

VideoWorld

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“I have no talent,” Melvin thinks, as he plays his rhythm guitar on stage.

Auditioning for his High School Talent show at the local Tech Museum, Melvin notices the battle of the bands attracts a lot of students and faculty. This band’s reputation for putting on a good performance has been the talk of the school for weeks.

“So loud I can’t think,” he squirms as the music blasts. “I’m embarrassing my band members,” he observes the musicians, and scans the audience, “All these kids, and teachers, will think I’m a nerd.”

“Dressed like a dork,” he compares his conservative suit, tie, and thick-rimmed glasses to the other wildly dressed band members. “I’m sixteen years old and move like an old man.” Melvin stiffly plays as the other band member’s move and groove to the music.

Sheila, a pretty, black girl, dressed seductively primitive in a leather loincloth and top, sings savagely.

The lead guitarist, Chip, an Asian, costumed like a robot, moves very machine-like, capturing the audience’s attention.

Pat, the drummer, a Latino, with a very shiny, totally shaven, bald head, wears large, mirror-reflective sunglasses. Short and troll-like, his clothes sparkle, due to the glitter attached to them he reflects all the lights on the stage.

Melvin, the white guy, in his thick glasses, and conservative suit, sticks out like a sore thumb.

The talent show's rules require that each member must display their individual talent in addition to their ability to perform in a group. The other members stop playing as Sheila sings a vocal riff by herself, without musical accompaniment. She performs a creative dance routine at the same time. The students and faculty in the audience applaud and press forward to the stage.

Chip, the lead guitarist, takes the stage. His robot-type moves, and dress entertain the people pushing up to the platform. He plays a computer sounding musical riff on his guitar.

The crowd mimics his robot moves.

Pat, the drummer, goes wild. He thumps out a savage beat as his mirrors, and bald head reflect all the lights.

The audience goes crazy, jumping up and down, and the guys slam each other.

With a thunderous wallop, Pat finishes his performance.

The spotlight focuses on Melvin. He stands with his back to the audience. He plays a brilliantly complicated riff but doesn't turn around or move about the stage. Nervous sweat pours down his forehead.

The energy in the crowd fades like a flashlight out of battery power. The kids groan. The faculty tries to support him with applause, to cover their embarrassment of his performance.

Killing their act, the rest of the band signal to each other, cut him short, and break into a rock and roll climax.

The audience, re-energized, resumes dancing and cheering.

The band members move out in front of Melvin and distract the audience as he leaves the stage. He passes through the crowd, and they all ignore him as they watch the band on stage. He stows his guitar and wanders out into the Museum.

Melvin seeks refuge in the Museum of Technology. Here among the great inventions of man, he feels solace. He views the displays of early computers, electric cars, robots, television sets, phones, videotape, DVD players, Cd players, radios and other electronic innovations of the last thirty years. He thinks of the lonely hours these inventors must have spent working away creating these wonders. Feeling sorry for himself, he questions if they all suffered from the social stigma of being a loner. Did they use their skills and talents to hide from having to relate to others? Were they all ostracized?

Melvin walks to the museum's collection of old video games. The room recreates a video arcade with a pizza kitchen staffed by manikins standing behind the counter dressed in colorful serving uniforms, offering plastic slices of pizza, held in an enclosed see-through plastic shelf-container that glows red from a red light to simulate a heater. Soda cups of different sizes are next to the soda machine and ice dispenser. Ice cream bars, ice cream sandwiches, and popsicle ads display on the signs around the snack bar. A large popcorn popper sits on the counter with bags and butter dispensers. Mid-eighties music plays loudly on the speakers, but not loudly enough to completely cover the sounds of the video arcade games. The games, all making playing sounds, include; Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, Centipede, PacMan, Donkey Kong, Dragon's Lair, Ghouls and Ghost, and Zaxxon.

He puts in a quarter and starts playing Zaxxon. Deeply into a one-on-one psyche sharing with the video game, he allows no distractions. He does not notice when other kids wander in, watch for a moment, then bored with his winning all the time, drift away. With an almost psychic ability he guides his jet fighter through the vibrating electrical defenses and avoids the enemy fire from ground fortifications.

The other band members come into the arcade. Chip sees Melvin first, “there’s the game nerd.”

Pat notices, “Yeah, I felt sorry for him. I can’t believe he let us down like that, lucky we found out before the real talent show.”

Sheila, indignant, says, “I invited him to play with us because I thought he had talent and creativity. How can anyone so brilliant with music and games be so inhibited? So unable to allow their creativity to be liberated, and to be shared and appreciated by others?”

Chip smirks, “Look at that guy. He’s totally unaware of anything or anybody around him.”

Sheila responds angrily, “Well, let’s see if he can ignore a piece of my mind.” She storms over to him, “Melvin, quit playing that thing and listen to me.”

Melvin, engrossed in the game, does not hear her.

Melvin does see her reflection in the video game monitor, and it seems to belong there as if now part of the games graphics. Her reflection superimposes over the strange planet surface on the video monitor. Melvin controls the fighter jet as it zooms over the terrain and fights off repressor forces controlled by an Evil Wizard.

Sheila, frustrated with trying to distract him, goes behind the machine and yanks out the plug. So, connected to the game, Melvin’s fingers still push the firing trigger, and his body still jolts the console for moments after the game has gone dark. Frightened, and angry, Sheila calls out, “Melvin! You’re a machine. Your dope with music and videogames but you’re a nerd on stage. You got to let go of your fears.”

Melvin, in shock, answers, “What? What, do you mean?”

Sheila continues her barrage. “You play music like you play this game. A machine could have performed more imaginatively than you did on stage.”

Melvin, not even defending himself, mumbles, “I have stage fright, I don’t know how to perform in front of an audience.”

Frustrated, Sheila quips, “Haven’t you ever watched, “Rock VideoWorld?””

Melvin weakly replies, “No. My mother doesn’t let me watch TV.”

Shelia denounces him, “You’re so out of it, Melvin. Watch the show. It’ll help free you from your fears.”

Melvin replies, “But why do I need to be free of them?”

Sheila, sympathetic to his stage fright, offers him one last chance, “Because I will never speak to you again if you don’t play with us at the talent show.”

Sheila storms off. All the kids at the arcade laugh and jeer at Melvin. His sanctuary disturbed; Melvin wanders out of the arcade.

A tour guide walks a group through the display of inventions and tells the visitors about the inventors. She pauses at a very sleek futuristic looking rocket craft. It resembles a snowmobile. The dashboard, behind the windshield, displays a computer monitor. The vehicle has handlebars with an array of controls, and foot pedals to drive it. It seats four, two in front and two in back.

Melvin, unnoticed, joins the group and listens intently as the tour guide informs the group, “Marco was a brilliant inventor, but a very unsociable person. Absorbed by his work, he lost touch with the world of people, which he didn’t understand, or which didn’t understand him.”

A general reaction ripples among the visitors with the younger members rolling their eyes, giggling, and making remarks to the effect of, “what a nerd.” Melvin feels a symbiotic connection with this inventor. The tour guide points to an open book on a small book stand, “His diary.”

The tour gathers around the book, and the guide reveals, “After spending most of his youthful years designing computers and applications, he, finally, met a girl and fell in love. When she jilted him, because she thought him dull company, he completely lost touch with reality. He became a total recluse and wasn’t heard of for years.”

The females on the tour seem to share an acknowledgment; indicating the girl seemed justified in dumping the inventor. Melvin notes their reactions, and ask, “Does the diary say where this mobile could take him?”

The tour guide informs him, “From the entries found, the mobile unit entered another dimension. He found his creativity, there, and it helped him overcome his fear and inhibitions around people.”

“Has anyone tried to start it up?” A man in the group questions.

“The diary makes a reference to a musical code that will unlock the starter, but, no one has been able to decipher the code.” She replies.

Another man in the tour group asks, “No one ever tried it out?”

The tour guide replies, “Lots of tech people attempted to break the code years ago, but, they weren’t able to, and no one has tried it since.”

A woman asked, “How did you acquire this from him?”

The tour guide answers, “Years after everyone had forgotten about him, he showed up one day with this mobile.”

Melvin, intrigued, listens to the tour guide. “Marco was mumbling out of his head about some strange world where he freed his imagination. When museum officials tried to calm him down, he got very violent. He kept telling them to take this mobile and hide it in the museum.”

A woman in the group ask, “Did he ever come back?”

The tour guide informs her, “No. No one ever heard from him again.” The tour group moves on to view the other exhibits.

Melvin lets them get out of sight, and then he sits on the mobile. He flips some of the controls, and the screen lights up.

The computer console lights up, and the computer responds vocally, “User ID?”

Stunned, Melvin looks around.

Melvin reflects for a moment, “Rock-video world.”

The computer responds, “Search for?”

Melvin still not sure he can talk directly to the computer, “my imagination.”

The screen flickers with programming information. Then reads:

User Id: Rock Video World

Password:

Melvin disembarks and walks over to the diary. He thumbs through it and finds the description of the music notes. He enters the data into a hacking application on his iPhone. He tries different variations. Several codes appear. He types them one at a time without any result. He texts in the last one.

The computer responds;

Press: Y to enter

Press: N to return

Melvin, fascinated, types Y.

The mobile glows with an electrical aura enclosing Melvin.

The computer screen displays a kaleidoscope star field.

Melvin projects into the kaleidoscope imagery and rides the craft through the colors and patterns. The mobile plays a music video on the screen, blasting electronic sounds.

The kaleidoscope display ends, and Melvin, on his mobile, zooms through a narrow rock canyon. He travels thirty feet above a raging river, out of control, flipping over and over. Melvin screams, "Computer!"

The computer verbally advises, "To obtain upright flight; please adjust the lever to zero degrees."

Melvin, spinning, and in constant danger of hitting rock boulders jutting out of the river, finally, locates the rotating lever, and sets it to zero. The mobile rotates into position. Melvin sighs in relief, "great."

The computer shows its personality, "Welcome."

Melvin rolls his eyes. Suddenly, his eyes widen.

Directly ahead the river turns quickly to the left. A rock wall blocks the path dead ahead of him.

Melvin panics, "Computer?"

The computer without any emotion speaks, "Direction of craft controlled by the handlebars."

"Why do I have to drive? You seem to know the way." Melvin whines.

The computer responds; "Driving upside down does not bother me, but apparently you have a problem with it, so you can drive as you see fit."

As he would drive a snowmobile, Melvin turns the handlebars, and the mobile steers left. Immediately, he must turn right. He is in an S-curve canyon and flies around each jutting wall. He shoots out of the S-curve and starts to relax.

Just ahead lies a box canyon. The river pours into a narrow cave that burrows through the far wall.

Melvin starts to pull up on the altitude control stick. It is up all the way. He calls for help, “Computer!”

The computer responds nonchalant, “At maximum altitude.”

Melvin, screams out, “No way! Computer, there is no way around that wall.”

Indeed, there is not. It is a box canyon.

“Computer. Help!”

The end for now

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