

You wake up suddenly, at the sound of gunfire. Never in your short life have you heard a gunshot, but it's loud enough where you don't know what else it could possibly be. Eyes wide open, you see the plastic, glow-in-the-dark planets and stars your father helped you put on your ceiling when you were just seven, over nine years ago. Time flies, you guess.

Quickly, you stand, grabbing a pair of shorts and a t-shirt from the floor next to your bed, the ones you wore yesterday. You throw them on, and then pick your way across your room, around the books and games strewn about, and head out into the hall. You're somewhat surprised to see your parents haven't done the same. Knocking on their door leaves you unanswered, and you turn the knob reflexively. Locked, as it usually is.

Heading downstairs, you are surprised to find it parent-less as well. Where could they be? You grab a bag of store-brand chips that was rolled (to preserve "freshness," of course), and absent-mindedly chew on a few as you wander the house, looking for them.

After a time, you are convinced that your parents have left you alone, no note or text or anything. Where could they have gone?

You hear another gunshot, louder, closer this time. While searching, you heard a few, but they were no louder than the first. Another one right away. You stand stricken in your living room. Could your parents have been shot?

From behind you, you hear a female voice say loudly, “Hey! Over here!” Turning, you see that the image of a large, cartoony, pink unicorn is being displayed on the TV. “There you are!” The unicorn moves, animated. “Listen to me—” You cut them off.

“Who are you? You can, see me? What the Hell?”

“There’s no time!” the unicorn puts on a panicked expression, movement lines and all. “In the drawer under the TV, quickly!” Hesitantly, you open it. Inside, is a small, white box, like one a ring might go in. “Yes, yes! Open it, quickly please!” The gunshots are louder, closer.

You open the box. Inside, propped up and nestled in cloth, as a ring would be, is a small white disk, with a large power button. “Put it to your temple, and push the button. Quickly! Please.”

“Why should I—” you start.

“Your life depends on doing exactly what I say. Your parents entrusted me to.”

“My parents?”

“Yes, quickly now!”

You put it on, and are startled by a loud bang against your front door, like a battering ram. The door bulges in slightly. Turning to the unicorn, she pleads “Please.”

You push the button, and feel your consciousness slip away.

You open your eyes. You stand in an open, grassy field, which stretches out for miles. In the distance, you see a great mountain. By your side, is the unicorn, less cartoony now, each hair of her mane distinguished. You turn to her. She breathes a sigh of relief.

“You’re here. Thank heavens.”

“Where...is here, exactly?”

“Why, you are in Cyberspace of course.”

“Cyberspace?”

“You mean, your parents never told you? They built all this,” she gestures broadly with one of her hooves. “It took them years. The first fully virtual world.”

Suddenly, you're reminded of the ‘non-virtual’ world. “Hold on, what’s going on?! Am I going to be shot? How do I turn this thing off!”

“Calm down, calm down. While in Cyberspace, time is dilated. You could spend weeks here before they break down that door. Which gives us plenty of time to do what we have to.”

“What we have to?”

“Yes. Your parents, see, they programmed me to act as your guide here in Cyberspace, in the event that the worst should come to pass.”

“The...worst? Are they dead?!”

“No, no...well, at least I don’t think so. Building Cyberspace wasn’t cheap, and they used money from some...questionable sources. Terrorists, mostly, who wanted to use Cyberspace as a weapon. Torture, for one, would be quite effective and efficient with time dilation.” You shudder. “But enough of that. Chances are high that these terrorists have already captured them, and are after what’s on your temple right now.

- Go into VR, where there are nine themed zones. Later, return to reality and cooperate with the government against VR terrorists.

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