

cyberwellness fanfiction

by Journalism
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Just A Comedian, Nothing More

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Overview

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We Were One And The Same

- Embracing Diversity in a Globalised Online Space
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Just a Comedian, Nothing More

by Lionel, Cayden, and Penn Lun

What did “WagTheDog” do that caused him to leave the first chat group? Why did the other party take offence?

How should “WagTheDog” have responded to it in a smarter way?

[Chatlog]

Wurtz: You know, I’ve been feeling down lately.

My dog recently died, and i don’t know what to do now the house is so empty.

WagTheDog: Why not get a cat? Probably less mess in the house compared to the previous occupant, lol

Wurtz: That was rather mean. Even after she passed away, I still loved her. I don’t know what to do without her.

WagTheDog: Well, at least cats don’t make a mess

Cat_Lover_966: Nah, cats totally use the bed as their toilet if they dislike you. Really similar, don’t you think?

Wurtz: Children shouldn’t use the internet.

WagTheDog: Ok boomer

*You blocked **Wurtz**.*

You left the server

I shut my laptop and let out a sigh. These days, sighs seemed to be perpetually mulling around in the expanse of my chest, swelling lethargically before finding their release as quiet breaths of resignation. I slump over my chair as if moulding around it, staring at the floor which offers nothing of assistance. Things were going so well, and yet my joke missed its mark. They always do.

I was only 13, young and shiny-eyed, when my parents handed me my own laptop for my birthday. The laptop previously had only existed in the barest corners of my wildest imaginations, and the very real weight of the gleaming silver felt so surreally heavy in my small hands. But what I didn’t know was that I had traded for the laptop something that I eventually came to crave more than anything.

My parents often left me to my own devices as they ventured on business trips to some obscure land I (and they) could barely pronounce. They flew in airplanes overhead as I was left alone, lonely, and very much on the ground. That’s when I discovered the wonders of the internet.

In a world where everything felt so grey, the internet was a burst of colour that nearly blinded me. YouTube, Reddit, Twitter, chat rooms and even Wikipedia were intangible yet tantalizing gateways to hours of entertainment and company. Company. A word that had felt so far away was now under my very fingertips,

Discussion Questions

How do you think “WagTheDog” could have improved his cyber health? (Hint: observe how he hardly has passions/hobbies outside of the digital realm)

just waiting for a click of a mouse. And click I did. I clicked my way into online friend groups and clicked my way into social media. I clicked my way into games and hours of unending distractions. I clicked and clicked away.

But I soon realized that what I had been trying to click myself to-- I was trying to click myself back to happiness.

And not long after, I clicked myself into something I didn't expect.

[Chatlog]

HAM: Theres a nice deli that opened close by. You guys want to hang out there on friday, try it out?

WagTheDog: Three guesses whether it has ham, first two don't count.

HAM: Yeah, of course. Apparently they have a foreign chicken supplier that provides premium cured meats.

NonNotSup: of course its ham

HAM: Heard good things about it

WagTheDog: You should probably just buy the meat and save your money

HAM: If only

WagTheDog: Just a slab of ham split down the middle, centre carved out and stuffed with cheese and toppings

NonNotSup: Hamven

HAM: Ew

HAM: tastes bad for my GI tract

WagTheDog: Wash it down with a salad

WagTheDog: Probably a good opportunity to lose some weight there lol

HAM: Lost a lot of weight recently, so I'm treating myself

WagTheDog: Probably leave the treatment to the doctors after you get done stuffing yourself, lol

NonNotSup: no u

WagTheDog: Nah, I'm very fit

WagTheDog: Yall are tons of fun though

WagTheDog: tons

HAM: ...

NonNotSup: ...

You have been muted for: 1 hour

Reason: unfunni

The red LEDs of my screen seemed to glare at me. Muted. And

Discussion Questions

not for the first time. I felt that familiar pang in my chest as I tried to calm my breathing.

Stupid, stupid, stupid! All of them. They just don't understand. I was just trying to be funny! I was just trying to be likeable! Why can't they like me? I've shared everything, I've done everything! Why do they always leave me?

I couldn't take it. The rejection. That constant taste in my mouth I try to wash away with energy drinks and caffeine. The constant ringing in my ear I try to drown out with blasting music. The constant... voice in my head telling me all the ways I messed up. All the ways I couldn't be. All the ways I had to.

But I needed my friends. Taking a deep breath, I unlocked my phone with an easy swipe and set a timer for one hour. I won't mess up this time.

When the jarring ringing finally permeated the quiet tension of my bedroom however, I saw a new scene unfold.

[Chatlog]

Leeedon was added

NonNotSup: We met this guy at that deli place we were talking about

HAM: He's a really nice guy, real into meats.

Leeedon: Hello!

Someone new to impress, eh? Alright, I could get behind that.

He was a nice dude, everytime I sent something or received backlash from the group, he would steer the conversation and entertain me a bit. He'd discourage the friend group from being negative and slowly the group became much more welcoming.

As the days went by, it seemed much better for me. Gone was their rejection; instead they were giving me the attention I desired. The bitterness that clutched onto me was gone and I had found a new friend that made me feel more than welcome. However, they were a little... off, to put it bluntly; a gut feeling was telling me that there was probably more intent behind those little screens and flowery words, but who would care if the joy you sought after was already at the push of a button.

How do we share jokes online appropriately?

Do you think "WagTheDog" has chosen the right online friends? (Hint: observe the way he behaves in the chat logs)

Day after day our conversations continued, as they fed me with the adoration I desired and we (or at least I) got more comfortable with each other. The videos and memes I had sent always seemed to be something they truly enjoyed. Gone were the words like “cringe” and “desperate” that were used on me, they were all replaced by prompt replies and even sending jokes back.

However, as the days passed and we grew more intimate, our conversations took an awkward turn. The jokes and comments they made became more backhanded, first subtle insults, then aggressive demands. They started asking for information like my age, location and real name, and when I refused or tried to change the topic they would pressure me more. What am I supposed to do? I don't know these people!

“We just need your address, we won't tell anyone.” Even in my youth I could smell suspicious activity and I continued to refuse. Eventually their pestering became unbearable and I had to argue back. I had to be firm with my refusal and unmoving.

Presumably unhappy, they dropped a bombshell; threatening to sever our ties and leave me as a friend forever. This sort of blackmail landed me in an impossible spot; how could I just give some strangers access to such personal information? But on the other hand, I'd been searching for this validation for my entire life-- I couldn't just leave it now. The struggle was great and I hesitated for a moment, before succumbing to my desires and trading away my particulars for my enjoyment.

But the next time I logged on, something was amiss.

[Chatlog]

Leedon: Wow, this guy sounds like a jerk

HAM: tell me about it

WagTheDog: Just joined, who are we talking about?

HAM: Nobody

Leedon: doesnt concern you

HAM: And he called me 'tons of fun' too

WagTheDog: Wait, didn't I do that last week?

HAM: Whoops, I meant someone else

WagTheDog: Two people used the exact same phrase?

Leedon: Losers think alike

WagTheDog: What's that supposed to mean?

How can we prevent ourselves from getting doxxed like “WagTheDog”?

Leedon: Those who can't face others in real life bring them down with words

WagTheDog: Let's go then, corner of 5th.

Leedon: no need, I already know where you live

[House5.png]

WagTheDog: dude what the heck

Leedon: what? You chicken?

HAM: that's messed up

WagTheDog: how did you know my house

Leedon: you literally posted pictures of where you live lmao

Leedon: whatchu gonna do, loser?

You left the server

I shot up from my desk as fast as I could, knocking my chair down in my rage. Adrenaline raced through my veins as I hurled my phone across the room as hard as I could muster. The little chunk of metal gave me access to nearly everything, but I had to learn the hard way that it also gave everything access to me. I was breathing hard, and I couldn't seem to stop my hands from trembling. They know where I live.

At this point my mind was a straight blank. I had nowhere to turn to. No one to turn to. All my “friends” turned out not so friendly after all, and now I had messed up big time.

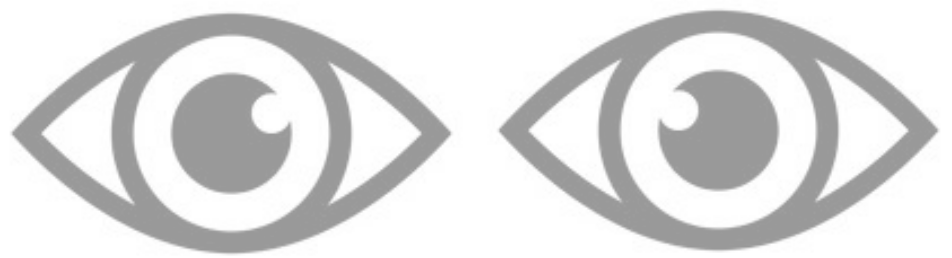
Scrambling across the room, I sought for my phone almost in a frenzy, before finding it in a dejected corner, screen slightly cracked. The screen lit up my face in the darkness, and I punched the numbers in as fast as I could with my clammy hands.

Ring. Ring Ring... Click. For once I knew what I had to do. What I should have done long ago. I took a deep breath, and reached out.

“Mom?”

I Don't Know How, But They Found Me

by Mandy, Aditi, and Ri Yen



I don't know how, but they found me. They know who I am, what I've done, what I am. I do not know how, but they found me. They have me now. They found me...

I stare into his pale eyes, his dark irises shimmer like gems, radiating fury so powerful that it burns right through my chest just like how a laser cuts smoothly through metal. No matter how many times I've seen him, it's always those eyes that get to me every time. Those sure, keen eyes that seem to know all. It's what put me off about him in the first place. I lose all sense of time and presence and my clenched fist slowly unclasps, letting the leash which binds my Labrador, Doge, fall listlessly to the ground. Those eyes, they're so unnerving, so... filled with vengeance. I can't hold the stare any longer. I try to drop that too, and stare fixated at my Adidas sneakers and can't help but compare them to his tattered soles which cling onto the frayed canvas like moss to a damp wall. I can't stop looking back up at him with wonder. I want to tear every inch of his furious face apart, seeking answers. I want to know how he knows who I am. How he knows what I look like. How he knows I would be here. He paces towards me, a step at a time. Each squelchy step he takes on the grass feels like an earthquake. I'm more than terrified.

"AwesomeNinja420. You don't look like much. Not as much as you claimed to be online."

His mouth curls up in a sneer. My eyes widen and even though I strain to hide it, fear is etched all over my ghostly face. "Your dog's getting away by the way." My eyes follow his gesture towards Doge who decided to make the best of the situation and make his great escape. It is only when I catch hold of Doge's leash that I've been gaping like a fool this whole while. I quickly clench my jaws shut and hear the slightest hint of a snigger. He raises an eyebrow and continues, his words punctuated with my soft gasps and the rustling "swish" of the tree branches against the cool whistling wind. I look around me and realise that darkness shrouds us, and the others in the park have long gone. This only makes my galloping heart palpitate even faster, and beads of sweat race down my forehead. My tongue feels heavy in my mouth, and my mind feels shut.

"You think you're cool, don't you? Think that you're superior to everyone else? Well face it! You're just a coward! A pretentious

Discussion Questions

Do you think that you would have posted similar stuff online, such as malicious comments, as was done in this story?

Why do you think the main character had such different personalities online and offline? Do you think this kind of situation occurs frequently online?

coward who hides behind your expensive computer screen and your username and taunts people. You're nothing in real life!" he spits. Each word he utters feels like a knife piercing through my skin, wounding me all over. The scabs reopen with every remark he makes. I guess this was how he felt. *I guess this was how he felt.* That thought feels like a candle in a blackout. It makes me aware. It makes me realise. *It makes me remember...*

I was what some would call a keyboard warrior, scouring the internet to look for places to air my "valuable" views. I never really stopped to think about what people on the other end of the screen. It was always about me, myself and I. You may ask why I was bold enough to do this. It was all an act, all a facade. The very fact that no one could find me was good enough to fuel my courage and malice to hurt others. I never felt guilt, only the triumphant feeling I got when they fought back. It was always so pathetic, their retorts. I never regretted it, until now. It turns out that the only thing that put me in this situation was my carelessness and malice.

Once again, my desire to strike was ignited. As I was scrolling through Joe's feed, I scoffed at another pathetic post of him standing in front of his house, again with his captivating, penetrating gaze. my nimble fingers flew on my keyboard, typing out yet another comment that cut. Of course my comments were never nice, or encouraging. Too many people did that. I was, in a sense, helping others air their personal opinion. However, of all the people I've beaten down, only one chose to face me head on. Of course, being the person I was, I knew the weak spot in the wall that protected his very soul. I knew what I had that he did not, and I used it to hit back, posting something that would crush his self-esteem forevermore. I would hit the hammer right on that weak spot and shatter him. Shatter the wall. Drag him down. At least, I thought that that would be how it would go down.

"You are surprisingly outspoken for a poor, pathetic boy!" These words were laced in venom, just like my soul. "Please, don't try to stand up to me!" Not once did I think twice before posting the comment. Being the headstrong and immensely foolhardy person he was, he replied that I did not have proof. Well, the last thing I wanted was for him to win. So, naturally, I gave him proof. Proof that I was rich. Proof that I was better than him. "Proof" that led to him tracking me down and finding me. It had been a trap, but malicious as I was, I was ignorant to the very power that

Discussion Questions

If you saw someone posting something you do not agree with, what would you comment and why?

Is there a limit to what someone should post online? What kinds of information can be posted?

people could unlock online.

“There! Slowly take that in! Let it seep in, and please understand that you are nothing compared to me. Nothing. Here's a picture of my house! Let's compare it to the measly shed you live in!”

Then he went silent. He stopped messaging me, or posting anything. I triumphed again! I dusted my hands and moved on. He was considered “dealt with”! Sadly, my childish illusion was broken soon after.

It was two months later. I received a direct message from him, and my heart went cold. He knew. “You really think you can do this to me and get away with it? Really? I know who you are, I know where you live and I know that deep down inside, you are just a little coward! Watch out. No matter what it takes, I will find you and I will crush you. And I promise, this idea of starting flame wars will never cross your mind again!”

I brushed it off as a threat, even laughing to show myself that I was not scared. Instead, it came out as a guttural cry that prey make, before being torn apart by their predators, at least. That's what I was. He knew where I lived, he knew what I did, what could I do to stop him? I was cornered, forced into a small corner, forced to retreat. He now had the upper-hand. He knew who I was, but he was always just the username of an anonymous account to me. This thought had not even flashed across my mind before. The thought that people, when hurt, do not break down but instead hit back. He never let go of the fact that I hurt him so much. He used what I posted to hunt me down, but the worst part was that I led him to me. It was my utter ignorance of the concept of online security. I was impaled upon my own sword, and a sharp one at that, and this is the kind of gut-wrenching pain that one only knows when they've experienced it. Was that what they felt when I insulted them?

I snap out of my reverie and I shake myself back into reality. There were many more like him, but he's the only one who stood up to me. The old me would have been irate, indignant, livid, even. But the new me....

My past deeds hound me. I see them float before my regretful eyes, each one adding to the cold and heartless laughter in my head. The wind seems to join in, whistling louder, sending a chill

Discussion Questions

How do you think you should react if you were the victim of the main character's online harassment?

through my every nerve. My blood races through every single vessel in my shivering body. It was all my fault. It is all on me. I brought this upon myself.

And, I do something that I have never once thought I would ever do. I break down. Right in front of a victim of mine. Right in front of someone that was supposed to be humiliated by me. I sink deep to my knees and bring my clammy palms up to hide my reddening face. It starts as sobs, but with every ounce of realisation, of mortification and self-hatred that enters my head, the salty streams from my eyes only flow stronger, and it ends up in full-fledged waterworks. I slam my fists on the patch of lawn, sending drops of evening dew flying as far as my dignity had gone. And he just watched. He seemed to be relishing it for a while, until he shook his head with a look of self-disgust and strode away in silence, always a better person than I could ever hope to be.

Still, through all this, I thanked him. I thanked him for teaching me a lesson, for helping me, for shaping me to become a slightly better person. I was not one to obey easily, but all it took was fear in its pure, viscous form to flow through my veins and force my eyes open, open to take in the consequences of each and every one of my actions, open to look at what my fingers retorted, and ask myself. Is this really who I want to be? Never share your personal information online. Never be malicious online. Even if it was for my own selfish reasons that i changed my character, I never got in touch with the old me ever again.

He found me. I know how, and I'm strangely glad that he did. After all, he would be the first and last one to find me. I'd make sure of that.



Footsteps Grow Louder

by Ryan Teung, Jovern, Joseph, and Janani

There once was a country with many little towns that had many little houses. These quaint little brick houses are placed along in evenly spaced rows, each with a perfect little garden.

At 7:59, just as the morning sun rose over the horizon, the town was still in a state of silent darkness. As the clock struck 8:00, the light burst out from the windows of every house as the street lamps came to life. As everyone prepared for the daily governmental announcement. As Tim nestled into his sofa, with a cup of coffee in hand waiting for the announcement to start.

“Greeting’s citizens, it's another wonderful day in Konorearth! We regret to inform you that taxes will once again be rising to keep our beautiful nation safe from evil influences. That’s all we have for today! Remember to stay safe and-”

Tim sighed and rolled his eyes as he repeated the rest of the slogan: “raise our flag with pride.”

Yet these words never came. Instead, a blaring static assaulted his eardrums. This set off a chain of dominos in his head, buzzing with questions. This had never happened before, could it be a mistake? Impossible! They don't make mistakes!

The TV came on again breaking him out of his panic attack. A man in green camouflage came on screen and bellowed: “Attention! Your government is in a state of surrender, cease and desist!”

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The synchronised thumps filled the streets as the military marched in. Holding guns at attention. Day by day, they took batches of people from their homes sending them off to places unknown.

Finally, it was Tim’s turn. The whole process was a blur. When he came to a vast array of architectural wonders, each unique in their own way, dotted the cityscape. Some made of stainless steel were glimmering in the sun, while others made of brick were painted in different colours. Tim’s world was uprooted. Transplanted somewhere else where everything was similar yet vastly different. It was amazing. Yet what appealed to him more was the intricate world beneath the surface, unseen yet

omnipresent. It was thus rightfully dubbed the “internet”.

In an attempt to integrate them with the rest of the world, the government handed out phones hoping they could educate themselves about and immerse in the digital world. Tim, like every other citizen, received a phone.

“Connectivity. A global network. A database at your fingertips.” As much as these buzz words were repeated, it wouldn’t change the reality that Tim had been thrust into a new world brimming with new information, rules, and culture with little to no warning. As curious as he was, he couldn’t deny that he’d simply been thrown into a city where he didn’t understand the language.

Despite his apprehension, he could not simply ignore a new resource he was given, could he? Throw away something that lets him talk to anyone on the planet? Say anything he wanted? Learn anything he wished to? Discuss issues and opinions in peace, without worrying about the government’s watchful eye? He was amazed how people had the freedom to talk about whatever they wanted, a stark contrast to his previous government. To put it lightly, it never went well for those who went against their “grand” ideals. Tim realised that like the influencers he saw online, he too could leave his own legacy. He had to give this a chance. How bad could this be? Not thinking much of it, Tim took his first step and opened his very first social media account.

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As Tim innocently scrolled through the endless feed of information he now encountered daily, the flashy headline “Miracle Drug: Asperdericiterol cures cancer” drew his gaze. He clicked it. Deceived by the clever mesh of half-truths and cherry-picked statistics he swallowed the information as if it was the gospel. Filling in the logical errors with his own cognitive biases. “Amazing! This new world truly has everything!”, he exclaimed.

The article was a mere appetiser for his still growing curiosity and he kept diving deeper into this rabbit hole.... It wasn’t long before he encountered an article that had opposing opinions, citing this miracle drug as hogwash. He could not believe his eyes! The clinical trials showed that it worked perfectly, yet, numerous people actually believed this! Taking it upon himself

There is a fine balance between detrimental and helpful freedom of expression. How far do you agree with this statement?

to be the knight in shining armour to preach and purify their poor tainted souls, Tim decided he would make an impact by responding to every supporting comment with his “proof” against the article.

Yet no one heeded his well-meaning advice. “Wow, so many people are wrong”, he thought. Instead of being discouraged by this setback, it steeled his resolve to “properly” educate everyone. This sparked the beginning of Tim's life as a creator to spread his message through the more interactive medium of videos.

Every “Like” his posts received signalled another lost lamb saved, a positive affirmation to his sense of existence, another supporter to remind him he was not alone, providing a warmth unlike any other.

Yet the high soon wore out, as he hit an iron wall of sorts. His growth on social media stagnated, the likes that brought him so much warmth a mere ember of what it once was. He wondered how some people could possibly be so thick-headed, deflecting all his logical points and ironically reaffirming their own stance.

At this roadblock he stayed, as other creators zoomed past him in the race to fame. It was unbearable, like a starving man forced to watch fat pigs gorge themselves in delicacies. Starving, maddening whispers gave life to his darkest desire, lulling him with the sweet promise of sating his ravenous hunger. Clicks no matter the cost. “Yes, it's to spread my message to help people,” he reasoned. “I won't go too far....”

Thus, he resorted to increasingly controversial, “sensational” news. Getting into numerous arguments about obscure facts and information was a regular part of his schedule, as he refused to back down from “spreading the truth”. Any attention, good or bad, was fuel for his warped passion. He threw himself further into a self-built echo chamber of delusion, arguing with people in reckless abandon of statistics and sometimes even logic. Just for more little red hearts.

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On the receiving end of this, people did not take kindly to his abrasive words and thoughtless statements. Jason, who couldn't

What would you do if you encountered someone like Tim online? Would you do something different if you knew them personally?

What do you think Tim should or should not have done?

stand to watch innocent people getting scammed and hurt simply because of their desperation for a cure, was no different. Jason too, had been a victim of a similar situation. He remembered the long, cold nights he went through in pain, pleading to make it stop. He bought into a miracle-cure like this. Anyone in his shoes would have. To be shown a glimmer of hope only to have it cruelly snatched away was arguably one of the hardest parts of his ordeal. Watching Tim spew half-truths and baseless "facts", getting exponentially outrageous day after day, sparked a drive to put this right. He had to do something. Make sure everyone knew he was wrong. Make sure he regretted every video he had ever posted. And he had the perfect idea.

Years on the internet had trained him for this. Scrolling through his old posts, discarded accounts, and every person he followed, Jason squeezed every last drop of information about him that could be found. And it was enough, as it seemed Tim had little care for what he said or put out there. Armed with this phone number, address, and employer, Jason could do anything he wanted.

Without a moment's hesitation, Jason began sending Tim's friends and coworkers the videos he had been making.

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As Tim pulled himself out of bed, he opened his work group chat to confirm their evening plans. Watching everyone ignore his message, Tim got ready for work, uneasiness settling in. As he made his way in, no one waved hello or even acknowledged him. Confused, Tim tried to get started on his work, pondering if he had done anything wrong.

The rest of the day did not get any better. Towards the end of the miserable day, someone looked at Tim with scorn, and huffed "I can't believe you have been posting these ridiculous thing online. Really, getting famous by tricking innocent people? I really thought you were better than this."

Paling at the realisation that his coworkers had found his account, Tim scrambled back home. Those words had sent him into a state of frenzy, as he thought through the incidents of the past year through his mind. What had he been doing?

Do you think that your cyberidentity is important? Why?

As time went on, more and more of his friends and family started to keep their distance from him. One by one, they came to know about his social media accounts, and reacted with the same disgust. As word reached his bosses, he soon lost his job. He was left alone, unemployed and scorned by his loved ones. What had he done?

Tim never really recovered from this. Despite deleting his account, those around him still held him in contempt for the year he spent exploiting innocent people for his fame. Abruptly losing his job made it difficult for him to find a job again. As years passed, Tim never won many of his old friends back and had strained relationships with his family.

What had started as an honest attempt at spreading awareness had become a desperate search for fame that cost him everything he cared about. But regret would not change the past.



As Reflective as Glass

by Ming Hong, Josh, and Rei

The ringing in his ears was all he heard, except for their distant laughter. Those monsters. The faint silhouettes of his tormentors towered over his curled up body as they showered him with fists, daring him to resist. “Get up, Jayden, you weakling!” Kai hollered. He was the leader of the pack, the one who called the shots. And at that moment, his target was Jayden.

After they had dealt certain damage to Jayden’s physical and mental health, Kai and his cronies fled the scene, avoiding capture from authority figures. Jayden, left on the ground like a cold foetus, slowly got up to his feet. This was part of his school life, his daily routine - it had almost become the norm for him to suffer such torture on a daily basis. Jayden pulled himself together and trudged home. He had only one thought in his mind, one thought keeping him together, preserving his sanity - his online game. It might well have been his sole reason to live, the metronome of his heart.

Fragment was a game launched not long ago, before taking the world by storm. Best of all, he had just gained in-game material of a few thousand dollar’s worth, along with the awe and online support of nearly anyone who played. He had the honour and great power to reach out to millions of other players.

As he inched closer to home, his mind started flickering between thoughts of his tormentors. They had such power, but they used it for harm. They didn’t deserve that power. Jayden found himself fantasising about his bullies receiving punishment for their actions, suffering the same way they had made him suffer. From the dark recesses of his mind a thought came to him. This newfound fame didn’t have to mean a responsibility to entertain the players. Instead, it could be a weapon, to be wielded against anyone who dared to disobey any judgement he passed. All his life he had been shunned, and treated as an underling. Now was the time for some compensation from the universe.

“I heard from a friend that Kai is a bully! Don’t friend him!” All it took was one message on the public message board, some falsified screen shots (that contained actual things Kai had said to Jayden) one click before the rumours about Kai spread like wildfire. Before Jayden knew it, multiple threads sprang out on social media platforms, criticising Kai and spreading defamatory remarks about him. Mentally, Jayden rubbed his hands in glee -- Kai was finally getting his just desserts!

Do you think Jayden was justified in taking revenge against Kai?

The action took an impactful blow on Kai. At school, he seemed less like his usual cocky, aggressive self, but became silent, undaring to interact with anyone. Anyone who was anyone played the game, and thus almost everyone would have seen Jayden's message, or at least the fallout from it. It was as though it was a taboo to be spotted with Kai. At times, when something flickered in the undulating eyes of Jayden, he saw himself in Kai. Kai became the living mirror of him.

Over the course of the next few months, Jayden saw Kai fall further still than even he himself had ever fallen on the social ladder, at school and online. He watched as Kai suffered the same things he had subjected Jayden to. At first, Jayden was delighted. He observed with vicious glee as Kai suffered through the same hateful remarks and disgusted glares that he used to receive, but no longer did as Kai was now their focus. Wasn't it majestic, he thought. How some words could change his life in such a manner.

The peace and quiet Jayden brought for himself soon became silence. Behind the anonymity of his online publicity, Jayden could not describe what he had as perfection. He was never able to feel much satisfaction in the downfall of Kai, being forced to act as the part of society that was meekly watching a bully get punished. Oh, how he had wished for such a long time to be the hero renowned for putting a bully in his place! Still, his vivid fantasies of cheering and parties were interrupted every time as Jayden found himself prosecuted for the mental breakdown of a student. Perhaps he would be better off playing it safe, and pretending he had no part in Kai's downfall. After all, watching from the sidelines brought Jayden more than enough satisfaction.

As time went on, however, things started getting boring, and downright uncomfortable. Jayden no longer felt that dark sense of satisfaction as he watched Kai receive his punishment. Instead, Jayden averted his eyes whenever he caught sight of Kai, trying to squash the niggling sense of guilt that kept trying to wiggle its way into his mind. That sense of guilt, and in turn the discomfort he felt whenever he had to see Kai in school, only grew as time went on.

Jayden found himself questioning the very origin of the incident. While he no longer had to put up with the torment caused by

If you were in Jayden's place, would you be satisfied with what happened to Kai?

Discussion Questions

If you were one of Jayden and Kai's schoolmates, would you have believed the rumors about Kai?

What do you think Jayden should have done? (Or do you agree with his actions?)

Kai, seeing Kai continuously suffer brought him no lasting satisfaction. The emptiness was consuming him. Was it right? Did it make a difference?

In the end, Kai changed schools. Jayden heard about it from the people gossiping in the corridors, in class and all over in the canteen. At that point, the only thing he felt was a vague sense of relief that at least now, everything would calm down. He went home that day exhausted, but not just from the constant and ceaseless conversations about Kai he had accidentally overheard throughout the day. The turmoil his mind had been going through ever since the adrenaline from seeing his biggest bully brought down had worn off had finally reached its peak.

At home, he sat motionless, bewitched by the cold, greenish glow of his screen. Hands over his head, Jayden lamented over the events of the past few months. 'Three a.m.', his alarm clock sputtered unforgivingly, its faint ticking akin to that of a deathly metronome, each beat one beat closer to his doom. Every few seconds or so, he found himself entangled deeper within an endless labyrinth of regret, sinking into a bottomless pit of problems. What exactly had he gained, after all that plotting and scheming? What had he thought he would gain? His fingers danced across his keyboard, mocking his lack of foresight. All those years of bottled up contempt had dissipated, replaced with bitter regret. Jayden peered into the screen, staring defeatedly at the unrecognisable figure on the other end who was staring right back. All that vengeance had taken a toll on him. He should never have started anything. Beep...beep... The screen flickered weakly, blanking out at last, leaving Jayden engulfed alone in darkness. In the pitch black computer screen, he saw ever so clearly what disastrous consequences he had brought unto himself.



Despite it All I Made a Difference

by Debraath, Elicora, Ariel, and Lokesh

Do you think that you would have posted similar stuff about yourself online?

If you saw someone posting about their illnesses online, what would you comment and why?

Post #1 19-7-2021 7.01pm

Hi everyone,

I'm Adele. I have anxiety, and I thought I'd use this blog to chronicle my journey and struggles.

Today was not a good day. My history teacher is on hospitalisation leave – I hope they're okay! The substitute teacher is harder to follow, and I'm falling behind. I don't know how long it'll be before my usual teacher comes back. I got really worried, because I don't want my grades to drop. I know all that stuff about how grades don't define your worth, but I got really upset just thinking about possibly failing History. Which is kind of irrational, because I've been getting As on all my assignments, and there's only four months left in the semester, so actually it's extremely unlikely that I'm going to fail. It frustrates me that my mind jumps to such stupid conclusions. I got upset about getting upset, if that makes any sense. And then – maybe it's because of the stress and overwhelming emotion – I got a really bad headache. Because of that, I didn't eat during lunch break. I spent the time trying to sleep. I didn't even manage to sleep! I ended up falling asleep during Math in the afternoon, so I missed a good chunk of the lesson. So now I'm behind in both History and Math! Why can't I just be a normal person? Why is being mentally healthy so hard to achieve??

Post #2 20-7-2021 6.43pm

So... today was even worse than yesterday. I thought it'd be better because there's no History today, but no. I was up late last night catching up on Math, so I was very tired today. I fell asleep in both Physics and assembly, which was some Zoom talk. Mr Lim, my Physics teacher, is also my form teacher, so he saw me fall asleep both times. He held me back after assembly and talked to me about it. He didn't shout, but he did tell me very firmly that he wouldn't tolerate me sleeping in class, and thought it reflected a bad learning attitude. I felt so guilty afterward that I started crying. I didn't want to deal with people asking me why, so I stayed in the empty classroom instead of going for CCA. I tried really hard to calm down, but it took me the better part of an hour. The thought of going late to CCA without a 'valid reason' was so upsetting that I decided just to skip CCA entirely.

Is there a limit to how much someone should post online?

Do you think social media is a good place to discuss sensitive topics or post controversial content? Why?

My CCA captain and several CCA friends have texted me asking why I was absent. I tried to reply to them, but I overthought what I should say and got stressed, so I didn't. I'm so worried that I've offended them by leaving them on read.

Post #3 26-7-2021 9.32pm

Last week was hell. I did a lot of crying and having headaches.

I'm so grateful that friends were so kind to me. They sat with me, listened to me vent and cry, and said soothing words. It's because of them that I'm feeling a bit better now.

Post #4 28-7-2021 10.54am

Hi guys,

Maybe you've had some misconceptions about me.

"Attention-seeking"? "Fake"? I'd just like to share my story with the internet, hoping that others could also benefit from reading this. No, I'm not being dramatic or fake with you guys, I just want to call attention to the fact that there are people like me.

With anxiety.

I fully sympathise with those of you out there. It's hard, I understand. Hope that you would feel better after knowing you're not the only one out there.

Stay strong :)

Post #5 30-7-2021 9.20pm

Hi everyone.

You may not be hearing from me as often as before.

I often feel discouraged when it comes to writing – it feels as though someone's holding my arm back as I write this.

Perhaps I shouldn't write any more.

Post #6 4-8-2021 8.46am

Today this is all going down.

All of it. Every single post.

I started hoping that this was going to make me feel better, feel normal. But it didn't. Just wanting to make some sort of difference in my life, or perhaps even someone else's...

But maybe you guys are right. It just isn't going to happen. Perhaps I was just too optimistic about this blog.

Thank you for your readership all this while.

Regards,
Adele

Post #7 7-8-2021 7.00pm

You might have noticed that I did not delete the previous posts. Some of you might be happy about it whereas others might consider my behaviour to be foolish. In the end, I realised that I should stop worrying about others' opinions and just focus on myself instead. Another reason why I didn't delete my last few posts because I learnt that I managed to positively impact someone else, and I think I'll keep my posts in the hopes that it might help others too.

A few days ago, a junior privately messaged me through Instagram and asked me to not stop posting on my blog. This confused me because she was one of the few who didn't think that I was doing this to be an attention-seeker. She told me how she had also struggled with the issue of anxiety too and how my posts comforted her. She said she had someone who she could relate to, via my posts. She mentioned how it gave her hope that she was not the only one battling this. In comparison to what she told me, I don't think the comments about others affect me. Her words empower me, they make me feel happy about what I've done. I've helped someone, that too unknowingly.

If you got a lot of hate from other people about your online posts, do you think you would choose to continue doing it so that you might help other people?

It may sound quite cringe, but I had a lollipop moment! This sparks joy. Many people commented, asking what the point was of making such posts. I guess I initially wanted it to be written down as something I could visit back on. Now, I realise how much it can impact others. So, I will keep them here. I don't think I need to care about what others say. It's my blog. I also won't bother deleting the words some of you have used because I think that doesn't help with anything. And for the others who enjoy reading my blog and who feel that they vibe with it, I send you hugs <3.

In the end, I powered through. And I know, to the fellow person who also suffers from anxiety and is trying to improve, that you'll succeed.

Love,
Adele

What He Used to Be

by Bindu, Elgin, and Renee



“Digitopia is suffering. As junior residents are brainwashed by the devices, parents grow more concer-” The urgent message of the radio was drowned out by the blaring television screen. The computers argued over one another’s flashing screens as the phone beeped in annoyance. Child 2207-82 was in a cage and no ordinary one. Flashing screens, video game upgrades and new characters to be unlocked formed the strong bars of the digital prison. Though the key was in his hands, he did not plan to use it. He did not want to. In his eyes, he saw the video games and television shows, and nothing else. In his mind, he heard the clicks and beeps ringing in his ears, and nothing else. He was frail and weak, his face had lost all of its color. The digital prison was slowly sucking him in, and he would soon be part of it.

2207-82 had not always been like this. He was a member of Digitopia, one of the many societies built on an alien planet by humans in the year 2180. Digitopia had sought to reform existing laws that had dominated humans for centuries. Robots would live freely among humans, be everlasting and never die. Humans also began naming themselves by birth year and the order in which they were born; for example, the 44th human born in 2200 would be named 2200-44.

The cage that imprisoned 2207-82 and other juniors was never meant to be. All residents of Digitopia were meant to enjoy happy lives in a utopic society alongside robots, with no pain, hunger or conflict. And that was exactly the life 2207-82 had been living. Every day, he would go to school and nourish his brain with the knowledge and experience of the human race. After school, he would go play soccer, his favorite sport, basking in the rich sunshine as he playfully kicked the ball to his friends. His days were full of sunshine, happiness and bliss, his nights filled with starry skies and blessing dreams. Yet they all went by as quickly as his childhood.

All the juniors remember the day those wonderful devices mysteriously turned up at their doorstep—Day 306, 2219. Their unknowing parents did not sense anything amiss and assumed that these devices would do no harm. One device was a wondrous small black contraption that could fit in the palm of a human hand. Despite its unimpressive size, the user would gain the ability to hear the voices of distant relatives or friends in other societies and whisper to them. With one click, they could access and connect with the entire network of societies. The best

Discussion Questions

Would you consider yourself addicted to digital devices? Why or why not?

What are some reasons that cause people to become addicted to their devices?

part was that they could use the gadget however they wanted.

So as soon as 2207-82 had gotten his shiny new contraptions, he eagerly started to fiddle around with them. He entertained himself with various games and was fascinated by the variety of apps. Sometimes, he would play non-stop for hours, even skipping mealtimes. As his addiction got worse, its talons began to grab hold of 2207-82's innocent mind even more firmly. He started going out less and less frequently until one day he stopped completely. Unbeknownst to him, the contraption was slowly sucking him in, filling his brain with the things of his dreams. He couldn't think. He couldn't move. He was frozen. His mind was being washed out, replaced by video games and text messages and YouTube videos. He was being tossed and turned until he could not tell his left from his right. He was losing himself. He was slowly turning into a lifeless zombie and his parents had no idea.

It was not until mid-2220, 6 months afterwards, that the effects started to show. 2207-82's parents, Mr. 2180-14 and Mrs. 2181-56, started to realize that something was wrong with their child. He had become increasingly malnourished and unresponsive, acting as if he was in a dream all the time. When his parents tried to destroy the devices, 2207-82 would fight back with surprising ferocity, then fall to his knees, drag himself on the ground and mumble as if he were in a trance. He was dying.

2207-82 wasn't the only victim. The addictive devices had been planted by a neighboring enemy society, brainwashing the other juniors too. They were all deteriorating like he was. The situation was dire and a solution was required urgently. If this was allowed to continue, Digitopia would soon collapse without the new generation of humans it relies on to continue its existence. The authorities of Digitopia eventually found out the truth after a lengthy investigation, but the enemy society had already gone far away, before anyone could find them.

Still, it was not too late.

Day 301- 2219 was the day Digitopia launched the program. When all the juniors were asleep, parents quietly and sneakily grabbed the contraptions out of their beds. The juniors woke up the next morning to find their devices gone. There was an outburst, chaos. Where had it all gone? Where were the wonders

of the digital world?

They searched their entire rooms, high and low, but the devices had disappeared for good. The juniors began to lapse into a violent rage as they flung things around, overturned their houses, screamed their lungs dry and fell to their knees, begging for just one more second on their devices. Nonetheless, the parents were unrelenting and watched their children use up their last remaining energy and strength before surrendering to the fatigue that rapidly engulfed them.

After a long sleep, the juniors had no choice but to drag their frail bodies outside. As the first rays of light hit them, fresh air filled their lungs and the wind tickled their faces, a new feeling engulfed them. A sense of freedom and happiness that had been unfelt for a long, long time.

So, as 2207-82 stood there in the grass of the sunlit area, wind ruffling his hair and his feet next to a soccer ball, he relished the real joy he had not experienced in months, and grinned widely, his first true smile after all those days in the cage. The program had paid off and the juniors were slowly returning to normal. And all of them had learned a lesson—the importance of self-control and not to give in to devices like computers and phones.

The next time the enemy society struck again in 2224, Digitopia was ready. The juniors immediately reported the problem to the authorities, who swiftly discovered and arrested the society members. It turned out that this malicious society had used the same trick to cripple other societies across the planet. However, that was not the end of the magical devices. The juniors realized that the so-called “curse” of the electronic devices could be a blessing in disguise. If they controlled their use of these devices and did not spend too much time on them, the devices would become a useful addition to their lives, helping to learn more and connect with others. With this knowledge, the authorities of Digitopia helped rebuild other crippled societies and safely integrate the use of electronic devices into daily life. From then on, they all lived happier than ever.

What do you think are good ways to combat internet addiction?

What are some good habits for regulating device usage?

What Choice Do I Have

by Pavana, Ryan, and Skylar



Did I really not have a choice? Why did I even agree to it in the first place?

When I look back at what I did, a million thoughts flicker through my mind, reminding me of how I could have done things differently.

Everything had started just like any other encounter on the internet would have. Having just gotten home from a long and arduous day at school, I had decided to sign up for an account on the newly popular Massively Multiplayer Online (MMO) game that had recently been published, by an up-and-coming game studio, to glowing reviews on various social media platforms.

As soon as I'd entered the game, I noticed an invitation to join a large group. Usually, most players would create groups in order to meet new people and work together. However, what made this request so unusual was that this group consisted of highly experienced players. Slightly intimidated, I decided to accept as it would be beneficial for me, as a newbie, to receive help from better players.

Just as I entered, I learned the name of the group through a message, "Welcome to The Omega Gamers!". Then, I fully checked out the profiles of other players in the group, only to see thousands of set-ups, made with the incredible skill, power, and strategy. I longed to be as good as these people.

I immediately introduced myself to the group. Everybody in the group acted very friendly towards me, helping me gather resources, or even teach me how to develop my strategies better.

Day by day, I started spending more and more time on the server, to the point where I did not even want to finish my homework. I got obsessed, addicted even. Not a single day passed where I did not spend more than 5 hours on the server.

As I continued playing the game, I started getting better at the game, and enjoyed playing it a lot more too. I also enjoyed spending time with other people in the group as well. But there was one problem... In-game currency.

To get any form of upgrade, for more fun ways to play the game, you had to buy them with in-game currency. Although I was

Discussion Questions

What Choice do I Have

What allowed the narrator to be taken advantage of?

already spending hours on the game, I despised grinding for useful materials that can be exchanged for in-game currency. Thus, I had begun relying on my fellow groupmates to provide these to me. However, even they gradually stopped doing so.

It was then that a sense of urgency sprouted in me, as though it were a bamboo shoot shooting up. I was scared... I wanted to continue playing the game as I wanted, yet the only way to get in-game currency was to buy them with money.

I expressed this exact frustration to my fellow groupmates, “I don’t really feel like playing this game anymore :/ A lot of gameplay mechanics require in-game currency and I don’t like grinding at all”

What caught my attention was the response from another groupmate, “Seriously? I really enjoyed playing with you though :(BTW, you don’t really need to grind for items, just fill in a quiz and it’ll reward you” This was followed up by several responses agreeing with this.

Having been sufficiently convinced, I decided to investigate the quiz. There were only several questions to answer, and I could easily complete it and reap the benefits. However, what made me hesitate were several objectionable questions, one of which involved giving away information on my address.

What was the nature of this incident?

Deep down, my heart knew that I was placing myself in unnecessary risk by sharing personal information, but the thought of being able to have fun with fellow groupmates made me throw all caution to the wind. As I went in to submit my answers, I bit my lips hard. There was a limited offer as well... an incentive that pulled me even more firmly towards doing the deed. I shut off the psychological war that was happening in my head and just clicked the 'submit' button.

After switching back to the game, I checked my inventory and found it filled up with the currency. I was also met with messages congratulating me for earning my reward. All regrets had left me now. At this point of time, my addiction had opened wide and swallowed my conscience up whole.

This was the very decision that I have now come to regret. I now receive various threats of stalking or breaking and entering, and I

Discussion Questions

What were some steps that can be taken to avoid Online Survey Scams like this?

What Choice do I Have

fear for my own safety. All I wanted was to be a part of this group that I enjoyed playing with, but they ended up betraying the trust I had in them. In the end, what choice did I really have?



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