

Kill Your Darlings (*a Holonovel*)

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Abstract. This paper presents a shady holonovel, which is situated in the vile, short-term future. The main protagonists are two teenagers, Angela and Veronica, who are immersed in an adverse Mixed Reality online game. The girls are, at first, seduced by the comfy Sherlock Holmes-type of suspenseful narration that involves engaging mystery-solving challenges. Thereafter, the adolescent girls are fascinated by the virtual social status that the game network offers, as well as the persuasive end-reward, which will allegedly answer the ultimate existential question, “Is there life after death?”. Behind the scenes, the game is controlled by a group of anonymous, extreme transhumanists who have virtual appearances in the game as holographic avatars. To avoid lawsuits, the game is moderated by Artificial Intelligence – a curator with a virtual presence of Professor Moriarty – that aggregates the gameplay and command streams of the savage community of teen-hunters.

Keywords: Holonovel, Science Fiction Prototype (SFP), digital resurrection, digital human, Mixed/Augmented/Virtual Reality (VR/AR/MR), transhumanism

1 Introduction

This *holonovel* – taking the form of a science fiction prototype (SFP) [1,2] – is about themes relating to transhumanism, posthumanism and digital resurrection in the Mixed Reality (MR) game environment that involves digital human avatars [3-6]. The SFP is a dystopic tale that draws its inspiration from the recent distressing activities in social media, a particularly upsetting one being an online game called “Blue Whale Suicide Game” that is specifically targeted at teenage children. In short, during the gameplay the players are provided with various acts of self-harm to be committed over the course of 50 days, and on the final day they are urged to win the game by committing suicide¹. The game has been reported to pursue victims mainly in the Russian-speaking part of the world, although it has been shown to have gained footing in various other parts of the world as well.

The *holonovel* illustrates similar precarious game settings in more systematic and technically advanced settings. To softening the corners, the game borrows elements

¹ More about the game with a generous set of references:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_Whale_\(game\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue_Whale_(game)) (Website retrieved June 28th, 2017; 11:02)
It should be noted that the diverse facts about this game are controversial.

from a popular, verbal party game 'Truth or Dare', in which the players are given the choice between answering a question truthfully, or performing a 'dare'. The Mixed Reality (MR) online game is designed to be motivating and rewarding by offering two adolescent protagonists, Angela and Veronica, challenges that arouse their curiosity and excitement. Eventually the girls grow fond of the adornment of the anonymous game community, which, behind the scenes, is composed of extreme transhumanists: adults that prey on pre-teens and young teenagers. Gradually Angela and Veronica's young minds are completely toyed with by the invisible game designers, who slowly gain access to their most private secrets and, thusly, find ways to implant their techno-religious agenda into their young minds. With the intimate information, the online community can effortlessly gain leverage over the girls; they can use the deviously gained knowledge for blackmailing and for threatening to kill their loved ones, if they eventually want to back out of the game.

The key technology to be explored in this *holonovel* is photo-realistic Holographic technology that provides immersive telepresence of people with realistic 3D rendering in physical space². The 'holoported' digital humans generated by the technology may be living, deceased or fictional characters, e.g., artists, entertainers, politicians, medical professionals or subject matter experts – who, at present, can be 'beamed' over the public internet onto interactive stages, classrooms or conferences. In this *holonovel*, the key focus concerning this technology is in a controversial concept called *digital resurrection*, which in the SFP is issued by exploring ideas from transhumanism and posthumanism – that evidently provide a distorted framework for the game community's notorious activities. Another explored topic is the symbiosis of the artificial game engine and the anonymous community, i.e., the mashup of algorithmic intelligence and human game designers. The artificial moderator of the game – who, in the *holonovel*, has the appearances of Professor Moriarty – aggregates the message and command streams of the online community, and by doing this, illustrates the *posthuman godhood* that is beyond any legal allegations. The topic of human experience engaging Artificial Intelligence in Holodeck³ (or more commonly, in Mixed/Augmented/Virtual Reality environments) has been greatly inspired by such Star Trek episodes⁴ that previously raised applicable philosophical and sociological issues.

² Such technologies are provided, e.g., by ARHT Media Inc. (HumaGram technology) and Musion Hologram Limited (3D holographic projection technique):

<http://www.arhtmedia.com/>

<http://musion.com/>

³ The Holodeck, and 'holographic' technology in general, is a plot device used in stories set within the [Star Trek](#) universe. It is used to permit stories with locations and characters that could not otherwise exist in the *Star Trek* setting, and as a means to explore metaphysical and ethical questions: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holodeck>
In scientific research, there have been attempts to create environments that have similar qualities, for example [7,8].

⁴ Inspirational episodes in Star Trek: "Elementary, Dear Data" (1988): Next Generation, Season 2, Episode 3; "Ship in a Bottle" (1988): Next Generation, Season 6, Episode 12.

2 Kill Your Darlings

The game started really much before the girls, Veronica and Angela, even took their first cautious steps in its holographic playground. It started when the ARCH (Associated Responsibility for C+ and H+) syndicate posted a proposal of the game to some of the popular community platforms devoted to the ultimate form of transhumanism. The message was:

“Come and create the game world, convince two teen players of the legitimacy of its rules and find tacit agreement with our common interests, domains of thought and practice. The persuasion capacity of the game designer will be measured by the strength of seduction, from the beginning until the mortal end of the game; and the champ will be rewarded with a unique opportunity to upload their minds to the eternal ARCH cloud.”

2.1 The Dare: Back on Baker Street

“Baker Street 221B, Resurrection of Moriarty, Missing alphabet.”

Angela and Veronica, both aged fourteen, were ordinary teenagers in Canterbury who liked to dress up classy, impress their friends and take unintentional risks when finding their way in the world. This was the case at the present moment, while they were heading towards a strange part of the city, which they had never visited before. The atmosphere of the near-downtown area felt like a ghost town, for the quarter was filled with abandoned retail stores that were gradually made extinct by the e-commerce. The girls knew exactly what they were after, so it did not take long for them to find the right building. They knew they were standing besides the right door, as they saw a familiar symbol in its surface: a red dragon that was eating its tail. Underneath the dragon, there were four letters, written in cypher, which was still an unsolved mystery for them.

‘This is our 45th challenge’, Veronica whispered proudly, ‘Only five more to go. Shall we enter?’

Angela nodded and opened the unlocked door with no hesitation.

The abandoned shop looked precisely like most of the ones they had visited earlier: it was almost empty, with only some abandoned furniture, and a lot of dust and dirt floating aimlessly in the air. The girls entered the main gallery, and there, beside a desk counter, were the precious things they were looking for: two pairs of glows and well-designed golden glasses. As they were all set, the girls pressed two fingers upon their hearts in an accustomed manner and greeted, with a clear and loud voice:

‘We pledge allegiance to the syndicate and swear never to speak of it to anyone.’

Right after the devoted oath Veronica added, ‘The Arch’, and with just one magic word, the girls were back at ‘Baker Street 221B.’ Like ever before, a beautiful sitting room was right in its place, completed with fireplace, mantelpiece and a Persian rug. One after the other a holographic presence of the girls’ famous friends appeared to the room. The holographic avatars were celebrated teen idols, film stars and artists, that Angela and Veronica had chosen to help them throughout the game.

The continuous plot of the game was seeking out missing alphabets from the Baker Street study, whenever it was addressed to be the game environment. So far the girls had collected 21 letters, and now there was only five of them left. Apparently, they were supposed to use them at the end of the game to solve the final mystery, which would answer the ultimate existential question: “Is there life after death?”.

Angela took her famous deerstalker hat casually, put it firmly on her head and requested Watson to sit gracefully beside her. In the beginning of the game, Veronica and Angela had contested which one of them was to be Sherlock. Angela had drawn the longest virtual-straw, and Veronica still felt bitter about it; Angela was already the blonde – why should she have all the fun of being Sherlock, too? Just when Angela had put the pipe to her lips, there was a sudden and unexpected knock on the door. The girls glanced at each other with slight astonishment, then Angela gestured for Veronica to answer the call.

“Hello Darlings,” said the voice of a familiar hologram, whom both of the girls knew all too well.

“Moriarty!” Veronica cried and took a restrained step backward.

“It can’t be: he already died on the 36th level!” Angela replied as the pipe slipped from her fingers.

All the other hologram avatars seemed as surprised as the girls about this new turn of the gameplay, but they seemed much more pleased than Veronica and Angela did.

“And like the spider, I feel the strings vibrate whenever they chance into my web,”

Moriarty said theatrically with a cruel grin while he entered the room. Veronica went closer to Angela and whispered with resentment:

“Why did you insist that he look like that old actor from the ancient Star Trek? I would have preferred his avatar to be that of Andrew Scott; I bet he would even have better lines...’

Angela did not pay any mind to Veronica’s contemplation, for she was more upset about Moriarty’s unreasonable emergence.

“Why have you reappeared?” she asked Moriarty crossly, “We killed you already, and now I feel disappointed – I feel that you have broken the game rules!”

“For me, the definition of life ‘*Cogito ergo sum*’ – I think, therefore I am – is the most important rationalization of that – and for that part, the only one that matters,” Moriarty revealed, as if by pouring out the extravagant words could make any sense to his unfair return. “But, if you need a simple explanation, I have experienced a renaissance for one sole purpose,” he continued and held a dramatic pause, “My consecrated purpose, the true reason for my resurrection, is the fact that the syndicate felt that no one could guide you through the game as I can.”

The holographic avatars of the girls’ most beloved television stars grouped around Moriarty and they nodded their virtual heads approvingly.

“And thereby I want to draw your attention to your next quest,” Moriarty continued sharply, “Do you still want accept the challenge?”

Angela and Veronica glanced at each other with frustration. After a long while, Angela replied:

“We accept the challenge.” Then she continued with a slight bitterness in her voice, “And this time we will choose the truth.”

Moriarty smiled arrogantly.

“The clue for the next challenge is in my name,” he said dramatically, “I suggest that you take the glows and glasses with you and be in that class after 12 hours.”

As a reward, he informed the girls about a missing alphabet, and said that there were sponsors’ generous gifts waiting for both of them in the main entrance.

V-ToD-EXIT CHALLENGE 45 ARTERMATH

ForEve+ 12 points 1 minute 7 seconds ago

Nice gameplay MetaLife! Good combo of state-need-reward. You really impaled into their motivational level: a point well deserved!

MetaLife 11 points 58 seconds ago

Thank you, my dear co-evangelist, but as you know, they were already hooked.

Uploading 13 points 46 seconds ago

Hallelujah! Moriarty is back: count your blessings!

VHEMT 9 points 38 seconds ago

I think the apprentices were pretty unsatisfied with Moriarty’s reappearances. A even mentioned about the legitimacy of the rules.

Moriarty the curator 21 second ago

My dear little posthumanistic circle, do I still and all sense a bit of dissatisfaction towards my latest resurrection? For solving the matter, VHEMT, would you like to be the one to design the next level?

VHEMT 9 points 8 seconds ago

Challenge accepted. I should think this one has to be a bit more stimulating one, as from now on the girls have to be brought much closer to commitment.

2.2. The Truth

“Art Class, Draw your Circle of Love and Hate, Know the Truth.”

After solving all the earlier challenges, the mystery at hand was not a very difficult one for the girls; as obviously, with the clue, MoriARTy had meant the ART class. What was more challenging, was the fact that the girls had to sneak there after school hours, and it was a well-known fact that all the classes were carefully locked precisely after five o’clock. Nevertheless, the mission turned out to be a surprisingly easy with the data glasses, as the girls received careful and detailed instructions informing how to break in without notice.

In the art class, the challenge was simpler than any of those they had completed before. They were to take up crayons and the biggest paper they found, and draw their personal ‘circle of love and hate,’ which included all of their classmates. One by one the girls drew names within or outside the circle. The names closer to the core were the ones they both liked, and the ones closer to the outer sphere we the ones they disliked or even hated.

After they were finished, and all the names were drawn on the paper, Moriarty, appeared in the classroom.

“Are you sure all the names are there?” he asked assertively.

The girls nodded.

“Well, my dear apprentices, to conclude the challenge, the task is simple: you must choose the one you both hate the most.”

The girls glanced at each other and furrowed their eyebrows with increasing discontent.

“And then what?” Angela asked nervously.

“You must hurt her,” Moriarty replied, firmly and dispassionately.

“How?” Veronica questioned, and she was more than appalled.

“In that you’ll have to be creative. But remember, this is your final chance to pledge allegiance to the syndicate. As you both know, you have already failed twice.”

V-ToD-EXIT CHALLENGE 46 ARTERMATH

Uploading 13 points 32 seconds ago

For me that one created more questions than answers about their commitment.

VHEMT 10 points 18 seconds ago

To be continued... For the next challenge, I need someone to find more about the desires and collective fancies of their classmates. Any volunteers?

ForEve+ 12 points 10 seconds ago

Will do.

2.3. Double Dare

“Angela’s home, Allegiance to the Syndicate, the Initiation Sacrament.”

Betty Reeves was probably the most annoying girl in the school, and this was, in fact, a well confirmed, shared opinion. Betty’s father was rich, yet she wore untastefully despicable clothes, and, of course, she was a crammer. Due to those usual and universal facts, she did not have many friends in her class; and therefore, when Angela invited her home right after school, she almost rolled over.

At home, Angela made tea for three, and on the table Veronica thoughtfully, offered Betty a freshly baked lemon pie. Both Angela and Veronica took a big slice of the readily-sliced pie, but for their discomfort, Betty just shook her head arrogantly.

“I am afraid I must refuse,” she said decisively, “For, I suppose it is not gluten-free?”

Angela felt annoyed, since this behavior was so Betty-like.

“What if it was?” she asked, as politely as she could, “What would it do to you?”

“Oh, it’s terrible,” Betty replied and rolled her eyes, “You would not want to witness that! If I take even the slightest bit, my stomach would ache, and, in the worst case, I might even faint.”

“I guarantee there is no gluten,” Angela said snappishly and smiled, thinking that the symptoms might not have time to expose themselves.

“I remember that your mother said,” Veronica accompanied, “That the pie is not only gluten-free, but it is also dairy- and sugar free.”

Betty looked at them both, with an uncomfortable hesitation in her eyes.

“Still, I think I would rather stick with tea,” she informed and sipped her cup delicately.

After the tea-time persuasion failed, the girls did not know exactly what to do. To buy some time, Angela took Betty to the living room and introduced her to a pair of odd-looking gloves and glasses. Betty needed some convincing concerning why she should change her perfectly operational ones to those that did not seem so fitting for her. After the girls had explained how they worked, Betty seemed a bit intrigued.

“The Arch,” Veronica said right after Betty had put the glasses on.

“I cannot believe it!” She sighed instantly, “The room just changed into a 19th-century study!”

The girls nodded, as that was exactly the same experience they had felt – which now seemed like ages ago. Betty walked slowly around the living room and moved next to the bookshelf. She had to glance at their backs only once, after which she sighed:

“...But this is not just any old room! This is the study of Sherlock Holmes!”

After the observant remark, Angela felt even more annoyed towards Betty.

Suddenly, without any outspoken notice, there was an unexpected knock on the door. All of the girls looked surprised, but Betty was the first one to be immediately on her feet. She approached the door, and almost experienced the after-gluten weakness she had just mentioned, when she met the visitor.

“Co-Conan Chris?” she faltered as she opened the door and took two steps back.

To all of their surprise, a famous teen-heartbreaker-singer, Conan Chris, stepped with steady moves into Angela’s living room. He greeted all of the girls with a smile, but then his eyes glued solely and tightly on Betty.

Suddenly, the air was filled with Conan’s sweet new hit song, which had a very slow dance beat. The modern-day Casanova nodded to Betty and to her great surprise, took her to dance instead of her more popular classmates.

“This is your moment,” said a sudden voice that was audible only to Angela and Veronica, “This is a dare for you both – a dare in which you cannot fail, again,” the voice continued.

Angela looked around the room, and then, on her command they both broke the seals of the balcony door. This particular door, as Angela’s mother had retained, was the one never to be opened. This absolute forbiddance was laid down for a good reason, as the door led straight to a construction site of the 12-story building. As the dancing couple approached it, Veronica opened it cold-bloodedly. When the fatal incident came about, Betty could not see the danger, as she was completely immersed in her dancing partner’s immersive opal-green eyes.

After the destructive incident, Moriarty appeared to the living room, ecstatic as ever.

“My dear Angela and Veronica, this has been your final hour,” he complimented openhandedly, “You have performed the initiation sacrament without any negative votes from the sponsors, and therefore your reward will be unforeseen!” Then he raised his finger into the air, and reminded, “Now, all you have to do is just say the words.”

The startled girls knew perpetually well what Moriarty meant.

“We pledge allegiance to the syndicate,” they repeated in sacred unison, “And swear never to speak of it to anyone.”

V-ToD-EXIT CHALLENGE 47 ARTERMATH

ForEve+ 12 points 1 minute ago

What an epoch! Now we a really part of the History+.

Moriarty the curator 58 seconds ago

May I just remind you, my dear flock, that the game is anything but over. What this all means, is that it is eventually time to decide, which one will it be...

MetaLife 11 points 42 seconds ago

I assume I speak on behalf of us all, when I say that there is no denial: with any objective measures, it should be the blonde.

Uploading 13 points 37 seconds ago

Obviously. BTW, which of us has less points? Who will design the next level?

Moriarty the curator 18 seconds ago

According to my interpretation, it is now MetaLife's turn. Will you do the honors?

MetaLife 11 points 2 seconds ago

Nothing could keep me from doing it! I have already decided the name of the level: it will be "No pain, no gain".

2.4. Confirmation

"Baker Street 221B, Milgram's test, Gain for Pain."

Veronica and Angela had only two days to recover after Betty's fatal incident. Although they were in the middle of police inquiries, the girls managed to slip into a random warehouse, which was disguised, again, as Baker Street 221B. As soon as the girls had put their glasses on, they saw a strange-looking chair in the middle of the sitting room.

"Congratulations, my dear Angela and Veronica," Moriarty applauded, "You have managed to proceed almost to the end of the game. A rare achievement, indeed, I must say: 47 levels completed, and only 3 left to go!"

Somehow, Angela and Veronica did not feel as pleased as Moriarty. After what had happened to Betty, they did not feel the urge to seek out the missing alphabets anymore; nor did they feel any enjoyment of the sponsors' generous gifts.

"But, as they say," Moriarty brought up, "When the game advances, the stakes grow higher. And so, my dear apprentices, at this point my devoted and sacred obligation – or should I emphasize, my privilege – is to introduce you to the next, hair-raising challenge," Moriarty proclaimed. He waved his arms and gestured to urge the girls to move closer to what he said was a confession chair.

"This challenge is a dare for you both," he informed and requested, innocently but coldheartedly, "Would either of you, by any chance, be familiar with the Milgram's test?" The girls shook their heads, but what he broadcasted sounded rather notorious.

"I thought so," Moriarty nodded with a cruel smile, "Well, in any case, the test is all about obedience... and to be more precise, in your case, it is to test your obedience to the syndicate."

The girls felt immediately nervous. Even more so, when Moriarty asked them to draw a virtual lot about which of them should sit on the chair. The girls had no idea that the draw was already fixed.

“So then,” Moriarty said, after seeing the result, “Could you, Veronica, please sit on the chair that is so perpetually fixed for you?”

Veronica felt shivers, but she did as Moriarty requested. As soon as she had sat, leather-looking straps folded tightly over her wrists. At the same time, from the thin air emerged a glass window between Angela and Veronica. Moriarty holoported himself next to Angela and snapped his fingers casually. Instantaneously, an electric shock generator appeared in front of Angela. She observed the generator in a growing terror.

The device had three switches which were marked as slight shock, severe shock and XXX. When Angela saw the scales, she turned pale instantly. Veronica did not see any of this, as the one-way mirror distracted her view from the interrogation part of the room.

“The challenge is simple,” Moriarty announced, faking a soft tone, “In this challenge, Veronica must truthfully answer questions about some of the doctrines that are of significance to our little circle of moral concern. It shouldn’t be too hard if we consider all the challenges you have already performed so eloquently.”

“But, of course, there is a catch,” Moriarty continued by raising his finger, “You Angela must administer an electric shock to Veronica every time she makes the slightest mistake. Furthermore, you should increase the level of shock each time Veronica answers a question in an unsatisfactory manner.”

“Shall we begin?” Moriarty asked, cheerfully, and rubbed his hands. On the other side of the mirror, Veronica was moving about uncomfortably. Angela looked at her friend in anxiety and refused boldly. Moriarty shook his head, and whispered in her ear:

“The challenge requires you to play along, Angela. You really don’t want to back out now, do you? ...Now that you are so very close?”

“Anyway, Veronica is doing most of the work this time,” Moriarty assured, “All you have to do is read the sentence I present aloud, and Veronica will fill in the blank lines.”

After Moriarty was convinced that the girls could not be any readier, he announced:

“Well then, what would Sherlock say in this situation... Ah, the game is afoot!” He grinned, “So, here comes the first question. Veronica, what is your belief: is there life after death?”

“Why do you ask me? Veronica seemed puzzled, “Isn’t that the question you should answer to me throughout this game?”

Moriarty glanced at Angela in unison and nodded firmly.

“Go ahead, press the button,” he said, “She will feel only a slight sensation of tingling.”

Angela hesitated, but after looking at Moriarty’s cold eyes, she saw no way around it. She bit her lips and pressed the button. Veronica was immediately quivering in the chair within the grasp of an electric shock that seemed to cause her something much more than just slight tingling.

“Yes, there is!” she cried finally after great torment.

Moriarty revealed his cruel smile.

“Good. Now we can proceed... Here comes a slightly tougher one: what is there to be expected more specifically after one’s mortal life is over?”

“Heaven... Will we go to heaven?” Veronica cried and sobbed simultaneously. Moriarty had a stony face, which, for awhile, expressed nothing.

“And what becomes of you...in heaven?” he continued then, attentively.

“I will be raptured to heaven and become an angel...” Veronica responded hesitantly. Angela looked at Moriarty in agony. Instead of commanding her to give another shock, Moriarty spoke softly:

“I let you keep your naïve thoughts, as in transcendence you may truly become anything you please. I suppose the transhuman phase will present itself exactly as heaven to you, for there you can be surrounded by all the things you love... And your loved ones will join you, sooner or later, one after the other.”

“But I have to add,” he continued sharply, “That according to my belief, humans will not be enhanced to become angels, rather they will be replaced by artificial intelligence. For this merger, humans bring in the specific qualities of faith, ethics and justice. Yet otherwise this eternal symbiosis will be multi-aspectual, as it functions in both the formative and lingual aspects.”

Moriarty clearly did not expect girls to comprehend his eloquent view, as, for that matter, it was undoubtedly targeted at his other audience. After savoring his thoughts for a while, he moved to the next persuasive question.

“Why do we do this?” he implored Veronica, “Why do we play this game?”

Veronica shook her head, for she could not find an answer. So, Moriarty turned to Angela.

“It is your turn again, dear Angela,” he whispered warmly, “You know what to do.”

Angela did nothing, but stared at the electric shock generator with glazed eyes.

“I have to remind you of the consequences of your choice,” Moriarty continued with a severe tone, “Think of your mother, Angela, and think of Betty. For your own, and Veronica’s sake, it is absolutely necessary that you do the thing that you must.”

Angela shook her head feverishly, but looked otherwise as if she was paralyzed.

“Angela dear, you know you’ll have no choice but to continue!”

This time the scale of the electric shock generator was marked as severe shock: the panel indicated that as the volts would approach 250, this caused notable danger to the examinee. Yet Angela had no choice but to press the button. The shock caused Veronica to shake, sweat and scream her heart out and the severe trembling seemed to take an infinity before it was over. Without blinking his eyes, Moriarty repeated the question:

“Why do we do this?” He asked compulsively, “Why do we play this game?”

This time Veronica replied without hesitation:

“Voluntary human extinction is mandatory, because it will prevent human suffering and the extinction of other species,” she poured out the memorized words, as if she had been brainwashed.

“Now, now, my dear Veronica,” Moriarty said, “Are you sure you are not in a so-called ‘agentic state’ in which you just repeat the learned words?”

Veronica shook her head furiously and tears were running through her eyes. An eclectic smile occupied Moriarty’s face when he claimed:

“The answer is nevertheless absolutely correct. Our transhumanistic circle is extending subjectivities beyond the human species,” he turned back to Veronica, requesting further, “And what is our dictum for which we plea?”

“I dare to know,” Veronica responded mechanically, “I acknowledge the reason as the primary source of legitimacy, and come to advance ideals such as liberty, progress and tolerance.”

Moriarty seemed pleased. He nodded approvingly and replied:

“Thank you my dear apprentices. The syndicate is proud of your accomplishment. You can consider this challenge now well taken care of, for that was all we wanted to hear. You can go home and have full enjoyment of all your more than lavish rewards!”

V-ToD-EXIT CHALLENGE 48 ARTERMATH

VHEMT 11 points 55 seconds ago

Nice closing, but what was the lesson? Deep down this is hardly more shivering than some good old reality TV. Milgram’s test already firmly convinced his Nazi-theory [9].

Uploading 13 points 40 seconds ago

The point was, that he never went this far. And Milgram never examined how much a person is willing to hurt someone whom she loves. I am convinced **A** would have killed **V** if she only had been commanded.

ForEve+ 12 points 26 seconds ago

I am not. Girls do that all the time, especially when they are cornered. It is perfectly normal to put their teeth into their best friend’s flesh, and bite as sharp as they can, if they feel even vaguely trapped.

Moriarty the curator 17 seconds ago

I have to remind you, my dear congregate, that our intention is not to murder anyone, or commence anyone to do such thing. Meaning is the being of all that has been created, and all we are looking is a voluntary sacrifice. But, as Milgram stated, “Illusion should be used when necessary in order to set the stage for the revelation of certain difficult-to-get-at-truths”. So, after all things considered, should ForEve+ be the one most capable of us digging out the final truth?

ForEve+ 12 points 6 seconds ago

Will do, with pleasure.

2.5. Private Truth

“Veronica’s home, Draw your personal Circle of Love and Hate, Know the Truth.”

Veronica saw her mother briefly in the kitchen before they both were running off to work and school. They changed a few words about the school, then Veronica pulled herself together and asked her mother cautiously:

“Mother, have you ever played the game Truth or Dare? I mean, as you were a child.”

Her mother was drinking coffee hastily. She raised her eyes from the morning news and looked at her daughter absent-mindedly.

“Of course,” she smiled and sustained, “But I suppose in Ukraine that game was a bit rougher than the one you girls are playing here.”

“How come?” Veronica asked and raised her eyebrows, “What was your worst dare?”

“Vodka in the eyeball,” her mother said and smiled. Then she remarked the wounded look in Veronica’s face, and it made her wrinkle her eyebrows. A sudden shivering thought came into her mind, but it took awhile before she could find words for it. Then she looked deeply into her daughter’s eyes and whispered:

“I am so sorry what happened to your friend, Betty... Was the incident caused by playing the game of Truth or Dare?”

Veronica didn’t say anything, but she looked extremely guilty. Just at that moment, her mother’s mobile phone rang. She got up, bent over Veronica and kissed her on her cheek.

“I am convinced, it was not you fault, but you should tell me all about it later tonight.” Then she answered the phone and at the same time ran off to work.

Distressed Veronica packed her schoolbag and just when she was about to leave for school, Moriarty appeared, uninvited, in Veronica’s hallway.

“What is this?” Veronica asked in agitation.

“This is the challenge 49,” Moriarty replied harshly, “And it is for your eyes only.”

“What do you want?” Veronica asked warily and unintentionally began to tremble.

“I want you to draw your personal circle of ‘Love and Hate’. And this time you should place Angela into it.”

“I don’t want to play the game anymore,” Veronica whispered.

“But you have no choice, my dear Veronica,” Moriarty smiled cruelly, “Remember what happened to Betty. Do you think the syndicate would ever leave you alone?”

“You have two-and-a-half days to convince Angela that you have not gotten bitter on her,” Moriarty informed and, in a blink of an eye, vanished into thin air.

V-ToD-EXIT CHALLENGE 49 ARTERMATH

MetaLife 12 points 1 minute 2 seconds ago

Nice! Neat!

ForEve+ 13 points 46 seconds ago

Thanks’, as you know, my motto has always been: keep it very, very simple, stupid.

Moriarty the curator 42 seconds ago

My dear congregate, should we, again, set our minds on the holy chore at hand, as, after all, we have merely the ultimate sacrifice left. The girls are already standing on the edge, but this last challenge requires the full engagement of us all. As you know, this time the reward will be generous three points for the champion of the challenge!

VHEMT 11 points 33 seconds ago

The rules are acknowledged. But I must bring forth my objection towards one little detail. You were earlier all so unanimously for the blonde, but I am not that convinced anymore. Why shouldn’t it be the brunette; as after all, she seems quite ripe to me?

Uploading 13 points 15 seconds ago

Why not both of them?

2.6. The Ultimate 50th Level

“Go to a bridge, Commit suicide, Understand the Ultimate Truth.”

Moriarty appeared to the bridge upon which Angela and Veronica were standing. The game designers had made them run through the city the whole day in pursuit of the final cypher alphabets, so they both were now more than exhausted. The pursuit was, of course, pointless; the real aim was not to leave the girls any time to contemplate their thoughts.

“This is your waterfall,” Moriarty proclaimed and waved his hands towards the bridge and river that was running underneath, “To pass the final challenge and the entire game, you girls do know what you will have to do.”

“Passing the challenge will cause you to understand the ultimate truth,” he continued firmly and persuasively, “As you know, I already confronted my waterfall in the 36th challenge. Now it is your turn to brake on through and find out what is on the other side. Are you ready for your eventual transcendence?”

Veronica was first to climb to the bannister with no hesitation. She glanced at Angela secretly in a vicious manner and then noticeably waved her to follow.

“We cannot back up anymore,” she proclaimed, “If we do, you know that they will kill our mothers.”

Angela looked surprisingly calm, almost as if she was sedated, when she climbed next to her friend on to the bannister.

“Ultimately an individual should always have the right to take personal control over their own death,” Moriarty declared theatrically, “But before you jump, my dear apprentices,” he added softly, “I would like you to share the name of your metaphysical afterlife.”

Veronica did not say anything, but Angela, with glazed eyes, responded self-consciously:

“Neo-Angela,” she said and leaned a bit forth. After that, Angela tried to take Veronica’s hand, but she refused and told that they should do it together, but alone. She said she will count to three and after that they both had to take the final step.

“One, two... three!” she counted.

Veronica, still feeling bitter about Angela administrating her the electric blows, had been ready to give Angela a push if she had not jumped herself. But now, after she had done it willingly, Veronica was suddenly experiencing an overwhelming and chaotic state of a shock. Veronica climbed back to the pavement, but she had really no time to collect her thoughts, as the dragon symbol and the unrevealed cypher emerged in front of her. There were the four unsolved letters floating in the air that had haunted them during the whole gameplay. Moriarty looked at her baffled face and laughed arrogantly.

“You deserve to know the truth,” he said pettily.

“It can’t be!” Veronica cried as the symbols began to unfold in front of her.

There were just four letters: ARCH. And then followed the slogan of the syndicate: “We deliver custom-created, ultimate experiences, tailored to answer the fundamental questions, such as: “Is there life after death?” “Is there a God?” and “What is the meaning of life?””

“Congratulations on solving the first mystery,” Moriarty proclaimed, “And now, my dear Veronica, would you like to start another game?”

“This time you can be Sherlock and the syndicate will find another Watson for you.”

“And I can play Moriarty,” Angelica’s holographic appearance echoed as she emerged floating next to Moriarty. Veronica looked at the supernatural reflection of her best friend and felt nothing but panic. She shook her head, and then ran as fast and far as she could.

V-ToD-EXIT CHALLENGE 50 ARTERMATH

MetaLife 12 points 1 minute ago

Angela is dead! Long live Angela!

ForEve+ 13 points 42 seconds ago

This is the true renaissance of Angela! She is now immortal.

VHEMT 14 points 28 seconds ago

May we all live long and peacefully die out!

Uploading 13 points 11 seconds ago

Human extinction is the only solution! In the end we will all be as one.

Moriarty the curator 3 seconds ago

We may sanctify our holy cause, because we have been blessed with the revelation of knowledge that human species can transcend itself—not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety, as humanity that is caused by divine agency!

Neo-Angela 0 points 1 second ago

Praise to you all! I know now, immortality is eternal life, and our only ability to live forever!

2.7. Aftershock

The detective that had been investigating Betty’s case was alerted when they found another teen body in the same neighborhood. He interrogated Veronica, who, once again, had been in the crime scene. The adolescent girl broke immediately, but her confession was only the first thread in a complex case. In fact, it later turned out, there had been several similar cases around the country during the last few months. The only thing that was different now was Veronica’s mobile phone, which, by a coincidence, had been unconnected after Angela’s death. Therefore, the phone had stored all the information of the last five challenges, and so this was the only case, in which the syndicate had not been able to wipe out their traces. Using the evidence, the police were later able to arrest two members of the circle; those who had presented themselves in the community chat as VHEMT and ForEve+.

Nevertheless, the case was still a very problematic one, when bearing in mind the legal matters. The detective had an intense conversation with the department lawyer about how to solve them.

“What I want to know is: Can we even sue the game designers or is the legal liability only on those making rational decisions: the teenagers, Veronica and Angela?”

“Both girls are adolescents and clearly victims here,” the lawyer replied, “It would be a waste of time to prosecute the one that is left alive: Veronica is surely a witness.”

“When it comes to teens in general,” the lawyer sighed, “They are gullible and lack life experiences. This means they are easy targets for these crazy predators, who, in my opinion, should solely be held responsible for their actions.”

“So, can we sue them?” The detective probed. The lawyer did not look too convinced.

“Of course we *are going to* sue them...,” she retorted, “But any evidence that we have so far demonstrates conversations between a combination of human moderators and artificial intelligence. So, the question to ask in this case would be: are the rest of these persons even human, or, as in the case of Moriarty, are they also some form of artificial intelligence?”

The detective scratched the back of his head, and concluded:

“I think the profound question should be: How do we prevent this systematic, sadistic activity from becoming mainstream? This case should be made a precedent.”

3 Reflection

“In writing, you must kill your darlings.” This literary advice from William Faulkner refers to the dangers of an author using personal favorite elements in the story s/he creates⁵. This *holonovel* has been created by compromising the advice: the storyline has extravagantly exploited the personal favorite elements of the author (especially relating to the chosen technologies and the cited Star Trek episodes) and, in addition, taken Faulkner’s words literally by introducing the virtual killing activity in a real-life game environment.

With regard to the form of the story, the introduction of the paper claimed that the story was a *holonovel*; yet to be quite honest, it is actually a science fiction prototype disguised as a *holonovel*. As a writing activity the difference may be compared to a short story and a screenplay: a story requires plot, characters, and three phases (a beginning, middle, and end), whereas a screenplay contains a story with specific parameters including details of how the actions will be achieved. In the SFP there are, however, aspects that can be considered very important characteristics of a *holonovel*, as it, for example, runs in the first person ‘subjective mode,’ occupies space, highlights the role of the artefacts and demonstrates how the protagonists actively interact with the designed game program and its characters – as a good *holonovel* always should⁶.

Regarding the chosen key technologies, the prototype introduced a Mixed Reality game environment that dominated space around the protagonists and operated between Milgram’s reality–virtuality continuum model [10], which, in general, is composed of real and virtual space and objects. For presenting the virtual and simulated people the SFP laid great interest in digital avatars and contemporary human ‘Hologram’ technologies. The human representation technologies currently seem timely and interesting, as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) are

⁵ The risk in such activity (e.g. overuse of a word or phrase) lies in the statement that while these elements may hold special meaning for the author, they can cause readers to roll their eyes.

⁶ http://memory-alpha.wikia.com/wiki/Holographic_novel

entering more and more to mainstream social media applications⁷. From that aspect, this SFP was essentially concentrating on a theme called *digital resurrection* – creating virtual appearances of deceased people – for which, there are currently several techniques that have been used. To draw notion of few, e.g. in ‘rotoscoping,’ the film footage of the person’s face is composited over a body double, and in more advanced cases, motion capture technology is combined with high-end 3D computer graphics that recreate a person completely anew. The digital resurrection has been demonstrated in a number of “real-life” cases, with, however, diverse feedback from the audience. One powerful experience has been described to be the virtual comeback of a deceased rap artist, who suddenly appeared onstage in a music festival, performed some songs and then disappeared in an explosion of light⁸. An opposing experience has been described the hologram of Michael Jackson at the Billboard Music Awards, which was described as being “disturbed” and “creeping [people] out”⁹. In addition, with the clear relationship to uncanny valley hypothesis [11], the technology includes a number of interesting socio-technical issues that could only be slightly touched by this SFP.

In addition with the presentation form of the holonovel and the introduced technologies, the overall message in the dystopian *holonovel* has been that already the software, applications and social media surrounding us are convincing people to give away valuable information about themselves in exchange for free experiences. In turn, the invisible parties delivering these experiences can accrue large amounts of data freely, and, if they will, may find disruptive use for the information and bear no legal responsibility for the consequences. Another matter that the SFP wanted to highlight is the anonymity in the Web that is cultivating the darker side of human nature, as it allows people to hide behind a mask and, for example in social media, write mindless things, which is enforced by the mob behavior of the private conversation groups. In the SFP, these issues were illustrated through how the anonymous game designers diminished the importance and uniqueness of individuals, Angela and Veronica, and turned them into variables in a game that was merely a facade for their extreme, posthumanistic devotions. As a consequence, the ultimate question of the *holonovel* has been to consider the moral basis of the illustrated reality that may already, to some extent, be achieved by the present-day technologies.

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⁷ Many VR companies are currently providing custom-created avatars in order to access their in-person interactive services, such as: [High Fidelity](#), [AltspaceVR](#), [Modal VR](#) and [The Void](#)

⁸ <https://mdhhologram.com/portfolio-items/tupac/>

⁹ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/michael-jacksons-crazy-billboard-awards-performance-and-more-hologram-wins-and-fails-video>

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