
Episode 449 – Meet the idiot behind all this mess

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.

“Well after whole minutes of peace, we’re back to the bloodshed,” Tsuneo admitted as he and Rebecca entered the apartment.

“What happened?” She asked. “Things were looking so hopeful too.”

“That’s what I thought,” he admitted. “But no, there was a new development that completely threw everything.”

“Which was?”

“An Orange retro-Classic Spaceman,” Tsuneo sighed.

“That bad?”

“No offence, but your club sounds like they’re at Rick level of obsessiveness,” Dan noted as he and Rick entered.

“Was that ‘no offence’ for me or Rick?” Tsuneo asked.

“You. We all know what Rick’s like,” he replied.

“This is true,” Rick nodded. “Just wait till I have another chance to list foreign GI Joe variants.”

“Here we go,” Rebecca sighed.

“I’m just saying that Cobra Mortal is an insane rabbit hole,” Rick explained.

“Before he goes too far, there’s something else that was on my mind,” Dan admitted.

“What’s that?” Tsuneo asked.

“I’m kind of lost with where this fic is going,” he contiunued. “See, when we got going, I assumed that the whole thing would be about the hunt for these Easter Eggs.”

“Right,” Tsuneo noted. “With maybe getting the third egg being the end of act two, and then act three being the inevitable showdown with Lynx.”

“Which would be a logical direction for it.” Rick agreed.

“But it’s not,” Rebecca noted. “Because we got the eggs less than halfway through the fic, and then spent another chapter on Mark doing housework and creeping over one random girl. Furthermore, it does seem that the fic’s direction is now going to be him continue to creep on her.”

“So in short, not what we had expected from the fic at all,” Tsuneo admitted. “And while normally I’d love a change from the long lists of what Halo guns everyone has, this is not exactly a direction I’m comfortable or happy with.”

“Agreed there,” Dan winced. “I could happily live without any more of his efforts to be romantic”

“You’d think that if he wanted the romance plot to be a key part of it then he’d have introduced Amira earlier,” Rick noted. “You know, bounce between her and the OASIS parts of the plot, maybe intertwine the two and make her a part of the narrative from day one."

“As much as it pains me to say this, copying his source material would have been a good way to handle it,” Tsuneo suggested. “Given that Artemis is introduced in the opening scenes of the movie and is there for its entire run, even if much of that is to just be a prop.”

“Then consider that movie Artemis is a far more active and involved character then her book counterpart,” Rebecca shot back. “But I understand what you mean, and I’ve been thinking about this development in the context of fanfic writing as a whole.”

“In short, this is another chance for you to lecture and show off,” Dan noted.

“Of course,” she smirked. “Basically there are two schools of fanfic writing. The first is to have a definite goal and work towards it. This could be everything from a fully planned fic to having a final end goal and deciding ‘well, might as well end the fic here’ sort of thing that still concludes.”

“Like when a TV show is cancelled early but still gets out its finale,” Rick suggested.

“So I suppose that the The Death Games would be one of those,” Tsuneo noted. “It had a baked-in premise of ‘Hunger Games but Batman’ that leads towards an obvious conclusion that you can tell the author was working towards from day one.”

“But what about the whole thing with the fact that they were still on a spaceship and nobody had died?” Dan asked.

“I think that was a last-minute change on the author’s part, mostly so that their OC and Nightwing wouldn’t be even remotely responsible for anyone’s death,” Tsuneo considered. “Either way, it really didn’t make much of a difference to the fic.”

“Makes sense,” Dan nodded.

“I’m going to also throw something out here and say that Delta Invasion was another such case,” Rick offered. “It has a very conspicuous number of chapters, and has the combination of a huge-arse fight and then a final part that’s a disconnected mess that’s a clear tribute to its source material.”

“No. I’m with you there,” Tsuneo admitted. “The Fic does show a certain progression; story elements are bought up in one chapter, explored in the next and then forgotten about in a logical sequence. The planet DELTA, the Blade of Souls, John Barren and so on. The fic can be divided into mini-arcs of a couple of chapters each, and as insane as it sounds, they do work in sequence.”

“Plus it’s got a final showdown,” Dan added, “That the fic built towards.”

“In a similar vein, what about The Dark Spiner and Old Conflicts Renewed,” Rick offered. “While far from the most developed or well realised story, it does have a definite start and works towards a definite end goal.”

“And like DELTA, it goes through mini-arcs,” Tsuneo noted, “Even if each one of them is ‘Kevin beats stuff up’, they follow in a logical sequence along that line.” He sighed. “And it’s a pretty sad world where Kevin is an example of a well-planned fanfic.”

“Just a bit,” Rebecca nodded. “The other one is the fic that’s clearly made up as it goes along. The author has a premise, but really has no idea what to do with it after they start writing.”

“I’m immediately reminded of Mutants versus Zombies,” Tsuneo considered. “The fic’s entire premise was the pairing between Possession Sue April and Logan, but it’s obvious that the author had no plan with what to do with the story after that.”

“Yeah, they flipped between kind of sort of but not really adapting X-Men episodes to then throwing things together, but you can tell they had no idea what they wanted to do,” Dan added.

“Plus there were no zombies,” Rick noted. “I mean, the fic constantly alluded to them existing, but again the author clearly had no idea for how to bring them into the fic or what to do with them.”

“Related to that, what about Star Spider?” Dan asked. “That one clearly had no story to it at all beyond the initial premise of introducing the author’s OC.”

“It did not,” Tsuneo agreed. “And it’s clear that the writer was just farting out whatever idea came to their mind as they wrote it without any actual overall plan. Look at how often new characters or plot elements would be introduced, get one or two chapters and then be forgotten altogether”

“And no clue where it was going either,” Dan added. “I mean, even Girl on Fire had an idea where it was going, even if it had no clue how to get there.”

“You know what else was like that?” Rick spoke up. “Mad Dog Squad.”

“Hmm,” Tsuneo considered. “It did open with a premise and dumping a massive cast of characters, and did wander a bit, but I thought it was showing signs of progression along the way.”

“Well yes,” Rick admitted, “But also no. Because when you look at it, Mad Dog squad’s plot is clearly reactive rather than being planned.”

“How so?”

“It was written at a point where Rifts had a metaplot that was being advanced as each new sourcebook was released,” Rick explained. “Each new chapter of Mad Dog Squad is introducing new elements from the newest sourcebooks, be they aliens, monsters, story elements or whatever else. The author was clearly responding and trying to keep up with the metaplot without contradicting it.”

“So they couldn’t have had an end in mind,” Tsuneo considered, “Because they’d need to write around whatever the books did.”

“Exactly,” Rick nodded. Not only was there no overall plot, the plot was entirely dependant on someone else’s plans.”

“So what about Leena Frost-Wagner?” Dan asked.

“I don’t think anyone had any idea what that fic was doing,” Tsuneo shot back. “Least of which was the author.”

“Good morning everyone,” the Voice crashed into the conversation.

“And speaking of no planning at all, good morning to you too, Jaw Bone,” Rick replied.

“...was that a Rock Lords joke?” Dan asked.

“It was indeed,” Rick nodded.

“Nice,” Dan admitted. “I did not see that coming.”

“So while the idiot brigade are congratulating each other on their stupidity, what do you have for us today?” Rebecca asked.

“Any reason why you’re asking?” Tsuneo enquired. “You know what it will be.”

“I live in hope,” she admitted.

“Well you’ll be glad to know that we’re going to be covering the next two chapters of Ready Player One the Adventures of Jack,” the Voice confirmed.

“See?” Tsuneo said.

“It was worth the shot,” Rebecca shrugged.

“This means you’re starting on the second half of the fic,” the Voice added. “I hope you’re all as excited about it as I am.”

“Well there’s a loaded statement,” Tsuneo simply admitted.

“So what do you think will happen in this part?” Dan asked as he took his place on the couch.

“At this stage, I have no idea,” Rebecca admitted as she and the others joined him. “But I’ll take fifty-fifty on it being Jack listing his inventory or more creeping on Amira.”

“Which do you want less?”

“I honestly don’t know,” Rebecca admitted as the big screen turned on, converting the world over to script format. “And that frightens me.”

> Chapter Seven

> GoldDragonZ: I hope people are enjoying this story.

Dan: I’m not quite sure how, but hey.

> I know I am enjoying writing it. It is all coming from my head.

Rebecca: As well as the messages he’s getting from his dog.

> Some things I wish happened,

Tsuneo: Like the collapse of civilisation into a Cyperpunk dystopia

> some things did happen, some things will never happen,

Dan: Like anyone using the term ‘gunter’

> but that's life.

> Jack smiled. Princess May smiled back as he took her by the hand.

Tsuneo: More vacant smiling then Leena Frost-Wagner

> They knew who each other
> were because their names showed above their avatars briefly.

Rick: Along with their vanity titles. He was Killmeister Jack_100292402 and she was Princess Princess May

> They entered the dance hall where they heard the music pulsing through the walls.

Dan: The virtual structure was shaking to its virtual foundations.

> Princess May was wearing a very elaborate dress
> with different designs woven into the digital fabric. The dress was tight against her abdomen and up
> until under her breasts.

Rick: Everything else was like a circus tent

> Her dress beneath her abdomen flowed out around her. Jack was taken
> away by the beauty

Tsuneo: The distinctly Caucasian beauty.

> of the Avatar that Princess May, rather Amira had created.

Dan: He felt a distinct tightening in his microfibre crotch inlay.

> Every single detail was taken into stride

Rick: Right down to the missing pixel on her upper lip.

> as Princess May wanted it to stand out from other people.

Tsuneo: Everyone else in the room was just using default presets.

> She could tell that
> the way Jack was facing her that he was trying very hard not to be a pervert.

Rick: Well his eyes aren't bulging out of his skull and his tongue hasn't unrolled like a red carpet, so it's a good start.

> He wanted to honour her, but she wanted him to look at her.

Rebecca: Minutes later, with Jack awkwardly dancing backwards while looking in a mirror, they had to admit that it wasn't working.

> She reached up and brushed his cheek. She made him look in her eyes.

Dan: So she put his head in a vice and pried his eyelids open, Clockwork Orange style

> "You're trying to fight it, aren't you?" She asked.

> "Fight what?" Jack said.

Tsuneo: The 5v5 battleground he's got open in another window. This party's boring him.

> "You want to look at me, but you don't know how." She said.

Tsuneo: Have you tried using your eyes?

> "You don't have much experience talking to women. I think you and I are alike.

Rebecca: She doesn't talk to women much either.

> I only know my friends' boyfriends.

Rebecca: Also I suspect her friends will never get any definition at all or even appear.

> Other than that, I don't know anyone else."

Rick: She lives in complete isolation from the rest of humanity

> "I've seen you talking to other men before." Jack said.

Dan: [May] That's my dog, he doesn't count.

> "You've spoken to one of our classmates Alan when we're on spare together."

Tsuneo: He’s sounding oddly accusing here.
Rebecca: Worryingly such

> "Yeah," Princess May said, "I admit, I'm one of his friends,

Rick: She said with no small amount of shame.

> but I don't like him like how I feel about you. You're something else. I really like you.

Dan: For no adequately explored reason.

> Let's talk later. Now, we dance."

> She lead him into the main chamber were players of the OASIS were all dancing together. There
> were men dancing with women, men dancing with men, women dancing with women,

Dan: Hello, I am really a totally hot girl
Rick: Hello, I also am really a totally hot girl

> and even cartoon characters dancing with other cartoon characters.

Rebecca: In the back, Sonic the Hedgehog was getting freaky with one of the Battletoads

> And then a slow song started playing.
> Jack took Princess May by the hand and started dancing slowly with her in his arms.

Dan: Only crushed her toes twice.

> She smiled at him, looking into his gold eyes as he looked into her emerald eyes.

Rebecca: They’re going to have a contest to see whose custom eyes can be more sparkly.

> "Beautiful." Jack said underneath his breath, and she heard it.

Tsuneo: Sadly, he was talking about the last bagel he’d had.

> Happily, she began resting her head on his chest. Jack held onto her closely relishing the fact that
> he was dancing with a girl,

Rebecca: Although he was still in the back of his mind worried about virtual cooties.

> even though it wasn't real.

Rick: And this time he was at least eighty percent sure it wasn’t Hairy Knuckled Chuck

> "Hey Amira," Jack said, pulling away from her. "Did you want to dance in real life?"

> "I would love it." She said. "Are you asking me to prom?"

> "Yeah, I guess I am."

Rebecca: He said as noncommittally as possible.

> Jack smiled. "I want to feel you in my arms for real. I want you to feel the
> same way about me that I feel about you right now."

Rick: [May] Mildly nauseous?
Dan: [Jack] No...

Rick: [May] Deeply regretful?
Dan: [Jack] No!
Rick: [May] Like you've made a fatal mistake and you can see your entire future crumbling before your eyes?
Dan: [Jack] Let's just be friends.

> "I think I've had those feelings for some time now." She said back.

Tsuneo: Amira is the romantic subplot equivalent of his ship. Everything's just handed to him, and it does all the work for him.

> "I wouldn't mind if we did something else in the real world as well."

> "Besides going for coffee, or hot chocolate?" Jack joked.

Rick [Jack]: We could go for tea, for example

> "Mark, thank you for this." Amira/Princess May said.

Rebecca: Internally regretting every moment of this.

> "Let's continue dancing."

> And then the song changed and they started dancing to a quicker beat. And then. They noticed that
> some time had gone by.

Dan: [Jack] Oh look. Time does indeed advance at a regular rate.
Rebecca: [May] I had suspected as such but it is good to have it verified.

> It was almost 12:00 AM, and they had mass and prayer the following
> morning (It was Saturday

Tsuneo: You do know that the Islamic day of rest and prayer is Friday, right?

> and Mark Patel/Jack_100292402 and Amira Qad/ Princess May were good children).

Dan: Boringly such

> They decided to call it a night and turn off their OASIS consoles.

Rick: Jack logged back in five minutes later to gank partygoers and loot their pretty dresses.

> The next day, Mark had finished all his homework for the weekend and had gone to 9:00 AM Mass
> at his community church, Saint Mary's.

Rick: The most generic Catholic Church you can think of

> He studied the Piano history

Dan: According to him, the piano was invented by Sir Jeremy Piano-Smythington in the 19th century

> with his brother and played the
> piano for one hour. He then went onto the OASIS where he decided to talk with some of his friends.

Rick: Church was cutting into his griefing time.

> He spawned on the bridge of the Tensa Zangetsu and looked for his friends. Tom was already
> online, playing a free for all yet again, only this time with tanks.

Tsuneo: In a game that can have giant robots and Krakens, that seems like a pointless distinction

> Jack 100292402/Mark did not want
> to join in at that moment as he just wanted to see how his friend would do by himself.

Dan: Tom died horribly screaming with sharp things in his head.

> Jack opened
> his Heads Up Display to see if John Matthews/Gadanza or Justin Rihaz/ Arathorn, Son of Anamon
> were online. Justin/ Arathorn, Son of Anamon was not online, and neither was John/Gadanza.

Rebecca: Fic, you could have just said that and spared us the effort.

> Maybe they were doing something else in the real world,

Rick: It really was worth all the effort of getting Justin his own OASIS rig, wasn't it?

> like homework or something.

Tsuneo: Jack cannot conceive of people voluntarily being offline, can he?

> In Justin's
> case, it was more than likely as he strove for excellence and did not want to let his parents down,

Dan: And yet, he remains friends with Jack.

> although they did not care very much that he had gotten an OASIS console from his friends.

Rebecca: I thought they banned him from it
Tsuneo: I suspect that might just have been their way of saying they didn't want to pay for his account and headset

> John
> might be out with his family as they had to spend time with their father. Their mother and father had
> split after a few years, so now John had to take over as head of the household,

Rebecca: Something his mother was apparently incapable of doing on her own.

> but they still needed some sort of relationship with their father or something like that.

Rick: He's not entirely sure how parents work.

> Jack looked at his roster for games that people were playing. He needed to let off some more steam

Dan: Okay, so doing homework and going to church makes him frustrated, apparently.
Tsuneo: I think it's more of time not spent exploiting his invulnerability.

> and could no longer wait for his friend to finish. He found a free for all again being played on the icy
> fields of Pluto.

Rebecca: The game was called 'planet or not'.

> The theme was space/sci fi battles so you needed to wear armor or something like
> armor to participate.

Dan: The guy wearing a cardboard box with 'Gundam' sharpied on it was allowed on a technicality.

> You also needed special weapons.

Rick: So... the weapons and armour that he uses all the time
Tsuneo: Apparently so

> John went down into his armory and geared up.

Dan: [Gasps] You know what this means?
Rick: More intense inventory action?
Dan: You know it!

> He put on his normal red and black samurai/ Mjolnir armor

Rebecca: By the way, this is a thing that actually exists
Tsuneo: Thanks, I hate it.

> and this time had his hair down so that he could but on a helmet for styles.

Rick: Is there such a thing as using too much detail?
Rebecca: Yes. Yes there is.

> He took out his Grenade launcher/assault rifle/shotgun combination

Rick: But was it a sci-fi gun?

> and went down into the pod bay area where he climbed into a Drop Pod
> and flew from the ship down to the battle ground. Several people were already playing, killing each
> other.

Dan: Ha ha! You just wiped out years of progress! Good show!

> Jack was well prepared and used a flare to light up the area as Pluto was dark.

Tsuneo: And absolutely nobody else was using any form of lighting whatsoever.

> He ran from
> the pod, firing as he went. He threw a fragment grenade into the air and it landed several meters
> away from his enemies.

Rick: Uh, dude? New guy? Gunfight's over this way.

> Jack fired a shotgun shell and made the grenade explode, lighting up the area as well.

Tsuneo: It does feel like he's overcomplicating the process.

> He started firing his assault rifle at the enemies that he had seen, and hoped that he hit them.

Rebecca: His plan was to simply fire indiscriminately

> One person was turned into coins, and the player that was closest to the destroyed Avatar
> scooped up the coins for himself.

Dan: Screw this, I'm not fighting anymore, I'm just following around that guy.

> He then took aim at Jack and started firing a shotgun at him. Jack ducked and rolled.

Rick: Captain Kirk approved

> He brought up his weapon and unloaded one clip worth of ammunition into the
> enemy. The enemy turned into coins and Jack picked them all up.

Tsuneo: So does he get the coins that they guy picked up from his last kill? Only if he did, then it would pay to sit out of the battle and snipe the last guy rather than actively participating.
Dan: You're thinking about it again.

Tsuneo: I can't help it, I've got to do something here.

> He then saw an explosion
> happen over a hill. He ran forward and looked for any trace of players doing battle against each
> other. He saw someone with an avatar of a Marine from Starcraft

Rick: I was hoping for a marine from Minecraft, but you take what you can get.

> firing a massive machine gun at a Black Ops opponent

Dan: Is that sci-fi enough for this fight?
Rick: It's a good question. I'd hate to turn up to find that my avatar was only Space Opera at best.
Dan: Me too. It'd be so embarrassing.

> who was using a plasma shield to block the bullets from the enemy. Jack fired
> a grenade at the marine, surprising him.

Tsuneo: Someone in this free-for-all shot at him? This comes out of nowhere.

> The marine stepped back, but he was wearing advanced
> armor, and the grenade seemed to just bounce off him. Jack fired three grenades in succession.

Rebecca: Since the first one worked so well.

> The other Black Ops player took the time to shoot at the Marine as well with an M4 Carbine Rifle.

Rick: Time out. Non-sci-fi gun.
Dan: He's totally ruining my immersion.

> The Marine took all the damage, but the grenades just seemed to have no effect. The bullets just
> bounced off him as well.

Rick: [Marine] How do you like it now, teapot?

> Jack put away his weapon and took out his sword from Avatar the Last Airbender.

Rebecca: And now Jack's got a non-sci-fi sword. Who's allowing all this crap?

> He ran up to the Marine and stabbed him in the left elbow,

Dan: Said marine obligingly stood there and let him.

> where the joint was. He tried twisting the blade to break
> open the arm, but the sword broke in two. Jack pulled away and summoned his Hulk-buster armor.

Tsuneo: Superhero, not sci-fi.
Rebecca: Well, I suppose if it was the MCU Hulk-Buster he could try to claim it as such.
Tsuneo: Eh, at best the MCU is action in Superhero drag
Rebecca: This is true.

> He put it on and aimed his right arm with his palm open. He aimed his repulsor beam, at the Black
> Ops player and fired at his head. The player was destroyed instantly.

Dan: What the hell, man, he's the no-seller.

> Now it was the Marine against Jack.

Rebecca: Yes, who will win the amazing struggle of invincible main character versus nameless guy we've never met before?

> Jack fired several small missiles at the Marine.

Rick: Take that, John Cena.

> The Marine dropped to the floor, and the
> missiles flew above him, exploding several meters away. Jack turned on a plasma shield as he
> perceived that the Marine was about to attack him.

Rebecca: Obviously his massive power armour wasn't enough for him.

> The Marine brought up his machine gun and
> aimed from the floor where he was. He opened fire, but the bullets could not get through the shield
> that Jack had pulled up.

Tsuneo: Jack silently lamented that there were no challenges left.

> Jack knew it was for nothing because he was immortal, but he did not want
> other people to know about it.

Dan: Yeah, at this point you're basically flaunting it in people's faces.

> He activated his flight mode and flew up over the shield. He fell onto
> the Marine. He placed his hands on either side of the Marine's head. He activated the repulsor
> beams and melted the helmet off the player.

> "What the fuck are you doing?" The player asked, his skin bubbling with heat.

Tsuneo: Effortlessly cheesing his way through the fic without ever facing any real challenge.

> "Winning." Jack said as he pulled away his right arm,

Dan: I mean, really, is that the best quip you could come up with?
Rick [Jack]: But I worked on it for ages.
Dan: I am so embarrassed to be killed like this

> and prepared to hammer his fist down onto the enemy's head.

> Jack's fist slammed into the ground as the enemy closed his OASIS console, preventing him from
> losing any coins as he did not die.

Tsuneo: Wait, you can do that? This changes everything! You just macro a quick logout and the death penalty becomes meaningless.
Dan: You're thinking about it again.
Tsuneo: Sorry. It's just that every time they talk about how things work, it makes less and less sense.

> Jack stood up and looked around for other enemies to face.

Rick: [Jack] Aha. More people to give me coins.

> There were three enemies to the North East of his position. He took to the air to fly to get to the
> battle that was going on. One enemy was a sort of war machine from an anime. It was a humanoid
> form, two stories high. It was significantly taller than Jack in his Hulk Buster armor. It had wings so it
> too could fly. It was a white machine with two green eyes. It had a pink light saber and a grey
> cannon on its left arm.

Tsuneo: Giant white humanoid anime robot with green eyes, a light saber and a laser gun. Nope, not ringing any bells.

> Another enemy was a white gorilla wielding two Morning Star maces.

Dan: Well this is either the stupidest thing in the fic so far or the best. I can't decide.

> It also
> had a Predator shoulder cannon and a device over its left eye like a scouter from DragonBall Z.

Rick: Is a gorilla with morningstars and a laser sci-fi?
Dan: Truth is I lost track long ago.

> Jack assumed that the scouter and the shoulder cannon were somehow linked so that the gorilla
> could control it.

Tsuneo: Thank you for that, pointless interjection.

> The last enemy was the Red Striker Beetleborg from the television series Big Bad Beetleborgs,

Rebecca: Along with characters from Superhuman Samurai Cyber-Squad and Ninja Turtles: The Next Mutation

> wielding the character's Striker weapon. Jack landed a few meters away from where
> the battle was taking place.

> He chose to go after the smallest enemy, which was the Beetleborg.

Tsuneo: Who was feeling kind of inadequate next to the gorilla and the strangely nonspecific giant anime robot.

> He took out his tank missile, and fired it at the player. The player cried out in surprise.

Rick: Is this a good time an 'Ah, boom?'
Rebecca: Is there ever a bad time?

> She turned around to look at Jack, and
> began firing her weapon at him. He leap into the air, and hovered there. Suddenly, a shot from a
> firearm took him by surprise from behind him. He whipped around and saw Lynx standing there
> close to Jack's position.

Rick: Hey, remember when he was in the fic?
Dan: Not at all
Rick: Me either.

> "What are you doing here?" Jack seethed.

> "I'm here to win." Lynx said, with a smoking revolver in his hand,

Tsuneo: The literal smoking gun in Lynx's prosecution case.

> "The bullet I just shot you with has taken away the affects that the Easter eggs had on you."

Rebecca [Lynx]: By the way, I can do this now.

> "I won those eggs." Jack said. "Why would you take them away from me?"

Tsuneo: Because he's the bad guy?
Rick: You may be on to something there.

> "The way I see it," Lynx said. "The Easter eggs were only supposed to go to one person.

Rick: Even though they were designed to go to three people

[Pause]

Dan [Lynx]: Well okay then.

> The High
> Five were never supposed to have the full control of the OASIS. There can only be one."

Rebecca: Beetleborg player has quietly slipped away while they're talking.

> "There is nothing at all that I can do now, is there?" Jack asked. "I can fire all of my ammunition at
> you, it won't have any effect."

Tsuneo: Congratulations, Jack. Now you know how everyone else feels about you.

> "No, it won't" Lynx laughed. "Now leave before I destroy you and take away your precious coins."

Dan: [Lynx] Now that I have admitted to hacking your account, please leave so you can inform your friends, the game's owners and administrators and allow them to undo what I have done. I am very clever.

> Jack threw a yellow magic orb at Lynx, which wrapped around his body. He also threw down a
> Flash-bang to blind his enemy.

Tsuneo: Then dumped some green slime on him just to be sure.

> Jack flew to his Drop Pod, put away his Hulk Buster armor and climbed into the pod.

Rebecca: Nice of Lynx to give him the time to do all of this.

> He activated it and flew back to the Tensa Zangetsu. He needed to tell
> Art3mis before it was too late.

Tsuneo: Remember, Artemis could have permabanned Lynx at any time. This is all on her.

> He opened a communication link. Suddenly, alarms started going off.
> A Star Destroyer from Star Wars came out from behind the world that housed the Pluto arena.

Dan: Or that could happen, I suppose.

> It started firing its laser cannons at The Tensa Zangetsu.

> "Power on the shields." Jack ordered his robot crew. "Power up the Mac Cannons.

Dan: THREE HOURS LATER!

> Launch all Interceptors."

> Interceptors were small, robot controlled ships that targeted anything else that Jack deemed to be a
> threat.

Rebecca: Mostly he used them to attack people he didn't like on Facebook.

> He programmed his ships to fire on the Star Destroyer and anything that came out of that ship.

Dan: Bad time to be walking the dog then.

> They zoomed past the bridge of the Tensa Zangetsu as the Star Destroyer started firing.

Rebecca: Seeing the automated drone fighters that followed every command his ship's computer gave them, Jack congratulated himself on his skill as a player.

> "Mac Cannons are 35% charged." The computer informed Jack.

Rick: No fic, you're right. I didn't have enough repetitive status reports in my life.

> "Fire all missiles." Jack ordered, and the missile housing units all opened.

Tsuneo: He fired the missiles so the missiles fired.

> The missiles zoomed faster than his Interceptors.

Dan: You would hope so.

> Jack turned on his communication link one more
> time, but got static. Lynx was behind this, and he wanted to stop Jack from telling the High Five
> about what he was up to.

Rebecca: Meanwhile, the High Five were locked in a board meeting discussing next-quarter revenue forecasts and budgetary allocations.

> Jack turned and ran from the bridge. He went into his vault and went to his Easter Eggs.

Dan: He'd grabbed them at massive discount after Easter was over.

> He stopped short and found that all three eggs were still there. However, they were
> housed in green cubes.

> "Ship, scan the hull for any tracking devices." Jack ordered his computer.

Tsuneo: Yes, green cubes logically mean tracking devices.

> "He must have been watching somehow.

Dan: Or used the same find-a-player service that everyone else in this fic does.

> But when did he have time to place a tracker on the hull of my ship? How did he even find it?"

Rebecca: Lynx pretended to be a girl and asked Tom for his details
Tsuneo: Cunning

> Jack had no idea what the answers would be. Suddenly, red alarm lights started going off.

Rick: Wow, it's almost like he's under attack.

> Jack
> turned around and ran from his vault. He stopped short. Lynx was standing there. His computer had
> not known that he was boarding the ship until it was too late.

Dan: Was that because of Lynx's amazing hacker skills?
Rebecca: No, Jack just left the back door open again.

> "You know, I like what you have on this ship." Lynx said. "It will be a great bonus to what I have."

Tsuneo: [Lynx] But I've got to do something about that decor, I mean, really!

> "You could probably copy everything I have, with your programming skills." Jack said. "Why steal
> it?"

> "Why?" Lynx mused. "Because I can,

Dan: Can't argue with that logic

> and you can't do anything about it.

Dan: [Lynx] Which is why I let you go. I am very clever.

> Any last words before I kill you and steal your ship?"

Tsuneo: [Jack] Um, not in the face?

> "Amorath, Forgoran, Zinthiodus!" Jack screamed, activating a black hole spell right behind Lynx.

Rebecca: Oh, by the way, I can do this.

> The atmosphere started being pulled from the ship into the black hole. Jack activated his magnetic
> boots, which made him stick to the ground. Lynx was pulled, but at the last moment before he was
> sucked into the black hole, he activated his jets in his legs and started flying.

> "I'll kill you!" Lynx screamed.

Dan: [Jack] Yeah, how’s that working out so far?

> "Sentinel, come online." Jack told his emergency system in his ship. "Intruder calling."

> Suddenly, a red beam swept through the entire ship, and found Lynx. It targeted him, and began
> wrapping him in yellow energy.

Tsuneo: Sounds useful. Good thing you just made it up.

> It pulled him into the black hole, and then sent him through it.

Rick: Fortunately, he was rescued by the crew of the Palomino

> Jack took out a missile launcher and fired at Lynx, who had no time to dodge or anything.

Dan: Missile launchers. Because black holes just aren’t enough.

> He was swept
> into the void of the black hole. Jack said the spell again, and deactivated the black hole.

> "You come to my ship?" Jack seethed,

Tsuneo: And you don’t even bring a housewarming gift? The nerve of you.

> going back to the bridge. "You think I'm just going to lay down and just give up what I earned?

Tsuneo: [Lynx] Uh.... Yes?

> I don't think so. This means war!"

Dan: Spoken like Bugs Bunny

> Jack looked out and saw that his interceptors were losing. They could not fight against something
> immortal.

Rick: This thought had never occurred to him before now.

> Jack had to decide; cut and run without his trusted robots, or see if he could pull off something.

Dan: He’s going to see if he can destroy the indestructible ship.

> "I'm going to have to buy new robots." Jack seethed.

Rebecca: Sure, hack his account, take away his god mode, threaten his life... But don't you dare make him pay for resupply!

> "You all served me valiantly. All robots, use
> your fire to get the ship's attention and fire on the bridge."

Tsuneo: Lynx has of course accounted for his invincibility and reconfigured his ship for pure offense. All incoming attacks are basically ignored since they're ineffectual, and he concentrates solely on wiping out his enemy.
Rick: Really?
Tsuneo: No, because Lynx is dumb.

> The robots obeyed as only robots with no minds of their own could obey.

Dan: Beep boop I despise you with every fibre of my being.

> Several were destroyed
> before they could reach the bridge. Others fired torpedoes at the bridge.

Rebecca: Not that they did anything, but hey.

> Jack piloted his ship, The
> Tensa Zangetsu to another point and prepared to jump to hyperspace.

> "God's speed." He said to his faithful robots and then the ship zipped away from Pluto.

Dan: Jack cares more about his robots than he does his sister.
Rick: Wait, Jack has a sister?

> Vladislav Volkovskis threw his Headset down. He had failed to steal from Jack_100292402.

Rick: Tried to steal some of that username. It was way too long.

> It was
> upsetting because he thought he was a good player, plus he cheated, and he had also caught Jack
> by surprise. And yet he was beaten.

Rebecca: You cut Jack off from his powers and forced him to go on the run. So tactical defeat but still an operational victory.

> It was not right. He did not want anyone else to be able to get the Easter eggs.

Rick: How's Tridosk, by the way?

> He wanted to be the only one with the powers that they granted.

Tsuneo: This is his entire personality and motivation, by the way.

> Then, if he
> couldn't do things that way, he needed to program something else into the OASIS that would grant
> him a better advantage against all the players, including Jack and Art3mis. He wanted to be the
> very best.

Tsuneo: Like no-one ever was.

> He wanted to be king of all the OASIS. He needed items that would grant him an
> advantage against these top tier players.

Rebecca: Because being immortal wasn't enough of an advantage, apparently

> That meant that he needed to find out the spells that
> would grant him the advantage and he needed to find them quickly.

Dan: Or just make up some crap like that revolver.

> He opened his cell phone and called Lewis Roger, also known as Tridosk on the OASIS.

Rebecca: Also known as SexxxxyKitten69 in several Furry chatrooms

> "Hello?" Lewis said.

> "Sup Noob." Vladislav greeted his friend.

Tsuneo: That greeting should tell you something about their 'friendship.'

> "I need you to do something for me.

Rick [Tridosk]: Is this going to be my standing in queue for a new iPhone again?

> Find out where the High Five spend their time and give me the information.

Rebecca: [Tridosk] I mean, they're massively famous public figures so it really can't be that hard...
Rick: [Lynx] Goddammit, just do it!
Rebecca: [Tridosk] Whoah, okay!

> I need to ask them something."

Dan: Sure, just spy on the richest and most powerful people in the world. Seems easy enough.

> "How can I find that out?" Lewis asked.

> "You'll find a way," Vladislav said. "I know you can."

Dan: Putting a lot of faith in your witless minion there

> "Okay, I'll ask around." Lewis said.

Rebecca: And so Tridosk jumped into every chatroom he could find, asking for the High Five's home addresses.

> "What were you doing?"

> "Just owning noobs, doing the same old thing." Vladislav lied.

Dan: [Lynx] Flaunting my unique powers over worthless nobodies. [Pause] How are you?

> "Just find that out for me, and I'll make it worth your while."

Tsuneo [Lynx]: Do this and there's a pile of Dogecoins with your name on it

> "Okay Vlad." Lewis said. "I'll do it."

> And with that they hung up.

Dan [Lynx]: Sucker.

> The next target was Art3mis.

> "Are you sure?" Parzival asked Jack, who was in Aech's chat room The Basement/ Garage.

Rick: They tried calling it the Basementage, but gave up when they realised how dumb it sounded.

> "Well think about it." Jack said. "He did shield one world from us getting to the egg. He also fought
> us the moment we all met."

Rebecca: That and he's been openly hostile to you at every step
Tsuneo: You may be on to something there

> "And you said that magic worked against him?" Art3mis asked.

Dan: We need to combine the powers of Witch Hazel and Broom Hilda.

> "That means he is probably aware of the same weaknesses that are out there for us."

Rick: They began to formulate a plan to deal with Lynx that involved a pile of free bird seed.

> "We need to find out what Halliday wanted us to use the unlimited ammo, boost in speed, and the
> immortality for." Parzival said

Rick: [Jack] I thought it was just for dunking on other players.

> "Was it really him that left us these eggs this time, or was it someone else who had access to the
> OASIS before?" Aech said.

Dan: Yes, somebody used the OASIS before the guy who invented it

> "It could be a mod that someone else made to make the game more goal oriented."

Rebecca: Somebody made a mod for the OASIS that would override the entire game at the server level and then uploaded it without the admin staff noticing. Yes, this makes perfect sense.

> "If that was the case then why was there no advertisement about these eggs being placed out in the
> OASIS?" Jack asked.

Dan: I mean, maybe there was? How did Lynx find out about them anyway?
Rick: Um, yes, well, that's, anyway, moving on.

> "Maybe there's a fourth egg that we need to find that has something that can explain it to us?"

Tsuneo: Fic, questioning your own premise is not a good look.

> "Where would we find the egg?" Parzival queried. "And it looks like only the three of you can get it
> anyways."

Dan: Shouldn't that be the two of them, given that Jack lost all his powers?
Rick: Well, yes...

> "Ok, so the best way to find something is to go through all the information we have." Jack said.

Tsuneo: Um, nothing.
Rebecca: Well, that was quick.

> "Maybe we need to go back over all areas where we found the eggs?"

> "That might take some doing." Parzival said. "It appears that the worlds where the eggs were
> vanished the moment the eggs were won. We can't go back."

Dan: Parzival doesn't seem to realise that he controls the company that runs the game.

> "I'll see if I can find anything out using my computer software on board the Tensa Zangetsu."

Rebecca: Isn't it nice of the fic to solve all of its problems as soon as they occur?
Tsuneo: It is. I'd hate for there to be any sort of tension or the like.

> Jack said. "I suggest we take some time away from the OASIS as well,

Tsuneo: [Jack] Long enough to live the humiliation down.

> because we don't want to start something before we have all the facts."

Rick: So they decided to never do anything again ever.

> "You want us to what?" Aech laughed. "We're not part of this."

> "This Lynx person may want to use one of our friends to get to us." Jack said. "He might hold your
> Avatars hostage.

Dan: How would that work anyway?
Rick: I suppose you could ask them not to log out or something.

> Do you really want to lose everything you worked so hard for?

Rebecca: I mean, there's an easy way to stop that.
Dan: Wear disguises and pretend to be other players?
Tsuneo: Use the instant logout macro to save your stuff?
Rick: Use dummy accounts like IAmNotAech69 and Decoy_Meatbox?
Rebecca: I was going to say ban Lynx for life, but never mind.

> I know my friends
> would not want to be held hostage because the gear that they have earned is hard to find."

Rick: [Jack] Except for Tom. Go ahead and kill him again.

> "Okay, so I'll lock up the Garage and stay off the OASIS while you guys do your thing." Aech said.
> "Do you need my cell number or something if you need help?"

Dan: And so when Jack called her in the middle of the night because his zip was stuck, Aech realised that she had made a terrible mistake.

> "Yeah that would be helpful." Jack said.

> "I also have friends; did you guys want their numbers as well?"

> "It would be best if we shared all the numbers that we can so that we can prepare those who were
> closest to us."

Rebecca: Jack also wanted their credit card numbers and mothers' maiden names, just to be sure

> "That call is going to go well." Art3mis mused.

Tsuneo: And I'm sure all your friends are perfectly okay with you sharing their phone numbers with a perfect stranger.

> "I know." Jack said. "Everyone for almost a decade has been living digitally, not leaving the OASIS
> until you guys came and closed it down every Tuesday and Thursday.

Dan: And for that, he despises them

> I don't know how my friends will feel."

Rick: Be honest here, it’s not like they have lives of their own.

> "Its for their own benefit." Art3mis said. "You and I have to work together to fight against Lynx."

Rick: Artemis came armed with a Terms of Service violation notice.

> "Hey, don't count us out yet." Parzival said.

Tsuneo: Wish I could.

> "I'll go down tomorrow to OASIS headquarters and talk
> to the programmers to see if they know what can be done against Lynx."

Rebecca: I recall Artemis saying that they could ban him at any time several chapters back.
Tsuneo: Funny that.

> "I'll come with you." Aech said.

Rick: Of course, the programming division could easily restore Jack’s lost powers... No? Okay...

> "We need to let Daito and Shoto know as well." Art3mis said. "They might know someone.

Dan: I’m sure the twelve year old kid has amazing contacts.

> At the very least they will be here in case we need them for something."

> "Okay, let's roll out." Jack said.

Dan: [Jack] You guys see what I did there?
Others: Yes.
Dan: [Jack] I put in an eighties...
Others: We know.

> "What the hell man?" Tom said as Mark told his friends at school that they needed to stay off the
> OASIS.

Rick: [Tom] You’re messing up my whole life.
Rebecca: [Mark] I can’t even begin to unpack that one.

> "I thought you were unkillable? How could he just depower your Easter eggs? Wouldn't he
> need to be in the same room as them?"

Rick: Why?
Dan: Um, because?
Rick: Makes sense to me.

> "You would like to think that, but the eggs are attached to us." Mark explained. "The code he used
> made is so that I am killable now."

Rebecca: Oh no. You no longer have god-mode level advantages over everyone else. You’ll just need to rely on your massive arsenal and huge spaceship. So suck it up, princess.

> "How can you be sure if he didn't kill you?" John said.

Dan: [John] Want me to test it out?

> "You still have everything."

Tsuneo: It’s a minor inconvenience at most.

> "Something changed with my Easter eggs." Mark explained. "There are now some barriers
> surrounding them.

Dan: Upside is they now have custom display cases.

> They may not work anymore, and I don't want to test it out just in case it is true.
> The only egg I can test safely is the one that gives you the boost in speed.

Rick: So time to drive in a straight line and see what happens

> But the High Five and I have decided that we all need to stay off the OASIS

Rebecca: I suppose that they’re fine with letting Lynx terrorise the rest of the OASIS
Tsuneo: Apparently so

> to give time for Wade to find out what he can
> from the higher ups in the OASIS coding department. And I need time to talk to Amira."

> "What do you need to talk to her about?" John asked.

Rebecca: No clue. It’s not like she has anything to do with this at all.

> "He wants to put his 'wocket in her pocket'." Tom joked.

Rick [Mark]: You have never talked to a girl, have you?
Dan [Tom]: I have not.

> "I don't want to hurt her." Mark said. "She needs to know what's going on. Where on campus does
> she and her friends hang out before class?"

Dan: Mate, if she hasn’t told you, she doesn’t want you to know.

> "I think I see her around my locker at the front of the cafeteria." Justin chimed in for the first time.

Rick [Justin]: Also I am still here.

> "Are you brave enough to face her like this."

> "Fuck no." Mark said. "I'm probably going to stumble over my words, but this is important. Can one
> of you come with me?"

Tsuneo: [Jack] At least make a humiliating TikTok out of it.

> "Yeah, I'm good friends with a few of her friends, like Jessica." Justin said. "We've worked together
> in class. I can be your wingman."

Dan [Tom]: You can be my wingman any time
Rick [Mark]: No, you can be mine.

[Pause]

Dan [Tom]: Time for some homoerotic beach volleyball?
Rick [Mark]: You know it.

> "Alright thanks," Mark said.

> "Anytime." Justin said.

> "We're coming too." John said. "We're all your friends."

> The four friends walked quietly, all four of them carrying the books they would need for their first
> class. And then there she was; Amira was speaking to one of her best friends,

Tsuneo: Amira saw them coming in a pack and bolted.

> Alan. Alan was five
> feet, four inches tall. He was not the tallest, but he was the bravest

Rick: Everyone still talked about the time he'd held off the German advance during the Battle of the Bulge

> as he could talk to anyone with no problem.

Rebecca: He was famous for getting Kim Jong-Un to the negotiating table.

> He liked to play basketball, and was good at it.

Tsuneo: He's five four in senior high. The rest of the basketball team are going to mock him

> The girls all thought he was cute.

Rebecca: [Amira] Way cuter than that loser nerd Mark. Oh, hi!

> Amira liked him and that was good enough for Mark.

Dan: Otherwise he would have had to beat Alan within an inch of his life for daring to be near her.

> The four friends walked close to her, and she caught Mark's eye and smiled.

> "I didn't know if we would talk in real life right away." Amira said, smiling.

Rebecca: I mean you already have.

> "I'm glad you came."

> "Hey Amira." Mark said. "There is something I have to say but I don't know how to say it."

Tsuneo: [Mark] So I'm just going to stare at you awkwardly and giggle a bit. That okay?
Dan: [Amira] Uh, no.

> Amira reached out and took Mark's hand.

> "Whatever it is, I can handle it." She said. "You can trust me. I'm not going to hurt you."

Rick [Mark]: I like Halo Combat Evolved.
Rebecca [Amira]: Oh god damn it.

> "Its about the OASIS." Mark said.

> "What do you mean?" Amira asked, not understanding what Mark was trying to say.

> He was sweating buckets.

Tsuneo: He was leaving a puddle on the floor.

> His knuckles were white as he was squeezing his books. And then he felt
> a reaffirming hand on his shoulder.

> "Remember Mark," Justin said. "We're here for you. Like Amira said, you don't have anything to
> worry about.

Dan: [Justin] Just think of her as that NPC you want to bang.
Rick: [Mark] The Prophet of Regret?
Dan: [Justin] TMI, dude. TMI.

> From what the others have told me, you have faced demons more frightening than Amira.

Rick: But how many hit points does she have?

> She wants to talk to you. Just breathe. You can do it."

Rebecca [Amira]: I'm right here, you know.

> "You can do it, put your back into it." Tom said.

Rick: [Amira] It's not a weightlifting contest.
Tsuneo: [Jack] It's not?

> "Amira, online." Mark started. "There's a guy who is out to get me. I won three Easter eggs, and
> there maybe more. He wants them all to himself so he's coming after the other winner as well.
> There was just us three; it has nothing to do with the big Easter Egg that came out after Halliday's
> death.

Rick: Well maybe. Truth is, we have no idea.

> It seems that someone else wants people to compete for other things to win. Right now, I
> have three Easter eggs. One grants Immortality in the OASIS. One grants a boost in speed. One
> grants unlimited ammunition. He's coming after me because he wants to be the only one to have
> the eggs."

Rebecca [Amira]: If you're trying to break up with me, you can just say it.

> "Maybe you should just give him the eggs." Amira said.

Dan: [Mark] But they're mine! He won them for me fair and square.

> "I don't like you because of your coins and
> stuff you have online. I like you for you on the outside.

Tsuneo: She likes him because... he's an introverted nerd?
Rick: Apparently so.

> Remember, the OASIS is just a game.

Rebecca: Mark has never been so shocked by such a blatant affront before.

> You need to figure something out about who you want to be when you outgrow the OASIS."

> "Outgrow the OASIS?" Tom asked, a little irritated.

Dan: Tom's life goal was to play capture the flag until he died.

> "Don't say anything." John told his friend.

Rick: But blink your eyes if you're being threatened or coerced into speaking. We'll know.

> "I don't want you to get in his way." Mark said. "That's all; I care about what happens to you."

Dan: [Mark] To... Princess May, I mean.
Tsuneo: [Amira] You are so blocked.

> She smiled a beautiful smile.

Tsuneo: Did I mention that she’s beautiful because she’s beautiful.

> "I have a friend that might be interested in talking to you, Mark." She said.

Dan: She blatantly lied.

> "I've noticed that you are always so serious. He might be able to loosen you up.

Rebecca: He’s a masseur. His rates are reasonable.

> Here is his phone number. Do you have a cell phone?"

> "Yeah." Mark said, pulling out his I-Phone that he only used for emergencies.

Rick: I-Phone 87. We brought back the charging port.

> "What's your number, by the way?"

> "Oh yeah, I should probably give you that as well." She said.

Tsuneo: If this is all an overly elaborate scam to get her number, then he’s doing a good job of it

> She gave him her cellphone number and the number for the person that could help him.

> "Thanks." Mark said.

> "No, thank you, Mark." She said. "I think we will start having a good relationship."

Tsuneo: [Amira] This is an example of how humans do speak.

> "I hope so too." Mark replied.

> "Guys, its going to be class soon." Alan said.

Dan: In case anyone cares.

> "I hope you guys know what you're doing."

> "Thanks, Alan." Mark said.

Rick: Now quit padding your part.

> "No problem." He said.

Tsuneo: This dialogue has all the life of an automated text to speech system

> Mark did not go home early that day. He wanted to know more about the person that Amira had
> suggested he talk with.

Dan: She didn’t mention why she wanted Mark to talk to him, but it involved a bathtub and hydrogen peroxide.

> He spent some time in the school library, looking up the phone number
> which was tied to a social media account.

Rebecca: Cyber stalking it is.

> He found out that the person's name was Nick Harvey.
> Mark's eyes widened. This guy looked like he could be a bouncer for a club. He had several
> pictures with other people and nine times out of ten he was the tallest. His arms were like tree
> trunks. There were some pictures with Nick having no shirt on.

Rebecca: So Amira is putting Mark in contact with a buff shirtless guy to get him to ‘loosen up’. I have a lot of concerns about this.

> He had several tattoos; one was a
> cross on his left shoulder. One was a wolf on his right shoulder. He looked like he trained for
> something.

Dan: I can only imagine that his ‘training’ involved lonely housewives.

> Mark looked up his work detail and was astonished at this man's resume. He was 32
> years old and had served several years as a police constable in the Toronto Police Department

Rick: He’d mostly worked undercover under a variety of aliases, such as a lifeguard, bodybuilder or male stripper.

> and was now a Mental Health Practitioner. His wife was a blonde bombshell,

Tsuneo: Okay, fic. Settle down.

> and their four-year-old son was quite cute.

Dan: And now Mark’s collecting pictures of their dog.

> Nick had brown hair, and in most of his pictures had his hair spiked up. He also had
> a goatee. He had grey eyes

Rebecca: He was also better described then Tom, Justin or John. Take this how you will.

> and had many friends online.

Rick: Mark wants you to know that he also has lots of friends online but he just doesn’t list them because of their privacy and anyway you wouldn’t know them and stuff.

> Mark looked up where Nick was working. It was completely blank, which Mark found to be odd. Why
> would Nick say that he was a Mental Health Practitioner but not put where he worked?

Tsuneo: And what exactly were his qualifications anyway?

> And then it
> dawned on him. His teacher had said that with most if not all health care, it was a serious offence to
> give out patient information, and that also had to do with mental health.

Dan: This guy is the mental health professional?
Rick: Is he? Is he really?
Dan: I do have my doubts.

> Mark decided that he needed to meet this man that Amira suggested him to call.

Rebecca: Mark was never seen again.

> He swiped his phone to make the call
> and searched the contact list for Nick's number. He found it and made the call. The phone rang
> twice, and then a man picked up.

Tsuneo: ‘Mark called his number.’

> "Hello?" Nick said from the other side.

> "Hi, this is Mark Patel." Mark introduced himself. "I'm a friend of Amira's."

> "Oh, Mark!" Nick said. "Amira has told me about you."

Rebecca [Amira]: So there’s this boy in my class who keeps following me around and staring at me like some sort of creepy weirdo

> "I don't know what to say." Mark said. "Amira and I have only just started talking to each other. I
> don't know how she could have known that much about me."

Dan: [Nick] Your password game is weak, that’s how.

> "She's liked you for a long time, Mark." Nick said.

Rick: [Nick] I know. I’ve tried to help her, but she won’t budge on that point.

> "She found out that one of your favorite movies
> was The Mark of Zorro. She had dressed up as Zorro during Halloween at your school."

> "I know." Mark said. "I saw that. I didn't want to assume that she liked me.

Dan: Really? Because it couldn’t be more obvious if she’d put it in huge blinking neon letters

> I thought that it could be a coincidence. Our friends don't hang out with each other.

Rick: They maintain at least a hundred meters distance at all times.

> It wasn't until recently that we started
> talking. She was the one who initiated it by asking one of her friends to talk to one of my friends
> about me.

Tsuneo: In case you missed the previous chapter, here it is again.

> I'm not really good at talking to people outside the OASIS."

> "It's about time that you overcame that," Nick said.

Dan: So this is a Ready Player One fic about getting people to quit the OASIS?
Rebecca: If that is the endgame, I will love this fic forever.

> "I will text you an address. Meet me there and I will help you get better, Mark. I want to help you."

Rebecca: So does anyone else here think this is all incredibly suspect?
Tsuneo: Like nothing else.

> "But you don't even know me." Mark said. "What could I have done to make you interested in
> helping me?"

Rick: Be a paying client.

> "I always want to help people." Nick said. "That is my purpose. God has given me a gift, and I never
> want to forget it.

Dan: If I could back away slowly from my phone, I would right now.

> Never give up, Mark. Sometimes, the night is darkest just before the dawn. The dawn is coming,

Tsuneo: Along with a bunch of other clichés.

> and you will become something more than what you are right now. Let me help
> you. You don't owe me anything. You don't have to pay me.

Rebecca: Okay, now that is the least believable part of all of this

> I am here for you and Amira. That and plus, I am Amira's God brother as well.

Dan [Mark]: Even though you are nearly twice her age.
Rick [Nick]: Well yes.
Dan [Mark]: I have some questions. Well, actually, a lot.

> I'm doing this as a favour to her."

> "Okay I will meet you there." Mark said.

> "Looking forward to meeting you Mark." Nick said.

Tsuneo: [Nick] Oh, and don’t tell your parents where you’re going.
Dan: [Mark] Why should I-
Tsuneo: [Nick] Just do it.

> "You too."

> They were no where to be found.

Dan: His DoorDash delivery, that is.

> Lynx was livid. Jack_100292402 had defeated him without killing
> him. He had thrown him into a black hole,

Tsuneo: Makes you wonder why he didn’t do it more often.

> which transported him right across the OASIS to another world altogether.

Rebecca: He’d landed on the Strawberry Shortcake chatroom. It got awkward.

> His ship was without its commander, and was being attacked. Luckily his Easter
> egg and hacking skills made all his items, tools, and vehicles to be impervious to damage.

Tsuneo: So in other words, nothing happened at all.

> His laser
> turrets would make short work of the interceptor robots that the Tensa Zangetsu had left in its wake.

Rick: Wouldn’t it have vanished when Jack logged out?
Dan: Probably.
Rick: So... why is it still there?
Dan: That’s a very good question, which I am not even going to try to answer.

> Lynx swore that he would find a way to track Jack down, but he did not have a clue what could be
> done.

Tsuneo: Lynx’s efforts to find a guy named Jack_100292402 in the phone book had been in vain.

> It appeared that the High Five were told about what happened, as there was no activity from
> any of them.

Rebecca: They were all forced to spend time outside the OASIS, and so spent their days sipping margaritas by the pool

> Lynx had created a code that could pinpoint wherever a few players would emerge.

Tsuneo: Due to the massive number of players the OASIS had, it was constantly spamming his inbox.

> That was how he found Jack, but he did not have time to track down the rest of his enemies.

Dan [Lynx]: You bought yourself a little more time, Santa Claus. But one day, my jolly old elf, you will pay for what you did to me

> Lynx decided that he would play a game to get off some aggression.

Tsuneo: He had no time to track his enemies, but had time to play video games

> He started playing a free for all,
> much like how Jack was playing when Lynx ambushed him. Lynx loaded a file on the world of Endor

Rick: Yub yub, commander

> where players would go through a forest with massive trees and kill each other for sport.

Tsuneo: Yeah, the game sounds a lot less fun when you put it like that.

> It was
> good for snipers as they could use the different tree branches, and platforms to take out other
> players.

Dan: They still needed to be on the lookout for Drop Bears

> The best snipers played on maps like these.

> However, Lynx was not much of a sniper. He preferred playing as a Predator.

Rebecca: Which meant he was weak against Danny Glover.

> He chose to use a code to make him invisible to other players.

Tsuneo: Lynx silently lamented that there were no challenges left.

> He watched as other players were killing each other for a time.

Rebecca: LifelessGraphitePlanet has killed FasterMustache!

> People from different countries were already playing against each other.

Rick: There were players from Bouduria, Dirtistan and Kumbolaland

> There was no time limit, and anyone could join at any time.

Dan: It was basically like hotdesking a battleground.

> There was also no kill limit, so the game could go on for
> hours until you needed a break from the game at any point.

Tsuneo: Honestly, the whole thing was rather stupid.

> However, Lynx had strategically

> decided to play the game right then and there because he was waiting for a clan to show up. Lynx
> flew and went to strategic spots where snipers would sit and wait to take out other players who were
> moving around the map.

Dan: Lynx was really put out when he found his favourite sniper perch was occupied. He put in a reservation and everything.

> Lynx placed fragmentation mines at these points. He had used a code that
> also made his items invisible as well.

Rebecca: Because usually land mines are so easy to spot.

> He looked for any openings in the trees and found a place
> where he could place a trap. People were playing oblivious to what was being done around them.
> Logs suddenly disappeared from the map. Sticks were sharpened, and vines suddenly began
> moving by themselves. Lynx was placing traps for all his enemies,

Tsuneo: Wait, people didn't expect basic traps on the Endor map?

> and it felt so right. He was a professional killer,

Rick: I thought he was a truck driver
Dan: Maybe the professional killer thing is a side job.

> and this was how he showed it. And so, he waited. Three players made their way
> to strategic spots where Lynx had left the mines.

Dan: And by that he means the toilets.

> They exploded, leaving behind nothing but coins.

Rick: I regret falling for such a basic trick!

> Lynx swooped down and took it all for himself. He then went and hid again, waiting for more people
> to join.

Tsuneo: So Lynx is the bad guy.
Rebecca: Yes.
Tsuneo: And he's abusing his abilities at the expense of others.
Rebecca: Yes.
Tsuneo: So how is this any different to Jack?
Rebecca: That's a very good question, one that I suspect the fic will never once address.

> He had also taken the time to create elaborate traps for the other players to encounter.

Dan: He felt really good about his traps and hoped the other players liked them.

> It took him about half an hour to come up with everything that he was going to use against them.

Rick: An arsenal of traps, the likes of which had not been seen outside of a Road Runner cartoon

> Finally, two clans joined. On the OASIS, you could advertise when and where you wanted a match,
> and you could coordinate when you can play against each other. That was how Lynx knew these
> clans were going to come together to do battle against each other.

Dan: Oh, and they'd booked the map for their battle. See ya, Lynx!

> Suddenly, the Wolf pack, a team of 20 players who wore grey and black fur/armour with wolf head
> shaped helmets appeared.

Rick: Their leader was a guy called Jimmy
Dan [Emile]: Did I tell you guys about my car?

> There were three players who had yellow patches on their shoulders,
> two players with red patches on their shoulders,

Rebecca: Five with teal patches on their shoulder and one with an elaborate cross-hatched patch that he got from a knitting magazine.

> and one with a shimmering white patch on his skull.

Tsuneo: That just meant he was going bald

> Next, 20 Starship troopers appeared as well on the field.

Rebecca: Each one of them was proud to be doing their part.

> There was only one with a Captain's
> badge. Both clans had warriors with varying pieces of weaponry.

Rick: If nobody has a thirty second bomb I will be so disappointed

> They did not stick to the weapons associated with their characters,

Tsuneo: So, like everyone else in this thing.

> but also had weapons from different media as well.

Dan: Mostly magical girl wands. It was going to be a weird battle.

> All other
> players were welcome to continue playing, but they would come in between the two clans.

Tsuneo: The rules of this game seem very arbitrary and stupid.

> The whole arena became alive with movement as players spawned at different places.

Dan: It used to spawn whole teams on top of each other, but that got messy pretty quickly.

> Teams did not
> spawn on either side, it happened this way for the players to meet each other right away

Rebecca: In short, they were speed dating

> instead of waiting to be found.

Rick: Single lonely pro gamer seeks noob to own.

> Lynx saw four players congregate in one area where his traps was. He activated it, and two huge
> logs flung from the trees.

Rebecca: Naturally, playing on Endor they were prepared for... No?

> Vines kept the logs from hitting the ground, but instead they crashed into
> the four players, killing them.

Dan: So did they *log* out?
Tsuneo: Go to hell
Dan: Entirely fair.

> They respawned of course, but lost some coins that Lynx picked up.

Tsuneo: And you know, everything else they'd earned for years.

> He needed to make as much money as he could to buy enough spells to combat Jack_100292402
> and Art3mis.

Rebecca: I thought he was a hacker who just abused the system to get whatever he wanted.
Rick: Yes, but he also believes in supporting small business.

> Next, six players were fighting each other at a different place.

Dan: That place was the coffee shop in the lobby. Their barista was rather put out.

> While they were doing
> that, three snipers tried to take positions at the very same place that Lynx had placed his mines.

Tsuneo: Wasn't that convenient of them?

> All three of them died and Lynx picked up their coins as well.

Dan: It's not that Lynx is some kind of tactical genius or anything, it's just that every other player is dumber than him.

> No one knew if the other team had done
> this on purpose. The Wolf pack thought that the Starship Troopers had come before the match to
> make these traps, but they could not explain why they would take out their own soldiers as well.

Rick: Maybe their soldiers were just clumsy

> The
> Starship Troopers thought the same thing about the Wolf Pack. They never even considered Lynx
> was there as he was invisible.

Tsuneo: Even though they both knew that other players could enter this battle.
Rebecca: Exactly.
Tsuneo: This is a battle between two teams of very stupid people.

> Wooden spikes flew from slings that Lynx had created. They sliced
> through the air and cut deep into the enemies that were close by. Several missed their mark, but
> that was okay.

Rick: They made the effort, and that was good enough for Lynx.

> Three Wolf Pack soldiers were running after one Starship Trooper when they fell into
> a pit with wooden spikes at the bottom.

Dan: Lynx had smeared them in faeces, just to be sure

> All of them were killed. The amount of coins that Lynx was racking up was staggering.

Rick: Soon he'd have enough to pay for all the mines he'd spread across the battlefield. [Pause] Wait a moment…

> Several players tried returning to where they died, but they never
> retrieved any of their weapons, coins, or spells that Lynx had taken for himself.

Rebecca: Lynx was a hoarder.

> He used his massive proton cannon to cut down a tree.

Tsuneo: Somehow nobody noticed this

> It toppled over six players, and they all were destroyed.

Dan: They had all been standing in a nice neat line

> Lynx picked up their coins, spells, and weapons that he did not already have.

Tsuneo: Mostly he got duplicate plans for the Single Action Revolver Ivory Grip.

> He wanted to have a place where he called his home in the OASIS.

Rebecca: So he entered the next Player Housing Auction.
Rick: One day he'll have a sex dungeon of his very own

> It was true that he had the Star Destroyer,

Dan: But really, who doesn't have a Star Destroyer these days?

> but it seemed like he would be copying Jack_1002492402 who had a ship already.

Tsuneo: Because nobody else in the OASIS had a ship of their own

> He needed a
> hangout where he could show the world all that he owned thanks to his own work in the OASIS.

Dan [Lynx]: I'll be able to brag to all my friends so they can bask in my glory.
Rick [Tridosk]: Yeah boss, I've seen it all already.

> He looked for other enemies nearby and used a radar device to find them.

Tsuneo: He has the incredibly advanced power of radar!
Rick: Lynx's clever use of radar shows that he is a player without equal.

> They came up as red dots on a round map just like in Halo: Combat Evolved.

Rebecca: Because radar exists nowhere outside of that game

> He flew using the repulsor jets on his boots and
> hands. He aimed his missile launcher and fired at four enemies. They all perished and he picked up
> their gear and coins.

Tsuneo: Well, instead of a pointlessly long sequence of Jack effortlessly going over people, we've got a pointlessly long sequence of Lynx effortlessly going over people.
Dan: I feel blessed.

> Soon, the players were feeling overwhelmed. They decided to come together,
> with their backs against each other.

Tsuneo: Or, as per the rules, they could just quit the game at any time and go somewhere else.

> It was Wolf Pack and Starship Troopers against an unknown threat.

Dan: Well gee, maybe they could actually start fighting back now.

> They found an area where they could all come together. It was to their undoing as they made
> themselves one target instead of many.

Dan: Or, y'know, not.

> Lynx flew above them and searched through his inventory
> until he found a weapon from the Fallout series;

Rick: A Nocturnal Pool Cue.

> a Fatman that shot out miniature Nuclear bombs.
> He powered it up and placed a special code to the nuke.

Rebecca: His nuclear bomb wasn't good enough for him. Lynx is just a stewing mass of adequacy issues, isn't he?

> He shot out the nuke and flew above the
> trees as the explosion rocked the whole arena. It destroyed mostly everything. Trees snapped in
> two like twigs. The atmosphere turned green and there was lightening.

Dan: Fire and brimstone coming down from the skies! Rivers and seas boiling! Fourty years of darkness! Earthquakes, volcanoes! The dead rising from the grave! Human sacrifice, dogs and cats living together, mass hysteria!

> Lynx had changed things in the OASIS, forever.

Tsuneo: After fourty players simultaneously reported an illegally modified weapon, Lynx was investigated and banned by an unrelated moderator. The end.

> This would mean that the creators, or those in charge of things would need to investigate.

Rebecca: Or even just reboot the world servers.
Rick: Cunning.

> With any hope, that would make the High Five take him more seriously as a threat

Dan: Lynx's next plan was to leave a bag of flaming dog poo on their doorstep.

> who was not afraid of destroying everything to get what he wanted in the virtual world.

Tsuneo: What he wants at the moment comes to a nice hot tub for his Star Destroyer.

> He picked up all
> the coins, weapons, and spells and left he arena. However, no one would know it was him because
> he had not shown himself,

Dan: [Lynx] Haha! Hiding my identity means they will recognise me as a threat! Wait...

> but thankfully he did save the game play.

Rebecca: So he could relive the moment on those long, lonely nights.

> GoldDragonZ: Thanks for reading. I enjoyed writing this story very much.

Rick: I would not admit that to a shirtless muscular guy called Nick.

> It goes on though.

Dan: Damn it.

> -----

> Chapter Eight

> GoldDragonZ: I hope people are enjoying this story.

Tsuneo: Oh yes. The lists of guns that Jack owns makes for particularly engaging storytelling.

> I know I am enjoying writing it. It is all coming
> from my head and heart as I look back on my life. Please enjoy and tell me what you think.

Rebecca: I think that statement offers a lot to unpack.

> Wade Watts and Helen Harris waited in the boardroom at the OASIS headquarters in the United
> States at an undisclosed location.

Rick: Their top secret massive corporate headquarters.

> As a matter of fact, they lived there now,

Tsuneo: Lived in the boardroom.
Rebecca: Aech has set up a hammock in one corner, while Parzival has claimed the bar fridge as his own.

> and were waiting to talk
> to the head programmers that oversaw what was happening within the OASIS

Dan: Their job was to make sure that the coders remained chained to their desks and never saw the light of day.

> and stop illegal activity from happening.

Tsuneo: And so far they've done a fantastic job of it.

> A Japanese woman came into the room.

> "Good morning to you both." She said in perfect English.

Tsuneo: As opposed to?

> "My name is Akira Tomoyo. I am aware
> that there might be some questions that you have about events that have transpired."

Rick: And like any good department head, she's already found a scapegoat to shift all the blame to.

> "No doubt." Helen said. "We were able to find out that someone was able to get their hands on the
> location of three Easter Eggs.

Tsuneo: But were they able to?

> Artemis, otherwise known as Samantha Cook

Rebecca: You know, one of the people who owns this company.

> and another person with the name of Jack underscore 100292402

Rick: [Aech] Seriously? Do I gotta say that every time?

> also known as Mark Patel, won all three.

Dan: Oh, and some other dude as well. Bobcat or something.
Rick: Caracal.
Dan: Yeah, him.

> It gave them immortality, unlimited ammo, and a boost in speed for their vehicles.

Tsuneo: I mean, when you line them up like that, number two seems like a bit of a dud.

> Who could have done this?"

> "We all did." She said. "We wanted to honor you five as well as other players who could win and be
> heroes in their own right.

Rebecca: So after learning that they had put this in the OASIS without even bothering to tell their bosses or get approval while risking compromising the system's integrity, Parzival had them all fired and made sure that none of them would ever work again.

> I never knew that someone would find out about the eggs and decide to hoard them for himself.

Rick: Which is why there were challenges to find them. Wait...

> It seems that the person who found out about the eggs in the first place
> wanted the original egg you won for himself.

Dan: [Parzival] But... It's not available anymore.
Rebecca: [Akira] He also doesn't keep up with the times.

> He does not like to share,

Tsuneo: He was the terror of kindergarten playtime

> and so was never accepted
> into any league or clan. He wanted to rule over everything. His real name is Vladislav Volkovskis.
> He was born and raised in the old Estonia just outside of modern day Russia.

Dan: Estonia is a suburb of Russia.

> His father was a business man, and his mother died when he was nine years old.

Tsuneo: Details which will no doubt be vital down the line.

> He has an older sister who is studying to become a doctor.

Rebecca: Parzival considers how far over the bounds of user confidentiality they had stepped, how invasive their investigation of his life must have been and the horrific legal and moral implications of what they did, and nods in approval.

> He is a programmer for a firm that creates programs for little children to learn.

Rick: Publishers of such titles as 'See Spot Own Noobs' and 'Noddy's Griefing Adventure'

[Pause]

Dan: I thought he was a delivery driver.
Rick: Maybe he codes while on the move.

> He could use his coding to hack into the OASIS and this made it possible for him to find out
> about the egg

Tsuneo: If your system can be compromised by a guy who codes for children's educational games, then I think you have some security issues you should deal with first.

> before we could organize an advertisement for it.

Tsuneo [Parzival]: But after you'd already gone live with the eggs and uploaded them to the system
Rebecca [Akira]: Yes
Tsuneo [Parzival]: And before you told anyone about them and gotten clearance for going live, let alone developing them in the first place
Rebecca [Akira]: Well, um, yes
Tsuneo [Parzival]: There are no words for how fired you are.

> We first came to Samantha with the
> information about the first egg so that there could be some competition.

Dan: But you didn't think to inform anyone else? You guys are really, stupid, you know that.

> We never thought that he
> would become so moved that he would strike out against other players for wanting to compete for
> the eggs."

Rick: We never thought that one guy would become a total jerk over the quest for immortality and ultimate power.

> "We need to stop him." Wade said.

Tsuneo [Parzival]: Also, I will make sure that none of you ever work again. I don't mean in the software industry or anything like that, I mean none of you will ever gain any sort of employment at all.

> "Halliday had wanted everyone in the OASIS to have fun and equal rights

Dan: [Parzival] Which is how I won everything.

> when it came to competing against each other.

Rebecca: And he did this by creating a contest squarely aimed at white American men.

> I don't think he would want to have only one person rule the whole network.

Rick: Well save for his insane digital ghost, that is.
Dan: I mean, besides that.

> Is there a way to stop him?"

Tsuneo: No. As the owners and administrators of the game and network that he relies on for his power, we have absolutely no way to stop him.

> "We need to mobilize a task force to strip him of his console." Helen said.

Rick: Which given that you know where he lives, his real name and all the details of his family and you're the richest people in the world and the owners of its most powerful corporation shouldn't be too hard.

> "That might be something to think about," Akira said.

Dan: Too late. Aech already Swatted his arse.

> "But there is the point that he won everything fair and square."

Tsuneo: No he didn't!
Rebecca: Akira doesn't seem to have the best grasp of ethics.

> "He is actively hacking into the OASIS." Wade said. "He's doing things that he is not supposed to."

Rick: Well, besides that.

> "One of the people who won the eggs was attacked yesterday." Wade explained. "He was playing
> normally

Rick: [Parzival] You know, abusing the immortality and unlimited ammunition that you saw fit to put in the game.
Dan: [Akira] But not the vehicle speed?
Rick: [Parzival] I fell like you're missing the point here.

> when Lynx attacked him with a special bullet that took away the abilities that the Easter
> eggs gave him. Is there a way to undo the breach?"

Dan: I see server rollbacks in everybody's future

> "He would need to come here with his console for us to look at his profile." Akira told them.

Tsuneo: Because there is absolutely no way we can assess it remotely.

> "Where does he live?"

> "I'm not sure, but per his phone number, it would be somewhere like Toronto Canada." Helen said.

Rebecca: Why not just abuse your powers to find his home address and every detail about him? It seems to be standard procedure around here.

> "He also has a few friends that he is afraid for.

Dan: I mean, three. Two. And honestly, John barely counts.

> He doesn't want Lynx to come after anyone. His name is Mark Patel."

> "If Mark's abilities were taken away, then there is a good chance that Mister Volkovskis will not
> come after him anymore," Akira said.

Rick: Clearly she has a psychological degree in addition to her programming and project management qualifications
Dan: Either that or she's shooting in the dark
Rick: After that whole Easter egg thing, I suspect you're right.

> "So, Samantha and the rest of the High Five are in danger?" Wade surmised.

Tsuneo: I'll just reiterate that Artemis said she could permaban him earlier in the fic. Why is this so difficult for everyone?

> "We need something from the Research and Development Wing."

> "What do you need?" Akira asked.

Rick [Pazrival]: A better microfiber crotch inlay.

> "Something that can bypass the immortality that one of the Easter eggs gave to Lynx." Wade said.

Dan: [Akira] So if I put in another Easter Egg...
Others: No!

> "It has to be magically based. We need to lock down his Avatar and trap him forever."

Rebecca: So they built a box propped up by a string.

> "With his hacking skills," Akira said. "He might be able to bypass the effects that something with that
> level of coding could produce. Also, its illegal for us to steal anything really.

Tsuneo: Parzival hears those words and just stares blankly

> The amount of money he must have spent in equipment alone could be staggering.

Rick: He's spent so many Lindens it's crazy.

> His net worth right now is $5 billion in coins alone on the OASIS.

Dan: Plus he's a shareholder, so he'd need to vote on his own disciplinary action.

> The public will not like it if you go against someone who is a top tier player.

Rebecca: Please, these are gamers. Just say that he prefers the Epic Game Store to Steam and they'll be ready to lynch him.

> It could show that you do not want people to compete with you to get the gifts that were left
> behind for everyone and anyone to collect."

Dan: I mean, the last thing Parzival would want to do is abuse his power. Imagine if he permabanned someone from the OASIS and then sued them into oblivion just for posting a funny video about him.

> "So, we just let him strip Artemis of her eggs that she won fair and square without hacking?" Helen
> said.

> "Why don't you guys just message him?" Akira asked. "Surely he can be reasoned with

Tsuneo: Meanwhile, Lynx is working on his manifesto while scratching out the eyes on photos

> before you can come up with something to destroy what he built.

Dan: Her plan is to negotiate with the terrorists

> I'm sure you both would not like to lose
> everything you worked for in the OASIS, including Halliday's Easter egg."

Tsuneo: I don't want to labour the point, but didn't we agree that he literally cheated to get those?

> "No, we wouldn't." Wade said. "How about this? Bring back the Easter Eggs except for Immortality.
> Let them be able to turn it on and off as well.

Dan: Rely on gamers to voluntarily give up an unfair advantage.

> That way, the more people win, the more that are against Lynx.

Tsuneo: And the more that can abuse this power.

> He wouldn't know what to do. And put out Skulls that people

Rick: Where would be a good place to put the skulls?
Tsuneo: Inside their heads, maybe?
Rick: Brilliant.

> can collect so that it
> would make gameplay more challenging. Like, have a skull that hides your targeting symbol. Or one
> that makes it harder for one player, but normal or easy for other players.

Dan: [Aech] Um, does this have anything to do with the Lynx problem?

Rick: [Parzival] No, but the quarterly review is coming up, and I've got to have something to put to the board.

> Skulls could be something
> you can use to challenge yourself. And then we will see who the most gifted players would be."

Rebecca: We could create a even greater disparity between players.

> "That's smart." Helen said.

Tsuneo: It most certainly is not.

> "But what if he hacks the system and negates what we put into motion?"

> "Then we keep doing it until he gives up." Wade said.

Rebecca: Keep going until the system degenerates into a festival of nonstop griefing or collapses into a mess of fast-patched spaghetti code. Good plan.

> "Put out as many different Skulls and Easter Eggs as possible. What do you think, Miss Tomoyo?"

> "It's workable." Akira nodded.

Tsuneo: And since Akira thinks it's a good idea, they immediately scrap it.

> "And this time we will make sure that advertisements go out before we place the eggs on the map

Dan: [Akira] In retrospect, that may not have been my brightest hour.
Rebecca: [Aech] You think?

> so that Mister Volkovskis would not be alone in the race to claim them."

Rick: This has been two idiots negotiating

> "I'm a good programmer as well." Helen said. "Tell me if you guys need my help."

Rebecca: Yes, miss eighteen year old who lived out of a van. I'm sure you'll be a huge help to the team of career professionals.

> "As owners of the company, I think it would do really nicely if the High Five spent a little bit of time
> working on the network with us." Akira said.

Dan: Because there's nothing that c-level execs like doing more than grunt work.

> "You would be overseeing everything that is going on within the company and what we are doing.

Rick: [Akira] I mean, you have been reading our reports and signing off on proposed developments, right?
Dan: [Parzival] Those? Naw, we just leave them lying around the pool and get Ogden to look at stuff.

> For too long, we did not include you five in what we're doing,

Rebecca: And just look at where that got you

> and I would like to apologize for that."

Tsuneo [Parzival]: That's nice. You're all still fired. I'll call security to throw your entire department out.

> "It's not your fault." Wade said.

Tsuneo: I mean, it absolutely, unquestionably is but never mind.

> "We just assumed Morrow would handle things for a while,

Dan: Their plan was to all buy private jets and fly off to conferences where they hung out at the bar.

> but you are right, we need to start considering everything that is going on

Rebecca: Turns out they have actual jobs to do. Who'd have thought?

> and see to it that no one can harm other players.

Tsuneo: Make sure that nobody gets hurt in the PvP free for alls.

> Whoever can afford a console should be able to play on the OASIS without any trouble.

Rick: And if you're too poor for that, well tough luck.

> From now on, all the Easter eggs and Skulls will be advertised.

Dan: So their solution to the Lynx problem is to spam ads for new quests that nobody will read.
Rebecca: Management at its finest.

> They should not be too hard to find, however we need to make it challenging as well."

Tsuneo: Have actual clues, rather than just spamming races.

> "How about we use different speeches that Halliday and Morrow used?" Akira asked. "Players get to
> win one million coins for finding and putting the speeches together in the right order."

Rebecca: Akira, do yourself a favour and stop talking.

> "Do we get to participate?" Helen asked.

> "Unfortunately, this is good for people who cannot afford to buy things in real life."

Rick: Like expensive headsets and video game subscriptions, for example.

> Akira said reluctantly. "It would not be fair for the owners of the OASIS to win more.

Tsuneo: Parzival continues to stare blankly.

> That might be why mister Volkovskis is angry that Samantha won the egg.

Rebecca: Lynx is angry for any number of reasons, probably ranging from 'not me' to 'gurl.'

> I believe that he was watching Mark for a while

Rick: Lynx is watching you while you sleep.

> and found out that Mark is not part of a clan, if I am guessing right.

Tsuneo: He also found out that Mark is a rabbit person from the moon, according to Akira's deduction.

> He thought Mark would be easy to defeat instead of going after the High Five. Obviously, he failed."

Rebecca: At this point, Akira is just blurting out every stupid thing that comes to her mind.
Rick: After they fire her and clean out her entire department, they need to hire someone more competent to run it, like Baldric.

> Just then an associate came in to the room.

Dan: I can only hope that they're better at their job then Akira here.
Rebecca: That's a pretty low bar to set.

> "Hello, how are you doing?" He asked, but his face was grim.

Tsuneo: Nobody made a fresh pot of coffee, did they?

> "Something terrible has happened to one of our most played maps."

Rick: They moved one of the spawn points a little to the left and cleaned up some of the object clipping. Now it's ruined forever.

> "What was it?" Akira asked.

> "Someone was cloaked and used elaborate traps to kill players." The associate began.

Tsuneo: Parzival nods in approval.

> "He made two clans and a few other players lose coins and weaponry.

Rebecca: And he said mean things about their mothers.

> He used a Nuclear Bomb and destroyed most of the map. It was Endor, from Star Wars."

Dan: I'm just saying that the little furry twerps had it coming.

> "How did he steal gear?" Helen asked. "I thought we could only take coins?"

> "This person was able to hack into players that were killed and take what they had most recently
> used."

Rebecca: So again, why are they not banning him?
Rick: Doing such would be mean.

> The associate said. "Mind you he could not steal everything, but he stole what they were
> using at the time. Everything that you own is on your console,

Tsuneo: In retrospect, this was a terrible design.
Rebecca: Client-side architecture was the downfall of the OASIS.

> and only the items you decide to play
> with would come into action. That was what he stole."

Rick: Unfortunately for him, most of the players were using pipe rifles.

> "It was him," Wade said with a somber expression. "He wants to gather as much magic and
> weapons that he can get so that he can kill us to get to Samantha.

Dan: Everyone will remember where they were the day that Samantha was killed with Magic Missile.

> He wants her eggs most of all.

Rick: He wants to make an omelette.

> Mark can't use his right now unless we can find a way to undo the spells or coding that Vladislav
> used."

Tsuneo [Parzival]: Even though you made the eggs.

[Pause]

Rebecca [Akira]: In retrospect there were flaws in our plan
Tsuneo [Parzival]: I am going to fire you, re-hire you and then fire you again.

> "Mark's parents must be willing to come with him or sign a form saying that he can travel by
> himself," Akira said.

Dan: [Parzival] Or we could abduct him. [Pause] What? I'm just saying, it would be easier.

> "Just like how you five were able to do."

Rebecca [Aech]: Um, my parents kicked me out of my home and I was living on my own, remember?

> "I'll talk to him." Helen said. "and maybe in the meantime, you can start finding out what you can
> about the three eggs that Samantha has."

Dan: Have you considered asking her?

> With that, Helen left Wade to speak to Akira alone.

Rick: Just so you know, Akira the head of programming is now my favourite character.

> "Hey Mark?" Helen asked into her cell phone.

Rebecca [Aech]: So I talked with the head of the programming department. I'm just saying that you might be better off disconnecting from the OASIS, destroying your headset and haptic suit and never going near a computer again.

> "Hey, how are you doing?" Mark said from the other side of the connection. "What happened? My
> brother said that there's been a bombing on one of the maps that kids play on?

Tsuneo: It was the under-seventeen free-for-all murderfest.

> So many players were destroyed. They lost their coins and weapons. What's happening?"

Dan: A regular Friday night?

> "We were just informed about what happened," Helen explained. "It happened and we did not know
> what to do about it. We are still coming up with a plan to deal with Lynx."

Rebecca: [Aech] So far our plan is to destroy what little balance the game has left.
Tsuneo: [Mark] Sounds good to me!

> "Are you sure it was him?" Mark asked, concerned. "He's insane. I heard people lost their weapons
> as well as any special items that they had not used yet.

Rick: Poor dudemeister_42069. He was saving that Gnawed Bone of Authority for a special occasion.

> Is that true?"

> "I can't believe how fast news flies." Helen sighed.

Dan: She runs the company and she only just found out.
Rebecca: Siloing is a curse

> "Everything is as you heard. I'm surprised you
> know so much, are you sure you were not on the OASIS?"

Dan: [Mark] Um, there are other ways to communicate, you know.
Rick: [Aech] Wait, there are?

> "I have a whole shipload of stuff that I don't want stolen." Mark said.

Rick: [Mark] A literal shipload. Did I tell you about my ship?
Rebeccca: [Aech] Oh god yes, we know already!

> "I would rather wait a few days
> than let go of all the items I hoarded over the years playing on the OASIS.

Tsuneo: So you're happy to let Lynx run amok and grief everyone else

> Why don't we play a different kind of game with this Lynx person?"

Rick: Hungry Hungry Hippos it is

> "What do you suggest?" Helen asked.

> "I know that this is not going to sound good." Mark began as he tried to think of the best way to say
> what he had been thinking of. "We should put a bounty on his head. Whoever can kill Lynx,

Dan: Yes, whoever can kill the unkillable player.
Rick: I think Mark and Akira would get along famously.

> the player wearing War Machine armor can win 155 million coins

Rebecca: That's an oddly specific amount
Tsuneo: It's Canadian coins. It reads better in US coins.

> and three special items that no one
> else has. One of his vehicles is an Imperial Star Destroyer from Star Wars. One was an alien ship
> from Independence Dayand he has a vast arsenal of heavy weapons that he can use.

Dan: But mostly just the proton cannon, really.

> The High
> Five can have their programmers go into Lynx's profile and look at what he has, and copy and paste
> and give the player who kills him everything that he has."

Tsuneo: Of course, the fact that he has them would indicate that they already exist within the system
Rick: He has no idea how any of this works, does he?

> "That sounds like a great idea." Helen said.

Dan: I can only assume she's suffered severe head trauma if she thinks this is a great idea.

> "And in that way, he becomes everyone else's problem as well.

Rebecca: So your plan is to just feed bodies to the already overpowered griefer. I see a lot of flaws here

> I'll tell Wade about it. We also need to you and your family to fly down to our base of operations

Rebecca: [Aech] Except your sister. She's got nothing to do with this and frankly, I'm not even sure she exists.

> so that we can look at your console for the OASIS and see what can be done to reverse
> what Lynx did to your Easter eggs."

> "I can't right now." Mark said. "I have school exams, prom, piano lessons and music exams coming
> up. Maybe I will come by in the summer after everything is finished."

Dan: So can you copy the data from his console remotely? Look at it that way?
Rebecca: No. There is absolutely no way they can read the player data that is required to run the online game.
Tsuneo: This fic is like a long competition to find the biggest plot hole.

> "That's fine, you're living life," Helen said. "We wouldn't want it any other way."

Rick: I'm sure that the entire internet can take care of itself for the next couple of months

> So, they spoke a little about coding and fixing things online.

Tsuneo: I'm sure Mark had a lot of useful suggestions.
Dan: [Mark] I like guns. Form Halo. So if you put in more guns. Guns from Halo. Then that would be good. Yes.

> They really needed to get started on how to defeat Lynx

Tsuneo: So the whole chapter thus far has just been gears stripping.

> but they wanted to take the time to talk amongst themselves. And then, they
> decided to end the call. Mark thought to himself that he and Helen had much in common,

Dan: Like their mutual hatred of Diddy Kong

> and should become good friends going forward.

Rick: Time to stalk her online

> "Dudes." Tom greeted two of his friends

Tsuneo: Mark and Justin have asked him not to call them that.

> who were sitting down together for lunch on a fine Tuesday
> afternoon. "I just got off the internet in the library.

Rick: He said, glued to his phone's browser.

> There's something big happening tomorrow. We all need to log into the OASIS."

Tsuneo: Wouldn't you do that anyway?
Rebecca: Well... yes.

> "What's happening?" Mark asked.

> The High Five are planning to tell us all something." Tom said, excitedly. "We haven't heard from
> them in years,

Tsuneo: As the fic had well established beforehand.
Rick: Really?
Tsuneo: No.

> and suddenly they're back."

Rick: The High Five reunion tour, now playing at a sleazy Atlantic City casino

> "But we met them." John said.

Dan: Tom’s so drunk he can barely remember this morning

> "I introduced you to them." Mark said.

Rebecca: And for Mark, that counts as social interaction

> "I know, but this is important because it affects everyone in the world who have an OASIS console."
> Tom said.

Dan: So... Everyone except Justin.
Rick: Didn’t they go through hell to get Justin a console?
Dan: Yeah, but he got bored and gave it away.

> "They have something to say to everyone. We need to be there in the front row."

Dan [Tom]: They said our seats will be marked with big red X’s

> Mark's eyes widened. This said the word 'trap' written all over it.

Rick: Admiral Ackbar nods in approval

> "Wait guys." Mark said, getting up from the table.

Dan: [Mark] We need to discuss this plan, but for that, I’m going to need more chips.

> "I'm going to sort this out and see what they have
> planned. This does not seem like a strategically smart plan. Lynx might show up and destroy us all."

Rebecca: I’m just saying that if they’re at the point that Lynx could show up and kill everyone then maybe things have gotten out of hand.

> "Maybe they're going to make him an honorable member of their group?" Tom said. "You don't
> know what they have planned."

Tsuneo: Mark was hoping that there would be ponies.

> "I know where I'm going to be." Mark said.

Dan: On his spaceship away from the rest of you losers.

> "But I have to make sure."

> Mark turned his back and walked as quick as he could to the exit with his cell phone. He searched
> through his contact list and found Helen's number. He pressed call and waited for Helen to pick up.

Tsuneo: Intense phone calling action!

> "Hello?" Helen said.

> "Helen, its Mark." He said.

> "Hey Mark, how are things?" She said.

Rebecca: I can’t keep up with this breakneck pace

> "Could be better." Mark felt someone looking at him, and turned around.

> Amira was there looking at him.

Tsuneo: Jack was realising what it was like to be leered at.

> "Sorry Helen, I'll call you later." He said, and hung up before Helen could give a reply.

Rebecca [Helen]: No, that’s fine. Only one of the bosses of the world’s richest and most powerful corporation that runs the entire internet here. I can wait.

> "Sorry Amira, how are things?" Mark said, his heart pounding against his chest.

Dan: He knows she’s killed, and he doesn’t want to be next.

> "Who's Helen?" She asked.

> "Someone from the OASIS." Mark admitted.

Rick [Mark]: She’s like, really hot and super awesome. But she’s from Canada. You’d never have heard of her.
Rebecca [Amira]: But aren’t we from Canada as well?
Rick [Mark]: Um...

> "She's part of a clan that I'm interested in helping out.

Dan [Mark]: The... middle... six. Yeah, that works.

> I
> think they have something planned but I think it's a bad idea. I wanted to tell her that it was a bad
> idea before it's too late."

Tsuneo: In short, it was a bad idea.

> "Why, what do you think is going to happen?" She asked.

Rebecca: [Amira] Oh boy, I really had to ask, didn’t I?

> Mark wanted to tell her. He considered it. What would happen if he let her know about his
> relationship with Helen, with Art3mis and the High Five?

Dan: Given that he’s already told Tom, I think we’re a bit past that point.

> He already spent more hours online talking to people who he did not see face to face.

Rick: Mark was only vaguely aware that his brother existed
Tsuneo: What about his sister?
Rick: Wait, his what now?

> Hanging out with two famous women might not go well with other women in real life.

Rebecca: Mark just assumes that Amira is going to be insanely jealous.

> However, Mark did not want to lie, not to Amira. He took a deep breath
> and remembered his breath training for performing the piano in front of other people.

Tsuneo: So he placed his fingers on the keys and looked at the sheet music.

> He had performed at a concert every year for the last ten years since he was seven years old.

Dan: True, at age seven he was banging out ‘Chopsticks’ at a retirement village.

> He had
> performed at two talent shows, once when he was thirteen years old and once when he was sixteen
> years old.

Dan: At one of them he'd managed to sink. It took some doing.

> His teacher had taught him and his siblings the art of performing, and he needed it now to
> talk to Amira.

Rebecca: Mark has tried following advice to be himself. It has failed him every time.

> He had to remember who he was. He was captain of his own ship. He was a warrior.

Rick: He died to an hero.

> "Amira, you are awesome, and I want you to be in my life." He said.

Dan: He wants to try on more of her pretty dresses.

> "But there are people who I
> have only just gotten to know over a few weeks and they need my help. They are the High Five from
> the OASIS."

Rebecca: Not to be confused with the children's TV show of the same name
Rick: Amira is disappointed at the clarification

> "So, wait, you're telling me not only were you just speaking with someone from the OASIS," She
> said excitedly. "You're talking to a girl whose name is Helen who is just so famous and runs the
> whole thing?

Rebecca: [Amira] I'd tell you to stop lying to impress me, but this is at a whole new level.

> What do you do exactly on your own when you're at home?"

Dan [Mark]: Play video games and jerk off. I am a teenage boy after all.

> "I fix things for other players." Mark said. "That's how people know me. I only bill people for the time
> it takes.

Tsuneo: He's actively making his nonsense business model worse, isn't he?

> I use parts I find on the floor after battles. I have robots helping me as well. They are
> wonderful.

Rebecca: And yes, he's far more animated talking about his fake internet robots then he is about other people. Make of this what you will.

> Enough about that; Artemis and I have won three Easter eggs. One granted immortality.
> One granted a boost in speed for vehicles. And one granted unlimited ammo.

Dan: Which after immortality seems to be a bit of a letdown.

> There is a person with the name Lynx who wants to be the only one.

Rick: The only one with the name Lynx, that is.

> I was playing a game and he attacked me with a
> special coded bullet that removed the gifts that the Easter eggs gave me.

Rebecca: At this point Amira's checking her watch and trying to think of an excuse.

> I left him, but he followed
> and hacked into my ship, which is my base of operations and tried to take things from me.

Rebecca: [Amira] I mean... I was just... I didn't really need to... No, you don't have to... [Sigh] That's okay.

> I barely escaped because I used a spell to send him across the OASIS to another location.

Tsuneo: And in case you forgot the previous chapter, here it is again.

> I have told my friends not to go on the OASIS because of him.

Dan: His friends now have no clue what to do with their lives.

> And now, it seems that the High Five want everyone
> to meet at a location in the OASIS to tell us all something.

Rick: [Amira] I'm fine, by the way.

> I think that Lynx will try something to kill
> us and steal everything that we worked so hard to get."

Tsuneo: And Mark was the only person to think this was a bad idea?
Rick: It appears to be the case

[Pause]

Tsuneo: This was Akira from Programming's suggestion, wasn't it?

> "They did announce that they were going to have a meeting with players from the OASIS."

Dan: All the players on the OASIS at once

> Amira said. "I think they know what they are doing.

Tsuneo: Really?
Rick: No.

> They do own the whole thing, you know. Have faith in them, Mark.

Rebecca: Something you'd never say if you met any of them.

> I heard that you spoke to Nick. How did it go?"

> "He wants to meet me." Mark told her. "He knows a lot about me,

Rebecca: Worryingly such for a complete and total stranger

> but how did you find out all those things about me to tell him?"

Tsuneo: [Amira] Well, I absolutely haven't been stalking your social media, if that's what you're asking.

> "People talk." Amira said.

Rick: Also she goes through his garbage.

> "My friends asked your friends what your favorite movie was. I dressed up as Zorro for Halloween."

Tsuneo: That one incident gets brought up conspicuously often.
Rebecca: Almost like it's the only time they've interacted beforehand.

> "I saw that." Mark said. "I guess you have liked me for some time now.

Tsuneo: And now that she’s met you, she’s beginning to wonder why.

> How can I make it up to you?"

> "Let's go somewhere." She said. "Let's have dessert for dinner."

Dan: Dream big.

> "How about tonight?" Mark asked. "There's an Italian restaurant close by."

> "You mean Fraticelli's?" Amira said, quite happy at the mention of the restaurant. "My best friend
> Jessica loves going there!"

Tsuneo: Jessica is a person who we assure you exists. Just take our word for it.

> "We took my mom there once for Mother's Day one year." Mark said. "Have you been there
> before?"

> "We go once a month!" Amira said.

Rebecca [Amira]: Something I probably should have mentioned before

> "I guess you like going there."

> "Yeah, it's awesome!"

Dan: Just don’t spend forever reading off the menu.

> "How about tonight at five o'clock?"

> "Sounds good! I'll meet you there."

> Amira reached out and grabbed Mark in a hug that squeezed the air from his lungs.

Rick [Mark]: You’re crushing my ribs...
Tsuneo: [Amira] I know...

> He kissed
> Amira on her nose by accident. Her eyes widened. She closed her eyes and puckered up. They
> kissed on the mouth for what seemed to be an eternity. They broke for air.

Dan: Quick cut to Tom and Justin miming throwing up in the background.

> "That was amazing." Mark said. "I have never kissed anyone like that before."

Rebecca: Not unless you count his lubed-up sex doll

> "Me neither." Amira said, pulling away from Mark, shyly.

> A teacher shook her head and smiled as she walked past the two teenagers. She was happy for
> them.

Rebecca: Fic, that is the most blatantly false thing you have said so far

> She had seen Mark through the four years that he had been at the school.

Rick: She had a picture of him pinned to a dart board.

> He was always
> grim when he was not with his friends. He seemed to have found something else that made him
> happy.

Dan: So she went back to the teacher’s lounge, lit up a cig and started bitching.

>She had caught him looking at girls, but she never confronted him about it.

Tsuneo: She was enabling his creepiness.

> He seemed to be behaving himself, however.

> "Helen, listen to me." Mark said after lunch. "Don't go through with the announcement. It will not end
> well. I think Lynx will attack Artemis at the announcement."

Rick: Apparently he was shouting this into space.

> "You don't have to worry about us." Helen said. "We will take care of each other and looked out for
> Lynx."

Dan: They have a plan to stop the player that they made unstoppable.

> "I'll be in my ship monitoring the situation." Mark said. "I have infrared scanners and other scanners
> on the ship.

Rebecca [Helen]: Yeah. We have full admin powers, remember?

[Pause]

Dan [Mark]: Oh.
Rebecca [Helen]: Our plan is to finally step up and force control of the situation before it hurts us, our company or our users any more.
Dan [Mark]: I have robots.
Rebecca [Helen]: I’m going to hang up now.

> Hopefully I can find him before he attacks you guys. He might go after you and the
> others who don't have immortality to force Artemis to fight him one on one. He's too powerful."

Dan: [Aech] But no, hey, it’s alright. We understand. Your piano lessons are far more important than this.

> "We own the OASIS." Helen said. "We have spoken to the programmers. Trust me, we know what
> we're doing.

Tsuneo: Despite all evidence to the contrary.

> We would like you and your friends to be there."

Rebecca: [Aech] I mean, except Tom, obviously.
Dan: [Mark] Obviously.

> "I'll be there." Mark said. "I will not leave you guys alone.

Dan: He was going to lurk outside their windows while they slept.

> I'll talk to my friends and see what they think."

> "Yeah, I hope so." Helen said. "Okay, I have to split, but I'll talk to you soon."

> "Okay, nice talking to you Aech."

> "You too, Jack"

Dan: Liar.

> The time had come. Lynx had been playing it too safe to the chest.

Tsuneo: Yes, his actions so far have been conservative and restrained.

> Now that he had immortality,
> unlimited ammunition and a boost in speed, it was time that he made the OASIS his world.

Rick: So what's he been doing so far?

> He hacked into his console,

Dan: Hacking has become Lynx's crutch. He's not the player he once was. He's useless without his hacks, and he knows it.

> not ready to go into the OASIS yet, but decided to modify several of his
> weapons using special codes.

Tsuneo: Who the hell came up with this god-awful system architecture anyway?
Rebecca: Akira from programming
Tsuneo: That explains so much

> He looked at all that he had gathered and chose several items and
> copied them so that there were many duplicates.

Rick: Lynx is why nobody plays Neopets any more.

> Weapons such as grenades and mines were duplicated so that he had a huge stock of them to use.

Tsuneo: Then he realised he needed to do something about weight limits.

> He mirrored missile launchers so that he
> could use two at the same time, one on one arm.

Rebecca: The OASIS is not left-hander friendly.

> For vehicles, he hacked into the codes for them
> and made it possible for cars and motorcycles to be able to ride on water.

Rick: I'd be shocked if that wasn't an unlockable feature already.
Dan: Oh it is, he just can't be bothered doing the fifteen-minute sidequest to get it.

> Spaceships or planes
> could plunge into water and run as if they were in outer space or in the air.

Dan: And yet, he hasn't unleashed a swarm of giant flying wangs on anyone yet.
Rebecca: That might be the most surprising part of all this.

> Next, he opened the OASIS, and searched for another world like Endor,

Rick: Endor's a moon, for starters.
Tsuneo: Thank you for that. You have enriched my life.

> where more than one clan
> was playing on. He found a desert world where players were using vehicles to destroy each other.

Rebecca: Yes, people were having fun. Lynx had to go and stop that.

> Some were using tanks. Others were using a mixture of vehicles from different movies. Some were
> using Scarabs from Halo 2. Some were using Goliaths from StarCraft.

Dan: Some were using the Super Ballistic Genki Manapult.

> They were all trying to destroy each other.

Tsuneo: And here was me thinking this was a peaceful prayer meeting

> Lynx flew quickly down to the ground and slammed into the ground, bringing up
> dust into the air, blocking player's view.

Tsuneo: Every player's view. The dust cloud could be seen from orbit.

> He took out his massive Proton cannon and fired at the
> nearest Scarab. The proton beam slammed into the joint of one of the legs of the massive vehicle. It
> buckled and almost went down, however the other five legs compensated for it.

Rick: Stupid insectoid designs and your stupid six legs.

> The Scarab turned
> around and aimed its primary weapon at Lynx, who ran as fast as he could to the Scarab.

Tsuneo: Why? Isn't he invulnerable?
Rick: Well, I've got two theories on that.
Tsuneo: It's sure to be more entertaining than another half-dozen pages of Lynx wiping out people, so go ahead.
Rick: The first is pure game physics. Lynx has an effectively unlimited damage capacity, but he's not immune to other affects. So while the Scarab's weapon wouldn't have damaged him, it could have knocked him back, tossed him around or otherwise incapacitated him. And while he can't be stopped, he can be inconvenienced for long enough to make it not worth his time.
Tsuneo: That implies an amount of thought that seems beyond this fic.
Rick: So the other theory is that Lynx keeps forgetting he's indestructible.
Tsuneo: Now that I can buy.

> It fired its weapon at the lone avatar.

> "Scrub noobs." Lynx said

Rebecca: That's about fifty percent of his dialogue
Tsuneo: What would you say is the other half?
Rebecca: Telling Tridosk to do something and then calling him a scrub noob.

> under his breath as he took out a laser sword that was attached to his right gauntlet.

> He sliced through the opposite leg of the first one that he had destroyed. He launched a grapnel
> hook which lodged onto the top of the vehicle.

Rick: I mean, you could keep slicing legs from down here. Nobody's trying to stop you.

> Lynx pulled himself on top and enemies started
> advancing on his position from within the vehicle. Some were Elites from the Halo series. Some
> were Spartans from the same series as well.

Dan: There were Halo guys and there were Halo guys

> There were also several other characters not at all associated with Halo at all.

Rick: Perish the thought

> There was someone with the Snake skin from Metal Gear Solid.

Dan: Which one?
Tsuneo: Pardon?
Dan: Was it Old Snake? Liquid Snake? Solidus Snake? Venom Snake? Naked Snake?
Tsuneo: You're making those up.
Dan: All legit snakes. Worth a google.

> Someone was Jax from Mortal Kombat. The list went on.

Rebecca: Wait, you're not going to list every last one of them? I don't know who you are any more, fic.

> Lynx slammed his fist into the face of the nearest player,

Rick: Let's say it was Fulgore from Killer Instinct.
Dan: Let's do that.

> and fired several missiles from a shoulder-mounted missile launcher at other players
> that wanted to see what was causing so much commotion.

Dan: Ding-dong-ditched to death.

> Their shields held, and they surrounded
> Lynx as he turned one of the enemies around and grabbed him from behind. The player grabbed
> Lynx's arm.

Rebecca: Then they started to waltz

> Lynx aimed a machine gun that was mounted on his right arm as he held onto the
> enemy in his left arm. He fired at the others who were trying to get around him. He laughed as they
> tried firing back. He used the enemy in his arms as a shield,

Tsuneo: Obviously he's not playing the German version

> and they disintegrated into nothing but
> coins which Lynx picked up. He took out two lasers from his elbows and fired them at the enemies
> all around.

Rick: I've never seen elbow lasers before, probably because they're such a stupid idea.

> The lasers were so powerful that they blasted away some of the top of the Scarab.

Rebecca: The enemy players just, I don't know, died or something.

> "Time to die." Lynx said in Estonian

Dan: Maybe 'scrub noob' are the only two words of English that Lynx knows.
Tsuneo: For very generous definitions of 'English'

> as he aimed his massive Proton cannon at the heart of the Scarab.

> He fired away and the Scarab lifted off from the ground as the blast from the cannon lifted it. Its core
> became unstable and the whole thing exploded.

Tsuneo: Do you ever think this fic is a bit silly?
Rebecca: Yeah, sometimes.

> All the enemies were swept away in the blast, and

> turned into coins and gear that Lynx scooped up.

Dan: Lynx also checks under the couch cushions for loose change.

> Lynx took to the air and zipped around the map.
> He fired a tank missile at one tank.

Tsuneo: I mean... Obviously.

> The tank exploded and Lynx scooped up his winnings.

Rebecca: Repeat for five more pages.

> These players respawned and had different weapons. Some had the same weapons as before

Tsuneo: They had different weapons except when they had the same ones.

> because
> Lynx was not interested in just taking everything. He was trying to find items that he had yet to
> acquire.

Rick: Like a mint-in-box Giant Vamp [Ding!]

> Something like the Scarab would come in handy, so he stole it.

Dan: He now had the powers of the Blue Beetle.

> He used a sniper rifle and
> shot someone who was riding a motorcycle. The person crashed and turned into coins.

Tsuneo: Yep, Lynx's battles really are exciting as the fic makes them seem.

> Lynx flew
> but someone closer to the motorcycle picked up the coins. Lynx became angry so he fired his mini-
> gun that was mounted on his shoulder at the enemy.

Rebecca: Because normally Lynx is such a calm and rational person.

> The bullets ripped through the enemy. He did
> not have a chance to retaliate as soon he was nothing but gear and coins that Lynx took.

Tsuneo: Well that accomplished a lot.

> Lynx
> destroyed the motorcycle completely as he did not want anyone to have anything left unless they
> fixed what was broken.

Dan: I mean, he loses all his stuff from being killed anyway, so...
Rick: Ah, but now he's lost it and it's broken.
Dan: Sure, that matters, I guess.

> This would cost them so much that they might stop playing the game for a
> while so that they could look for a way to make enough coins to fix what was destroyed.

Tsuneo: Thank you for that, Economics 101

> And then,
> five people came together to form the Mega-Zord from The Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers
> Television show.

Rick: As opposed to the Mega-Zord from the Old Man and the Sea.

> The Mega-Zord was huge and walked slowly towards Lynx. Lynx launched several
> missiles from his shoulder missile launcher. They bounced harmlessly off the Mega-Zord's hull.

Dan: [Lynx] Heh. Minimum range.

> He
> flew backwards as the Mega-Zord walked, and fired his minigun that was on the opposite shoulder.
> He needed to think of something.

Rebecca: But then he remembered that he was invincible and that he didn't care.

> He pulled out his Massive Proton cannon and aimed upwards to where all the players were sitting,
> in the chest cavity.

Tsuneo: Lynx's plan was to just do the thing he always did anyway

> The beam slammed into the Mega-Zord which stumbled back and as smoke
> cleared, Lynx saw that what he used had no effect.

Rick: Only one thing to do.
Tsuneo: Contrive a bigger gun?
Rick: You know it.

> His anger grew. He pulled out a Fat-man from
> the Fallout series and took to the air. He flew up and started firing mini-nuke after mini-nuke. The
> Mega-Zord tried to grab him,

Rebecca: Apparently being unconcerned about the rain of atomic destruction

> but he flew too quickly for the massive behemoth to grab him. He then
> decided about what he needed to do.

Dan: Get his own giant robot?
Rick: You may be on to something there

> He flew past the Mega-Zord's hand and went right up to its
> face. He pulled out his massive Proton cannon again and fired right directly into its head.

Tsuneo: Uh, Lynx? The proton cannon thing? Yeah, we've seen it.

> Lynx
> powered his Arc-Reactor and attached it to the massive cannon and added more energy to the
> weapon as he fired it. He left a massive hole in its head.

Dan: Hmmm, stings a bit.

> However, he had stayed in one spot for too long as the players within the Mega-Zord could bring up
> its hands and snatch Lynx from the sky.

Tsuneo: Apparently the huge hole in their head wasn't a concern.

> He could not move his arms as they were pushed to his
> sides, and his massive proton cannon had left him as he needed to use both of his arms to wield
> such a massive weapon. He activated his missile launcher which was attached to his shoulder and
> began firing it at random, trying to get the massive Mega-Zord to let go of him.

Rick: Since that worked so well the last time.

> He also activated his
> boosters in his boots to fly, and activated his small mini-gun which was on his opposite shoulder. He
> was trying everything he could to break free.

Rebecca: But has he tried tickling it?

> However, his one-man armor was no match for this titan that he was facing.

Rebecca: Which kind of makes you wonder why nobody had tried this before

> Sweat beaded his brow in the real world as he decided what he could do.

> He laughed. He was immortal, had all the ammunition, could fly faster, and yet was still not doing
> well against a few opponents that were beneath him.

Tsuneo: In short, Lynx kind of sucks

> He activated his Arc Generator that was in the chest compartment of his armor.
> He stopped all other weapons from firing and concentrated all energy to his chest area.

Dan: He's going to blow himself up for victory.
Rick: Wait, does that even work if he's indestructible?
Dan: Let's find out, shall we?

> In the meantime, his enemies were trying to smash his skull against the
> ground. Of course, this had no effect as he was immortal.

Dan: It was somewhat annoying, however

> They were getting frustrated. Lynx could
> picture them arguing in the chest of the Mega-Zord. They had no idea what they were dealing with.

Rebecca: Some idiot in a suit of armour?
Tsuneo: You may be on to something there

> Soon they would find out. He unleashed a massive ray of destructive force from his chest. He broke
> free from his enemies' grasp and took to the air just in front of the Mega-Zord's chest. He powered
> up his Proton cannon once more

All: Seen it.

> and poured all the power he could muster right into the cannon.
> He fired it and destroyed his enemies as they all turned into coins.

Dan: In short, his plan was to keep doing the thing he always did anyway

> He was not part of a clan so had no use for the Mega-Zord.

Rebecca: So he used it as a decorative pot-plant holder

> However, there were other things that the players possessed that he
> could get from their deaths. They respawned in different places around the map so that they could
> continue playing.

> Three tanks of different worlds made their way to his position.

Rick: One each from Earth-1, Earth-2 and Earth-3

> They thought that he had used up all
> his reserves. While retaining energy was an issue, he still had other weapons that did not need

> energy.

Tsuneo: And that whole unlimited ammo thing.
Dan: I suppose then there's a reason he's not just constantly raining Fat Man shells down on everything?
Tsuneo: If there is, I doubt the fic's thought of it either.

> He pulled out a missile launcher that were standard in other games

Dan: A generic missile launcher.

> that was not attached to
> his Arc Generator. He fired missiles at the three tanks that were coming to get him. At first the
> missiles seemed to have no effect.

Rick: You buy missiles from out of a truck in the 7-11 carpark and that will happen

> He decided to switch tactics. He pulled out a laser sword

Tsuneo: A generic brand laser sword that is proofed against lawsuits.

> that
> was not attached to his suit and began running at the nearest tank. They tried firing on his position
> but their attacks did nothing to him.

Dan: Fic, this is not as exciting as you think it is. I don't know how exciting you think it is, but it's not that.

> He leapt onto the machine and went right to the top hatch,
> which opened. A soldier with a shotgun tried firing at Lynx, who just grabbed the weapon, yanked
> the soldier from the tank,

Rick: I regret my poor reaction time!

> and threw down a grenade. The grenade exploded. The tank kept moving.

Rebecca: Apparently being exploded was only a minor inconvenience to the crew

> This time, Lynx went into the tank and fought with two players who were still alive in the tank.

> He killed them and took control of the tank.

Tsuneo: [Flat] Thrilling.

> He aimed and fired a round at one of the enemies. They
> fired back. Lynx closed his eyes, and activated his Heads- Up Display and made this tank his.

Rebecca: Still couldn't see it because his eyes were closed.

> He
> started driving the tank at full speed to the other tank that was to the left of him. He needed
> someone to fire the primary cannon at the enemy, and unfortunately, he had no one.

Rick: Say, where is Tridosk anyway?

> He could only drive the tank, or stop and fire the cannon, but he could not do both.

Dan: So he put a brick on the accelerator.

> He decided to ram the other tank, and hopefully flip it over or something.

Tsuneo: Brilliant plan. Say, what about your suit of armour with a zillion guns, all of which have unlimited ammunition?

> He braced himself for the impact. His tank was so
> sturdy and resilient now that it was his. The other players' tank did not flip over easily. Lynx got out
> of the tank and pulled the Arc Reactor from his chest compartment. It needed to recharge. Luckily,
> he had 100 spares and so used one.

Rebecca: Making you wonder why he didn't do that before.

> He activated his Proton Cannon once more

Tsuneo: For those times when you don't have a Proton Cannon, there's Proton Cannon.

> and fired it at the tank. He melted the tank and killed the four players that were inside.

Dan: And he didn't even notice our Hogan's Heroes themed avatars.

> Suddenly, the ground shook and Lynx was blasted to the ground. The last tank that was still there
> had fired upon him.

Rick: Oh look, things are shooting at Lynx.
Tsuneo: Uh-huh.
Rick: Pretty soon, Lynx will be shooting at things.
Tsuneo: Probably.
Rick: Say, do think... Like, was there actually a time *before* Lynx was shooting at things?
Tsuneo: You mean when things weren't shooting at Lynx?
Rick: Yeah.
Tsuneo: Honestly, I can't remember.

> Lynx gritted his teeth. He used an attack called World Destroyer which allowed
> him to shoot several missiles into the air

Dan: Not exactly world-destroying, is it?

> and they rained down upon the tank and the players that dared to attack him.

Tsuneo: Medical professionals prescribe this part of the fic as a cure for insomnia.

> He fired a tank busting rocket at the tank, and it opened with flames, coins and
> gear that Lynx then gathered. He was about to leave when there was a loud sound. Lynx looked
> around and saw that a Gundam from the Gundam Wing series

Rebecca: By simply being there, it's generating slashfic.

> had landed close to him. It had a
> massive rifle on its left arm. It raised its weapon and aimed it right at Lynx.

Rebecca: While intellectually Lynx understood that he was immune to damage, the stain in his microfiber crotch inlay proved that emotionally, he did not.

> "Fuck." Lynx said as he was blasted away from the Gundam.

> He slammed against a cliff and in the real world felt sensation all over his body from the X1 suit that
> he was wearing

Tsuneo: I have to question the value of a suit that makes you feel the pain from being shot, punched, crushed or whatever else.

> that he had won by winning the race to find Halliday's first key to get his fortune.

Rick: Okay, he didn't so much win it as he was one of the massive number of people who simply got there

> Lynx was about to get up when a massive fist slammed into his avatar. His Avatar was stuck in the
> cliff.

Dan: This is how Wile E. Coyote lives his life

> He tried wiggling his way to freedom however the rocks would not let him. He swore under his
> breath and opened his Heads-Up Display to look for something that could help him.

Rick: Razor wire, banana peel, bust of Mozart, adhesive medical strips, The Stoppable Force... Gotta be something in here...

> He activated
> something from his utility compartment in his abdomen. A green piece of plutonium fell out.

Rebecca: Isn't it great when you find a chunk of plutonium that you'd forgotten about?

> Normally, he would have needed a special device to harness the power of the radiated material,

Tsuneo: Making you wonder why he was carrying it with him to begin with.

> but he decided that he would try something. He activated his massive proton cannon

Dan: Proton Cannon. It's what's for dinner.

> and it broke
> through the cliff that he was in, freeing his arms. He shot at the Gundam while finding the plutonium.
> He shot it with his right arm's repulsor beam and it exploded.

Dan: Well this seems like a perfectly sane and reasonable plan.

> It wrapped him up in a green inferno which would have killed him.

> He turned on the flight mode in his suit and tried to maintain control as
> he flew through the nuclear fallout storm that raged on. He was unharmed as he was using the
> Easter egg that he had won.

Rick: But just to be sure, he was wearing his lead-lined underpants.

> The Gundam was nowhere to be seen. Even coins were missing.
> Maybe they were destroyed as the blast had changed the map forever.

Tsuneo: Maybe he'd just gotten bored and gone home. We may never know.

> Dark clouds formed as the fallout spread throughout the map that Lynx was playing on. Lightning
> and thunder became evident as the sky lighted up, and then there was the boom that followed.

Dan: I kind of get the feeling that he's done something bad.
Rick: There are subtle indicators.

> Lynx laughed as he saw other players come out

Tsuneo: Say, somebody just destroyed a chunk of the map with a huge nuclear explosion
Rebecca: So keep playing?
Tsuneo: You know it.

> with different vehicles. Some had tanks, others had other
> vehicles that either walked or drove but were different from tanks

Tsuneo: Some were tanks, and some were not tanks in that they were not tanks
Dan: A rare triple. Well done.

> as they had upper humanoid
> bodies that could turn and pick up items, or use massive machine guns.

Tsuneo: Literally the only time you will ever see a Guntank again.

> They aimed rocket
> launchers and mini-guns up at him and fired at will. Lynx used his increased speed to zip through
> the air erratically, flying straight, then turning 90 degrees, then changing direction and fired tank
> missiles at his enemies. Tank treads exploded.

Rick: But what about the non-tank vehicles? Were they fine?

> The vehicles got shot down and burned.

Rick: Ground vehicles got shot down?
Rebecca: You know what I mean.

> Lynx
> picked up their gear and coins and continued destroying those that came back to attack him.

Dan: This is the opposite of exciting. Not just boring, but so far past that to the point that it goes out the other side.

> He found that someone had an upgrade for armor piercing rounds.

Tsuneo: Something that sounds so basic and generic, it was a wonder he didn't have it already.

> It was a modification and since he would never run out of bullets, he applied it to his avatar.

Rebecca: He also found a discount coupon for a local McDonalds, and applied that to his avatar as well

> He started firing his mini-gun that was
> attached to his shoulder and his bullets pounded into the vehicles of the enemies he was facing. He
> fired several other tank missiles and successfully destroyed his enemies.

Tsuneo: Can we agree that Lynx is blowing things up?
Rick: I think we can.
Tsuneo: And can we agree that Lynx will continue to blow things up?
Rick: That seems reasonable, yes.
Tsuneo: And since this scene of Lynx blowing things up has been just like all the previous Lynx blowing things up scenes, is it reasonable to assume the rest of this will be just the same?
Rick: I cannot argue against that.
Tsuneo: So, since we're basically going to be reading exactly what we've already read just all over again, could we possibly skip forward to a point after Lynx blows things up?
Rick: No.
Tsuneo: Oh well, I tried.

> Lynx laughed as one by
> one the players left as he had taken most of their coins and whatever specialty items that they were
> planning to use during their match.

Tsuneo: Well if his plan is to drive users away then he's doing a great job of it

> Lynx looked at all if his items that he had claimed.

Rick: He finally had the Bruno Demonski the man on fire who you cannot defeat Funko Pop of his dreams.

> He had
> successfully collected heavy duty powers that should have been used to defeat tank-like enemies.
> He could destroy strong opponents with the items that he had stolen.

Dan: I mean, he'd already done that without those stolen items, but good for him I suppose

> He also had a lot of coins that he could buy some things instead of scavenging for them.

Tsuneo: The mechanics of the OASIS are set up not just to enable cheaters, but to actively support and encourage them

> He decided to do just that as he left the irradiated world.

Rick: The radioactive wasteland was not the best shopping destination

> He got out of the OASIS and used special programming that copied some of the code from the
> Easter eggs, which he scanned and used the coding to give his Avatar unlimited fuel.

Dan: Why he hadn't already done this was anyone's guess.

> He could now fly for a longer period.

Tsuneo: Possibly even an unlimited period?
Rebecca: You might be on to something there

> He looked at all that he had gotten and ranked them from strongest attacks to weakest.

Rick: All the way from nuclear apocalypse to gentle nudge.

> He looked at what could come in handy with a fight against someone like him; immortal.

Tsuneo: Since you can't hurt each other then what are you meant to do?

> He made sure that these items could be brought out into the OASIS with a press of a button.

Dan: He wanted to use his OASIS items in the OASIS

> He went back in, and wanted everyone to know that he was on the loose;

Rick: Dude, what's that?
Dan: Dunno man, some message from some kitty guy. Says he's all that and chips.
Rick: Huh, I got one too. Spam folder it is.

> ready to defeat the High Five and their allies.

Tsuneo: The players' collective laughter was overwhelming.

> There was a map where players were dancing to their favorite songs.

Rebecca: Oh great, it's one of those awful headphone discos

> He burst in
> through the roof and let down some bombs which exploded on contact. Several players transformed
> into coins, while others ran as they were not the battling type,

Rick: They were Sabres or Lights.
Dan: Needlessly obscure. Well done.

> or had no access to their gear at the time.

Tsuneo: Obviously he hacked the area to disable the sanctuary setting.
Rebecca: The what now?
Tsuneo: I mean, I assume there's some kind of setting in non-combat zones to prevent violence and player killing.
Rebecca: No comprende?
Tsuneo: It's a common feature in many modern games, so exactly this doesn't happen on a daily basis.
Rebecca: Nope. Not following.
Tsuneo: Yeah, figures.

> Lynx activated his shoulder mounted mini-gun and began firing into the crowd as he crashed
> to the ground, landing on his feet. Three players unlocked their fighting skins and looked at Lynx.

> "What the fuck are you doing?" One person asked, dressed like the Punisher.

Rick: Dolph Lundgren, Thomas Jane, Ray Stevenson or John Bernthal?
Dan: Hard call.
Rick: Hold on, they've just announced another one.

> "You know no guns are allowed in here, don't you?" Another person said, in a skin that they made
> their own with armor and weapons.

Dan: But if they're not described as this one character from this one franchise, how will I know what they look like?
Tsuneo: They could be described in text.
Dan: Eh, sounds too hard.

> "I've come to draw blood." Lynx said. "I will be the one."

Rick: He's going to cut off Clancy Brown's head.

> The nearest person pulled out a golden gauntlet and tried smashing his fist into Lynx's face. Lynx
> blocked the punch and slammed his heel into the player's abdomen.

Rick: And it went FAAAAARRRRRT!

[Pause]

Rick: Nobody?
Rebeca: Go for it. We need to bring some class to these proceedings.

> He opened a laser pointer-like
> weapon in his wrist and shot a small laser into the eyes of another player.

Rick: A weapon designed to disable his enemies and annoy cats.

> The player brought up
> their hands to shield their eyes and they tried shooting a pistol at Lynx, who took the bullets head
> on. He did not bother ducking, or flying but instead walked right up to the player and placed two
> mines on his chest.

Dan: Hmm, he's coming towards me with explosives in his hands. I wonder what this guy is thinking of and where he's going with this?

> The mines exploded, turning the player into coins, which Lynx picked up. Other

> players just turned back into their normal avatars and escaped from the dancehall.

Tsuneo: That one guy’s logout macro idea has gone viral.

> With no one to oppose him, Lynx decided it was time to end other people's fun.

Rebecca: Because so far they’d been enjoying this dance party massacre.

> He looked through his inventory
> and found that someone from the previous map had planned to use a nuclear bomb on a Scarab.

Tsuneo: He didn’t realise that he had a nuclear weapon on him, despite all the nuclear weapons that he has used so far.

> He would have jumped or land somehow on the Scarab and plant the bomb and get off before the
> Scarab exploded. Now, it was in Lynx's hands.

Rebecca: His sweaty, sweaty hands.

> He made sure to use his copy codes so that he
> could use this device more than once. He placed one bomb in the dance hall and flew out the hole
> in the ceiling that he had come in from. He counted down, and then the whole place lit up like a
> small star.

> Now armed with these types of bombs, Lynx now sought to spread all throughout the OASIS, killing
> players, stealing their items, and laying waste to all that they held dear.

Rebecca: And remember, the High Five could have just banned him at any time.

> Mark held up a piece of paper that he had printed off the computer. It was the address for Nick
> Harvey's office.

Rebecca: Any reason why he didn’t just put the address on his phone?
Rick: Maybe Mark likes making things difficult for himself.

> He had printed off the directions to the office and used a bus to get there. He had
> gone home when his classes were finished, and for once did not stay back to help clean the school
> for Community Service Hours.

Tsuneo: Mark had done it every day, even on weekends and holidays. People were beginning to worry

> He changed his clothes and made his way to the office. It was a
> sunny day, so he wore blue jeans, and a black dress shirt with short sleeves.

Rick: The ten gallon hat and gag glasses were a touch off-putting, however.

> He also wore casual brown dress shoes and a silver watch his aunt had given him for his birthday.

Rebecca: Thank you fic. I could not have lived without knowing where he got the watch from.

> He opened the door
> and saw that he needed to go up to the third floor. He used the stairs because he preferred to be
> active and not use an elevator.

Dan: And yet he spends all his time in a video game.

> He saw that the office was at the end of a long hallway. For some
> reason, he felt dread creep inside his stomach as he walked down the hallway.

Tsuneo: The end keeps getting further away.

> It wasn't a dark
> hallway. There were several doors leading to other offices and they were all lit and had small
> windows on the door for people to look through.

Rick: Keep to the right. Don’t make eye contact. Don’t approach the glass.

> Mark found himself standing in front of the door.
> What would happen when he walked through the door?

Rick: He could fall through a hole in time and space into an unknown dimension beyond all human understanding. Or he could be asked if he has an appointment. You never know.

> Well, he did not come all that way for nothing. He opened the door and found a waiting room with no
> one inside it. There was a middle-aged woman sitting at a desk, looking at files on a computer
> screen. Or she might have been playing Solitaire.

Rebecca: Or she could be hacking into the Pentagon to start a nuclear war. Just saying.

> Mark could not see, and did not want to call her out on it. He cleared his throat.

Dan: [Mark] Oh well, she didn’t notice, guess I tried, time to leave...

> "Hello." The woman said, looking up, smiling. "Do you have an appointment to see the doctor?"

Dan: [Mark] Dangit.

> "Ugh," Mark replied lamely. "I didn't know I needed to make one to see doctor Harvey."

> "Doctor Harvey?" The woman asked, raising her eyebrow. "Nick's no doctor."

> "I thought he had a PHD?" Mark said.

> "He does, but he's not practicing now." She said.

Rebecca: Actually he’s a doctor of mathematics. He gets that all the time.

> "He needs to get more experience before he feels
> he is ready to become a full-fledged doctor.

Dan: So his plan is to sit in his office and do nothing and hope that experience will naturally accrue

> I'm talking about Doctor Dundas."

> "I'm just here to see Nick," Mark said. "But I didn't make an appointment so I guess I should go
> home then."

Tsuneo: He said hopefully.

> "Hey, you must be Mark." A man's voice said from behind him.

> Mark turned around and saw that his head was at the man's chest.

Rick: [Mark] Pectorals. I mean, hi!

> Mark had to look up to look in
> the man's eyes. He looked just like how he was in the pictures that were online.

Rebecca: In as far as he was completely shirtless.

> This was Nick Harvey. Mark nodded his head.

> "I'm a friend of Amira's." Mark said.

> "Yeah, I know, you and I have already spoken on the phone." Nick said, and then turned his
> attention to the secretary. "Carol, do I have anything left for today?"

Rebecca [Carol]: No, because you're not practicing, remember?
Dan [Nick]: Oh yeah. Silly me.

> "Just the normal paperwork." The secretary, Carol said.

Dan: [Carol] Burn it?
Rebecca: [Nick] You know it.

> "Ok, so Mark, I have time to see you." Nick said. "Follow me."

Tsuneo: Isn't it lucky that Nick was just sitting around twiddling his thumbs?

> Mark waved good-bye to Carol and followed Nick to his office.

Rick: [Carol] I'll call the coroner.
Dan: [Mark] The what now?
Rick: [Carol] Nothing, dear. Was nice knowing you.

> Nick ushered Mark in.

> "Did you want some green tea?" Nick asked Mark.

> "Uh," Mark said shyly. "Yeah sure."

Tsuneo: Mark's immediately worried that there will be incense and yoga involved.

> Nick poured two cups of tea from a teapot on his desk. It was a small office, but the view was
> spectacular. The office was close to the lake. There were pictures and statues all over the office.

Tsuneo: Every square centimetre was covered by a picture or a statue

> It felt like home.

Dan: I mean, if you live out of your over-decorated office, then sure.

> Nick sat at his desk which had a laptop on it as well. There was a printer in the office.
> There were several files on his desk which he would be going over later.

Rick: I'll just leave this confidential patient information lying around. Don't mind me.

> Mark saw that Nick had his
> University Degree hanging up on the wall next to a picture of him and his wife with their son.

Rebecca: The one of him wrestling a crocodile was somewhat less reassuring.

> Nick offered Mark the cup of tea.

> "I'm sorry, did you want sweetener with your tea?" Nick asked.

> "No, its fine like this." Mark said.

Rick: Having not even tried it.

> "I like your office."

> "Thanks man, my partner came in to give it life, because she has better taste in design than I do."

Rebecca: Nick’s original plan involved shag carpeting and orange vinyl.

> "Was the secretary your partner?"

Dan: [Nick] Naw, she just cooks the books and hides the bodies.

> "I mean my wife, I just don't like calling her my wife because for a while we lived together but had
> not considered getting married. I prefer calling her my partner because it's an equal relationship."

Rebecca: There are some very wrong implications of what he’s saying there.

> "Oh okay. And is that your son in the picture beside your degree?"

Dan [Nick]: Him? Truth being told, I have no idea.

> "Yup, his name is Liam. He will be five years old in August. They are my pride and joy."

> "Amira only mentioned you the other day. I admit, I did look you up based on your phone number.

Tsuneo: Mark used his phone number as a judge of his entire character.

> I saw that you have a few pictures online as well as what you did before starting to work here."

Rick: [Mark] The one labelled ‘cartel buddies’ was uh... Enlightening.

> "Yeah, I used to be a cop. I decided that the late shifts and time away from my partner was not for
> me. It was not right for us as I wanted to spend as much time as I could with Liam.

Dan: Nick joined the police for the stable nine-to-five.

> When he was
> born, my partner took Maternity Leave, and then when her time was up, I took Paternity Leave.

Tsuneo: After that, they took dogsitter’s leave.

> He was never alone for the first few months of his life. Eventually I had to trust someone, though.

Rick: Nick was a raving paranoid

> We
> signed Liam up at a daycare which was in the neighborhood for two decades. People never
> complained about it so we signed him up.

Tsuneo: Well isn’t that just the best recommendation?

> He's gotten so big now, he's heavy to pick up.

Dan: But he’s five and Nick’s covered in muscles...
Rick: Do not question it!

> But enough about me. Amira said that you are quite the piano player."

Rebecca: Amira has spent years watching his every move

> "Yeah, I've been going to piano lessons for almost a decade now. My siblings and I all play the

> piano.

Tsuneo: And I’m sure they’re doing it for the love of music and not because of pushy parents at all.
Rebecca: Not that you’d know anything about that.
Tsuneo: God no.

> Some people in my grade think I'm gay because I play it…"

> "How do you know that?"

Rick: They directly compared him to Liberace.

> "I hear them laughing. I heard one guy tell their friends that I was gay because I dressed business
> like so that I could play the piano for them for the talent show."

Dan: Because nothing screams ‘queer’ more than a sensible suit and tie.

> "You respect your peers, and they spit in your face.

Tsuneo: Folks, high school.

> Trust me, you don't want these people in your life. They are toxic.

Rick: He’s talking about Tom, isn’t he?

> Focus on the good,

Dan: [Mark] Like my guns from Halo: Combat Evolved?
Rick: [Nick] No.

> although right now it might be hard since you see these
> people every day, but think of Amira. She does not believe any of the rumors that are going around.

Rebecca: That she’s written slashfic about Mark and Tom shouldn’t factor into it at all either.

> People can make up their minds for themselves, and not let others dictate how we live our lives."

Dan: [Nick] Except me. I’ll tell you how to live your life.

> "And that's another problem. My parents are forcing us to focus on school right now.

Rick [Mark]: Stupid parents being concerned about my having the best start in life and wanting a good future for me. What would they know?

> They are
> saying that we should not focus on getting girlfriends or boyfriends because they won't last forever.

Rebecca: Both his parents settled, didn’t they?
Tsuneo: I’m beginning to get that feeling.

> My parents think the same way about friends.

Dan: And if you’d met his friends, you would too.

> We should only do the work for now so that we get a stable job in the future."

> "While I agree with your parents on some things, you can't just live like that. Humans are social
> animals.

Rick: Just ask your dad, the overnight bus driver.

> We need contact with other people. Just give your friends a hug next time you see them.

Dan: [Nick] In a totally heterosexual way, of course.

> Better yet, give Amira a hug, so then no one will think you are gay."

Rebecca: Or they'll double down and assume she's your beard.

> "I feel so lonely.

Tsuneo: Magical fantasy girlfriend and school buddies aside

> But I don't want to go against my parents.

Rick: [Mark] For the three hours a week that I see them.

> I don't know what to do."

> "I get the feeling that these issues have been present in your life for a long time now.

Rick: As soon as he was born they signed him up for piano lessons, and stopped him from speaking to the other kids in the maternity ward.

> It won't be easy but you need to talk about these issues with your parents.

Rebecca: [Mark] I'll set up a meeting, I think they're free sometime next month.
Tsuneo: [Nick] You know what, never mind.

> You need balance in your life.
> You're not the type of person who would just skip school all day with your friends.

Dan: Maybe every third day tops.

> You honor your parents and try your best."

Rick: And desperately overcompensate online.

> "I'm also not that smart. I only have College grade courses. Amira is in University courses.

Rick: Ah, see? That vital infodump on the Canadian education system is paying off.
Tsuneo: I am genuinely shocked.

> What if
> she graduates from high school, and while she goes to University finds someone whose more her
> equal?"

Tsuneo: Your mother has a clearly well-paying IT job and your father drives busses on the night shift. I think your family can accept that sort of disparity.

> "Something like that can happen to any of us. I work out, I live an active life style, and I work.

Dan: [Nick] I do counselling sessions at the gym. Feel these quads, brah.

> I can meet other people who work out as well.

Dan: His friend circle consists entirely of gym bros.

> Hell, I can talk to Carol.

Rebecca: [Carol, distant] No you can’t!

> But, Wendy, my partner, must have faith that I will not cheat on her. You need more confidence.

Dan: [Mark] Oh god, no. Could never do that.

> I suggest you start taking Martial Arts studies. This would relieve stress and get you out there.

Rick: You could be repeatedly kicked by new people.

> I know you probably use the OASIS,

Dan: Use he says, as if it’s a hard drug.

> but that's no way to live. You need human interaction. Martial Arts can help you."

Rebecca: When it comes to building character, I can’t think of a better place then a strip mall Karate dojo

> "You've given me a lot to think about. Thanks for the tea."

Rick: And literally nothing else.

> "Any time. Listen, if you need me anywhere or anytime, I'll be there for you.

Tsuneo: And so when Mark called him up at two in the morning because the cup on his haptic suit was stuck, Nick came to regret his words.
Rebecca [Aech]: Eh, at least he’s no longer bothering me.

> You can trust me Mark. You're a good guy."

Rick: And he always does the right thing

> "Thanks Mister Harvey."

> "Just call me Nick."

> Mark nodded and they finished their tea. Mark left the office with the feeling that a huge weight had
> been lifted from his shoulders.

Tsuneo: He’d forgotten his backpack.

> He headed to Fraticelli's to meet Amira. Change was inevitable. He
> felt that this might be the calm before the storm…

Dan: And he felt good about that for some reason.

> GoldDragonZ: I wish my guidance counsellor talked to me like this.

Rebecca: Trust me kid, you do not.

> I wish we could just go
> somewhere and talk to someone who would give us advise.

Tsuneo: Like, a guidance counsellor maybe?
Dan: You could be on to something there.

> There doesn't seem to be anyone though…Please enjoy this story as I write it.

On that final comment, the big screen turned off, reverting the world over to prose format. “And that was the next two spacio-temporal entities that comprise the ongoing sequence that is the Adventures of Jack,” Tsuneo considered.

“I admit that I was genuinely surprised by that section,” Rebecca spoke up. “In as far as I didn’t expect it to be nearly that stupid.”

“You’re talking about Akira from Programming, aren’t you?” Dan asked.

“I am,” she nodded. “Because she is a fantastic case of taking a stupid idea, making it even worse and then digging that hole deeper.”

“She was not very smart, was she?” Rick asked.

“She was not,” Rebecca agreed. “Now I will say this; it’s clear that the author doesn’t know much about video game design, programming, client-server architectures or the like, and that is all fair.”

“I sense a ‘but’ coming,” Dan continued.

“But the author should have also seen that her idea was terrible, and that the solution to the problem she created was even worse.”

“Agreed there,” Tsuneo nodded. “Her Easter Eggs were a bad idea in and of themselves. But not telling the people who run the OASIS before she went live with them was even stupider. And now she’s going to make it even worse still.”

“Though related to the eggs, I have a question,” Rick spoke up.

“Go on,” Tsuneo nodded.

“Lynx abuses his immortality to cheat at deathmatches and ruin the game for everyone else and he is the bad guy,” Rick considered. “But Jack abuses his immortality to cheat at deathmatches and ruin the game for everyone else and the fic considers him to be the hero.”

“There’s a lot of that going on,” Tsuneo agreed. “Mark/Jack is the good guy because the fic says so, even though he’s not heroic or decent at any level. In fact, I dare say that the more we learn about Mark as a person, the worse he gets.”

“I could happily live without him ever having another date with Amira,” Rebecca shuddered. “Because they are just so creepy.”

“He hasn’t hit Artemis Knight levels of nice guy yet, but I feel that’s only a matter of time,” Rick added.

“So what do you think Nick’s role in the fic will be going forward?” Dan asked. “Besides his gross braches of professional and ethical conduct.”

“Probably to validate everything Mark does,” Rebecca simply shot back.

“Well I can see that you’re getting really engaged with the fic,” The Voice crashed into the conversation.

"We really don’t have any choice in the matter,” Tsuneo shot back.

“And that’s great to hear,” the Voice beamed. “Because next time we’ll be continuing with the next two chapters of the fic.”

“Oh joy,” Dan sighed.

“Well at least we’re done for now, right?” Rick asked.

“We are, yes,” the Voice confirmed. “I look forward to seeing you all next time.”

“Felling’s not mutual,” Dan finished.

Tsuneo slumped back on the couch. “So based on all this, do you think this fic was thoroughly planned in advance, or that the author’s making it up as they go along?”

“You know, up until this last part, I would have said that this was all going to a plan,” Rebecca considered. “But now, I have no idea at all.”

“I mean, it’s still got OASIS stuff, but that seems to be second place to Mark’s awkward dates,” Dan noted.

“Lynx blows up half the OASIS and nobody really cares,” Rick added. “Certainly not the people running the OASIS who seem to be happy to let him keep doing the crap that he’s doing.”

“And the whole thing with Akira seemed to be there as a way of covering a pre-existing plot hole,” Tsuneo finished. “Albeit at the cost of making a whole mess of new ones instead.”

“Which means that we’re likely in for another four chapters of mindless wandering,” Rebecca considered. “Now don’t get me wrong, there likely is a destination in mind-“

“Jack beats Lynx, gets the girl and is congratulated for owning a Spaceship,” Dan interjected.

“-but I have no idea how the fic plans to get there.”

“Probably,” Rick agreed. “So do you think that we’ll see more of Akira from programming?”

“I can only hope so,” Rebecca finished.

Author’s notes:

Akira is one of those rare characters who is a gift to us. It’s not just that she’s presented as some sort of genius when she obviously isn’t, but that she’s clearly making terrible decisions every step of the way. And, of course, her solution to the problem she created is to make things even worse while everyone agrees that this is a great idea. And, of course, nobody at all thinks to just ban Lynx. Why? Well to be honest, the fic never once addresses that issue.

If you’re hanging out for Amira/Princess May to ever do anything on her own then don’t hold your breath.

Next time, the epic showdown, or something.

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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 and register your Jeff.

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> Jack opened
> his Heads Up Display to see if John Matthews/Gadanza or Justin Rihaz/ Arathorn, Son of Anamon
> were online. Justin/ Arathorn, Son of Anamon was not online, and neither was John/Gadanza.