

Hero: Origins

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This is a little outside the genres I usually do but thought it would be fun to share.

The Costume Box

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Chapter 1

Hero: Origins

Kyle and his little brother Tye walked from booth to booth of the school's science fair. Kyle had his arms crossed scoffing at each of the displays. "Why did you want me to come to this kid's showcase?" Kyle lamented to his brother. "It's so lame."

Tye skipped ahead of his brother. "They have a version of the game you always play." He cheerily told him. "You're always telling me how good you are."

Kyle scoffed at his diminutive brother. "I'm just better than you, you're like a kindergartner when it comes to video games."

Tye's smile turned into a petulant pout. "I'm not that bad, you just cheat." He complained.

Kyle smirked at his brother. "Not my fault you can't remember all the game's secrets." he egged him on a little further. "You're just a baby after all."

Tye glared at his brother. "I am not a baby," he grunted.

The two of them walked through the gymnasium turned science symposium, booths and stalls were set up with posters and demonstrations of all kinds of different things. Tye led his brother to the back corner where a television, computer and chair had been set up. A handmade sign on the table read, 'Hero: Origins, Virtual Experience'.

“What is this?” Kyle declared in a more than annoyed tone.

“It’s another version of the game you play.” Tye said as if he had no clue what Kyle was referring to.

“I play ‘Hero: Crusade’, isn’t ‘Hero: Origin’ just some antique game from years ago?” Kyle complained.

“It is, but now you can play it in VR!” Tye said excitedly.

Kyle just groaned in desperation. “This is a baby’s game, no wonder you are so interested in it.”

“I’m not a baby!” Tye whined.

The stall owner grabbed their shoulders. “Perhaps you should just give the game a shot.” He offered. “My name is Marvin and I have spent all year working on a way to have an immersive experience with Hero: Origins.” Marvin waved his hand towards the seat.

Kyle clicked his tongue. “Fine I’ll play the stupid game and show my baby brother how easy it is.”

“But first let me explain how it all works!” Marvin pleaded, desperate to explain his project. “I took the Hero: Origins game and got it to work on the latest hardware, after some modification to the game it is now much harder and can run thousands of times faster.”

“At least it will be a little more challenging.” Kyle agreed. “Too bad Tye won’t be able to beat it.”

Marvin ignored Kyle and continued on his explanation.

“Rather than play with an old controller you use the virtual reality equipment and it’s as if you’re really in the game.”

Kyle sat down in the chair. “Alright, hook me up.”

Marvin quickly got to loading the game up on the screen, then adjusted the headset and gloves for Kyle. Kyle moved his hand through the air on the character selection screen. “Since when is there an actual baby in this game?” He asked.

“That’s part of the new difficulty mode, you play as Tomkin the main character of the Hero: Crusade game, it’s the hardest starting position since he starts off as a newborn.” Marvin explained.

“Pick the baby Kyle, if you’re so good it should be a breeze for you.” Tye chided his brother.

“Fine, I will!” Kyle said and selected the sprite depicting a baby labelled Tomkin.

A bright white light filled Kyle’s eyes and he flinched his arms up, they got caught on the wires attached to them which brought the computer they were plugged into crashing to the ground. Kyle shrieked and sparks spurted out of the headset, the smell of burnt hair filled the room.

Another flash of light and Kyle was gone, Tye looked around trying to find him. “Marvin, what happened to my brother?” Tye asked in a panic.

Kyle opened his eyes in a strange place, something felt

strange though. His head was heavy and he was surrounded by white linen. He tried to call out but only murmuring babbling came out of his mouth. He tried to pick himself up but felt trapped by the weight of his own body. He was confused and scared, what had happened to him? Emotions flooded him quickly and he began to wail and cry.

Meanwhile Tye and Marvin were trying to figure out what happened to him. “What do you mean, he’s in the game.” Tye demanded of Marvin.

“Look, it’s still playing just at super fast speed.” Marvin explained observing the TV screen still hooked up to the computer. The screen depicted a nursery with a crib and a sprite labelled ‘Tomkin’ above it. Nannies zipped in and out of the nursery at a blinding pace depicting multiple days were passing. A prompt on the screen waiting for user input asking the player to start.

“What do we do?” Tye asked Marvin. “We can’t leave him like that.”

It felt like months to Kyle, he seemed to be trapped in his crib with nannies constantly doting over him, always saying and doing the same things in a precise order. After the first couple days he knew it had to do with the video game, all the Nannies called him ‘Tiny Tomkin’ and there was no way for him to protest.

All of a sudden his surroundings changed as if by magic, rather than lying down in a crib he was sitting up in a playroom. He was surrounded by toys depicting monsters and heroes from his favourite video game, it felt like ages since he had been able to do anything for himself. “Hello.” He squealed out in a tiny voice, the first coherent sound he had been able to make in months. The room scared him more than the crib did, it had no doors or windows yet was brightly lit and padded with colorful walls and floors.

There were toys laid out on the ground and some cushions to sit on, there was a toy chest in the corner but Kyle couldn’t even open it.

“Hello!” He screamed in his tiny voice, but no one heard him.

“I’ve lost control.” Tye told Marvin.

Marvin typing rapidly at his computer looked at the screen. “It’s just an opening cinematic, young Tomkin plays with his toys foreshadowing the upcoming game.”

“It’s not doing that, he’s just running around the room.” Tye explained as the Tomkin toddler zipped back and forth across the room.

Marvin stopped for a moment and considered. “He needs to actually play with the toys I think.” He went back to his laptop. “Just give me some more time and I think I can get him out of there.”

Kyle was a complete mess for how long he had been trapped in the room. Weeks? Months? It was hard for him to tell the time, he never hungered and it was always so bright. He was laying on the padded floor staring at the toys that always seemed to reset themselves if he moved them. There was Tomkin, the hero of 'Hero: Crusade', standing in front of a dragon. Out of sheer boredom he picked up the hero and tossed it at the dragon, the small act of frustration changed everything.

The toys came alive and started moving on their own, giving him a little show of the toy Tomkin defeating the Toy dragon, this is the only thing that had changed in so long. After the little Tomkin finished his puppetry the room disappeared around him and he was placed in a new location.

Kyle tried to focus his eyes at his new surroundings, he was outside in a muddy courtyard. He had a blunted sword in hand and was wearing only a tunic. "Where am I?" He squeaked.

Something felt different now like a weight had been put on him, he felt a pang of hunger and the sharpness of the stones under his feet. The feelings were almost foreign to him after what felt like an eternity in the crib and playroom. Almost immediately he felt a warm stream trickle down his leg, that's when he noticed he wasn't wearing any undergarments at all.

"Ah!" He shrieked but the people around him paid him no mind.

He carefully stepped to the nearest person, a man in armour. “Prepare to train young Tomkin.” He burst into action against the boy.

“He’s in the tutorial now.” Tye told Marvin. “What does that mean?”

“He triggered the cut scene so now he’s on the tutorial level.” Marvin explained. “It teaches the player how to play the game.”

Tye watched as the toddler Tomkin slowly defeated more and more enemies. He had been reset dozens of times as he always seemed to fail the next test. “Isn’t there something we can do?” Tye asked.

“I’m trying to get the game to release him, that should get him out.” Marvin told him. “Stop distracting me.”

Kyle breathed heavily as another soldier rushed him with a blunted sword, once again he was bleeding from above the eye as if the attack had been scripted. He was almost ready to give up but this is the farthest he had gotten without being reset back to the beginning. This would have been easier in his other body from before, it had been years since he even remembered being Kyle, his life reduced to repeating battles with scripted villains or being cared for by scripted nurses.

He swung the heavy sword over his toddler body ready to

parry the incoming blade, his body moved so slowly against the well trained soldiers he was up against. The sword came down hard knocking him to the ground. He was now covered in mud and sputtered. "I almost miss the playroom." He spat out knowing the mindless soldiers wouldn't talk to him.

His eyes burned a white light again and suddenly he was lying in a pile of computer equipment. He gasped when he felt the modern tile under his hands. His head snapped back and forth, it was the gymnasium! He looked up at the shocked faces of his little brother and Marvin the booth owner, he had given up on seeing them ever again. Tears blurred his vision as emotions ran through him, how long had it been since he had seen him. "Tye!" He cried in his pipsqueak voice.

Tye looked at him with concern. Sitting on the ground was a teary eyed little boy covered in mud, wearing a brown tunic and had a bloody face. "Kyle?" Tye asked carefully.

He hadn't heard his own name in ages, everyone had referred to him as Tomkin for so long he had almost forgotten it. He nodded to his younger brother and stood up uneasily, everything felt so different. He looked at his hands and up to Tye and Marvin. "I'm still Tomkin?" He asked.

Marvin looked worried and started punching in numbers into a calculator. "Kyle or Tomkin, how long were you playing the game for?" He asked matter of factly.

Kyle held his head in his hand trying to think. "So long, like forever." He surmised with a deep fear on his face. "How

long was I gone?" he asked.

Marvin kept punching numbers into his calculator. "How old was your brother?" He asked Tye.

Tye swallowed taking in the grandeur of the situation. "He was twelve." He spoke softly.

Marvin's face dropped. "The VR world was set to much faster speed than our own. To us he was only in the game for about half an hour and didn't even make it through the tutorial. To him it's been four and a half years." Marvin explained. "I can't explain why he came back as the toddler version of Tomkin, his real body must have been lost during the process."

Kyle looked horrified at Marvin, was he really a sixteen year old in a four years old's body? Just then he felt the too familiar feeling of urine trickling down his leg. The toddler collapsed onto his butt and started bawling, sitting in a puddle of his own making.