- > Her makeup would be done to make her skin shimmer brightly.

Tsuneo: She sparkled like a Shojo manga boyfriend

- > She had been in several classes together with Mark, however he seemed preoccupied. Did he
- > notice her, or did he not really care?

Rebecca: Mark in the meantime was thinking about adding more items to his inventory.

- > In any case, she wished that he would talk to her.

Tsuneo: Given all that we know about Mark, I have to ask why.

- > And then she
- > learned that he had a favorite movie called The Mark of Zorro, starring Tyrone Power.

Dan: She'd bought it up with that Wayne kid, but that had upset him for some reason.

- > The movie came out in 1940 and was a classic.

Rebecca: So what it's doing in this fic is beyond us.

- > During Halloween that year, she had dressed up as Zorro.
- > During lunch, the student council voted on the best costumes. She had hoped that he would notice,
- > but Mark did not seem to even care.

Rick: Mark hadn't recognised her due to the mask and hat. It really worked.

- > However, he was surprised that she had dressed that way.

Rebecca: Internally he was raging about her being a fake fan and only cosplaying for attention.

> Secretly, Mark had known that Amira liked him.

Tsuneo: But he already had a player group

> He wanted to speak to her badly, however for some
> reason he could not bring himself to do it. Was it fear?

Dan: It was the cooties, wasn't it?

> He just did not feel good enough. Sure, he was a Captain of a ship on the OASIS,

Rick: He had achieved what literally anyone else could by playing far too much.

> but in the real world, he was a nobody. There were jocks in
> his school who seemed to rule the roost, so to speak, and get the girls.

Dan: He's going to start ranting about 'Chads' and 'Staceys', isn't he?

Tsuneo: It does seem to be going that way

> They did not need to pretend to be anyone else.

Rebecca: They were confident enough to flick towels and gnash teeth at each other

> They did not need to use the OASIS at all.

Dan: They all did, however

Tsuneo: Almost certainly

> Mark was not very good at sports.

Rebecca: Mark was already gasping for breath by the time he left the locker room.

> Sure, he was lean and very skinny, but that did not mean he was muscular.

Rick: You could play his ribs like a xylophone.

> At the very least,
> he did not feel attractive. He hated himself, but on the OASIS, he had made his Avatar to be the
> very best thing he could think of.

Rick: But since the death metal T-Rex avatar riding a hoverboard was too impractical, he settled on an ordinary schlub.

> He spoke to people on the OASIS. He felt that he could hide who
> he really was; a loser who could not speak to girls. He was not that smart either.

Rebecca: No! Really! This comes out of nowhere.

> In his school, there were three levels of courses.

Dan: Hold on folks, we'd better buckle in for some more intense curriculum action.

> University grade courses were geared towards the
> very brightest students. College courses were for people who could not get into University type of
> courses.

Rick: And for the rest, there was driving late night busses.

> And then there were workplace courses that were geared to get students ready for the real world.

Rebecca: A rare thing in the Ready Player One universe

> Mark was in the College stream of courses, and did have several University courses.

Tsuneo: Mark was aiming to be a frat bro.

> That

> was how he and Amira shared classes. The best class they had together was called Anthropology,

> Psychology, and Sociology.

Dan: He was studying Applied Gunting.

> The second class they had was a Graphic Design course where you

> used computer programs to design flyers, documents, websites and GIFs.

Rick: And only GIFs. All other graphic formats were banned.

> They also shared the same spare period.

Dan: Shared?

Tsuneo: You know, him and Amira.

Dan: Amira?

Tsuneo: The girl they're awkwardly introducing.

Dan: I thought this was about Mark's college prospects.

Tsuneo: Yeah, fair enough.

> Out of his friends, Tom Calcio was in Workplace geared courses and needed a Teaching Assistant

> to help him.

Dan: Tom was studying to be a skateboarder

> John Matthews was in the College stream, and Justin Rihaz was in the University

> stream. Although they were all different, they had grown close because they all had similar

> personalities.

Rebecca: It's cute that they claim to have them.

> But, Amira did not care that Mark was not in most of her classes. She liked the way he looked.

Tsuneo: She liked how he was skinny and covered in acne.

Rick: The fic said it, not us.

> She liked how quiet and shy he was. He was so sweet and she could not tear her eyes off

> him. He seemed like something was always bothering him.

Dan [Mark]: Do I have enough guns on my ship? Could I get some more?

> He seemed upset most of the time,

> although she never saw anyone be mean to him. What could his troubles be?

Rebecca: Really, we have no idea. This is the first time the fic's suggested his life is anything but sparkles and unicorn farts.

> Amira wanted to get to know him,

Dan: Like how does he do the laundry?

> however she was like him, and could not bring herself to speak to him either. There

> had to be a way for them to come together, but how could they do it?

Rebecca: This scene needs her to be standing in front of a huge banner saying 'Prom.'

> Graduation was close by, and by the time, they might not have the chance to talk at the very least.

Tsuneo: So far Mark had said more words to the class hamster than her.

> There was only one thing that

> they could do; meet on the OASIS. It was against the rules to tell people your AVATAR name

Rick: It made trading friend information very difficult.

Dan: Mark had taken months to figure out who Tom was in the OASIS.

> so it

> might be difficult to do that, however Parzival had already shown that you can break the rules by

> telling the whole world who he was.

Tsuneo: And the whole world had pointed out that they did not care.

> Amira decided to speak to several people about finding out who on the OASIS Mark really was.

Dan: Tom, John and Justin all denied knowing him.

> She

> told some of her friends during the weekend as they were working together on a project for school.

> They understood where she was coming from.

Rebecca: She had no prom date and was truly desperate

> One of her friends, Jessica Walsh was going out with someone

Rebecca: Jessica's OASIS avatar was also a princess and only concerned with fashion.

> that used to go to elementary school with Mark. His name was Tyler Biscuit.

Rick: His friends were Bob Alias and John Obviously Fake Name.

> They had spoken and worked together, but Tyler could not say that he was a friend of Mark's.

Rebecca: Tyler seemed deeply offended by the suggestion.

> They respected each other, but did not go the same parties or hang out anywhere.

Dan: Tyler was only loosely aware that Mark existed.

> Tyler was nice to Mark. Mark

> was, as always quiet and distant, as if he was always thinking about something else.

Rick: Mostly, he thought about Halo guns, and if he had enough of them

> He did not smile often. He was strange, and no one knew what they could say to him.

Tsuneo: The end result was a lot of atomic wedgies

> He was not brave, or strong in real life, but on the OASIS, he was all of that and more.

Dan: Did we mention how amazingly awesome Jack is in the OASIS?

Rick: Oh yes. OASIS Jack is smart and cool.

> As Jack_100292402, he was everything he thought a man could be.

Rick: A long list of weapons that he carried on him at all times

> He leapt into battle, and relished the thought of winning

> races and competing with other people. He could battle with the best players and win.

Tsuneo: He hid behind his overpowered arsenal and let his automated ship do everything for him.

> Amira liked the real him though.

Dan: Having already admitted that she barely knew him.

> She liked how he was soft spoken and gentle in real life.

Rebecca: How he only interacted with a small group of weirdoes and never spoke to anyone else.

> She liked how he worked diligently on homework whenever he had free time.

Tsuneo: Amira is very boring, isn't she?

> Amira just wanted him to acknowledge how much she liked him,

Dan: And maybe write a novel for her after she broke his ankles.

> but she needed help on how to talk to him. Tyler decided that he would

> talk to Mark's friends on Amira's behalf

Rick: So our lengthy introduction of Amira is...

Rebecca: Mostly talking about how awesome Jack is in the OASIS.

Rick: Figures.

> "Hey you're Tom, right?"

Dan: [Tom] Damn straight.

> Tyler Biscuit said to Tom as they were heading to the cafeteria for lunch.

Tsuneo: Also, I can't believe we're reading a fic with a character called Tyler Biscuit.

> "You're friends with Mark Patel, right?"

> "Why are you talking to me?" Tom asked defensively. "I don't know who you are."

Rick: Tom's next reaction is to jump on top of a locker and hiss.

> "One of my friends wants to talk to Mark." Tyler said.

Dan: [Tyler] Anyway, long story short she paid me five bucks and here I am.

> "Is there a way for you to get Mark to speak to her?"

> "It's a girl?" Tom said in disbelief.

Rick: Making the sign of the cross was a bit much.

> "No girls have ever wanted to talk to any of me or my friends.

Rebecca: He had no idea why girls weren't interested in them and all their video game guns.

> What does she want from Mark? Does she want to fuck him?"

Rebecca: Tom literally cannot think of any other reason she'd want to talk to him, can he?

> "Well...it's complicated." Tyler said.

Rick: This is all a part of his elaborate heist setup.

> "She just wants to talk to him."

> "She can use the OASIS." Tom said. "That's the best way to get in touch with Mark.

Tsuneo: She sits next to him in class.

Rick: Best way.

> His name online is Jack underscore 1-0-0-2-9-2-4-0-2.

Dan: [Tyler] Let me get a pen.

> She can just send him a message and he will find her."

Rebecca: Congratulations, Tom. You just fell for basic social engineering.

> "Okay thanks Tom." Tyler said, and then he left Tom alone.

> "Who was that?" Justin said as Tom joined him for lunch.

Dan: I dunno, Tyler Cookie or something.

Rick: Biscuit.

Dan: Right, Tyler Scone.

> "It was a guy from our elementary school." Tom replied. "His friend wants to talk to Mark."

> "What about?" Justin asked.

Tsuneo: [Tom] No clue. Honestly, I cannot fathom any reason why anyone would speak to Mark.

> "She wants to suck his dick." Tom said jokingly.

> "Damn it, Nappa." Justin retaliated.

Rebecca: If the author's plan was to make these two completely odious and unlikeable, then they're doing a great job.

> "I hope she knows what she's doing."

Tsuneo: Mostly a study for her anthropology class.

> "What do you mean?" Tom asked.

> "I just don't want to see Mark get hurt." Justin said. "He's an awesome guy."

Rick: Is he? Is he really?

> "Some of the other people don't think so."

Dan: How could they not? Jack is amazingly awesome in the OASIS?

Rick: Oh yes. OASIS Jack is smart and cool.

> "Yeah, some people think he's full of himself, but we know him. He's just shy."

Tsuneo: Informed characterisation is the best characterisation

> Mark unlocked the door to his home and walked in. He took off his shoes and placed his backpack
> on the floor. He took out his lunch container and cleaned it in the kitchen sink.

Rebecca: He railed at the bleak senseless isolation of his existence where every day was the same while he cut himself into the shape needed for a job that would consume the rest of his life. He put the container on the drying rack.

> Next, we went and
> changed into his X1 suit and then went into the living room where his piano and OASIS console
> were.

Rick: I thought it was in the dining room.

Dan: Maybe they moved it.

[Pause]

Dan: Are we really getting hung up on this?

Rick: With how exciting this chapter is, I'll take anything.

> He played the piano for one hour

Dan: In his boot suit.

Rebecca: He likes how snug the micro-fibre crotch inlay feels while he's seated. Sadly, they won't let him wear it to school anymore.

> and then put on his gloves and Virtual Reality Headset. He
> then jacked into the OASIS. His Avatar spawned on the deck of the Tensa Zangetsu. His Heads-up
> display indicated that he had a message. He opened it up.

Dan: More intense real-time e-mail action!

> Dear Jack. It read. I have been watching you from afar for a long while.

Rebecca: Well that is not creepy at all

Tsuneo: Not in the slightest.

> We go to the same school.

Dan: Good thing they don't go to rival schools, because then they'd have to fight.

> Please forgive your friend because he gave me your OASIS name. Rather, one of my friends'
> boyfriend spoke to Tom and Tom told him your name.

Tsuneo: Jack then swears a blood oath of vengeance against Tom.

> Tom said that this is the best way to reach you.

Rebecca: Other options included passenger pigeon and smoke signals

> I would like to meet you either here in the OASIS, or in real life somewhere, anywhere.

Dan: In the school's halls, at The Coffee Shop, on the deck of the Titanic, anywhere.

> I am looking forward to your response,

Rick: He looked at the email, then forgot about it and went off to play more capture the flag

> with warm regards,

> Princess May

Tsuneo: This message will self-destruct in five seconds.

> Jack_100292402/Mark Patel read the note one more time.

Dan: It took him a while

> The name did not ring a bell. He took off

> his headset and then went up stairs to his room which he shared with his siblings. He took out his

> yearbook from last year and looked for anyone with the name May.

Tsuneo: The thought that somebody might use a different name on the OASIS was beyond him.

> There was no one with that

> name. And then something flickered in Mark's mind. Could it be Amira trying to reach him?

Dan: Better send her the 50,000 coins she requested to find out.

> She was the only person who seemed to be interested in him,

Rebecca: Even though he never noticed her, he'd noticed that she was interested in him.

> but Mark was not sure. Mark went back

> downstairs and turned on his OASIS console one more time and jacked in. He started writing a

> reply.

> Dear Princess May.

> I don't know who you are.

Tsuneo: But he wants to know what weapons she's carrying on her at any given time.

> I have been told by my parents to be vigilant against people I meet here

> on the OASIS or the internet because people might not be who they say they are.

Dan: Meanwhile, Justin is giving his bank account details to his fake internet girlfriend.

> Do we go to the same school?

Rick: Because this would be a staggering string of coincidences otherwise.

> If we do, I will meet you after school tomorrow at the library.

Tsuneo: Preferably in full view of the security cameras.

> I hope that's okay with

> you. Please let me know if you have other plans or you want to meet some other place.

Rebecca: Dear Jack. I would like to meet you but the library is not convenient. How about we meet behind the condemned warehouses down by the docks instead? Signed, a totally real girl

> Truly yours,

> Jack.

> Mark/Jack sighed. He didn't know what to think.

Dan: Duuuuhhhhh

> For years, he had wanted and prayed to meet his wife sometime soon.

Rebecca: I don't know what the author intended but wow, did that come out creepy.

> Could this, be it? Had God answered his prayer?

Rick: God here. Leave me out of this.

> Mark did not know what to think.

Tsuneo: So he asked his computer for advice.

> All he knew was that it was not time to be on the OASIS. He had to prepare to meet this person.

Dan: Assuming it's an actual person? Whoah, slow down there Jack.

> He did not want to meet them empty handed so he decided to go to the grocery store to get
> a bouquet of flowers.

Rick: Then he realised how weird it would be to drag a bunch of flowers to school.

> He hoped whoever she was liked the flowers.

Rebecca [Amira]: Should I have mentioned my many, many allergies to him? Eh, probably not important.

> He knew that he was getting ahead of himself.

Dan: He had to do something about his oppressive BO first.

> She had not even replied, so it was a waiting game.

Rick: Then he got tired of the waiting game and played Hungry Hungry Hippos instead.

> He would be there the day after and if she showed up, he would know.

Rebecca: Smash cut to Mark being dragged out of the library after harassing three separate girls.

> Mark went to the kitchen table and began doing his
> homework. He needed to get his mind off the letter that was written to him from someone he did not
> even know.

Dan: Internally his hormones were raging at the idea that a girl might even talk to him.

> The next morning, Mark looked at the school uniform.

Tsuneo: This was probably not the time for working on his Harry Potter cosplay

> What could he do to make it more presentable?

Rebecca: I mean, he could wash it but that may be a step too far.

> He took a shower, shaved, put on skin lotion, sprayed cologne and combed his hair.

Rebecca: Everyone at school was repulsed by the walking cloud of Ax body spray.

> He ironed his shirt and pants, and put them on.

Dan: Mark had learned not to iron his clothes while he was wearing them.

> He took out a black tie and tied it around his neck, under his collar.

Tsuneo: He wouldn't be making that mistake again.

> He took out his dress shoes, and shined them up. He cleaned his glasses. He

> looked at his watch and cleaned that as well.

Rick: In short order he'd gone full Howard Hughes.

> He left home early and made it to school before

> anyone else was there to see what he brought. He went to the secretary's office and spoke to one

> of the secretary to see if he could leave the flowers with them.

> "Aww, that's cute." The secretary said to her comrades about Mark.

Dan: [Secretary] But really, it is rather inappropriate.

Rick: [Mark] I didn't mean –

Dan: [Secretary] Oh, I'm definitely flattered, don't get me wrong.

Rick: [Mark] But they're for –

Dan: [Secretary] You really should be finding someone your own age instead.

Rick: [Mark] Never mind...

> "You kids have fun after school. Remember, to get the girl, just be yourself.

Tsuneo: I'm sure that would go well.

Rebecca [Amira]: Hi Mark, I'm-

Dan [Mark]: I have a huge spaceship and dozens of guns,

Rebecca [Amira]: This was a mistake

> She's going to be as nervous as you if not more. Girls are human

Rick: This idea was shocking to him.

> so you shouldn't feel nervous."

Tsuneo: [Mark] But I always feel nervous.

Dan: [Secretary] Forget what I said, this ain't going to work.

> Mark did not know what to say, so he just said good bye with the assurance that the secretary

> would take care of his flowers.

Rebecca: Within five minutes they were stuffed in the bin.

> He went through his day very preoccupied. He was thinking about

> girls and could not stop thinking about sexual activity.

Dan [Shouted]: I have boner

> Finally, the final bell rang.

Dan: Hi! I'm the final bell! I'm finally ringing! Ring ring ring! You should all leave school now!

Tsuneo: Thank you for that, inappropriate comedic schoolbell

> He picked up his

> books and stuffed them in his bag and left the cafeteria where he was spending his spare after

> cleaning with the school personnel.

Rick: Toilets ain't gonna scrub themselves.

> He made his way to the front office. Lost in thought, he walked
> right passed Amira, who was going to say something to him right then and there but the flow of
> students pushed her along. He went into the office and picked up the flowers from the secretary's
> office

Dan: [Secretary] Flowers? What flowers? I didn't see any flowers. I don't know what you're talking about.

> and went up to the library. There he waited, reading a book to try and calm himself down.

Tsuneo [Mark]: Hm, Silence of the Lambs. That should be nice and relaxing.

> His
> hands were sweaty. His heart was racing. He kept looking at the clock. It was 10 to 3:00 pm. And
> so, he waited.

Rick: Mark realised that he never got a reply and has no reason to expect that anyone will be there for him.

> This was a mistake. Amira thought to herself.

Rebecca: Fic, we finally agree.

> He never even knew I was going to talk to him when I walked passed him.

Dan: Mark's current perception of Amira is as a vaguely human-sized blob that occupies space in classes.

> She stood right in front of the doors to the library where all the computer work stations and books
> were kept.

Tsuneo: I mean, we didn't need to know what a library is, and yet it's still the worst definition of what a library is.

> The librarian's name was Mr. Mosby. He was a very nice guy and very approachable.
> Amira breathed in and sighed. She had spoken to Mr. Mosby before about many things,

Rebecca [Amira]: Mister Mosby, do you believe that the universe will continue to expand infinitely, or will it eventually collapse in on itself in a superdense singularity?

Rick [Mosby]: Retirement can't come soon enough.

> but never about speaking to boys.

Dan: [Mosby] Miss Qad, that is not only wildly inappropriate, but also... Help.

> She only spoke to her friends about it, and they were constantly joking around.

Tsuneo: Her friends will never actually appear as people, will they?

Rebecca: I think we have to just assume they exist and move on.

> Now was the time to decide. Should she go in, or should she wait for a different time?

Dan: Should she reply and let him know he was coming, or flee across the border?

Rebecca: They're already in Canada.

Dan: Well, so much for that plan.

> She wanted to speak to him and tell him how she felt. She wanted to so bad.

Tsuneo: She wanted it more than she'd wanted that X-1 Boot Suit with micro-fibre crotch inlay.

> She was squeezing the strap of her knapsack so bad that her knuckles were turning white.

Rick: Compared to this, Neil Armstrong's walking on the moon was nothing

> She had prepared in the morning, like how

> Mark prepared. She had a shower, washed her hair, combed and dried her hair,

Rebecca: Thank you for that, fic. Otherwise I would have assumed she was spending the whole day with damp, tangled hair.

> made sure her

> uniform was well pressed, and put on makeup. Her family never allowed her to use makeup to go to

> school, but surely this would qualify as a special occasion

Rebecca: And I imagine explaining that 'special occasion' to her family will go down wonderfully.

> as she was preparing to do something right after school. She slipped off her glasses

Rick: Bad move as Mark wouldn't recognise her without them.

> and put it in her breast pocket of her blouse that she

> was wearing underneath her vest with the symbol of the school crest.

> I am not Amira Qad. She thought to herself. I am one of the best racers in the OASIS, Princess

> May.

Rick: Please ignore her absence from the previous racing-focused chapters.

> She opened the door and prepared to greet Mark with a stunning smile; the best that she could

> muster at that moment.

Rebecca [Forced]: I'm so happy.

> She opened the door and looked around. She saw Mark sitting at a table

> readying To Kill a Mockingbird.

Dan: Mark thinks this Finch guy is a total loser.

> He had his glasses on and was really into the book. He looked up as

> he felt her gaze on him, and then his eyes widened.

Rebecca: And quickly got back to the book.

> He closed the book and stood up. He had the

> flowers on the table in front of him and he presented them to her.

Dan: [Mark] FLOWER?

> "Princess May?" Mark asked, and then said shyly: "Amira...hi."

> "Mark." She said, "Are those for me?"

> "Yes." Mark said. "Do you like flowers?"

> "Yes." She said as she walked up to him.

Tsuneo: This dialogue is amazing.

Rick: Yes

Tsuneo: So emotional and involving

Rick: Yes

Tsuneo: I am deeply invested in these characters

Rick: Yes

> He brought them up and gave them to Amira. She blushed, and so did he. He scratched the back of his head.

Dan: This is the action climax of the chapter, isn't it?

> "Do you like books?" Mark asked.

Rebecca [Amira]: I do like books.

Rick [Mark]: Do you like Halo: Combat Evolved?

Rebecca [Amira]: Oh god damn it.

> "Yeah," She said. "Didn't we do a book report for To Kill a Mockingbird In grade ten English class?"

> "Yeah, I know," Mark said. "I like the book."

> "Me too." Amira said. "You remind me of Atticus Finch."

Rebecca: I can only assume that they haven't read Go Set a Watchman then.

> "I wish I was half the man that Atticus Finch is." Mark revealed. "I'm not that good at anything. I'm

> not good at sports. I don't know if I can be good for you."

Dan: [Mark] In fact, we'd better call this whole thing off so I can wallow in the misery of my perfect upper middle class life.

> "Listen Mark." Amira said. "No one is perfect. Michael Jordan was the best basketball player but he was lousy as a baseball player.

Rick: But how were his parfaits?

> Find something that you are good at, or interested in and you will find out what your purpose is."

Rebecca: [Amira] And no, your repair racket in the OASIS doesn't count.

> "Why do you like me, Amira?" Mark asked, his eyes swelling with tears. "I'm not good..."

Tsuneo: Mark's plan is to be pathetic and hope that the girl will feel sorry for him.

> "You're so cute." Amira said. "I just want to hug you."

> She came up to him. Mark was three inches taller than Amira.

Rick: And how tall was she?

Dan: Three inches shorter than he was

> She hugged him. All Mark could do was hug her back.

Rebecca: Keep those haptic feedback gloves at 10 o'clock and 2 o'clock, pal.

> "Amira." Mark said. "Did you want to go out for hot chocolate or something?" Mark asked.

> "Yes, Mark." She said happily. "I would like that very much."

> And so, the happy couple said good bye to Mr. Mosby

Tsuneo: Who was seconds from physically ejecting them.

> and made their way to the nearest coffee shop

Rick: But was it The Coffee Shop?

Dan: It does have the best coffee

> where they could also buy hot chocolate or almost anything that they would like to drink.

Rebecca: So Mark asked for a glass of Organic Kombucha, and the manager threw him out.

> Mark

> bought himself a cup of coffee, and bought an iced coffee for Amira. They chose a booth to sit in

Dan: Thank you for that, fic. I couldn't have lived without knowing where they sat.

> and started talking to each other. Mark was still very nervous, and everything he was saying was

> very simple.

Rick: The only thing she's learned is how little there is to learn about Mark.

> Over time, he started feeling comfortable with Amira. They spoke about their friends

> and their family.

Rebecca: Amira was having regrets already.

> Soon it was 5:00 pm. Mark got up and offered his hand to Amira, who took it. He

> helped her out of the booth and they walked to the entrance to the coffee shop. Mark went in and

> hugged the girl, who graciously reciprocated. They went their separate ways, Mark going to his

> home, Amira going to hers.

Tsuneo: He spent the rest of the week having a cold shower.

> "So, did you rock out with your cock out?" Tom_001 asked Jack_100292402.

Rick: Yes, he did indeed show off his backyard chickens.

> They were in the OASIS. Tom and Jack were playing together in a free for all game where they

> were trying to kill as many people as they could.

Dan: Jack had killed Tom three times already.

> They had each other's backs and just wasted other players.

Tsuneo: Given that Jack is immortal and has unlimited ammo, isn't this just a touch unfair?

Rebecca: I suspect the thought has never once crossed his mind.

> "It was just the first time that we ever spoke." Jack said. "Watch your back!"

Dan: Whoops, four times

> An explosion tripped Tom up and he came crashing down onto the floor. Jack ran over to Tom and

> fired his assault rifle/grenade launcher/shotgun

Rick: Slash vacuum cleaner.

> at the enemies that were closing in on them.

> "Piece of shit." Jack muttered as he fired a grenade from the launcher.

Tsuneo: The characters endear themselves to me through their respect for fellow players.

> He fired several bullets and ended his volley with a blast from his shotgun. Two players died and
> respawned at different locations.

Rick: One was in a vacant lot outside of Alice Springs, and the other was on the dark side of the moon.

> "All that ammo..." Jack muttered although he knew that he could never run out of bullets.

Tsuneo: Jack likes to complain that his house is too big and his family is too accommodating.

> He was not in a good mood. He had told his parents about the girl, Amira, who wanted to be with
> him. They responded by saying that it was not the right time for a girlfriend.

Rick: Mostly they were in shock at the idea.

> He needed to focus on
> his school work to get into a respectful college. In Canada Universities are higher tier institutions,
> and colleges are second tier.

Dan: Didn't we already cover this?

Tsuneo: Possibly, but I don't care enough to check.

> They were not happy that he was not doing majority of University
> courses and hoped that by doing well in college, he could transfer into University for something.

Rick: He ended up doing a Master's in Medieval Plumbing

> And
> they did not want him going to any school; he had to be better than what he was right then. He
> needed to find a way to be more than mediocre.

Tsuneo: Immortan Joe agrees.

> Amira deserved better from him.

Dan: Amira deserves better than him.

Rebecca: Amira has started dating Tridosk, and they're both very happy.

> So, there was also
> the dilemma of staying for one extra year of high school. This would mean that he would do courses
> that were University Level so that he could get enough credits to get into University instead of
> wasting time in College.

Rebecca: This is more than I ever cared to know about the Canadian educational system.

> He needed to play on the OASIS less, and pay attention more in class and
> do more homework.

Dan: Or actually start doing those last two.

> His parents did not believe in friends either.

Rick: They thought that his friends were delusions

> They could never know how much this hurt Mark,

Rebecca: His parents have also picked out his future wife, haven't they?

> as he desired to be the best Christian that he could be and honour his parents.

Tsuneo: So far, his parents can be summarised as 'boring and overbearing'.

> His

> parents did not realize that for people to mature naturally, they needed to be around people more,

Rebecca: There are many words I'd use to describe Mark's friends, but 'mature' is not one of them.

> especially at the age that Mark/ Jack was. It was vital at the time in life where he would be making

> big life decisions.

Dan: Jack's idea of a big life decision was which video game gun to use.

> Who did he want to be, and what did he want from life?

Rebecca: So he told them he wanted to run a repair scam in a video game. That didn't help.

> He needed guidance from someone, but there was no one that came to mind.

Dan: So he tried licking toads instead. It didn't work, but he kept trying it anyway.

> "Fuck you motherfuckers!" Jack screamed running into the heat of battle as several players tried

> taking each other out.

Rick: Jack had been reported several times already for apparent cheating due to his invincibility and unlimited ammo.

> Jack sprinted out and pulled out his two desert eagles. He shot two bullets and got two headshots

> without even trying. He was strong. He was fast. He was a professional killer online.

Dan: But did he have a 45mm silencer?

> He was brave,

Tsuneo: He was being followed by a trio of small bears

> and when people were trying their best to conserve ammunition and save their skin, he was out

> there braving what was to come. He already had immortality so it was not fair to the other players

> that he was doing so well at the game. Jack revelled in it.

Rebecca: In short, Jack was an utter arse.

> He was in control and he liked the feeling.

Tsuneo: This bodes well for his future relationship.

> He pulled out his assault rifle combination and put away his two pistols. He screamed and shot at

> the foes that were trying to kill him and Tom.

Dan: And Tom once more, because why not?

> He was a demon.

Rick: He was huge. He had huge guts.

> He was angry, and this was the only way he knew how to relieve himself of stress.

Tsuneo: This seems entirely healthy

> He needed to kill as many enemies as he could. He was a warrior.

Rick: Ans died to an hero.

- > He threw down a smoke grenade. He threw several flash bang grenades as well to
- > disorient his enemies.

Tsuneo: So if grenades are single-use items, does he have an unlimited number of them, or...

- > He aimed the shotgun at one enemy and shot one shell into the enemy. He
- > used a special type of grenade,

Dan: One that exploded.

Rick: Cunning.

- > threw it at the enemy, and shielded Tom from the shrapnel as the
- > grenade exploded. Tom was using a AA 12 gage shotgun and was blasting away at other people.

Rebecca: But he doesn't matter. More about how Jack hates his perfect life.

- > They worked well together. And then suddenly, one of the other players had enough of Jack and
- > Tom and decided to pull out the ultimate weapon.

Tsuneo: A board with a nail in it.

- > They pulled out a massive war machine.

Rick: If nothing else is specified, can we say it's the War Wheel?

Tsuneo: Sure, why not?

- > It landed
- > and its leg landed on Jack. They had done this on purpose. Immortal though he may be, Jack could
- > no longer play as he was pinned underneath the machine

Rebecca: He can't be killed, but he can be somewhat inconvenienced

- > Tom ran and ducked under cover as the
- > machine took aim and fired several missiles at him.

Tsuneo: The nonspecific machine

Rick: We know it has missiles, so that has to narrow it down.

- > His cover exploded and he was knocked down.
- > He swapped weapons to a missile launcher. He aimed as high as he could and fired at the machine.
- > It bounced off the hull and landed several feet away from Tom. It exploded, killing another person.

Dan: He meant to do that.

- > Everyone took aim and started firing their weapons at the huge vehicle that had Jack pinned.
- > Shit, Tom's going to die if I don't do something.

Tsuneo: And why is this a problem now?

- > Jack thought as he opened his Heads-up Display
- > and activated his Mac Cannon on his ship, the Tensa Zangetsu.

Rebecca: By the time you can call in your spaceship to bombard the area with nuclear weapons the game kind of loses any meaning

- > He took aim and waited for the ship to power up. He waited until it was at 15%

Tsuneo: Three days of charging later.

- > and fired a rather weak Mac round. He wanted to break
- > open the vehicle that pinned him down, but he did not want to kill Tom in the process as well.

Tsuneo: He only wanted a small, localised nuclear explosions.

- > He closed his eyes as he felt the ground shake beneath

Dan: Not him, that's just a random intrusion from Jurassic Park World.

- > him as the Mac round penetrate the
- > atmosphere and ram down on the vehicle that pinned him underneath its foot. It took a step back, its
- > top blown open.

Rick: It's a convertible nonspecific killing machine with missiles

- > Tom took the moment to activate a jetpack. He flew up over the machine and used
- > Spawn's Hell Chains to rip open the chase of the massive vehicle.

Tsuneo: Demon chains work against giant robots. Good to know.

- > The occupants looked up in fear.

Rick: Also vaguely wondering why he hadn't done this before.

- > "Surprise motherfuckers." Tom said as he tossed in a mini-nuclear grenade into the vehicle.

Rebecca: Nuclear weapons it is.

Tsuneo: Good to see that they're not being silly about this.

- > Tom zipped through the air and the explosion from on top of the vehicle was deafening. Like a nut,
- > the vehicle cracked open, sending molten, radioactive remains on the battle field.

Tsuneo: Molten radioactive slag, just like a cracked nut.

- > Jack got up.

Rick: He was invincible, but he was also covered in molten radioactive slag. So a bit of a lateral move

- > He took out his sword and began running towards one of the enemies that were closest to him.

Rebecca: I mean, obviously they gunned him down, but that doesn't matter.

- > He ran
- > and with a flick of the wrist, disarmed his foe. He ran his sword through the enemy and twisted the
- > sword, transforming the Avatar into coins that Jack picked up.

Dan: Mortal Kombat fatalities must look weird in this world.

- > Jack pulled out a sniper rifle and
- > looked at his Heads Ups Display. He saw markers that showed where his enemies were per the
- > nearest location to his position.

Rick: Damn stealth mechanics never work right.

- > He saw one person taking out a Jeep and got in. Jack wasted no
- > time and shot at the driver seat. His bullets passed through the windshield, slamming into the driver,
- > turning the Avatar into coins as well.

Rebecca: So in short, Mark is quiet and reserved and can't talk to girls, and turns into a complete ragemonster online. I foresee a SWAT team in his future.

- > The jeep disappeared at the same time. Jack aimed once more
- > to another enemy that were closest to him. The enemy had changed his form and was now a
- > massive Kraken like animal from The Clash of the Titans.

Dan: It's the little things that you fail to notice.

- > It was massive.

Tsuneo: It was massive and it was massive.

- > Jack aimed and fired at the beast's eyes. The animal screamed in pain,

Rick: The sad death of Squiddly Diddly.

- > and Jack heard through his headset that the player was cursing him out as well.

Tsuneo: But that was the player's fault for not having all the game-breaking advantages Jack did.

- > Jack pulled out a missile launcher and began firing it at the Kraken,

Dan: When you can't think of what to do, missile launchers.

Rick: That's probably why he struck out with Amira.

- > which began coming after him. He pulled out his Optimus Primal skin and entered it.

Rebecca: Making the missile launcher seem a bit pointless

- > He activated his Jets and began flying over the monster. He fired several rounds at the beast's head.

Dan: He was beginning to wish he'd paid for the Medusa's Head weapon.

- > The Kraken

- > brought its arm up to try and swat Jack from the sky. Jack activated his shoulder cannons and
- > began firing once more at the Kraken.

Rick: This fight demonstrates what Jack's really about. A endless supply of guns.

- > The Kraken raised one of its tentacles and brought it down
- > over Jack, who could not dodge quick enough.

- > How is it seeing me? Jack thought. I took out its eyes.

Tsuneo: Maybe it's got a guide dog.

- > He felt the pressure of something swatting
- > him from the sky. It was not painful, it just felt like something warm pressing against his body.

Dan: In the real world, his siblings were piling things on top of him to see how long it would be before he noticed

- > His Heads-Up Display said something different.

Tsuneo: It said he should get out more.

- > He should have been feeling pain or receiving damage.

> However, with the Easter Egg made it impossible for Jack to die.

Rebecca: By not letting his opponents know this in advance, Jack was essentially grieving

- > He was slammed onto the ground.
- > He transformed into Gorilla mode and picked up the massive tentacle. He ripped the tentacle apart
- > and then transformed once more into robot mode.

Rick: Then turned into his bat mode, for some reason.

- > He used his swords to cut up the beast.

Rick: Calamari for everybody!

- > He fired his shoulder cannons at the beast's head.

Dan: That did something, we guess.

- > He flew, up above the Kraken. He activated a mod that
- > he applied to his Optimus Primal skin.

Tsuneo: He turned into a Japanese store-exclusive repaint

- > His chest opened and revealed a cannon that was bigger than his shoulder cannons.
- > His cannon on his chest began counting down from ten.

Rebecca: Jack is a fan of needlessly long countdowns.

- > The Kraken lashed out wildly. It could no longer see him.

Dan: Why?

Tsuneo: Because

- > Jack aimed his chest cannon and fired a blue ball of energy right through the
- > Kraken's head, killing it, turning the player into coins. The amount of power that the shot used
- > deactivated the Optimus Primal skin, so Jack turned back to normal.

Rick: Oh no. Now he'll have to use something else in his ridiculously overpowered arsenal to effortlessly kill things.

- > He fell and landed on the
- > ground. He pulled out his two Desert Eagles and began running. The other players were busy trying
- > to kill each other, no one even noticed him.

Rebecca: Nobody noticed the guy who had just been on a one-man killing spree and had fought a giant squid

- > He looked for Tom, who was fighting against someone playing as Aquaman, wielding a trident.

Dan: Displaying a level of consistency and commitment to theme that was previously unheard of.

- > Tom was using a long sword and a Glock to try and wound his opponent, who was powerful.

Rick: Tom on the other hand had recently been reset to zero. Twice.

- > Jack pulled out another skin, this time of Iron Man's Hulk Buster armor.

Tsuneo: Tom has a pistol. Jack has a gigantic power armour suit. Seems fair to me.

> He used mini-missiles and fired them at Aquaman. The avatar burst into flames, screaming
> as death overcame him.

Dan: Tom must really be feeling useful at this point.

> He turned into coins, which Tom more than willingly picked up.

> "Finders keepers." Tom said.

Tsuneo: So Jack's plowing down players to help Tom rebuild everything he lost?

Dan: Everything he lost following Jack while Jack got the unbalanced powers.

Tsuneo: Good point.

> "Let's get a move on." Jack told his friend. "Activate your bike and follow me."

> Tom took out his Ghost Rider motorcycle and climbed on.

Rick: He's only just been able to buy that again. Up until now he's been using Dagwood's bicycle.

> Jack flew as Tom rode the motorcycle.

> They found someone in a Venom skin battling a Spartan from Halo.

Tsuneo: I mean sure, why not?

Dan: Heck, I stopped worrying about this nonsense two chapters ago.

> The bullets did little to hinder the avatar wearing the Symbiote.

Rebecca: Yeah, but show him a clip from Spider-Man 3 and you'll kill him.

> Also, the suite that the Spartan was wearing could not be

> punctured by the spikes that the Venom character was trying to use to kill the enemy with.

Dan: It was a battle of two very stupid people

> Jack used two tank missiles to get their attention.

Rick: He got their attention by blowing them apart

> Tom did the trick where he rode on the back wheel of the bike and raised the front wheel in the air.

Dan: If only there was a word for that

> He brought down the wheel on the Venom player, who screeched in pain and shock.

Rebecca: He'd hoped his death wouldn't be so stupid.

> Jack landed right on top of the Spartan and threw away the player's

> assault rifle that he had been using. Jack grabbed the player's head and yanked off his helmet. The

> player was angry,

Tsuneo: Yelling about cheating and unfair advantages or something stupid like that.

> pinned against the floor, unable to move or do anything.

Rebecca: Because apparently Jack was really heavy and had pinned all four of his limbs at once

> Jack pulled out a plasma

> grenade and pressed it to the player's chest. He leapt off him and the explosion destroyed the

> enemy.

Tsuneo: Jack really is a psycho, isn't he?

> In the meantime, Tom's flaming bike burned through the Venom player's chest, killing it. Venom
> roared as his body disintegrated. Tom picked up all the coins that were there to collect, as did Jack
> from the Spartan.

Rick: Did you know that when you kill people in the OASIS you get coins from them?

Dan: I wouldn't have figured it out if the fic didn't mention it every single time it happened.

> Suddenly, Jack's Heads-Up Display started pinging indicating he was getting a
> call or voice message.

Rebecca: He'd set all his notification sounds to a screaming goat, so he couldn't tell.

> He put out a time up display to stop the other players from attacking him.

Tsuneo: It was a very polite free-for-all murderfest

> Tom did the same, curious to see what was going on.

Rebecca: Tom got ganked three times while Jack was on the call.

> "Hello, Mark?" Amira asked as her avatar, Princess May. "I was wondering if you wanted to meet
> me at a dance party that's about to start."

Rebecca [Amira]: Hey Jack, would you like to engage in some rudimentary socialising rather than
just mindlessly shooting things?

Tsuneo [Jack]: Hm, let me think about that...

> "I'm not really good at dancing, but yeah, we can go." Jack said. "It will be fun."

Rick: Demonstrably not true.

> "Okay, I'm sending you the code to get to the dance hall." Amira said. "I can't wait to see you."

> "Me too." Jack/Mark said, gritting his teeth as he knew what his parents would expect of him.

Rebecca: Spending all his time in a PvP free-for-all is fine, but talking to a girl is too much.

> "I will see you then."

> "Okay." She said, and then they hung up.

Rick: Strangely enough, his Spartan armour was not the weirdest outfit at the dance contest.

> "Was that her?" Tom asked when Jack turned to face him. "Are you actually going to go dancing?"

> "Yeah that was Amira from school." Jack replied. "I'm going to go meet her and see what we can do
> together."

Dan: Jack was hoping that she had some items that needed repairing.

> "Just give us five more minutes." Tom whined. "We haven't won yet."

> "Okay, Yeah." Jack said, with mirth. "Let's do this."

Rick: Three hours later, the contest long over, Amira is still waiting for Jack to stop wailing on people.

> Jack spawned on board his ship the Tensa Zangetsu. He went to the Captain's Quarters to pick out
> something good to wear for dancing.

Rebecca: If he wears a suit from Buckaroo Banzai, I'm leaving.

- > He picked out black dress shoes with no laces, black pants, a
- > blue dress shirt, a black tie and a black blazer. He looked at his avatar,

Tsuneo: He somehow looked even less interesting than usual.

- > and was pleased with how it looked.

Dan: Adequate!

- > However, he needed to do something about the hair. A Top Knot would not do. He decided
- > to comb out his hair so that it parted in the middle and fell down the side of his head and to the back
- > of his head as well.

Tsuneo: Or he could select a new hairstyle from the customisation menu.

- > He added blue sparkles to his skin to make his skin shine.

Rick: He's either a Twilight Vampire or a Tiberium Mutant. Your call.

- > He went to the bridge of his ship and piloted the massive ship to hover over the dance rooms in OASIS.

Tsuneo: Yeah, you're not going to get valet parking for that.

- > He took a drop pod down to the dance hall that Amira/ Princess May specified.

Rebecca: While she stood there and sighed at his pointlessly flashy and self-indulgent entrance

- > He landed outside and looked for
- > Princess May. He looked around and saw that many couples were entering the dance hall.

Tsuneo: Jack saw all the happy couples laughing and dancing together and thought of his ship.

- > People
- > from all over the OASIS were entering, wearing different but cool looking clothing of different
- > designs.

Dan: Since I have no idea what any of them look like, I'm just going to hit the 'Random' button in Create-a-Wrestler mode a few times

- > They were all happy together, with nothing held back.

Rebecca: I just love this Great Gatsby themed dance party.

Dan: So much.

- > Jack on the other hand was
- > sweating and he could feel his heart hammer in his chest. He wanted to make a good impression on
- > Princess May.

Tsuneo: Too late.

- > He did not want to appear to be shallow or vile,

Tsuneo: Way, way too late for that

- > but wanted to make sure he showed her the best side of himself.

Dan: Which is why he started shooting other players.

- > He could feel sweat bead all around his headset. He took time to grab a
- > tissue and dab around his forehead, careful not to accidentally log off. And then, there she was. Her
- > black hair was done up in curls. Her skin was white as ivory.

Rebecca: Despite this fic using the Ready Player One movie as its basis, I can see it took one of the book's lessons to heart.

Tsuneo: Which was?

Rebecca: Be a white American male, or as close to it as possible.

- > Her eyes first appeared black and
- > dark, and then changed to glistening jade colour. Her dress was her favorite colour.

Dan: Which the author totally didn't forget between her introduction and now. At all.

- > Jack breathed in and held his breath as he saw her.

Dan: [Jack] PRETTY LADY?

- > She smiled as she came closer to him. They were the same height

Tsuneo: All avatars had a standardised height for the sake of object interaction.

- > although Princess May was wearing high heels. This would turn to be an amazing night.

Rick: That's nice for them. Say, what about Lynx?

- > GoldDragonZ: Hey guys, I just wanted to take the time to say thank you for reading my story.

Tsuneo [Tired]: You're welcome

- > I am enjoying it very much.

On that final comment, the big screen turned off, converting the world back to prose format. "And that was the wall of text that amounted to the third portion of Ready Player One the Adventures of Jack," Tsuneo considered, "In which we resolve the fic's major challenge before we even get halfway though it."

"A point that does concern me," Rebecca admitted. "After we established the premise, I assumed that we would spend the entire run of it on the hunt for the Eggs with fighting Lynx being a recurring subplot."

"But we're not," Dan noted. "We kinda got that over and done with halfway through chapter five of twelve."

"Yeah," Rick nodded. "I mean, on one side, I suppose that leaves us with not knowing where the fic is going from here. On the other side, given the rest of the chapter and then the next one, I'm not sure if that's a good thing."

"Well yes," Tsuneo nodded. "I mean, this last portion raised a whole bunch of new issues."

"Like the eggs," Dan considered. "Jack, Lynx and Artemis are now immortal in the OASIS, yet they're allowed to continue interacting with it like nothing's happened. Which given that they play PvP deathmatches does seem a tad unfair."

"Just a bit," Rick added. "I mean, Jack's already been written with every advantage he could possibly have, but making him immortal is just a bit much."

"Which makes me wonder what was the point of these eggs," Rebecca commented. "I mean, yes, this is still only halfway through the fic so there may be some reason why they need these three people to be immortal."

"But?" Tsuneo asked.

"But I somehow doubt it," Rebecca finished. "We've had no indication that this is a part of anything bigger. If there was, you'd think the fic would have pointed it towards us by now."

"You're also assuming a greater competence on the fic then it's demonstrated so far," Tsuneo countered.

"This is also true."

"I mean, it's not like Jack going into deathmatches to murder people without any risk of consequence or the like is exactly top-tier heroic," Dan considered. "I mean, it's basically cheating."

"Speaking of cheating, is there any reason at all why the High Five haven't just lifetime banned Lynx?" Rick asked. "Especially since Artemis said she could do it to his face."

"Given that they're actively enabling him?" Dan shrugged. "Really, I have no clue at all."

"Not that the rest of the fic was exactly winning material," Tsuneo noted. "The extravagantly dull highlights of Mark's day to day life did not make for gripping reading."

"It did not," Rebecca noted. "But yet, there is his newfound fantasy girlfriend."

"Oh yeah," Rick said. "I can tell she's going to be the most amazingly well developed and realised character and certainly not a shallow prop at all."

"And not just that," Rebecca continued, "But my god, did that whole thing about his pining for her have major creeper vibes. The combination of breathless idolising and massive self-pity did not exactly create a positive image."

"And that concerns me, and I'm worried this will be the major plot going forwards," Tsuneo sighed.

"And we're only halfway there," Dan finished.

"Even worse."

"I can tell that you're all getting really engaged with this fic," the Voice beamed.

"If you mean 'deeply loathing it on every level', then sure," Dan shot back.

"Fantastic," The Voice continued. "So you'll all be glad to know that we're going to be covering the next two chapters next time."

"And I'm sure that they will be as riveting as these two were," Rebecca sighed.

"Oh, I have no doubt," the Voice enthusiastically added.

"Wonderful," Tsuneo finished. "Well, we survived these two chapters and made it half way. I suppose that's something."

"Yeah, but now we have that real problem where we don't know where the fic's going to go next," Dan noted. "And I've seen enough fics go insanely off the rails to be concerned."

"And this one at least looked predictable from the outset," Rebecca agreed. "But now? I have no clue."

"I mean, it feels like it's about to flip into slice of life drama," Tsuneo considered. "Mark struggles with school, tries to get a girl and deals with his family with the OASIS stuff in the background."

"What if it turns into a stealth crossover?" Rick spoke up. "Like suddenly, boom, there's something completely out of nowhere in the real world that we did not see coming at all."

"Funny thing is, it wouldn't be the first time the Voice has pulled that on us either," Rebecca considered.

"If such were to happen," Tsuneo pondered, "Can we assume that the crossover would be poorly utilised and under-developed?"

"No doubt," Rebecca nodded.

"So not like the crossover premises we came up with."

"Yeah." Dan nodded. "Which means one thing."

"We've put more thought into the fic than the author did," Tsuneo finished. "Again."

Author's notes:

I'll admit now that my own reactions to the fic while reviewing it for use mirrored those of the cast. Okay, we've just resolved the fic's central plot and we're less than halfway in. What the hell are we going to do next? I certainly didn't see the pivot from Jack the invincible internet god to Mark the guy who wallows in self-pity because he doesn't have a fantasy girlfriend coming, and I'm not sure it's a good thing either. I also have to wonder if this was the author's plan all along, or if they changed directions along the way or what.

We'll be seeing more of Amira/Princess May in the fic to come. Weather that's a good thing is another matter entirely. On the other hand, don't get too attached to Tom, John or Justin, as they're basically irrelevant.

Computer Warrior will probably never see reprints simply due to the level of rights hell it dwells in; after all, it was basically backdoor advertising for various video games. I dare anyone to write the fanfic though.

Next time, we meet the genius responsible for all of this

Ready Player one copyright Random House and Warner Brothers

Ready Player One: The adventures of Jack written by GoldDragonZ

Rebecca Bartley and Rick R. Mortis created by Rick R. (natch)
Tsuneo Tateo and Dan created by Zogster

Questions? Comments? Complaints? Even more guns? Email us at [elmerstudios00 \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:elmerstudios00@gmail.com) and register your Jeff.

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All of Elmer Studios' Classic MSTings, random DELTA Invasion Episode Generator and other stuff in one spot

> "Hello, Mark?" said Krystle. "I finished my shift, should I come over to David's so that we can work
> on the assignment?"

> "Hey Dave, it is Krystle." Mark told David. "She wants to know if she should come over so we can
> continue doing the assignment."