

Robert Watts paced through rows of white tubs. He was standing in the center of the “New Worlds” gaming simulator room and other than Mr. Watts’ echoing feet, the room was silent. In each of the tubs there was about one inch of clear, thick, liquid. Mr. Watts had learned that this gel was for the people's comfort. When the “New Worlds” game would come out, the players would lay down in these tubs and be immersed into a virtual world where they would be able to do amazing things. He thought of what this new game would bring. Goosebumps formed on Robert’s arm even though the room wasn't cold.

Mr. Watts had begun his new job for the Gamersoft gaming company. The company was just finishing and testing a game that would take virtual reality to a whole other level. He actually had a child in one of the tubs, testing the game at that very moment. The idea for the game was a simulator that would give you the ability to use all of your five senses, and while playing, you would be able to acquire amazing skills.

Joey Davidson was going to be one of the first people on planet Earth to try “New Worlds.” He had been painstakingly selected by the crew at Gamersoft and would be receiving a small cash prize for his time.

On the day that he was scheduled to try the game, Joey walked up to the “New Worlds” center. He checked in with the woman at the front desk and she told him to change into some tight fitting clothing. After changing, Joey stepped past the doors he had been instructed to go through.

On the door’s other side, Joey couldn't believe what he saw. Hundreds of white bathtubs were laid out all over the room. Joey looked over to an older man that pointed down one of the rows.

"Down that way until you reach containment tub number nine-hundred and forty-five," he said. Joey followed the man’s directions and walked through aisle after aisle until he reached "containment tub" number nine hundred and forty-five. A tiny hole opened up in the floor next to Joey and from it rose a very compact speaker.

“Hello Joey,” a woman’s voice came from the speaker. “We are glad that you could make it today. We would like you to pay close attention to your surroundings once you are in the simulator. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” Joey said a little bit impatiently.

“Your purpose here today is to tell us how we could make this game better. If anything goes wrong, you will know. Now please enter the containment tub.” Joey stepped into the tub and laid down in the layer of gel. Then, a machine set a large metallic piece of headgear onto Joey's face. He relaxed and closed his eyes. His head filled with a low whirring sound and then everything turned black.

Joey's eyes opened. He found that he was lying down in a field of grass. "Awesome," Joey whispered to himself. He had never been in a simulator this realistic before. He took a deep breath in and was amazed that he could actually smell the scent of freshly cut grass. He clapped his hands and discovered that he could also hear.

Then a very loud voice that didn't seem to come from anywhere in particular spoke, "Hello," it said. "Welcome to New Worlds. Here, in this simulator you will be able to acquire certain skills that you would never be able to have in the real world." Joey was still having trouble believing how natural everything looked. "In New Worlds you will be able to play one of the three game modes. 'Fighter', 'Lounge', or 'Creative'. Please speak the title of the game mode you would like to play."

Joey thought for a moment before saying "Fighter."

He looked around and found that his surroundings had changed again. He was in some sort of hallway with an arched roof. The walls were made of stone and there was very little lighting. A gentle and cool breeze blew past him. He heard footsteps coming up from behind him and turned his head to see who was coming, but before he was fully rotated, something collided with his face. Joey fell to the ground and saw the fist from an outstretched arm where his face had been. He felt his nose to find that it was dripping with blood.

“What are you doing?” Joey shouted.

The boy who had struck his face walked over to Joey and began to kick him. “What the heck!” Joey jumped up from the ground and got his fists in front of his face. “I didn't do anything,” Joey told his attacker. *I have to actually fight this guy?* he thought. Joey had no skills in fighting and this was not what he had expected.

*Well then let's fight.*

Joey stepped out of containment tub number nine hundred and forty five and dried himself off. That had been an experience unlike any he'd had before. Joey had lost his first fight, but that didn't discourage him one bit. It had been his first time even in New Worlds.

"Welcome back Joey," the voice said. "Did you enjoy yourself?"

"Sort of," Joey said. "The game was not like I expected it to be."

"Well if you don't feel like telling us details now, you can come back tomorrow and try again."

"I'll try again tomorrow," Joey said.

The next day, Joey went into New Worlds again. This time he was prepared for his fight with whomever. He was in a forest thick with trees. After a while, he heard the snapping of wood to his left. As he turned, he got into his fighting position. His enemy today was a much smaller person than yesterday, and a girl. It wasn't Joey's nature to attack little girls, but, he knew that this was all part of a game. Walking up to her, Joey threw the first punch. He managed to hit the girl right in the face, but this did not seem to affect her.

Just as Joey was getting ready to hit her again, the girl pulled a large stick from behind her back and swung it into Joey's gut... and it hurt. Now seeing the power the girl had over him, he backed up and searched the forest floor for a weapon, but he didn't have enough time. The little girl ran after Joey with the stick raised above her head and brought it down onto his back. Joey scrambled on the ground, desperately trying to find a fallen branch. As he circled a tree, he saw perfectly straight tree-limb. He ran over and snatched it from the forest floor.

Back on offense again, Joey ran at the little girl and whacked her with his tree branch. This game was becoming much more brutal than he had thought it would be.

Even though she had the advantage in the beginning, she was beat now. Joey closed his eyes, ready to return to the real world.

After going to the New Worlds Center everyday for over a month, Joey once again stepped into his containment tub. In the virtual world, he found himself in the same room as the very first time he'd played. He heard footsteps behind him. Something in Joey's mind told him to duck. So, knowing that his brain was normally right, he dropped to the ground as an object flew over his head. Joey turned to meet his match. Suddenly, the person who had begun walking towards Joey was thrashing on the ground with what seemed to be tiny lightning bolts flying out

of the tips of his fingers and toes. Joey backed away and looked around for help, but of course this was not real. What could he really do? Joey felt a sudden pain in his left hand. A spark popped out from Joey's index finger and then his whole body began to shake. He fell to the ground.

Joey felt very cold in his tub when he woke up. Something was wrong. They usually kept the containment tubs at the user's preferred temperature. Looking around, Joey also realized that there was very little lighting in the room. There seemed to have been a power outage. Joey stepped out and dried off.

At home, Joey searched for a snack. Because he was unsuccessful in finding one, he decided to cook some eggs. He reached in the fridge and pulled the egg-carton out.

"Hey honey," Joey's mother stood at the top of the basement steps.

"Oh, hi," Joey said, a little bit surprised at his mother's stealthy appearance.

"You should have told me if you wanted something." Joey's mother walked over to the carton of eggs. "Here, let me do this."

"Thanks mom," Joey said while handing them over. He headed towards the couch, ready to lay down, when he heard something smash. He turned towards his mom. She lay on the ground shaking.

"Mom?" Joey crouched down next to his mother. Tiny sparks of light flew out of her finger tips and toes. *This can't happen.* Joey thought. *This is real life.*

Joey sat up and ripped the headgear from his face. "What just happened?" he yelled. A man stood beside his containment tub. "I was in my home!" The man's face began to come into Joey's focus.

"Calm down Joey. My name is Mr. Watts and I need you to tell me what you just went through."