
Episode 446 – Check out my inventory

One of the things that Rebecca had learned in the course of her job was that people would go to great lengths to hide something when they didn't want it to be found. Underground bunkers, stashes in distant mountains, hidden caches in the deepest woods and so on. However, this time around, she had to give credit to whoever had hidden this one to the degree of effort they had taken. Of all the places one would expect to look for a massive spaceship, the bottom of the ocean was about the last of them.

It was obviously a one-way trip, emphasising just how much whoever had hidden it had wanted it to remain that way. The vessel had never been designed for this, and would never surface again. However, at the same time, it was clear that they had made the effort to bring it down intact and whole. Clearly the intent was for somebody to return to it some way to recover whatever secrets it held.

Which was why she was here. She may not have been the person that whoever had marooned the ship had intended it for, but she was going to take those secrets no less.

What little of it she could see through the gloom suggested the vessel was massive, but had also been there for a long time. The hull was covered in muck and growths, obscuring its form but still leaving indications of its functionality. That had included an airlock, which had been easy enough to force and override on to give her access to the ship.

Once inside she couldn't help but be impressed by a sense of scale inside the ship. Whoever had built it had given it high hallways, far larger than any human would ever need. The chambers she passed through were almost cavernous in nature, with vaulted ceilings that almost vanished into the gloom. Most of it was dark, presumably the result of most of its systems being powered down or simply depleted after the centuries.

The air was cool but at the same time, stale. Occasionally trickles of water ran down the walls or fell from the lofty heights, pooling before eventually draining away. She quietly wondered just how extensive the decay of the ship's hull was and where all that water was going. Whether it was being pumped out by some still functional system, or maybe pooling and slowly flooding the ship would make a world of difference.

Cautiously she made her way into another chamber, this one markedly different from the others. Its walls were dominated by banks of computer equipment that was not only obviously still functional but actively running. "And here we go," Rebecca commented to herself as she approached a terminal, looking over it. Presently it was running a long, possibly perpetual diagnostic cycle that suggested that, despite all else, the system was fully functional and that its secrets were intact. "So let's see what was worth all this effort to hide."

It took her some effort to navigate through the archaic operating system before she found its central datacore. What she found in there surprised her.

"Bubblegum Crisis Fanfic?" Rebecca blinked. "What the hell?"

Despite that, she couldn't help but look further. There were dozens of files in the system, maybe hundreds. But as she examined them, she noticed something else in the file details. "Somebody has accessed these recently," she considered.

And she had a worrying idea who it was.

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

"So how goes the spaceman war?" Dan asked as he and Tsuneo entered the apartment.

"Well the funny thing is that the whole debate got lost in a sidebar discussion," Tsuneo replied.

"How so?"

"Well the issue came up of retro-styled spacemen," Tsuneo explained. "Like Benny or the like. Particularly the 'new' colours for them. And that then raised the question of if they are acceptable as 'Classic Space' or not."

"And how did that go?"

Tsuneo shrugged. "Last I saw, it had degenerated into infighting over the issue of hollow stud heads versus solid stud ones and I ducked out there. Suffice to say, I don't think spaceman colours are an issue any more."

"I should join this club," Rick spoke up as he and Rebecca entered. "It sounds fun."

"I think you'd like it," Tsuneo nodded. "It'd be a great creative outlet."

"Oh, I was thinking more of all the drama and the like," Rick replied. "Great stuff."

"Of course," Tsuneo sighed. "How have you been, Rebecca?"

"You know, boring day at work," she simply shrugged off. "Nothing too exciting or the like."

"I'd hope so," Dan snorted. "Your last 'exciting' day involved blowing up a colourful ruin while I was in it."

She shrugged. "I figured you'd be fine."

"You're also a terrible liar."

"Probably," she admitted.

"Good morning everyone," the Voice cut in to the conversation.

"And good morning to you too, Head of Doom," Rick replied.

"Before this turns into another spaceman war," Tsuneo continued, "What do we have in the pain inventory today?"

"Today we're going to be looking at something a bit different," the Voice began.

"That bodes," Tsuneo admitted.

"So today we'll be looking at a Ready Player One fic."

"Voice, I actually hate you," Rebecca shot back. "You know that, right?"

"Is it based on the movie or the book?" Rick asked.

"Dude, does it really matter?" Dan glanced at him.

"Oh yeah," Rick nodded. "it effects a lot of things. How unlikeable Wade is, if Samantha actually gets to do anything and has a life beyond being a prop girlfriend, how prominent the inadvertent racist, sexist and homophobic undertones are, weather one of Daito and Shoto are dead..."

"Which one?" Tsuneo asked.

"Truth being told, I don't remember," Rick shrugged. "But the point is that it does change a lot."

"It is based on the movie," the Voice confirmed.

"So the less loathsome option," Rebecca noted.

"Before we lose this one deeper into the weeds, what's the fic called?" Tsuneo asked.

"It's titled Ready Player One: The adventures of Jack," the Voice explained.

"Is it about a guy called Jack?" Dan asked.

"It is, yes," the Voice confirmed.

"I knew it," Dan nodded.

"Well called there," Rick agreed.

"And we'll be covering all twelve chapters of it," The Voice finished.

"With our history, that could mean anything," Rebecca admitted as she took her place on the couch. "Really, what constitutes a 'chapter' for us is so broad as to render it as a measure completely meaningless."

"How about we take the option that is the most painful to us?" Tsuneo offered as he and the others joined her.

"Makes sense to me," Rebecca finished as the big screen turned on, converting the world over to script format.

> Ready Player One: The adventures of Jack

> GoldDragonZ: I have looked at the movie and was really influenced by all that happened.

Rick: So the author got all their Funko Pops and bashed them against each other.

> I want to make my own story based on the OASIS

Dan: Madlibs exist, so most of your work has been done for you

> about my own character named Jack.

Rebecca: But is he a gweep?

> Please enjoy as I do not own the movie or the book that it is based off of.

> The following takes place two years after Wade and his clan won the Easter egg.

Dan: During the tenebrous reign of the Spider Kingdom.

> Wade, Helen,

> Samantha, Akihide and Toshiro and their families were taken to the headquarters of the OASIS

Rebecca: For tax reasons, it was a hut on the Cayman Islands.

> where all the computer servers were kept in a cool environment.

Tsuneo: The servers chilled in their bean-bag chairs by the infinity pool.

> They then lived happy lives and continued playing on the OASIS

Tsuneo: Conveniently out of sight forever.

> and made many friends online and in the real world.

Rick: This is automatically a better outcome than Ready Player Two.

> They realized that life is what you make of it.

Dan: Which is why they spent all their time watching Family Ties reruns

> They continued to make strides in the real world,

Rick: Having to be occasionally reminded what it is.

> going to elementary school, high school and college.

Rebecca: Wade majored in Gatekeeping.

> Many people were employed by the creators of the OASIS

Dan: Nobody had been employed beforehand. Gregarious Games was just Simon Pegg on a laptop down at his local.

> as all the information needed to be protected.

Tsuneo: And this is why Wikipedia requires you to create an account.

> As a reward for helping Wade and his team win, all the

> players who took place in the last battle against the Innovative Online Industries, or IOI,

Rick: Even if you just sat at the sidelines and ate virtual popcorn.

> were granted all their coins and gear that they amassed up to the point against the IOI.

Dan: But then he remembered that it included people who made their avatars into Battletoads, and decided that they should all go to hell instead.

> One such player held the Avatar Name of Jack_100292402.

Rebecca: Such a catchy name.

> Jack had taken the form of Optimus Primal from Season One of the Beast Wars television show

Rick: Munky not truck!

> and fought on the ground with other members of the OASIS.

Tsuneo: We will fight them on the forums, we will fight them in the tweets, we will fight them in the chatrooms and we will never surrender.

> Jack had not joined a clan and did things his own way.

Rick: Mostly pantsless.

Rebecca: His avatar or in real life?
Rick: Why not both?

> He fought hard until everyone was destroyed because of the bomb.

Tsuneo: Including Ruby and Coates.

> And then Wade had beaten the IOI. It took months for Wade and his team to
> fight for the items that their comrades had

Tsuneo: But I thought Jack fought alone.
Dan: Details

> so that they were given back to them.

Dan: Don't they own the game and can basically do anything?
Rebecca: Yeah, but it took them months before they could be bothered.

> For Jack, that included a black space ship

Rick: He got it from Brick Hactar.

> designated in Japanese, the Tensa Zangetsu, or 'Heaven Chain Slaying Moon'.

Rick: And if he ever came across any chains, then his moon would be ready for them.

> It was named after the main character of the anime Bleach, Ichigo Kurosaki's
> weapon.

Tsuneo: Pointing out the references? Yep, that's pure Ready Player One.

> It was black in colour and was similar in structure to The Pillar of Autumn which is the ship
> from Halo: Combat Evolved, as well as the ship from Toonami, the Absolution.

Rebecca: It was like this one ship except that it was like this other ship

> However, there were many missile and laser turrets attached to the hull.

Dan: Like a model that he'd inexpertly glued extra parts to.

> There were two Mack cannons

Rick: They shot trucks at people

> which fire nuclear projectiles that decimated other ships.

Tsuneo: As nuclear weapons often do.

> These projectiles could be swapped out for other projectiles as well.

Rick: Like when they shot hamburgers at people. They were Big Mac cannons.

> Within the confines of the ship were robot ships and workers.

Dan: He had ships on his ship.
Rick: Robot ships on his ship.
Dan: So is his ship a robot ship?
Rick: ...I have no clue.

> Jack had several personal ships that he could pilot in the hangar as well.

Rebecca: But not outside the hangar. He had to be very careful how he flew them.

- > He had amassed quite the collection of vehicles
- > ranging from X-wings from Star Wars

Tsuneo: As opposed to X-Wings from Pride and Prejudice, of course

- > to Audi-V8s that could all be customized with different colours.

Rick: As long as one of them was yellow with custom 'JaAm' numberplates, I'm good.

- > He had the LTD from Men in Black. He had the General Lee from the hit TV show Dukes of Hazzard.

Rebecca: The General Lee was missing its roof decal, which had caused him to rage endlessly on forums about his cultural heritage.

- > He had much more as well. His Avatar was an Indian man with gold eyes,

Dan: But I thought it was Optimus Primal.

Rick: Maybe it was an Indian Optimus Primal.

- > of average
- > height, with long black hair done up in a top knot with a red ribbon. He had a slim yet athletic build
- > as well.

Rebecca: The OASIS truly is a fantasy realm.

- > Usually, he wore black and red armour similar to Japanese samurai armour but kept his
- > head exposed. He had Batman's gauntlets

Dan: For want of any other description, I'll assume this means he has flared purple gloves.

- > and his armour was very similar in design to Mjolnir Powered Assault Armour

Rebecca: Except that it was samurai armour. Make up your mind!

- > from the Halo series of video games, books, and online shorts.

Tsuneo: And Mega Bloks.

- > He also
- > had Sokka from Avatar: The Last Airbender's Black sword strapped to his back as his primary
- > Melee weapon.

Dan: Not the space sword. Just a regular sword that Sokka barely used.

- > He had two black and red Desert Eagle pistols

Rebecca: If his goal was to make himself look like as big a tosser as possible, then he's doing a great job.

- > strapped to his hips as well. Like the
- > other players, these weapons could be swapped out for other weapons at any time.

Rick: So I'm not really sure why I bothered listing them.

- > Attached to his left ankle was a black hilted knife with a black dragon design on its blade.

Dan: At this point I can only assume that he's a Mall Ninja.

> The sheathe itself was red to match Jack's armour.

Rick: His samurai Halo armour, of course.

Tsuneo: Of course.

> Jack made his way to the bridge of his ship.

Rebecca: Barely able to walk under the tons of gear he was carrying.

> Various robots were at the task of making sure the ship was running smoothly.

Rebecca: The robots are only there to run his ship and totally not a substitute for actual friends.

> They were monitoring lighting

Tsuneo: The ship's interior lights were vitally important.

> as well as the radars so that they could see where other ships were.

> Within the ship there were areas where he could customize his items as well as fix other items.

Rebecca: He'd spent all his money on microtransaction weapon skins

> He was well known throughout the OASIS as someone who could fix anything

Dan: But can he fix a broken heart?

> as he had used most of his coins to upgrade his tool benches and

> factories within his Gargantuan ship.

Rick: The ship had cost less than the workbenches inside it, I guess.

> That is the reason he had a ship.

Tsuneo: The idea that he could go places with it didn't seem to occur to him.

> If anyone needed anything

> fixed, he could fly over to the world where they were and use a special drop ship that could carry

> them and the object they needed to be fixed to the Tensa Zangetsu.

Rick: So if my gun was about to break, then I could message him.

Dan: Yep.

Rick: And he'd fly his ship across the OASIS to come to wherever I was.

Dan: Well yeah.

Rick: And then he'd swoop down in his dropship to collect my gun and take it back to his ship to be repaired.

Dan: Of course

Rick: I'm seeing some flaws in this business model.

> Jack would then repair the item and earn points or coins while doing it.

Rebecca: Jack's entire playstyle relies on nobody else being able to fix anything.

> He had a huge hangar that ships could park and their item could be taken out to be repaired.

Tsuneo: And so as a massive dropship unloaded a single pistol into the cavernous bay in the giant spaceship, Jack congratulated himself on his investment

- > He
- > had all of his items displayed throughout his ship as well, but he had it locked down so only people
- > he wanted could see his collection.

Rebecca: He limited it to only his friends, which meant that nobody ever got in there.

- > He had several friends from his school who knew who he was in
- > the real world and he allowed them to see his collection within his ship.

Dan: Yeah, Jack, we've seen it.

- > In the real world, his name was Mark Patel. He lived in Canada in a town just outside of Toronto
- > which is the capital of Ontario, one of the provinces of Canada.

Rick: Which was a nation in North America on the planet Earth, the third world from the star Sol, which was...

Tsuneo: We get it.

- > He went to a Roman Catholic High-school that made the students wear uniforms

Rebecca: Fic? I think we can figure all this out for ourselves.

- > which included dress shoes, dress shirts, and pants

Rick: Thank you for the small things.

- > as well as the school sweater or vest with the school crest on the left breast.

Tsuneo: I'm just going to assume none of this will ever be relevant.

- > He was 17 years old
- > and was almost finished high school. He was really skinny and had bad acne.

Dan: His face looked like the dark side of the moon.

- > He wore glasses and
- > lived with his mother and father. He had a younger brother and a younger sister. He hung out with
- > kids who were just like him.

Rick: All his friends were called Mark, were skinny, had bad acne and had OASIS avatars that looked like Samurai, Halo Spartans and/or Optimus Primal.

- > They were not good at sports.

Tsuneo: Their gym teacher frequently organised them into the 'sick, lame and dying' squad.

- > While he was one of the smartest kids in
- > his grade, one of his friends had special needs. They had learning disabilities. He had smart friends
- > as well

Rebecca: Well that came out awkward.

- > and they were indeed smarter than he was.

Dan: They actually played the game, rather than wasting their time being a repair bot.

- > If it was not for them, he would not be where he
- > was grades wise. He was also a musician as his parents forced him to go to piano lessons.

Rick: Aha, no doubt we're setting up for the elaborate play-off with Jeff Goldblum in the third act.

Tsuneo: As much as I would love that, no.

> He did not like it, but he liked playing songs that he wanted to play.

Dan: He didn't like piano lessons except that he did.

> He liked singers like Jay Z or Rihanna

Rebecca: Whose music was only five decades old. So you know, practically contemporary.

> but knew how to play songs by Johann Sebastian Bach and Beethoven. His mother and father liked
> love songs so he played some of those as well.

Dan: Jack's whole identity was based on pleasing his parents.

> He owned his own virtual reality Headset, OASIS
> console, and sensation X-suit that were given to him as gifts for being such a son to his parents.

Tsuneo: Say, wasn't everyone in the Ready Player One impoverished and malnourished?

Rick: Yeah, and wasn't there like a massive breakdown in law and order with leather-clad booster gangs prowling the wastelands between the cities?

Rebecca: Clearly Mark's family isn't bothered by the collapse of civilisation.

> After school was finished, he often walked home by himself to his house. His parents worked
> different shifts so he would not see either of them for some time. His mother worked the day shift 9
> am -5 pm at a building firm where she was an IT specialist. His dad worked the nightshift 4:30 pm –
> 2:00 am at a bus company within Toronto where he drove buses.

Rebecca: This meant his parents rarely saw each other, an arrangement that suited them both well.

> He preferred to be alone,

Tsuneo: Socialising was for losers

> working away at whatever homework he had, practising the piano,

Dan: Just generally being such a son.

> and playing on the OASIS. His real life was not pleasant as he felt like an outsider.

Tsuneo: His comfortable, upper middle-class life was so terrible.

> He was a good kid. He kept to his Christian beliefs

Rick: Wade Watts automatically hates him

> however in the OASIS he could do anything literally anything.

Rebecca: The phrase 'Sonic the Hedgehog mpreg' is basically inevitable at this point.

> No doubt that if his parents knew
> what he was doing, he would be banned from playing the game.

Rick: He figured that explaining what a 'brony' was would be more trouble than it was worth.

> Only his friends knew who he was on the OASIS.

Dan: Turns out, you don't know Jack.

Rebecca: Getting the puns in early?

Dan: I have a whole barrel of them waiting to go.

> He longed to meet Wade Watts, also known as Parzival, and the rest of the High Five.

Tsuneo: So he stalked them constantly.

> That is why he tried to make it well known that he could fix anything in the hopes that Wade
> would find out and use him, or even add him to the group although that probably would not happen.

Rebecca: But since Wade had omnipotent godlike powers over the entire OASIS, having a guy who could fix stuff would be a bit pointless.

> Jack/Mark was on the bridge of the ship, looking out to space.

Rick: [Jack] Space, the final frontier. These are the voyages of the repair ship, 'Obnoxious Sword Name.'

> He usually took up residence on the outer rim of the OASIS

Dan: He lived in the outer suburbs of the internet.

> and could see the different worlds or maps that he could travel to either by
> ship or portal.

Rebecca: Well, I can instantly jump to any of these other worlds, or I can spend forever travelling alone to them the bleak and empty space. [Pause] Grim solitude it is.

> He pulled up the schematics to the OASIS

Dan: Turns out it's made of chip board and hot glue.

> and picked up where one of his friends was playing a racing game.

Rick: He was playing a Need For Speed game in the faint hope that he would get turned into a Transformer

> His friend Tom, or Tom_001

Dan: Another truly inspired username.

Rick: Are you kidding? Do you know how many OASIS Bucks he had to pay to get the first issued Tom?

> on the OASIS was playing on that circuit and Jack_100292402 decided to go and play with him.

Tsuneo: He's hoping to cause a pile-up and drum up some business.

> "Hey Tom!" Jack said, calling Tom on the cell phone app he used in the game. "Is there room to
> play with you or is it too late?"

Dan [Tom]: Damn straight.

> "You can join, but it will force you to go to the back of the pack." Tom said. "Do you think you can
> win this?"

> "Probably not," Jack said. "But think of the fun."

Rebecca: People doing things for fun? That's a radical idea for the Ready Player One universe

> Tom's race began so it allowed time for Jack to get to the track while Tom played the game. Jack
> used a black painted X-wing from Star Wars which had yellow stripes and flew around the race
> track.

Rick: [Jack] This is a space race, right?

Rebecca: [Tom] Eh, who cares?

> Tom had taken the form of a Caucasian male with various tattoos all along his body.

Dan: Tom looked like any given guy in LA.

> He wore

> a leather vest with a golden eagle sprawled on the back of it. He wore black leather gloves as well.

> He wore a black tank top underneath the vest and black leather pants

Rebecca: Even though it's a virtual world, you know exactly how he smells.

> and black hard boots that looked like a biker's boots.

Tsuneo: He wore biker boots to ride his bike

Dan: Cunning

> He wore a bad ass helmet

Rick: I want to put a hyphen in there, but I don't know where

> with silver/ chrome wings painted on the

> sides. He had blue eyes and had long brown hair and a goatee with red highlights.

Rick: Um, Dan? About your earlier joke...

Dan: Yeah, I'm feeling it too

> For the race, he

> was using Ghost Rider's motorcycle. He used various weapons to try and push other racers off a

> bridge that was part of the track.

Rick: [Jack] This is in the rules, right?

Rebecca: [Tom] Rules? Who cares?

> He used rocket launchers, Spawn's Hell Chains of Destiny,

Tsuneo: If you've got Ghost Rider's bike, then Spawn's chains feel a bit redundant

> and

> machine guns to pop tires, and turn over other vehicles. Other players were doing the same with

> weapons of their own.

Dan: Tom was worried when the guy next to him popped out a Fat Man launcher.

> They were all trying to destroy each other by blasting each other away or flipping each other over.

Tsuneo: This is a race, right?

Rebecca: Well, if you're the only one to cross the finish line, it counts as a win.

> They tried running into each other with their cars. Someone driving the

> Tumbler from Batman Begins

Rick: It was indeed Batman's Batmobile from Batman

> tried running into Tom and his motorcycle. Tom did a one wheeler and landed on the Tumbler.

Tsuneo: This sounded like a better idea in his head.

- > He used the Hell Chains of Destiny and wrapped them around the
- > Tumbler. He broke the vehicle in two and caused an explosion.

Rebecca: This is apparently how chains work

- > Coins erupted from the Tumbler's
- > chase. Tom reached out and used the Hell Chains of Destiny to pull the coins to himself.

Rick: He had to keep his stud multiplier up.

- > He revved
- > his engines and started going faster than before. He passed several cars, shooting them with a Mac
- > 10.

Dan: When you're riding a flaming hell bike using flaming hell chains, a regular SMG seems somewhat unnecessary.

- > He damaged several tires, blowing them out. Tom laughed and he passed the cars.

Rebecca: [Tom] Sending some clients your way, mate.

- > The flames
- > from his motorcycle burned up the concrete and he left other drivers in the wake of the flames.

Tsuneo: Tom strikes me as the type who camps spawn points.

- > One driver had enough of Tom's foolishness and decided to take things into his own hands. His
- > avatar looked like Vin Diesel wearing a white T-shirt and blue jeans and black shoes.

Rebecca: If it had been Vin Diesel in a pink tutu then this would have been the best fic ever.

- > He was driving a Dodge Charger

Tsuneo: Obvious reference to one of Vin Diesel's iconic roles

Rick: What, Bloodshot?

Tsuneo: Do you do that on purpose?

- > and pulled up beside Tom. He pulled out a double barrelled shot gun and
- > shot at Tom's tires. Tom laughed and started shooting at the Vin Diesel look alike.

Rebecca: Tom is a mature and stable person.

- > The flames from
- > the motorcycle burnt up the pellets from the shot gun. Suddenly, an obstacle appeared in front of
- > them.

Rick: Based on the description, I can only assume it was an untextured test box with the word 'obstacle' on one side

- > They broke away from each other and went around the obstacle. This gave the Vin Diesel
- > enough time to reload. He then ran into a weapon button that placed a weapon on his vehicle.

Dan: Dominic Toretto's life would be so much easier if he could just pick up blue shells.

- > It was a mini-gun that was on a device that let it turn.

Rebecca: Mounting for a weapon on a vehicle that allows it to turn. If only there was a word for that...

- > Vin Diesel turned the weapon to point at Tom.

Tsuneo: So is it actually Vin Diesel driving then?

Rick: It's Vin Diesel cleverly disguised as Vin Diesel.

Tsuneo: Cunning.

- > Tom pressed the brakes and turned so that he was directly behind Vin Diesel. Tom pulled out two
- > Mac-10s and with both hands

Tsuneo: This seems like a smart thing to do when you're riding a motorcycle at high speeds

- > started firing at the Dodge Charger. Vin Diesel swivelled the mini gun
- > so that it pointed at Tom. Tom pulled a chord and at the last second a glider erupted from the bike.

Rebecca: Guys, better buckle up as it's only going to get stupider from here.

- > He flew up into the air as Vin Diesel tried shooting him. Tom used Spawn's Hell Chains of Destiny to
- > wrap around the mini gun and destroy it. Tom landed on top of the Dodge Charger,

Tsuneo: Tom is desperately trying to make this a thing.

- > and aimed one of the Mac 10s and fired at the driver side of the car, killing Vin Diesel.

Tsuneo: He died as he lived, with a vacant look on his face

- > The car turned a sharp left,
- > and slammed into the wall. Coins erupted from the wreckage and Tom picked up some of it and
- > continued the race. He drove around obstacles

Rick: Test obstacle 002, fill in later (context needed).

- > and made his way to the front of the pack. He drove
- > passed flamethrowers, and pressed a red button on his motorcycle. The wheels erupted with blue
- > flames and he started going faster.

Dan: His flaming bike was now more on fire.

- > Jack in the meantime flew over the race in his X-wing, following his friend. It was against the rules of
- > this game to use a ship or plane as they needed to use any land vehicle.

Tsuneo: Which makes you wonder why he didn't bring one of his many cars instead.

Dan: Jack's not very smart

- > Thus all he could do is follow Tom as he played against other people who drove quickly.

Rebecca: Jack is spectating in the most obnoxious way he can.

- > And then, Tom was in third place. In second place was a person who drove a blue monster truck.

Rick: Well it's obvious what that is.

Rebecca: Do tell.

Rick: The unobtainable unique blue background Atlasbreaker from Saints Row 2.

Rebecca: You're right, how did I not figure that out?

- > The avatar was hidden from view so
- > Tom and Jack could not see who was in the driver seat.

Dan: If it turned out to be a little old granny just going to the shops then this would be the best fic ever

- > Tom pulled out his two Mac 10s and fired at
- > the huge wheels of the monster truck. Tom reloaded and continued firing, trying his hardest to
- > make the blue monster truck to crash.

Dan: Out of my way, nerd. Mister Wesley wants me to crush a Ford dealership.

> He then pulled out the Hell Chains of Destiny to destroy the monster truck's wheels.

Rick: [Tom] Really, I should have lead with that.

> Suddenly, a sniper rifle emblem appeared in front of the monster truck.

> They picked up the weapon and opened their door to point the barrel of the weapon at Tom.

Dan: Still hidden from view.

Tsuneo: The interior of the monster truck is an inky black void.

> The

> front wheel of the motorcycle veered to the right as the bullet from the sniper rifle destroyed the front

> wheel. Tom fell off the vehicle and several other players passed him.

> "FUCK!" Tom screamed into his microphone.

> "That sucks!" Jack said. "Hurry Tom, get back on your bike."

Tsuneo: Gee, thanks. I never would have thought to do that otherwise.

> Tom looked at his motorcycle and opened up a panel to choose a replacement wheel from his

> inventory.

Rebecca: He should have taken advantage of Jack's repair services. That way he could wait for a dropship to arrive, collect his bike, take it up to the ship, have Jack repair it then bring it back down to him.

Tsuneo: You're right. How could he pass up such speedy and efficient service?

> He then climbed back on the motorcycle and was off again.

Dan: I can assume that all the other drivers in this murder race were polite enough to go around him while he worked.

> This time, he was in sixth place.

Tsuneo: Racers seven and onwards were already burning wreckage on the track.

> He passed obstacles. He picked up a red Mario shell

Rick: The Mario Shell, from the classic karting game, Crash Team Racing

> and flung it forward. It slammed into the person that was in front of him.

Rick: With no further identification, I'm going to assume he was driving a Fusion Flea.

Dan: You do that.

> The vehicle spun out and Tom went into fifth place. He drove as fast

> as he could. He brought up his Mac 10s and fired at the person in front of him. However, the vehicle

> stopped abruptly.

Dan: That wasn't their plan. It's just that it was being driven by an old guy in a hat

> Tom was flung forward from his motorcycle. The person peeled away and other

> people passed around Tom.

Rebecca: Tom is now being lapped.

Tsuneo: Isn't it a point-to-point race?

Rebecca: It took effort.

- > Tom ran to his motorcycle to look at the destruction that had happened
- > to his vehicle. The whole front of the motorcycle was smashed in.

Rick: [Tom] It'll buff out.

- > The flames were extinguished and it seemed that the motorcycle would not start anymore.

Rebecca: I suspect that might have something to do with its front being crushed.

- > Tom cursed yet again. Time was of the
- > essence so he put his motorcycle away and pulled out the program to choose another vehicle.

Tsuneo: Is it just me or does that feel like cheating?

- > He
- > picked a black Pontiac Thunderbird which had a red and white eagle imprinted on the hood of the
- > car.

Rick: At this point he actually needs to have a seventies moustache to drive it

- > He also put away his helmet and started the car. He used a health pack to restore health to his
- > avatar.

Dan: Laid out a picnic blanket, poured out some coffee, unpacked his sandwich...

- > He peeled off to try and finish the race. He ran into an ability credit to fire rockets from two
- > rocket launchers that appeared on the roof of the car. Tom locked onto the car in front of him and
- > fired two rockets.

Tsuneo: Tom's success is based entirely on his luck with pick-ups.

- > They slammed into the back and the car spun out of control. Tom passed them
- > and laughed. He finished the race however did not come close to third, let alone first.

Rebecca: The worst part was being overtaken just before the finish line by Rod from Birdemic

- > "Do you want to start again?" Jack asked Tom.
- > "Hell yeah." Tom said. "Wait, WWE is on now."

Rick: So Dan?

Dan: ...yeah?

Rick: I feel afraid.

Dan: Me too, buddy.

- > "Can't you record the program?"
- > "How do you do that?"

Tsuneo: In the future, on-demand streaming services aren't a thing.

- > "Never mind. Go enjoy your show. I will fix your bike when the show's finished."
- > "Can't you take it now?"
- > "Yeah sure."

Rebecca: Clearly he doesn't have a backlog of work at his repair business.

> Jack landed near the back as the race was going to begin soon and most of the people were getting
> ready to race. Spectators were welcomed and placed their bets.

Dan: Twenty Klatoos on the newcomer.

> Tom ran and met Jack.

> "So how bad is it?" Jack asked as Tom came up to him.

Rebecca: [Tom] I mean, I wasn't really that attached to it...

> Jack put away his X-wing and brought out the black LTD from Men in Black that he would be racing
> with.

Rick: Jack might actually be the world's last Men in Black fan.

> "It's fucked." Tom said. "The asshole who did this knew he would destroy the front of the bike."

Tsuneo: It's almost like somebody tried to kill him during the murder race.

Rick: Perish the thought

> Tom handed him the bike, which had shrunk to a model.

Dan: Jack, in demonstration of his delicate repair technique, immediately dropped it.

> "Ok I'll fix it after this race." Jack said.

> "Alright thanks bro." Tom said, and then he reached up and pulled the Headset from the face, which
> made his avatar disappear as he went offline.

Rick: So would that mean when he next logs in he's in the middle of the race track?

> Jack entered the car and his perception changed to second person so he could see his vehicle.

Tsuneo: Tom was watching from... someone else watching him?

Rebecca: I'm not sure that's how it works.

Tsuneo: I'm not sure how any of this works.

> Other racers went to their respectful starting positions. Jack checked his stats.

Dan: What's his batting average like?

> His car was in top

> shape. He had entered the twelfth position, and there were eighteen positions to this race.

Tsuneo: So starting at the back of the pack means nowhere near the back of the pack.

> There

> were many spectators who placed their bets on their clan-mates. Jack revved his engine. A

> countdown appeared in Jack's Heads up Display.

> 3

> 2

> 1

Dan: Have a nice day.

> GO!

> They were off. The first obstacles were these walls that were brought up in front of the racers.

Rick: Obstacles are now being identified!

Tsuneo: Can we assume the previous obstacles were also pop-up walls?

Rick: I still prefer my version.

> Several people crashed early on.

Tsuneo: The idea of going around things hadn't occurred to them

> Some avatars were injured so they needed to apply health packs.

Dan: Being the OASIS, health packs were only available in 'potion from Legend of Zelda' or 'Big Keg O' Health.'

> Jack veered to the right and left, dodging vehicles and avatars as well as other obstacles that
> sprung up. There were sharp 90 degree turns. Jack drifted around each turn

Rebecca: That doesn't strike me as the smartest thing to do on a sharp right-angle corner.

> and followed other

> players around different obstacles. Huge wheels with spikes started coming up from the road.

> Flamethrowers spewed flames from the walls around the racetrack.

Rick: You know, I'm beginning to think this race might be kind of dangerous.

> And then, several icons came

> up saying that there were weapons available. Jack drove through one and received a boost in

> speed which also made him invincible for a short time.

Dan: It's a Mario star. You can just say it's a Mario star.

> "Here we go." He said to himself as he pressed a red button that was on the gear shift stick.

Rebecca: And launched himself through his car's roof.

> There was a sudden boost of speed as Jack transformed his LTD into full speed mode which meant
> that two boosters came out the back that propelled the car forward.

Tsuneo: Is that what boosters do? I had no idea.

> For races like this with

> obstacles, it was unwise to use this mode unless there was invincibility being used because there

> were obstacles and other cars and vehicles to think about.

Dan: Going fast in a race was a bad idea

> Then, the invincibility started counting

> down in Jack's Heads up Display. He disengaged the boosters and the car transformed back to

> normal form. He was now in second place.

Tsuneo: [Jack] Way better than that loser Tom ever managed.

> In front of him was someone on a red motorcycle.

Rick: Was it, perchance, Kaneda's bike from Akira?

> Jack did a double take.

> "That's Artemis." Jack said to himself.

Rebecca: Because nobody else in the OASIS would ever have the same iconic fictional vehicle.

> "What in the world is she doing here?"

Tsuneo: Taking part in a car race?

Dan: You might be on to something there

> There were more icons up ahead, and Art3mis picked one up.

Rebecca: And thus Jack fell afoul of the dreaded banana peel.

> Jack drove through it right after her and picked up an object.

> "Flamethrowers?" Jack said. "That's useless unless I get up really close."

> Jack then saw it. The end of the race was in view.

Rick: The huge 'finish' sign was a bit of a giveaway.

> "What if...?" Jack pointed the flamethrowers behind him.

> He activated it and it drove his car forward.

Rebecca: Um, physics or something.

> He reengaged the boosters and he started going faster

> than Art3mis. He drove until he was beside her. Art3mis looked at him. Suddenly, she engaged her

> special that she had picked up. Tacks erupted from the back of her bike. They were magnetic, and

> drew to Jack and his LTD. He tried driving faster, but the tacks followed as he passed Art3mis.

Tsuneo: I have many questions about how this works.

> He

> was so close to the end. Suddenly, explosions started erupting from behind him. The tacks started

> making all of the other vehicles combust. A green blast lanced from Art3mis and it slammed into the

> fire.

Dan: She can do this, by the way.

Rebecca: She's part owner of the game they're playing. She can do whatever she wants.

> The fire turned blue and really hot. The flames combined with Jack's flames that were pushing

> him forward and it leapt into his boosters.

Tsuneo: Jack wished he'd worn his asbestos underpants today.

> Jack dove out of the car and activated a special force shield to protect him.

Dan: [Jack] Good thing I had this in my samurai Mjolnir giant robot ape armour.

> His car exploded and flames surrounded him. Art3mis drove away, winning

> the race. She left no one alive.

Rick: Artemis killed everyone she ever spoke to.

> "Was that really Artemis?" Jack asked himself

Dan: Either that or a half-shaved Bushbaby. Your choice.

> The flames died down and Jack disengaged his shield. He picked out a black Audi R8 and drove it
> so that he would win second place in the race.

Tsuneo: Again, this feels a little bit like cheating.

> He looked behind him and saw that there were several other players who survived.

Rebecca: And here was me thinking that Artemis left nobody alive.

> He won the second place prize and earned enough coins to fix
> his Men in Black LTD and Tom's motorcycle.

Tsuneo: His business model needs a lot of work.

> He brought out his X-wing and flew towards Tensa Zangetsu.

Rick: Back to the awkwardly named ship we go.

> He parked in the main hold and parked his X-wing in the place he designated as its spot.
> He made his way to his workshop and started work on Tom's Ghost Rider motorcycle. He would see
> Tom the next day at school.

Dan: Regrettably

> It was Tuesday, so everyone had to take a break from the OASIS video game.

Rick: So here's a question; how does shutting off the OASIS for two days a week work?

Tsuneo: How do you mean?

Rick: Like, is it a single twenty-four hour bloc for the whole world? Or is it staggered by timezone? So could Australian users be online while Americans are not or what?

Tsuneo: Rick, not only have you thought about this more than the fic author did, but you thought about it more than the source material did too.

Rick: I try.

> That being said, people would still play other games

Rebecca: Assuming they didn't have to go through proprietary online launchers or get save data from the Cloud

> or they would go out with friends or family.

Tsuneo: Interacting with other humans was at best the second option

> Around 7:30 in the
> morning, Mark walked to school. His house was only two miles away and he walked to and from
> school every day by himself.

Rick: Presumably through the lawless wastelands.

> His brother was two years his junior but would walk with his friends.

Tsuneo: Mark's brother apparently has no life of his own.

> Now as for Tom_001, his real name was Tom Calcio.

Rebecca: Tom's username is even less imaginative. If that's even possible.

> He was of Italian decent. He was also a
> special needs kid. He loved watching Wrestle-mania, and wanted to be like Triple H.

Dan: His life goal was to marry the boss' daughter

> He did well at gym class,

Dan: His favourite sport was the hundred meter Gunt.

Rick: You still don't know what that means, do you?

Dan: Not a clue.

> but other subjects were where he had the most trouble.

Rebecca: He had the most trouble with everything else.

> He had an older sister and lived

> with his mother and step-brother. His father and step-father were both dead.

Dan: But what about his uncle, Tom's Uncle?

> Mark tried to help him,

> but Tom had a problem concentrating, so it was up to the Teaching Assistants at school to help him.

Rick: A for effort, Mark.

> One of their best friends was into Anime and loved different things like InuYasha or Pokemon. He

> was not a special needs person

Rebecca: I worry that the fic needs to qualify this fact.

> but was into art. He wanted to one day become a director of some

> sort. He loved making movies and painting.

Tsuneo: Congratulations, you are any given person on TikTok.

> He had three other siblings and was an older brother as well, similar to Mark.

Dan: That's nice. Who the hell is this?

Rick: Mark's other friend.

Dan: Okay, and his name is?

Rick: Um, Mark's other friend?

> He was bad at gym class though,

Rick: All characters will be rated by their proficiency at gym class.

> was kind of chubby and needed to use special skin cream for marks on his face.

Dan: He had all the allergies.

> He also wore glasses like Mark. His name was John Matthews.

Tsuneo: If his username is John and a number, I will legitimately hurt somebody.

> Rounding out their group was the genius of their grade. His name was Justin Rihaz. He

> did not have any game systems as his parents did not believe in such devices.

Rick: They thought that they were delusions caused by huffing paint fumes.

> He made friends wherever he could.

Tsuneo: So he was the smartest and most popular of them all, but didn't play the OASIS. [Pause]

Hmmm.

- > He was constantly trying his hardest to be the best that he could be.
- > Unfortunately, he was quite hefty in size and although he had good morals,

Rebecca: He only ever took the Paragon option

- > he was cast out
- > because he was not cool enough. Of all the people who needed the OASIS, it was Justin.

Tsuneo: Why did he need it anyway?

Rick: Because he has good morals.

Tsuneo: Obviously.

- > Mark did not have a job per se;

Dan: Mark's in high school, so that's kind of expected.

- > however he did want to help his friend out with anything he needed. They
- > would play cards together, playing a game called Asshole.

Rick: The objective of the game was to ruin friendships.

- > The four friends would play together, and
- > would talk about Television shows like Suits, Game of Thrones, InuYasha, or Bleach.

Tsuneo: Everyone liked talking about shows that were over decades before they were born.

Rebecca: To be fair, this is the Ready Player One universe.

- > Justin did not look at Anime,

Rick: Justin was into the works of the Dutch Masters instead

- > and neither did Tom.

Dan: Tom just licked toads

- > Mark believed that if they tried at it, they could become a good clan in the OASIS.

Tsuneo: Except for Justin, of course

- > However, they
- > needed to apply as much time as they could, and although he would rather play in the OASIS than
- > go to school,

Rick: How about going to school in the OASIS?

Dan: Cunning.

- > he knew that the game would not last forever and could never replace real life.

Rebecca: The plot of Ready Player Two notwithstanding

- > He did not know where, to what college or university he should be going to after High School.

Dan: I'm sure his parents have picked out a college, career and fiancée for him.

- > For the most
- > part, he only had one or two classes with his friends. He went to Computer Programming with Tom,
- > English and Graphic Design with John; and Criminology with Justin.

Tsuneo: This is a remarkably broad high school curriculum

> "So, what happened in Wrestle-mania yesterday, Tom?" John asked his friend as they sat together
> to wait for classes to begin in the cafeteria.

Dan: The main event was Dragon versus Annihilator for the title

> "Holy shit, Hercules got up in the owner's face

Rick: Something about performing twelve labours.

> and did a suplex on him." Tom said excitedly. "They fucking went at it, bringing out chairs and shit."

Rebecca: They sat down and discussed their problems like reasonable adults.

> "And then what happened?" Justin asked.

Dan: [Tom] Something about Invadors; I don't know, I wasn't paying attention.

> "There was a tag-team bout." Tom went on.

Rick: The Obvious Midcarders versus the Minority Duo.

> "He guys." Mark interrupted. "Sorry Tom,

Rebecca: [Mark] But nobody cares.

> but have you guys ever raced with Artemis before?"

> "No." Tom said. "I've never seen her."

Rick: Tom thinks that she's a myth, like Bigfoot.

> "Well right when you finished your race, she went through mine." Mark said. "She won the race man
> and she was awesome. I came in second."

Dan: Really rubbing it in Tom's face then

> "Tomorrow, we should get on the OASIS." John said.

Tsuneo: Because really, what else are they going to do in a Ready Player One fic?

> "Maybe we should meet at your ship?"

> "Yeah let's do it."

Dan: [Tom] Anyway, about Wrestlemania –

Rebecca: [Mark] I said, nobody cares Tom.

> "You guys spend too much time on that game." Justin said.

Rebecca: Meanwhile he's apparently spending all his time on barn-raising

> "Trust me, it's better than it sounds." Mark said.

Rick: He's had sex with so many Sonic the Hedgehog characters. It's great.

> "You'll see some day, I hope."

> Jack stood in the hangar of the Tensa Zangetsu.

Tsuneo: Jack got lost inside his own spaceship.

> He checked the time on his Heads-Up Display. Suddenly, a portal opened up in front of him.

Dan: Damn Stargates get everywhere.

> John Matthews and Tom Calcio appeared together.

> Apparently they met before coming to Mark / Jack's ship. John's OASIS name was Gadanza.

Tsuneo: John has an actual username that's not just his own name or another ridiculously common Anglo-American name? I am legitimately shocked.

> He

> was a Caucasian male with long shaggy blond hair. His eyes were green, the deepest green you

> ever saw.

Rick: How deep? Can you put it in terms of a hex code?

> He wore a black trench coat with green lining. He also wore black combat boots and navy

> blue jeans with a gold chain going to one of the pockets.

Dan: On the other end is his most prized possession, a Lego Admiral Ackbar keyring.

> On his back was a Key Blade from the video game Kingdom Hearts.

Tsuneo: Kingdom Hearts being in the OASIS raises a lot of questions. A lot.

> "Hey Jack." Gadanza said.

> "Yo how's it hanging?" Tom said.

Dan: And is Mister Cooper involved?

> "Good." Jack said to his friends. "I have been looking at the game play from the race that I did the

> other day when I went up against Artemis.

Rebecca: [Jack] Did I mention that I raced against Artemis? I totally met Artemis you guys. I definitely held hands with her and she totally said she was my girlfriend.

> It looks like she was only after easy cash for something bigger."

Tsuneo: That Nigerian Astronaut needs her help now.

> "What could she possibly want?" Gadanza said.

Rebecca: A life beyond just being Wade's prop hot gamer girlfriend?

Rick: Besides that, I mean

> "She already has more cash than anyone in the OASIS."

Dan: Her gold farming schemes paid off big time.

> "It might be something personal that she does not want other people to know about." Jack said.

Rebecca: You're implying that she has a life of her own.

Rick: Dangerous territory there.

> "That or she was just bored and wanted to race."

Tsuneo: Or maybe she just gets off on crushing the dreams of others.

> "Maybe that is it." Tom said. "Why else would she race?"

Rebecca: Isn't she allowed to simply enjoy the competition for the sake of it?

> Maybe we are just making things harder

> than they really are. Now why don't we play some Capture the Flag?"

Rick: I call dibs on the Warthog.

> "You guys go ahead." Jack said. "I'm going to see if I can find Artemis to talk to her."

Dan: Yep, already ditching his friends for his imaginary girl.

> And with that his friends left him.

Tsuneo: They blocked all contact and moved out of state.

> Jack made his way to the bridge of his ship. He went to the captain's chair and sat down.

Dan: Jack leads a rich and fulfilling life.

> A screen popped up in front of him showing different aspects of the OASIS.

> "Locate player." Jack commanded his ship and then spelled out her name. "A-r-t-3-m-i-s."

Rebecca: [Computer] User not found. Try spelling that properly, you twit.

> The various scanners came on and started searching for the user with that name. Jack took a deep
> breath and waited as his ship did its thing.

Dan: Jack plays the world's most advanced video game so he can sit around and wait for search results.

> "Player Artemis found." The computer on his ship said. "She is currently racing in the Burnout
> simulator."

Rick: It's the game that lets you play as the bland white guy on a superhero team that the writers inexplicably like

> "Well look at that, another racing game." Jack said to himself.

Rebecca: She was racing in the movie, so that's obviously the entirety of her character.

Tsuneo: Wasn't that just for the key?

Rebecca: Entirety of her character.

> "When is there going to be another race?"

> "According to our calculations, Artemis has a ninety five percent chance of winning the race." The
> computer said.

Tsuneo: Not that it's rigged or anything.

> "And there is a fifty percent chance she might race again, or stop for today.

Rebecca: [Computer] Look, I don't know, I'm just spitballing here.

> This is her fourth race today."

Rick: Thank you for that, magical do anything computer

> "Sign me up for the next race." Jack said. "I'll race her and find out what she is doing."

Dan: Um, racing.

> And so, Jack found where the Burnout race was being played. He picked out his Audi-R8 and
> changed the color to cherry red.

Tsuneo: As opposed to the nonspecific colour that it was before, I suppose.

> He opened a portal and went through it. He landed in fifth place for the race.

Rick: Short race.

> He picked out his car and climbed into the chase. He revved his engine. At first place, he
> saw that it was Art3mis in a red corvette.

Rebecca: The red corvette from the Prince song, of course.

> The aim of the race was not only to compete against other
> racers but they also had to avoid other traffic.

Rick: Sadly, the traffic was set to 'old lady going to the shops.'

> Luckily, this was not a game which included fighting
> so there would be no police intervention or weapons to pick up.

Dan: On the upside, no Blue Shells.

> It was solely about racing for the hell of it.

Tsuneo: Jack knew how boned he was.

> So they waited for the countdown. Jack saw other racers in their respective places. Jack
> took a deep breath as the countdown initiated.

Dan: Jack watched the numbers. Jack tried to count down. Jack got lost.

> And then they were off. Jack veered to his left, slamming into the back of the person in front of him.

Tsuneo: Racing for the sake of it, as long as you kill your opponents.

> The crash turned the other car around and then Jack was off in fourth place. It seemed that Art3mis
> was not paying attention as she was weaving in and out of traffic,

Rebecca: She wasn't paying attention to the traffic she was expertly weaving through

> avoiding cars to her right and left. She avoided a gasoline truck.

Rick: As well as a bus load of nuns.

> In another game, you would think that shooting that vehicle would
> cause a reaction. No one tried it as they did not want to find out what was going to happen if they
> did break the rules of the game in the OASIS.

Dan: Wouldn't the game have just disabled their weapons anyway given that it was a no combat race?

Tsuneo: Well you'd think so.

> Jack went passed the gasoline truck still in fourth place. He weaved in and out of traffic.

Rick: The traffic was set to Los Angeles rush hour, so he did it very slowly.

> Luckily, he was in the lane that was going the same way.

Dan: Jack had learned that driving into oncoming traffic was generally not a good idea. Took him a few tries, though.

> There was a turn up ahead. Jack drifted around the corner. He witnessed as the player in third place suddenly veered the wrong way and struck a semi-truck. Coins erupted from the crash.

Rick: You crash into a truck full of loose change and that will happen.

> Jack

> opened his door and picked up as many as he could. He then closed his door and started driving away from the crash.

Tsuneo: Jack is quick to take advantage of the misfortune of others.

> He passed the player who was in second place and drove up until he was right beside Art3mis. He looked at her but she did not look back.

Rebecca: Artemis just doesn't care.

> They both needed to concentrate because there were cars in front of them going slower.

Tsuneo: Hey, wow, would you look at that.

Rebecca: What is it?

Tsuneo: Turns out you need to concentrate on a race that you're in.

Rebecca: Really? I literally could not have known that.

Tsuneo: Thanks, fic.

> Jack saw that Art3mis was going faster than he was.

Dan: The car that was in front of him was going faster than him? I did not see that coming at all.

Tsuneo: The twists in this fic are just amazing.

> He tried going on the shoulder of the highway that they were racing on however there were cars veering to his side as well as they were trying to dodge Art3mis.

Rebecca: Artemis was driving a turbo-charged bulldozer.

> Suddenly, a car veered right in front of Jack. He applied the brakes to try and stop from crashing.

> He stopped short, and then two racers passed him as Art3mis drove away from him.

Rick: Jack's plan was to slowly and carefully race to victory.

> Jack looked behind and looked for a place where he could get into traffic to drive.

Dan: Jack checked his mirrors and switched on his indicator.

> He pulled away and looked for the racers who passed him.

Tsuneo: Might they have been ahead of him, perchance?

> He drove past several cars but none were the drivers that were in the race. He gritted his teeth.

Rick: Gritting them like he was a ninja turtle.

> "Damn it." He said to himself. "I have to win! I have to win!"

> Jack pressed on. He then looked ahead and to his surprise one of the racers had crashed.

Tsuneo: They'd crashed into a fortunate happenstance

> He

> passed them and did not waste time trying to pick up coins that spilled out onto the racetrack. He

> passed several more cars, and revved his engine.

Rebecca: Up until this point he'd been driving carefully within the speed limit.

> He drove quickly until he was neck and neck with

> the second place racer. The avatar in the rival car looked at Jack, and smiled. They turned sharply,

> trying to veer Jack off the track. Jack was not scared so he bumped into the other racer. He then

> pressed two red buttons on his steering wheel.

Dan: Which turned on the car speakers and started blaring show tunes.

Rick [Jack]: I, ah, meant to do that.

> The car peeled off, and Jack passed the other racer, who fumed.

Rebecca: Somehow this happened. Just accept it.

> Jack smiled and he drove until Art3mis was in his sights. He was right behind her. The

> finish line was in their sights. Art3mis knew how to drive

Dan: You'd hope so at this point.

> and kept blocking Jack from moving beside

> her. However, she could not count on the traffic that was driving with them.

Rebecca: Her plan was to hope Jack crashed into something

> They both passed the

> finish line and turned onto a road that was closed off. They waited until the race was fully over and

> all of the cars had passed the finish line.

Dan: They'd driven into a cut scene.

> Jack hopped out of his car, shrunk it to a miniature size,

> and put it away. He walked up to Art3mis, who also put away her Corvette.

Rebecca: [Artemis] Crap, not another stalker. Okay, play it cool, don't make eye contact, maybe he won't...

> "You are awesome." He said. "Why are you racing so much?"

Rebecca: [Artemis] Okay. Time for the mace.

> "Hey thanks for the compliment." She said.

Dan: [Artemis] Now never speak to me again.

> "You're the racer from the other day. You came second that day as well."

Tsuneo: Just rub it in that he's only second-best.

> "Yeah." Jack said, smiling. "I can't believe I'm meeting you Artemis. You're famous."

Rebecca [Artemis]: I am literally one of the richest people in the world. You get even remotely close to me and I'll have my people beat you up.

> "Yeah, I know you." She said, smiling.

Dan: In a 'oh great. This guy' way

> "You're quite the racer. I have also heard that you fix things.

Tsuneo: Something that apparently nobody else in the OASIS does.

> I can see from your designation is Jack underscore 100292402.

Dan: She can tell that from his username?

Rick: It's the second 'two' that gives it away

> Did you want to meet the others?"

Rebecca: This is some kind of revenge on Wade, isn't it?

> "Yeah!" He said. "I know my friends would want to meet them as well. Can I bring them?"

> "Only a couple of friends." Art3mis replied.

Rebecca: Already regretting what she said.

> "We don't need a whole party to come."

Rick: But we do need a tank and healer.

> "Yeah, there are only a couple of us anyways." Jack said.

Dan: [Jack] I don't have enough friends to be a bother anyway.

Tsuneo: [Artemis] Um... That's good?

> "How about Friday?"

> "Friday's good." Art3mis said. "Meet me at these coordinates."

> On Jack's heads up display, a location was put into his system.

Dan: The Busby the Bobcat world? What the hell?

> "Nice" Jack said. "Thank you so much."

> "Okay, see you then." She said, and then she took off her headset and disappeared from the
> OASIS.

Tsuneo: [Artemis] Oh no, I didn't get a time for the meeting. I suppose I'll never see him again. Oh well.

> Jack had won \$250,000.00. Coming in first, Art3mis had won \$500,000.

Rebecca: Ah, numbers that we have no frame of reference for. Just what I wanted.

> Jack could not wait to tell Tom, Justin and John about what happened to him.

Rick: He might have embellished it a bit. Well, a lot.

Dan [Jack]: And then Artemis and I made out and she said that I was like a billion times sexier than Parzival and she let me touch her bike which was Kaneda's bike from Akira.

> GoldDragonZ: Hey guys, I have not written a story for a long time.

Rebecca: Not since the fall of the Assyrian Empire

> I don't know if I have done the novel Ready Player One justice or not.

Tsuneo: Now there's a loaded question.

>I have only just watched the movie.

Rebecca: Probably safest that way.

> Please tell me if things are going well or if I need to make changes.

Rick: Give us a few more chapters and we'll let you know.

> ----

> Chapter 2

> GoldDragonZ: So I'm enjoying writing this story so I will continue.

Tsuneo: Puts them ahead of half of our fic authours, it seems.

> If you want me to stop, please tell me. If you hate this story, feel free to tell me.

Rebecca: Rick, no.

Rick: Awww...

> If you like the story please let me know that as well. Here's to another adventure.

> Mark had already told Tom and John about his interaction with Art3mis

Tsuneo: [Mark] She logged out seconds after I met her, so I assume it went well.

> before shutting down his

> console for the day. They were elated that they would be meeting such a famous person from the

> OASIS.

Dan: They'd already bought bottles of her bathwater.

> Unfortunately, Justin was out of the loop because he did not know anything about the

> OASIS

Tsuneo: Justin was convinced that Artemis was a type of root vegetable.

> since he did not have the gaming console to jack into the world.

Rick: And his parents thought it was the devil, or something.

> "I don't see the importance of meeting someone online as being comparable to meeting them face

> to face." He had told Mark, Tom and John.

Tsuneo: It's not that Justin doesn't play the OASIS, he has no idea about the internet at all, does he?

> "I mean, would you not want to meet the actual person

> behind the fake avatar that they have online?"

Dan: Comparing the real Wade Watts to his avatar? Hell no.

> "Fuck off Justin." Tom said. "You don't understand. We're going to meet one of the most bad ass ladies ever known."

Rebecca: Yeah, go to hell Joan of Arc. Eat it, Boudicca. Artemis is better than all of you because she is good at video games.

> "Did you ever consider that she might be a he?" Justin said. "You don't know about people these days."

Rick: He got fooled once by Hairy-Knuckled Chuck. Won't happen again.

> "It doesn't matter." Mark interjected.

Dan: Although now he's strangely intrigued by the idea.

> "We are going to meet the High Five!"

Rebecca: [Mark] People call them that, right?

> "You guys are hopeless." Justin said, rolling his eyes.

Tsuneo: [Justin] Seriously, I don't know why I hang out with you guys. You're killing my GPA.

> "Hey, maybe we can ask them for a console for you, Justin." John said. "Then you could join us playing the game and doing homework together."

Dan: I'm sure they'd give a random guy they'd never met an OASIS headset for no reason whatsoever.

> "You're a noob John." Tom said. "Who the fuck does homework on the OASIS?"

Rebecca: Nobody has ever engaged in remote learning ever.

> "Two years ago, schools were virtual because the OASIS made it possible for people to stay at home and learn." Mark said. "The High Five reversed this because they believed that it was better if we interacted in person."

Dan: You'll interact with other human beings and you'll like it.

> "We all know that." John said.

Rick: Thank you, Mark Exposition.

> "They want us to interact with each other in real life."

Tsuneo: I mean, heaven forbid you become isolated loner shut-ins spending all your time watching Alf episodes while jerking off.

Rebecca: Yeah, that would be terrible.

> "Yeah." Mark said. "They changed things, forever."

Rick: There was something about uploading the digitised consciousness of all humanity without their knowledge and sending them to Proxima Centauri, but I forget the details.

> "Hey, what time did they want to meet tomorrow?" Tom asked.

> "About Five o'clock," Mark replied. "So are you guys interested or what?"

Tsuneo: Not one bit.

> "No shit we're interested." Tom said.

Rebecca: [Tom] We want to leer at Artemis too.

> "Did you want to play Capture the Flag before?"

> "Yeah we can play." John replied.

> "Yeah we can play." Tom also replied.

Dan: Yeah, we can play.

Rick: Yeah, we can play.

Dan: Yeah, we can play.

Rick: Yeah, we can play.

Tsuneo: Okay, how long are you two going to keep this up?

Rick: About three or four more passes each.

Tsuneo: Let's just nip it in the bud right here.

> "Good luck, guys." Justin said.

Rick [Justin]: I'll be over here interacting with real human beings and being decently socialised.

> It was 3:20 pm. Mark had eaten something

Dan: Nonspecific food is my favourite food.

> and changed from his uniform to something more comfortable.

Tsuneo: Elvis costume it is

> He went to his dining room where his piano and OASIS console were placed.

Rebecca: Imagine trying to eat knowing that there's a microfibre crotch inlay that's likely gotten a lot of use right next to your table.

> He

> started playing the piano, going over the classical pieces that his teacher needed him to practice as

> he had lessons on Saturday.

Rebecca: We're going to give you usable life skills and you're going to like it, young man.

> He played for about forty minutes and then decided it was time for Capture the Flag.

Dan: He's tried combining the two activities before, but it didn't go so well.

Tsuneo: On the other hand, their team had great musical accompaniment.

> He jacked into the OASIS. He spawned aboard his ship, the Tensa Zangetsu.

Rick: Thanks fic. I would have forgotten the name of his ship if you didn't keep reminding me of it every few pages.

> He searched for

> Tom_001 and Gadanza and found them on a world with other players who were battling each other.

Rebecca: A location that is both very precise and completely useless at the same time.

> They were standing on the edge of a gorge watching two sides; blue and red fight each other. Red

> team had a flag and was trying to get it to their base on one side of the gorge. It was against the

> rules to interfere.

Tsuneo: You had to ask politely before taking the other team's flag

> "Open up a portal to Gadanza's position." Jack_100292402 commanded his computer on the Tensa
> Zangetsu.

Rebecca: [Computer] Do it yourself.

> The portal opened up beside his friends. Jack walked through it and was among his friends.

Tsuneo: He was beside his friends and was among his friends.

> "Yo what's up?" He asked Tom and Gadanza.

> "Red team is about to score." Gadanza said.

> "That's what your mom said." Tom laughed.

Rick: His mom was watching the livestream.

> "No Tom, that's what I did to you sister last night." Gadanza said, and Tom swatted at him.

> "Asshole." Tom said.

> "Retard." Gadanza responded.

Tsuneo: Our heroes, ladies and gentlemen.

> "Guys relax." Jack said. "Save it for the other team we're going to be facing."

Rebecca: Yes, they need their *best* material for the match.

> "There's something wrong with that though." Gadanza said.

Tsuneo: Fundamental human respect?

> "Yeah." Tom said. "We're not part of a clan."

Tsuneo: Oh, no you're right. It's a gameplay thing.

> We need ten players to join the Capture the Flag game."

Rick: He's expecting to get stomped by a premade.

> "Shit." Jack swore.

Rebecca: All three of them somehow missed that beforehand.

> "Let's go over the roster of people who want to play next."

Dan: There's a guy called Jimmy who likes wolves, if that helps.

> Jack updated his Heads up Display. He looked and saw that there were five people waiting in line
> who wanted to play Capture the Flag who were not part of a clan.

Tsuneo: And so they sat in the LFG queue for hours.

> There were also three clans already ready for the next bout.

Rebecca: I'm sure the Mass-Murdering Serial Puppy Kickers will be friendly opponents.

> "I see that there are five people wanting to play next." Jack told his friends. "That means we need
> two more players. Any ideas?"

> "Hey Tom," Gadanza said. "What's your brother doing?"

> "He's working right now." Tom said. "He wouldn't be interested in playing games with us anyways."

Rick: He's more in to resource management simulators anyway.

> "What about your brother or sister, Mark?" Gadanza asked. "I mean Jack."

Dan: It took Jack a while to realise that 'Mark' meant him.

> "I think my bro's out with his friends talking." Jack said.

Tsuneo: Jack is only vaguely aware that his siblings exist

> "And my sister does not play shooter games."

Rebecca: She says they're for weaklings.

> "Shit." Gadanza said. "My brothers and sister might want to play. Just wait, let me ask them."

> Gadanza reached up and took his console headset off, and his Avatar disappeared.

Tsuneo: And you can't just call them from in game?

Rebecca: Ssshhh, he's making a run for it.

> Tom and Jack waited, watching the match that was still going on.

Dan [Tom]: Whose stupid idea was this again?

Rick [Jack]: I thought you wanted to do it.

> Red team had not scored yet. They were fighting

> hard to do it, but Blue team was making it really difficult. Explosions rang out as blue team had two

> members firing rocket launchers at Red team.

Tsuneo: Wow. I'm so invested in the struggles of these two teams we've never met before.

Rick: Oh, me too. Definitely.

[Pause]

Rick: I actually, legitimately mean that.

Tsuneo: Likewise. Far more than our supposed cast.

> Other members were laying suppressive fire, trying to

> pin down their enemies. Two members combined together and used coins to use an AT-ST from

> Star Wars.

Rebecca: They've got this. Well, as long as their opponents don't have access to rocks, logs or ropes.

> They fired at the enemy who had the Blue Flag. Red laser bolts rained down on the Red

> Team members as they tried to combat the behemoth.

Rick: This just in, Red Team fires red lasers.

Tsuneo: This will all be on the test.

> They fired off a few shots from machine

> guns. They threw hand grenades that had spikes on them. They attached to the AT-ST's legs and

> exploded.

Rebecca: Told you, rocks, logs and ropes.

Tsuneo: A lesson well learned.

> Unfortunately the behemoth stood steadfast on its two legs. It continued firing and was
> successful in killing the person who held the flag. One of his comrades picked it up and used a
> temporary spell to make a bubble force shield over them.

Dan: And remember, game balance in the OASIS is something you use to weigh your guns.

> Suddenly, something began growing inside the bubble.

> "No way." Jack said.

> The bubble shield disappeared and a T-Rex took its place.

Rebecca: Apparently they're playing with Calvinball rules.

> Laser bolts lanced out and struck the
> dinosaur on his jaw. It roared loudly and bit the AT-ST right where the turret for the lasers were and
> broke it off. This left the AT-ST useless,

Tsuneo: Because those things are so effective otherwise.

> however someone from inside opened the top hatch and
> began firing using assault rifle right at the dinosaur,

Dan: I don't know if this is the best or dumbest thing we've ever read in one of these.

Rick: I'll go with best part of the fic so far, and leave it at that.

Dan: Fair call.

> who turned around as fast as it could, using its tail to trip up the AT-ST.

Dan: Everything the author knows about dinosaurs comes from watching Jurassic Park.

Rick: Good thing that it's not a Velociraptor. Then it would have hijacked the walker.

> The gunner from the hatch fell out. The T-Rex bent down and picked up the Avatar,

Dan: Sorry, little bald kid. You're on your own.

> and swung its head back and forth, killing the Avatar as coins erupted from the body of the
> Avatar. He then walked forward and transformed into his 'human' form.

Rebecca: Which begs the question of if he could do that, why he didn't do it before now.

> He took the flag and dashed for the base. Victory was his as he entered the base.

Tsuneo: I have questions about the effect of long-term death consequences on an objective-based game mode.

Rick: Are you kidding, that guy turned into a T-Rex. That's meant to be awesome, or something.

> And then there was a trumpet sound, signalling the Red Team Scoring and ending the game.

> "Game Over." The announcement rang out. "Ready for next game shortly."

Tsuneo: Well that was stupid.

Rick: And this is only the second chapter

Tsuneo: I feel afraid.

> There was a shifting in the OASIS as everything was reset in the gorge.

Dan: Spectators stampeded the arena to scoop up fallen players' coins.

> The flags reappeared in

> their homes, the Red Flag in the Blue Base, and the Blue Flag in the Red Base.

Tsuneo: It would be a pretty short game otherwise.

> The AT-ST

> disappeared and any residue from the battles like scorch marks, broken items, or other things

> disappeared. Just then, Gadanza returned.

Rick: Just then, a massive war broke out on the Vok homeworld.

> "We're out of luck." He said. "No one wants to play with us."

Rebecca: That says it all.

> "Shit." Jack said

> Gadanza opened a communication channel to the five other people who were not part of Clans.

Rick: Dark Caste it is.

Dan: Obscure.

> They spoke to each other briefly about playing together and then they chose the blue side.

Rebecca: Four other premade teams have played in the time it's taken them to form up.

> And then, something lucky happened.

Tsuneo: The power went out and we had to leave?

Rebecca: Nice try, but know.

> One of the Blue players decided to get a few other people to play.

Rick: And he hadn't done this before, because?

Dan: He was hoping to find someone in the LFG queue, but he got Jack.

> Blue markers appeared above their heads as they teleported to their base. A ten-person clan

> appeared across from them at the red side.

Rebecca: So what we've learned from this is that Jack has no friends.

Tsuneo: That does seem to be the message.

> "This is really lucky." Jack said to Gadanza and Tom.

> "No kidding." Tom said. "So what's the plan?"

> "We open a channel to our teammates." And with that, Jack looked at the other Avatars that were

> playing with him.

Tsuneo: Talk to other people is your plan? Wow, no wonder they all defer to him.

> One was the Nemesis from Resident Evil.

Rick: So he had a teal trim and turned into a black truck.

Dan: No, that's Nemesis Prime.

Rick: So he had buffed his Adept powers.

Dan: No, that's the Nemesis class from Mass Effect
Rick: So he's a fire-breathing demon in a distant future
Dan: No, that's Nemesis the Warlock
Rick: So he's a large main-belt asteroid
Dan: No, that's 128 Nemesis.
Rick: So he had a Strain Threshold and likely some ranks in Adversary?
Dan: Nemesis? Probably.
Rick: So he'd be Nemesis (Nemesis).
Dan: Yes.

[Pause]

Rick: Huh. Not what I expected.

> They had a double rocket launcher on one arm and a mini-gun on the other arm.

Tsuneo: However, put a locked door in front of him and he's helpless.

> One was Master Chief from the Halo franchise and held an assault rifle.

Rick: And was muttering something about nerfed needlers.

> One was wearing black armour that read SWAT on the back and they held an assault rifle with a
> grenade launcher and shotgun outfitted to it.

Dan: His goal was to be the most tacticool person in the room.

> One was a soldier from Mass Effect wearing blue
> armour and they had various weapons strapped to their back and had a laser-assault rifle as well.

Rick: They had weapons and they had an assault rifle.

> One was a Black Garbed Ninja who had two Mac Tens, one per each hand.

Dan: Traditional ninja weapons

> One was an Avatar that
> they made to resemble a Spartan from 300. He held a rocket launcher with a sword strapped to his
> left hip.

Rebecca: Bare oiled chest and a rocket launcher. Sounds good.

> On his head he wore a helmet with a visor attached to it. One was Selene from the
> Underworld franchise and she had Andúril also called the Flame of the West from Lord of the Rings
> strapped to her back and she was holding a double barrelled shotgun.

Tsuneo: This had all better be important later, because I'll feel robbed otherwise.

> Gadanza held onto a machine gun which had a knife attached to the barrel.

Dan: Is that like a Call of Duty machinegun?

Tsuneo: Uh, no.

Dan: Like a Fallout heavy machinegun?

Tsuneo: I don't think so?

Dan: Or an M2 from Half Life?

Tsuneo: I don't think it's from any game franchise.

Dan: Then how am I meant to know what it is if they don't compare it directly to something?

Tsuneo: I'm sure you'll live.

> Tom was holding an AA-12 Shot Gun. Jack

> pulled out a sniping rifle. He had played Capture the Flag before on this map so knew where key places were.

Rick: I'd wager 'around the flag' is one of them

> "Game will commence in one minute." The computer said.

> "Okay guys, here's the plan." Jack told the nine other players.

Dan: [Jack] Nemesis and Master Chief will spearhead into their base. You're a diversion. Once you've drawn them out, SWAT guy and Mass Effect soldier will back you up and pin down the enemy in gunfight. Ninja and Rocket Spartan will head over the rock formation to the base's side entrance to get their flag. We'll support you from the rear.

Rick: Normally when you do that gag you have to make up a lot of silly people for it.

Dan: And I don't know if this is good or not.

> "We need to place mines at the four

> doorways to our base. I will take a position in a cave on one of the walls on the side of the gorge.

> Tom, you use your motorcycle to get to the Red Base as fast as you can.

Dan: Go to the enemy base? What a brilliant plan! I'd never have thought of that myself.

> Nemesis,

Rick: Actually, my name is Ted.

> you take a position in front of our base as a goalie.

Tsuneo: As the goalie, he'd be allowed to use his hands. Well, if he had any...

> Everyone else, take it to the middle of the map. Lay down

> suppressive fire to stall the others while Tom tries to get the flag."

> "Sounds like a plan." Gadanza said.

> They placed mines at each of the openings to the base so if anyone slipped passed Nemesis they

> would meet with a fiery end.

Rick: So when Tom tried to return the flag...

Dan: Acceptable losses.

> Tom pulled out his Ghost Rider Motorcycle and started the engine.

Tsuneo: [Tom] This is literally my only vehicle.

> Jack went along one of the walls until he met a cave a few meters up in the air. He used a jet pack

Rebecca: Just assume he had this and move on.

> and flew into the cave. He put the Jet Pack away and lay down with his sniper rifle out. He looked to

> the red base and watched the other team. They had pulled out two different mechanical beasts

> which were similar in construct to the Mantis from Halo.

Tsuneo: Yes, since the others are on foot, this certainly seems fair.

> It was a clan of similar Avatars wearing

> similar armour. They were reminiscent of Mjolnir Powered Assault Armor from Halo. Two players

> held Rocket Launchers.

Dan: But are they rocket launchers from Halo? We must know this.

> One had a 12 gage shot gun.

Tsuneo: Is this fic going to be entirely listing people's inventories?

Rick: I certainly hope so.

> The others had assault rifles with different mods on them.

Dan: One of them had a Tee-Shirt cannon mount. Clever.

> Four were piloting the mechanical beasts which had a mini-gun on one arm, and a
> rocket launcher on the other. The sound for the beginning of the game sounded off.

Tsuneo: The buzzer?

Rick: No, it's a sound.

Tsuneo: The siren?

Rick: Look, it's a sound.

Tsuneo: Or... a horn, maybe?

Rick: It's just a sound that sounded, okay?

> The teams went into motion.

> "Shit," Jack swore. "Tom might not make it because of those two Mantises.

Rick: Damn you, Lokar!

> It looks like they are hanging back though,

Dan: Yes, the massive mechs with the long-range firepower are hanging back. Genius.

> so I have to concentrate on the others who are coming towards us."

Rebecca: Genius that man.

> Jack scoped out the field. There were several hills that made sniping difficult. He then saw
> movement. Without hesitating, he fired. A shield erupted as the cloaking ability fell away. A
> decloaked Spartan appeared, however they were not dead. Jack fired again, killing his enemy.

Tsuneo: Well that was a swift resolution to that tense moment.

> He

> then looked for others. In the meantime, Tom quickly drove forward, towards the Red Base to
> retrieve their flag.

Rick: Straight at the giant robots.

Rebecca: Good man, Tom. Nice knowing you.

> The Mantises watched and primed their rocket launchers. They fired heat seeking rockets at Tom,

Dan: Tom was regretting driving a motorcycle that was on fire.

> who launched flaming chains forward. They glowed blue, and were hotter than the
> motorcycle that he rode.

Dan: But were they hotter than lava?

Tsuneo: Don't you start.

> The rockets collided with the chains and exploded.

Tsuneo: The chains he was holding, right?

- > Tom drove fast and
- > then leapt off his motorcycle as two more rockets collided with his bike.

Rick: Downside is that his bike exploded. Upside is that Jack's got more work for his repair shop
Rebecca: Almost like he planned it that way

- > "Oh damn it." Jack swore as he looked to where Tom was.

- > He was surrounded behind enemy lines.

Dan: Red Team is played by the Bolivian army.

- > Jack made haste and fired at one of the Mantises that was closest to where he was perched.

Rick: [Mantis] Be right with you, gotta murder your friend.

- > Blue team moved forward over the hills. Red team were trying to
- > get to Tom, who was firing at them with his Shot gun.

Tsuneo: Tom shoots metal pellets into reinforced shields of six-meter mechs and briefly wonders precisely what horrible life choice landed him here.

- > He had placed a force field up behind him and was firing at the others.

Dan: Tom is pressing all his "oh crap" buttons at once.

- > "Damn it Tom." Jack swore.

- > Jack summoned Iron Man's Hulk Buster Armour and put it on.

Rick: By the way, I also had this.

- > He flew up to the closest Mantis and
- > blasted away one of the arms. Several of the Red Team looked to Jack

Dan: Oh hey, they've got other people. Who would have guessed?

- > and started firing their
- > weapons at him. Tom summoned his motorcycle again, which was slightly damaged but still
- > driveable,

Dan: It had only been lightly exploded.

- > and drove quickly to the red base and found that they had not placed mines or anything
- > to protect the flag from the opposing team.

Tsuneo: They had, however, put up a 'keep off the grass' sign.

- > Tom grabbed the Flag and ran away from the base. As
- > he was holding the flag, he could not drive his motorcycle.

Rick: Tom did not have an exit strategy

- > Jack ripped off the mini-gun from the
- > Mantis he was fighting against. Tom ran on the side closest to Jack. Jack aimed one of his repulsor
- > beams at the Mantis cockpit and destroyed it, killing the occupant and they turned into coins that
- > Jack collected.

Tsuneo: I suppose the moral of this story is that planning is futile because you never know what your

opponent will pull out of their arse.

> Jack then flew towards Tom. He fired several missiles at the others.

Rebecca: I can only assume that the opposition were all standing there going 'duh'.

> Just then, the rest of Blue Team came up and started firing at Red Team.

Dan: So why did they need a team again? These two seem to have the match under control themselves

> Three fired at the Mantis that was left.

> Tom climbed aboard Jack's Hulk Buster and they flew back to their base.

Tsuneo: So he can't use his bike to get back to the base when he has the flag.

Rick: Yes.

Tsuneo: But he can climb on a suit of armour and fly back to his base instead.

Rick: Yes.

Tsuneo: I have questions as to how this works.

> Tom entered it and they scored. Anyone who died respawned and they started the game again.

Rebecca: So that guy's still lost his coins, right?

Dan: Yes? No? Consistency?

> This time, Jack took point and flew across the field with his Hulk Buster armour.

Tsuneo: Yeah, next time lead with that. In fact, do that all the time.

> However there were several members of his

> team already almost half way across the field. One of the Mantises was still operational.

> "I gotta take it out." Jack said to himself.

> One of the members of Jack's team transformed into the Tumbler from Batman Begins.

Rick: Was it the Spartan warrior or the Mass Effect guy? I need to know.

> They drove

> forward to the opposing team's base and fired at the closest opening to make sure there were no

> mines set.

Tsuneo: Apparently Jack is the only person smart enough to think of this elementary plan

> The Mantis aimed and fired at the Tumbler with its Rocket launcher. The Tumbler flipped

> onto its roof. It blew open a compartment which turned the Tumbler over. It started firing its primary

> weapon at the Mantis.

Rebecca: Its nonspecific primary weapon.

> The Mantis returned fire with its main Gatling gun and rocket launcher. The

> Tumbler roared forward, dodging explosions caused by the rockets. It used its booster to propel

> itself forward. It launched a grapnel around one of the legs of the Mantis. It drove passed the

> Mantis, which tried to swivel and track the Tumbler as it went by. The Tumbler drove around the

> Mantis twice and tied up the Mantis' legs. The Mantis fell and stopped moving. The Mantis

> disappeared and a single soldier came out of it, using an assault rifle to battle the Tumbler.

Rebecca: Nameless nonspecific team member is the real hero here.

> The two teams were also battling each other to get to the flags.

Dan: Other stuff was happening. Take our word for it.

> Suddenly, there was a shift as one of the players at the opposing team summoned King Kong.

Rebecca: Obviously. I can't think of a more logical plan

> The gorge rumbled as the beast roared.

Dan: King Kong? Really?

Rick: What?

Dan: Way to blow our Halo theme, man.

Rick: I'm trying to help!

> Jack summoned all of his missiles within his Hulk-Buster

> armour and fired them all at King Kong. The beast roared back

Tsuneo: Giant Gorillas are apparently immune to missiles

Rick: Obviously

> and started running as fast as it

> could on its four limbs to try and swat at Jack. Jack used his repulsor beams on his legs to soar into

> the sky. No matter how much the King Kong tried, it could not touch Jack.

Dan: Given that they were fighting a guy who can fly and has laser beams, why not then summon something that could shoot it down?

Tsuneo: I have several theories, most of which come down to 'these guys are morons.'

> Jack fired lasers from his wrist launchers which slammed into the beast's face, blinding the animal.

Rebecca: [Kong] I am not an animal, good sir, I am a noble creature.

> Jack looked up and watched. His team was losing as there was no communication.

Rebecca: The brutal, one-sided massacre notwithstanding

> The opposing team seemed to be

> making headway. Two members were already fighting Nemesis. Nemesis was firing at one

> opponent with his mini-gun while the other used a scoped assault rifle to try and blind the monster

> by shooting out his eyes. He ended up killing the one enemy

Rick: So how many guys were there on the enemy team?

Tsuneo: I lost track, and I suspect the author did as well.

> however the other one succeeded in

> destroying his eyes. Nemesis roared and started firing at random. The enemy bolted for an entrance

> into their base, which was behind Nemesis.

> KAPOOM!

Rick: The cartoon sound effects are adding so much to this.

> The first landmine went off, killing the enemy instantly. Jack concentrated. He could not

> help Nemesis

Rebecca: Sorry unholy cybernetic abomination. You're on your own.

> so he needed to concentrate on the enemy in front of him.

Dan: [Jack] Oh yeah, giant ape I'm meant to be fighting. Forgot about that.

> He opened up with his wrist cannon and started firing tank missiles at the huge ape.

Tsuneo: You mean anti-tank missiles?

Rick: Nope, missiles shaped like tanks. Weird design, but their DPS is fantastic.

> King Kong roared angrily. Jack started firing his repulsor beams at the massive ape.

Rick: [Jack] Okay, what else have I got on this boat?

> Jack went right to the beast and held up King Kong's arms with his own arms.

Rebecca: Yes, let's give up our ranged advantage to get into grappling range with the giant gorilla. That kind of tactical thinking is why they all follow Jack.

> Jack aimed his

> unibeam chest projector right at King Kong's chest. The animal realized what was about to happen

> and tried to resist. Jack activated the unibeam, boring right through the animal.

Dan: Well that worked out fantastically for him.

> It collapsed and transformed to the player that was within it. He died and left coins behind.

Rick: I regret not using Gigan!

> The Hulk-buster armour

> ran out of energy and transformed back into Jack's avatar. He pulled out his sniper rifle and looked

> out towards the terrain. There were battles raging all around him.

Rebecca: Given that there are at most twenty combatants on the field, they're very small battles.

> He ran up one of the largest hills

> and looked around. It seemed that five of the enemy clan were destroyed. However, six of Jack's

> team were killed, including Tom.

> "Tom, what happened?" He asked.

Dan: [Tom] I lost everything. Years of work, all my savings poured into this game. Why? Why did I do it, knowing it was all so fragile, knowing that one simple bullet could end all my hopes and dreams, pushing me back to nothing. Leave me. I am but a burden.

Rick: [Jack] Eh, just respawn and get over it.

> "Shit got real is what happened." Tom said.

Dan: Maybe if you'd done something useful rather than fighting your stupid ape duel.

> "I have to wait to respawn when someone scores."

> "Damn it, what about the rest of you?" Jack said, opening up his communication device to include

> all of the people he was playing with.

> "Eyes are shot." Nemesis said.

Rick: He can still find his communicator though.

> "I'm taking two of these guys on." Selene said.

> "I'm out." The SWAT specialist said.

Dan: Thanks SWAT guy. Really helping there.

> "I'm taking on one of the Spartans." Gadanza replied.

Rick [Gadanza]: Also I am here.

> "Okay." Jack said, disregarding anyone else.

Tsuneo: [Jack] Thanks guys. I don't care.

> "I'm going for the flag."

> "Go for it." One of his teammates said.

> Jack ran forward. He pulled out a motion tracker and found out where all of his enemies were.

Dan: Yes, he had this all along. Why do you ask?

> One was getting closer to his base.

Rick: Oh also, they're coming out of the walls and game over, man.

> Others were fighting with his team members. Jack ran along the

> edge of the gorge and pulled out a black motorcycle.

Tsuneo: Just how much crap does this guy carry on him anyway?

Rebecca: I suspect the answer is 'as much as the story needs'.

> He revved the engine and was off,

Dan: [Jack] Yep, started up the motorcycle I wanted to ride. Not gonna make that mistake again.

> going as

> quickly as he could to the opposing base. He was spotted by one of the enemies who were fighting

> one of Jack's comrades. He aimed a rocket launcher;

Tsuneo: I assume they're in some kind of stand-off if he's using a rocket launcher.

Rick: Nope, close in brawl.

Tsuneo: But won't he hit his ally?

Rick: Yeah, probably.

Tsuneo: And... everyone's okay with that?

Rick: Jack knows it's a sacrifice he's willing to make.

> however Jack's teammate took the time to fight against the enemy.

Rick: They were taking time out to fight to the death.

> The rocket shot forth, and went above Jack. Jack drove as there was an

> explosion that destroyed some of the wall of the gorge. Jack used his motorcycle to jump over a hill.

Rebecca: Some of these events may be related, but don't bet on it.

> There were explosions happening elsewhere in the gorge.

Rick: The place was full of old timey prospectors

> Jack scanned the base in front of him.

> He tried to see if there were any mines or any booby traps.

Rebecca: He searched for traps and secret doors.

> So far, there was nothing to indicate that
> there were mines or anything that could destroy him. So he entered the base and found the flag.

Tsuneo [Bored]: Well that was a thrilling climax.

Rick [Bored]: I'm excited

> He
> then grabbed it and dashed out of the base. He ran to the left where no one was fighting. He then
> took off.

Dan: He went for a smoothie. He ordered banana. He got a shot of wheatgrass.

> "Damn," He said, breathlessly. "I need to run more."

Dan: I can only imagine that right now in the real world he's slumped over his treadmill, gasping and wheezing

> He opened up a channel to talk to the other players on his team.

> "Hey guys, I have the flag." He told them. "Keep the other team preoccupied so that I can get it
> done."

> "Guys," Nemesis said. "I have bad news."

> "They got passed you?"

> "Yeah, I heard them and saw them through the radar but I could not shoot them."

Dan: Some use you were. Worst cyborg killing machine ever.

> "Gadanza, you're up." Jack said. "Take him out!"

> "I'm a little busy." Gadanza said. "I'm facing one of the Spartans and they are not giving up."

Tsuneo: [Gadanza] I thought they'd just roll over and let us win, but they're actually fighting for it.

> I'm already out of ammo for my machine gun."

> "Use a grenade or something." Tom said.

Rick: Use some sort of nonspecific explosive device.

> Tom was watching the match but could not help do anything else but comment on what happened.

Dan: So he filled the chatbox up with a racist tirade. It's what you do when watching a stream.

> "I'm using a pistol right now." Gadanza said.

> "Here, take some ammo." Jack said, transferring 200 bullets to Gadanza.

Rebecca: I'd ask if he can do that, but given how stupid this battle has been so far, I'll just shrug and accept it.

> "Nice!" Gadanza pulled out his assault rifle one more time and started firing at will.

Rick: That's like a grenade or something, right?

Tsuneo: Sure, why not?

> Jack pulled out his two Desert Eagle Hand Guns and looked around while running as fast as he
> could. Then, a Spartan from the other team came into view. Jack started firing his weapons. His

> shots rang out but did not find purchase on his enemy. He put away his pistols as soon as he could,
> and then did a somersault as the enemy fired at him using a carbine.

Dan: The somersault was entirely necessary, why would you even ask that?

> They missed him as well, and then Jack pulled out his sniper rifle. He aimed and fired.

Tsuneo: While running as fast as he could.

Dan: He's going to claim a 720 noscope or some such garbage next.

> The shield around his enemy flared up and
> went out. Jack pulled out a small machine gun and fired at his enemy.

Rebecca: When that didn't work, he pulled out a crossbow.

Tsuneo: And after that, he took out a slingshot.

Dan: Following on from there, he got out a boomerang.

Rick: And when all else failed, he took out his nine-barrelled duck-foot gun.

> Coins erupted from the enemy's body.

Dan: Something he'd done had finally worked.

> Jack put away his weapon and pulled out the black sword that was on his back next to the flag.

Rebecca: There are armies that have less weapons than Jack does.

> He slashed at the enemy, who leapt back. Jack put away his
> sword and pulled out the sniper rifle once more. He held his breath, aimed and fired, making the
> enemy's head explode with coins. The body transformed into coins,

Tsuneo: His head turned into coins and the rest of him also turned into coins.

> which Jack collected. Jack activated a cloaking spell

Dan: Oh he can do magic as well, by the way

Rick: Good to know. Maybe lead with that next time?

> and he was invisible to the other players, including his own team.

Tsuneo: Say, maybe do that before they start shooting at you?

Rebecca: I mean he would have, but he hadn't made it up on the spot yet.

> He ran
> as fast as he could, trying to use this precious time that he had. He only had thirty seconds until
> time on his cloaking spell ran out. He ran until he was one third of the gorge away from his base.

Rick: How long is this map anyway?

> He
> took out a hunting rifle of his own design that he modified to be very precise over a long distance.

Rebecca: Is that the same weapon as his sniper rifle?

Tsuneo: I have no idea any more. Nor am I sure if I care.

> He saw Nemesis and ran towards him.

Dan: [Jack] Good, I can use him for cover.

> Then there was an explosion. Jack fell to the ground, letting
> go of the flag. There appeared a counter over the flag marking that if no one picked up the flag in

> thirty seconds, it would respawn back at the other base.

Tsuneo: If the flag's not back in thirty seconds, it's three dollars off.

> Jack felt his right arm go numb as coins fell out.

Rebecca: He was haemorrhaging small change.

> Someone had succeeded in wounding him.

Dan: So you lose coins even if you're injured?

Rebecca: I'm pretty sure that's not how it works.

Dan: I bloody well hope not.

> He found that he could not move his right arm. He

> pulled out a desert eagle pistol with his left hand

Dan: Sure, fire a massive pistol with wrist-shattering recoil one-handed. Nothing can go wrong with this.

> and made his way to the flag, and the counter

> continued counting down. He picked it up and put it on his back.

Tsuneo: [Bored] That was an exciting conclusion to that tense situation.

Rick: [Bored] I am on the edge of my seat.

> Three Spartans made their way to Jack. There was no one on his team there to help him.

Rebecca: They'd all gone for a smoko at once.

> Nemesis was close, but without the ability to see, he was useless.

Tsuneo: The fact that he still had a minigun, a rocket launcher and a radar didn't seem to have registered

> Jack sucked in air as dread filled him.

> "I'm going to enjoy tea-bagging your ass." One of the Spartans said.

> Jack opened up his Heads-up Display, looking for spells or technology that could give him an

> advantage in this instance.

Rebecca: In the meantime the three Spartans simply gunned him down.

> He pulled out a small device from his belt and threw it down. A bright light blinded his enemies.

Tsuneo: Aha! Jack threw a plot convenience at them.

> Jack grabbed the knife from his left boot and ran up to the closest

> Spartan, and slammed his blade into the Spartan's neck, he forced the Spartan to go down, and he

> opened fire with the Spartan's own Assault Rifle on the other two Spartans.

Rick: Wait, has Jack actually run out of guns?

Tsuneo: No, he just can't be bothered using his own ammo.

> One of their shields went down. Jack threw his knife at the Spartan who took it in the right eye,

Tsuneo: I see that losing one of his arms hasn't made any difference at all

Dan: If anything, that arm was only slowing him down.

> or rather where their eye
> would have been. They exploded into coins. Jack grasped the Spartan he was on top of and
> reached into his throat, and ripped it from the Spartan,

Dan: Going full Dalton on him there.

> who exploded into coins as well. The last
> Spartan aimed his assault rifle at Jack. All of a sudden, there was a guttural roar as a metal panther
> roared. He launched at the Spartan, taking him down. The Panther mauled the Spartan.

Rick: I was hoping that something spontaneous but not entirely unexpected like that would happen. I feel lucky.

> Wasting no time thanking his teammate,

Dan: [Jack] Nice save with the panther, mate.

Rick: [Gadanza] But I didn't...

Dan: [Jack] Huh. Oookay then.

> Jack made sure he was still holding his flag. He made his way to his base with the flag.

Rebecca: I can only assume that he's murdered the entirety of the other team at this point

> Incoming Communication. The words appeared in Jack's heads up Display.

> "Go for Jack 100292402." Jack said, saying his name one word and then one number at a time.

Tsuneo: In the time it took him to recite his username, the enemy team tracked him down and ganked him.

> "Hey Jack." Art3mis said. "We're ready early, and wondered if you guys would be interested in
> meeting now."

> "Shit," Jack said. "We are in the middle of a game,

Rebecca: [Jack] I'm literally seconds from winning, though.

> but I'll ask my friends about what they think."

> "Go ahead." Art3mis said.

Rebecca [Artemis]: Only one of the wealthiest and most powerful people in the world here. I'll wait on your stupid game. It's fine.

> Jack muted the communication to Art3mis and then opened a channel to Tom and Gadanza.

> "Guys, Artemis is wondering if we are ready to meet the High Five now." He told them. "What do
> you think? Should we end this game?"

Dan: [Tom] Dude, you've single-handedly murdered the enemy team, and you're seconds from the target. Just finish the damned thing.

> "It's going to cost us." Gadanza said.

> "Don't worry." Jack said. "I'll pay both the people who are playing on our side and the other team."

Tsuneo: Hey guys, mind if we stop massacring you?

> "Do you have enough coins for that?" Tom asked.

Rick: Well if he hadn't spent them all on purchasing every weapon under the sun, then maybe.

> "Yeah don't worry." Jack replied,

Tsuneo: [Tom] Can you float me a few mil? I kinda lost my shirt on this.

> and then he opened up a channel to all of the players of the

> Capture the Flag game that they were all playing.

> "Hey everyone." He began. "Something has come up and we need to stop playing."

> "That means your team forfeits the match." One of the Spartans said. "We win the prize."

Rebecca: I'm glad they checked with Nemesis beforehand. I'd hate to have a mutant cyber zombie angry at you.

> The prize was one million coins for the winning team. This made them really happy.

Rick [Bored]: Yay.

> "What the hell man?" The team member who was wearing SWAT armour asked Jack, running up to
> the man.

> "Here, I'll pay all of you one hundred thousand coins each." Jack replied.

Rick: Sure, of course he had this all along.

> "That's as much as we would get if we won."

Tsuneo: Which kind of makes the whole thing kind of pointless.

> "That's good, but we were doing so awesomely." The player in the Nemesis skin also said.

Rebecca: Jack was doing awesomely. The rest of you were just sucking up air.

> Jack looked at his inventory on his Heads Up Display and paid out 100, 000 coins to his seven co-
> players.

> "So what, you're not going to pay us?" Tom mused.

Tsuneo: [Tom] I zeroed out for this! I lost years of progress!

Dan: [Jack] Yeah, but I'll get over it.

> "Hey I didn't tell the others that we are meeting with the High Five." Jack said sternly. "That should
> be a treat in itself."

Tsuneo: If he can't monetise it, Tom doesn't care.

> "Yeah, so where are we meeting them?" Gadanza asked.

> "Aech has a chat room called The Garage, also known as The Basement."

Tsuneo: Not confusing at all

> Jack said, having been invited to the chat room by Art3mis.

Rebecca: [Jack] And yes, I know, but this is totally the real Artemis, not like the last time.

> "They gave us access to the chat room. We need to get to the Tensa Zangetsu first."

> Jack opened a portal. He and his two friends walked through the portal.

Tsuneo: Meanwhile, all seventeen other players blocked him.

> They were on board the ship that was Jack's personal home on the OASIS.

Dan: Despite being a virtual spaceship, it was still littered with empty Ramen packets

> Usually, the team would download weapons on the ship and then go play games.

Tsuneo: Why bother? Jack seems to keep the entire catalogue on him at all times.

> The Tensa Zangetsu would charge weapons that needed

> replenishing in energy. The spaceship also spent Jack's coins in order to get ammunition. He

> shared it willingly with his friends.

Tsuneo: I see no way this system could be abused at all

Rebecca: Gods no

> He looked for an extra arc generator and placed it within his Hulk

> Buster armour to power it up. His friend stocked up on ammunition.

Rebecca: [Gadanza] You know we are just going to have a chat, right?

Dan: [Mimes pumping shotgun] I know.

> "Did you guys have clothes you wanted to change into?" Jack asked his friends.

Dan: Or did you just want to go pantsless as normal?

> "What's wrong with what I have on?" Tom asked.

Tsuneo: Only that you look like a nazi biker from an awful 90's action flick.

> "Dude," Gadanza said. "We're about to meet the best players in the world. Have a little respect."

Rick: What is the dress code for meeting the world's top gamers?

Rebecca: Be white cishet men.

Rick: Fair.

> Gadanza changed his clothing to appear like a detective wearing a suit underneath a trench coat

> and fedora that matched the colour of his coat.

Dan: What colour was his coat?

Tsuneo: The same colour as his hat, obviously.

> Tom refused to change.

Rebecca: Tom was heaved into a dumpster by their bouncer.

> Jack looked through the clothing and gear that he had amassed

Rebecca: He was thinking of wearing something from his Rainbow Brite collection.

> and pulled out a suit that he liked. It was a black dress

> shoes, black dress pants, a white tunic, a black blazer and a red bow tie.

Dan: Jack is going as a complete and total tit.

> His combed out his hair

> and summoned his knife in its holster along his left leg. He pulled out a pistol and put it in a holster

> that was underneath his blazer.

Rebecca: Jack isn't happy unless he has at least a dozen weapons on him at any given moment

> He picked out sunglasses that suited the look

Dan: They had better be hot pink shutter shades is all I'm saying.

> and he looked at his

> avatar from different vantage points. He then returned to first person mode. He looked like an Indian

> Gangster.

Tsuneo: Or, alternatively, a complete and total tit

> "Okay, let's go." He told his friends as he opened a portal to Aech's chat room, The Basement.

Rick: The basement, the garage

> They walked through the portal and found that they were in a huge room. In the middle was The

> Iron Giant which was in two huge pieces. The hips and legs were one piece while the abdomen,

> head and arms were another piece.

Rebecca: It was only lightly melted in lava

> There were five Avatars waiting for them.

Rick: Including the weird one with the two HAGs.

> "Hey." Jack said, waving. "My name is Jack."

> "Hey, welcome to The Basement." Aech, a tall orc-cyborg said. "If you need anything to be fixed, I

> can do it here for a charge of course.

Tsuneo: Jack realised that Aech was his competition and that he didn't stand a chance.

> This is my home, where we come to chat and do other awesome things."

Rick: And by that we mean 'watch reruns of Alf.'

> "These are my friends, Tom and Gadanza." Jack introduced his friends.

Tsuneo: He introduced his friends as his friends.

> "Hello." Parzival said, rising to meet the guests of The Basement.

Rick: Parzival has been demoted to doorman.

> "I take it you all have questions about what Artemis has been doing on the racing circuits."

Rebecca: Not really, no

> "Yeah," Jack said. "She keeps kicking ass. Is there a reason,

Rebecca: It's because she's better than you, Jack.

> or is she just trying to make more money even though she has a lot already?"

> "The High Five does not really come to the OASIS anymore."

Rick: They're more into MUDs now.

> Shoto said, as he introduced himself to the new friends.

Dan: By the way, he's eleven.

[Pause]

Rick: Wait, is he the one who's eleven?

Dan: I don't remember.

> "You are right to question our motives, but you are not in any position to order us around.

Tsuneo: Shoto establishing dominance there. Good start.

> The reason you are here is because Artemis wants more comrades.

Dan: She's realised how small her circle of friends is.

> For some time, we

> were looking to expand our clan to take up more players. We want to know more about you.

Tsuneo: Ask him to list his inventory then, as it's the closest thing he has to an actual personality

> Jack 100292402, your name is all over the OASIS.

Rebecca: Turns out they keep mistaking him for Jack 100293402. Honest mistake.

> You fix things like Aech aboard your spaceship."

> "Yes." Jack said.

Rebecca: Apparently this talent is so rare that only two people know it

> "I believe you can help Aech build something special." Art3mis said.

Rick: A frost-free fridge. [Ding!]

> "We are after one player in

> particular. He is a hacker who has bypassed much of the games that were originally created by

> Halliday and Morrow. His Avatar name is Lynx.

Rick: He has venomous fangs and little kitty ears. I think he's missing the point.

> I believe he is after another Easter egg that Halliday

> had created but wanted only the best players to find. He's not from America.

Dan: Well that narrows it down.

> I believe he's racing for

> another egg so I'm racing to find out more about him and find the egg before he does.

Tsuneo: The secret is to race more.

> This time, there are no rules.

Dan: I'm throwing away my badge and taking the game into my own hands.

> There are no scoreboards. This egg is something else entirely."

Rick: [Parzival] And as owner of the game, I know absolutely nothing about it.

> "But you guys have everything." Tom said. "Why would Halliday make another Easter egg and not tell anyone about it?"

Rebecca: Because he was a weird, creepy, shut-in transhumanist with no sense of personal boundaries?

Tsuneo: Well yes.

> "The same reason why people started leaving Easter Eggs in the first place." Aech said.

Rick: So bored programmers with nothing better to do.

> "What are you guys doing about it?" Jack asked Aech, Parzival, Shoto, and Daito. "Are you racing as well?"

Tsuneo: Racing? So they've figured out this Easter Egg is from a race somehow?

Dan: No. They just don't have anything better to do.

> "Yes, we are." Shoto said. "I'm racing spaceships."

> "I'm racing on foot." Daito said.

> "I'm modifying our vehicles." Aech said.

Rick: I'm racing three-toed sloths

> "I'm doing research at Anorak's virtual archives to see if there are any clues," Parzival said.

Dan: Admit it, Parzival. You're not even trying.

> "What would you have us do?" Jack asked. "Why did you invite me here?"

Tsuneo: Because we had to save the readers from that capture the flag scene somehow.

> "We need your ship." Parzival said. "People who you helped in the past have told us that you can track people, is that true?"

Rebecca: Of course, he has full admin powers over the entire OASIS and so could easily find and perma-ban anyone he wants, so Jack seems to be a little redundant here

> "I can only track people who have won games." Jack replied.

Dan: Don't ask how this works, it just does.

> "Are you saying you want to track this Lynx person?"

Tsuneo: It took a while for the idea to register.

> "And build a special item." Aech replied. "We need your help.

Rebecca: For reasons that will probably never be properly explained.

> Your friends can also race with us as well."

Rick: Artemis can destroy each of them in turn.

> "Sounds like fun." Tom said.

Tsuneo: Tom is easily entertained

> "We do have another friend who does not have console to get onto the OASIS." Gadanza said. "He
> might be a good help to us if he was to get one."

Rebecca: I mean he knows nothing about the OASIS and has no experience with it whatsoever and he's not playing because his parents won't let him, but sure.

> "Yeah, but then he would have to start playing ASAP." Parzival said. "He would begin at level one
> where we are all above that."

Rick: Justin is that guy in Auction House Green gear that wants a spot in your Mythic Raid

> "That's the price you guys need to pay in order for us to help you." Jack replied. "Let our friend get a
> console and we help find this Lynx person."

Tsuneo: Is it possible that Justin doesn't want to join them in the OASIS?

Rebecca: The possibly has literally never crossed their minds.

> "What about the Easter Egg?" Art3mis asked. "You don't want a share in that?"

Tsuneo: Assuming it's some kind of prize. I don't know. It could just be Haliday's signature on a bathroom wall.

> "Our friend joining us is more important." Jack said.

Dan: You guys are really dumb, you know that?

> "Now hold on Jack," Gadanza said. "Let's not be too excited. I want Justin to play with us as well,
> but what if this Easter egg is something better?"

Rebecca: Jack's idea of 'something better' is probably a seventeenth gun.

> "Halliday had left everything to The High Five." Jack responded,

Tsuneo: [Jack] You don't get to make decisions, Gadanza. You know that.

> and then turned to the High Five. "Maybe we should think about things then get back to you."

Rick: And by 'think about things,' they really mean...

Dan: Get Tom killed in a pointless game again.

Rick: Right. Of course.

> "The Basement will be open to you guys." Aech said. "You can come here to find us whenever you
> want."

Rick: And so when they all entered the Basement at three in the morning and demanded attention, Aech simply killfiled the lot of them.

> "Alright thanks." Jack said. "Just to let you guys know it's crazy for you to invite us here. You guys
> are awesome. Thank you for doing that for us."

Dan: [Jack] Then I started feelin' kinda gooey inside and I fell on my knees and I cried and cried. And that's when those security guards threw us out

> "You guys are awesome as well." Parzival said.

Rick: Really?

Dan: No.

> "We will see you soon." Jack said,

Rebecca: [Shoto] Gods, I hope not.

> and then he, Tom and Gadanza entered a portal and left The Basement.

Tsuneo: Also known as the garage.

> GoldDragonZ: I don't know about you guys, but I like writing this story.

Rebecca: I'm not enjoying writing it myself.

> If you enjoy the story, that's just bonus for me. If you find something wrong,

Dan: Yeah, about that...

> please tell me.

On that final comment, the big screen turned off, converting the world back to prose format. "And that was the first two chapters of Jack's inventory," Tsuneo considered. "Which might have also had some other things in it, but I'm really not sure."

"I think Jack's inventory was the most important part of the fic," Rebecca agreed. "I mean, it's not like the author put much effort into anything else."

"Yeah," Rick nodded. "Let's look at his friends, for example. They're not exactly the most developed of characters, are they?"

"Tom is an obnoxious dudebro, John has no personality to speak of and Justin doesn't even use the OASIS so I'm left wondering what the hell he's doing there," Dan admitted.

"And I suspect they will never really go beyond that," Tsuneo added. "You'll noticed that Tom and John are more defined by what weapons they use than anything else."

"Which also applies to our lead," Rebecca continued. "I mean, I know its early days, but so far the fic's been more about his spaceship, his repair business, his computer and the approximately six dozen guns he carries on him at all times then who he is as a person."

"Right," Rick nodded. "All his actual character traits so far have been informed more than demonstrated. And most of that has come through block exposition in the introduction."

"Speaking of, I can't help but notice that Mark's whole situation is somewhat at odds with the rest of the Ready Player One world," Dan added. "It's clear that he and his friends are living comfortable upper middle-class lives despite the fact that the world is supposedly wracked by crime and poverty."

"The leather-clad booster gangs who prey on the electric vehicles that carry goods and services though the lawless wastelands between the cities and all that," Rick noted.

"It is a bit odd," Rebecca noted. "I mean, there could be some twist coming where we find out that they live in a walled community that's enforced by armed guards to keep the unwashed masses out. But I sincerely doubt it."

"Also I have to wonder why the High Five are so interested in him," Tsuneo considered. "He can repair things and he has a spaceship, but they own the OASIS and have full admin powers over it. I can't see what he'd have to offer them that they couldn't do themselves."

"You've got me," Rick shrugged. "Mostly I was thinking about how nonsensical that Capture the Flag match was."

"You kind of lose sight of the objective when you can turn into a Tyrannosaurus," Dan agreed. "I mean, it is kind of awesome, but at the same time it doesn't make any sense in the context of the game."

"I can see that you're all getting really involved with the fic," The Voice spoke up.

"It's not like we've really got much of a choice," Rebecca shot back.

"Well we will be covering the rest of the fic," the Voice continued. "So another ten chapters to go."

"Are they all as long as these two?" Tsuneo warily asked.

"Actually, these were two of the shorter ones," the Voice explained.

"Help."

"But we are done for now?" Dan cautiously asked.

"We are, yes," the Voice finished. "I'll see you all next time."

"Yeah, and gunt you later too," Dan sighed.

"Well this was all purely awful," Rebecca commented. "But I do need to get going. I have a lot of boring office work to catch up on."

"And by that you mean you found something really important," Dan commented.

"Seriously," Rebecca shook her head. "Most of what I do is incredibly boring analysis and documentation. It is honestly a lot less exciting then it seems."

"Right," Dan shook his head. "So I'll take it you did find something but can't or won't tell anyone about it."

"Not at all."

"Yeah, and I'm sure it won't come back to bite us in the arses at all either," Dan continued. "Like all the times you've gone prying into our employers."

There was a brief pause. "No," Rebecca finally said.

"You did, didn't you?" Dan winced. "What have you done this time?"

"Well I have to be off," Rebecca hastily finished as she got up and headed for the door. "See you all next time."

"We're in so much trouble, aren't we?" Tsuneo asked.

"Oh yeah," Dan nodded. "I can tell."

Author's notes:

If you're worried that Jack has no personality to speak of, then rest assured that he will get some in chapters to come. However, weather that's a good thing or not is another matter.

This is definitely one of those 'golden' fics where it's bad and only manages to get worse. And, despite how wordy it is (and trust me, it only gets more so) it was surprisingly fast and easy to work with, as the riffs just threw themselves at the page. Mark/Jack is not exactly the best character, but as we will see in chapters to come, he's also one of those characters that actively gets worse as the fic goes. But don't worry, his friends will actually manage to become even shallower as we continue. Shocking, I know

Next time, more hot inventory action

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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](mailto:elmerstudios00@gmail.com) and register your Jeff.

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> "Did you want to play Capture the Flag before?"

> "Yeah we can play." John replied.

> "Yeah we can play." Tom also replied.