



Journey Into the Net

A Cyber-Thriller for Kids & Grown-Ups



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Chapter 1

The Secret of TM20.02

Hi! My name is TM20.02, but I got to know this by chance. I am living fast besides you, in your parents' computer, on the World Wide Web, to be more exact. Ok, let's put it simple, I live on the Internet. I am sure you hear this word many times a day.

Would you like to see my world? Of course it's possible!

Look how beautiful it is.



This is how the net or the Internet, as you call it, looks like (nothing in common with spiders and spider web if you are afraid of insects). Do you see this blue dot? This is my home, I live there. Our web is similar to your stellar system. The colored dots you see are various worlds with their inhabitants. Oh, what weird creatures you can meet there!

Some of them look similar to me, some are like huge wise flying dragons from your fairy tales, some crawl like snakes, and some even swim like fish.

The lives of our worlds are parallel to your stars and planets lifecycles. They are born, shine brightly, and thrive as long as the one who created this or that world guards and protects it from the foes invasions. Unfortunately, the fight of good and evil forces never stops in my virtual world. Though, the same situation can be observed in any world.

Probably, you have already guessed that I am one of the peace and good keepers. What does the net need the keepers like me for? Our mission is to provide your (people's) safe shift from one point of the net to another and do everything you wish to do there (play, work, learn).

Do you see this brown dot? The evil genius who always gets in my way when there's a big opportunity lives there.



But, please, don't be scared. First of all, the villain is far away at the moment, secondly, you are travelling with me.

What do you think happens to the worlds that lose their keepers for one reason or another? The population abandon them little-by-little, the worlds go out, turning into dark, deserted labyrinths of shades. Not the best places for children, like you...

Nevertheless, unlike the extinguished stars, our worlds can be saved if a dignified keeper appears, who will restore the erstwhile glory of the passe world, or maybe even make it more dazzling and appealing for the tourists from the outside (this is how we call your planet).

I am 14 years old. But time in our world doesn't run like it does in yours. According to your calendar I am 114. So, I am a grown up, but not old because we can stay young and active for thousands of years in virtual reality. I like to take care of my world and all its inhabitants, create new amazing systems, and revive the ones that have lost their splendor ages ago. Besides, I have to fend off the attacks of dark forces, but I'll tell you a little bit later about that.

Do you know what is most astonishing on the net? You can move from one of its points to another almost immediately. All you need to do is just insert the required coordinates into the search bar.

That's all, you will be at the destination place in an instant. You don't need to sink into anabiosis and make a flight of thousands of parsecs, like astronauts from Earth. This is convenient, isn't it?

We are not born like you, either. We are nurtured at special labs with specific characteristics. Such incubators replace us a mother's tummy you have appeared from.





I know, this looks strange, but it's pretty cozy inside.

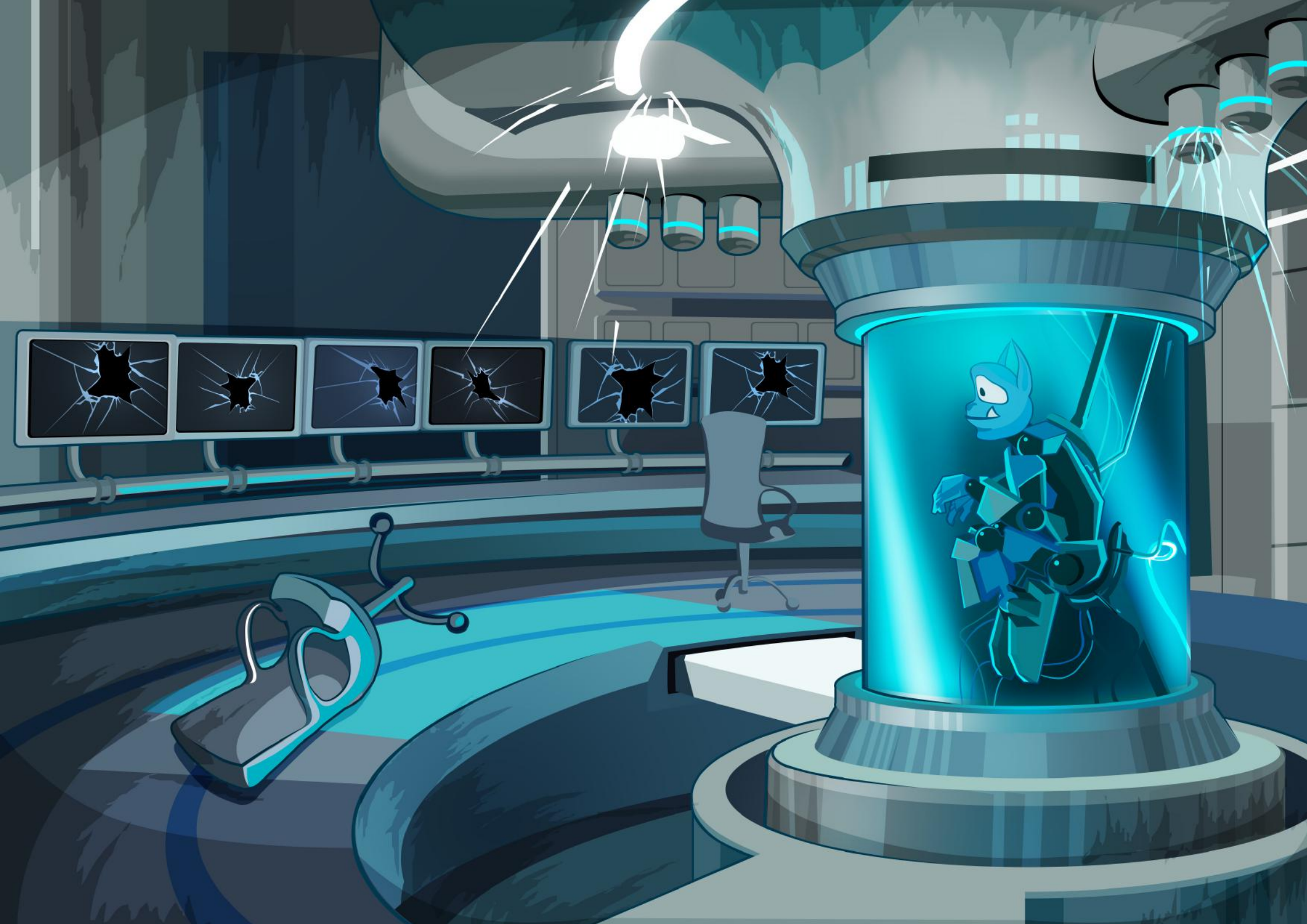
Now then... My story begins.

Chapter 2

The Birth of the Hero

I opened my eyes. There was nobody at the laboratory. What could have happened? They never left me alone in my incubator before as something might go wrong. Frankly speaking, I was scared to the bones or whatever I had instead of them. I don't know how much I was waiting for the lab workers to come back. Maybe several hours, maybe several weeks, or even months. I experienced a weird state: falling into oblivion and coming back to consciousness every now and again.

I looked through the nutrient solution I was in and the glass of the incubator. The lab was a total mess. The monitors were broken, the lightbulbs were blinking, the desks and the chairs were flipped over.



I understood: there is nothing to wait for, nobody will come for me. Completely deluded, I got out of my incubator. I had so many questions, but nobody could answer them. Who or what am I? What was I created for? What is my mission? Where am I and what happened here?

There was a metal table on my incubator: TM20.02 (that's how I got to know my name), type: airbender (I had no clue what could that mean), mission: keeper, skills: 10%, stand-to: 0%. You can't but agree that the information was poor, especially taking the fact that data upload was likely interrupted into account. It's safe to say that I was like a toddler.



TM20.02

TYPE: AIRBENDER
MISSION: KEEPER

SKILLS



STAND-TO



Chapter 3

Wandering Around the Kingdom of Fear

When I got out of the laboratory I was dazzled by the bright light at first. When my eyes got used to it, I was surprised how boundless the world outside the lab turned out.

The outlandish plants were all around. I felt the irresistible desire to see the place I was living at now. Maybe there are more creatures like me here?

You won't believe what happened then! As soon as I thought about it, my feet blasted off the ground and I FLEW! Did you know that hope, kind thoughts, and good intentions give you wings?

Anyway, that's how it happens in the virtual world. I think some people can also fly, but most of them forgot how to do this when they grew up. But you can still fly in your dreams, can't you?



So, I flew around my world, but, unfortunately, didn't find any living being. The cities were ruined. I hope their citizens had enough time to recede before the enemy invasion. But who was this mysterious hostile? At that moment I decided to dedicate my life to restoring my world, finding the wretch who wanted to raze it to the ground, and doing everything I can to prevent him from harming anybody else.

Roaming among the ruins of constructions that were magnificent back in the past, I found pieces of code (these are like the pieces of a puzzle you put together), and if I managed to put them in the right order, the building took its original appearance. It was like a work of magic. When I remembered the right combinations, the construction went faster and I cheered up.

My force grew stronger with every building I reconstructed. Soon I learned how to craft animated objects and make my creations look unique.



Chapter 4

New Acquaintances and My First Mask - the Mask of Light

Nobody knows how much time has passed (on your planet it took 3 years, but time is different in mine), but my blue world became almost perfect. I say “almost” because nothing is absolutely perfect in cyber-space. You can always improve something, can’t you? The things that seemed perfect to you yesterday don’t appear as attractive today.

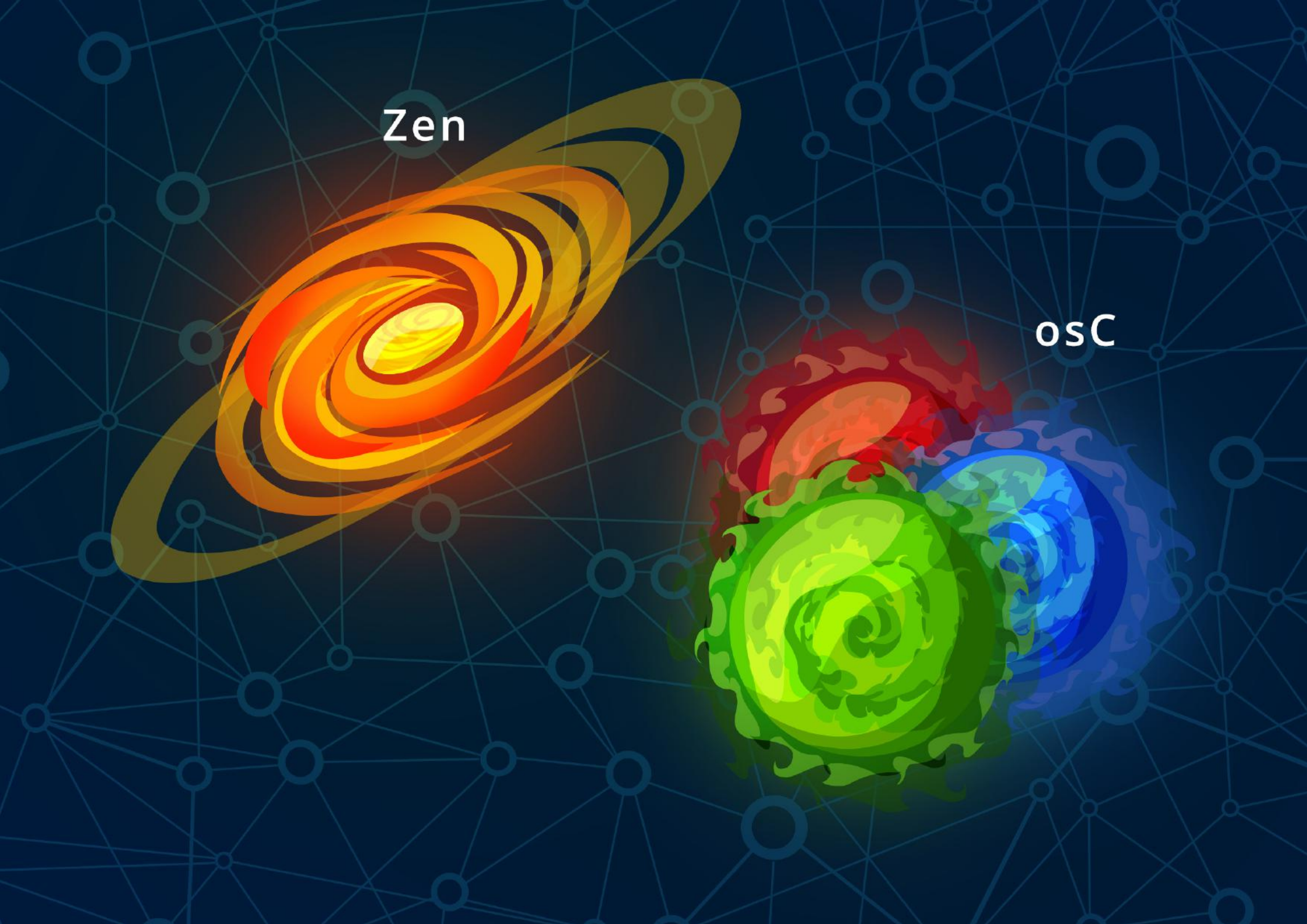
Well, I decided to look what was going on in other worlds. Maybe they needed my help or maybe I could learn something from their habitants (if I found them, of course). It was like a miracle! I did find them!

At the colored world I met the osC nation and made friends with the aborigines from Zen.

These friendly nations shared their knowledge of commerce with greatest pleasure. Why commerce? Because trade was their major occupation. We also have stores in our world, where you can buy anything you wish. “Shopping is so tedious” - you will say (if it’s not a toy store, of course). “Nothing of the kind!” - I will answer you.

Zen

osc



Just think about how much time your parents save buying the things your family needs, including your toys and nice clothing, on-line. They don't need to go to the supermarket. They just open their laptop, find the item they need, make a few mouse clicks, and this item is delivered right to your door the next day. Just agree that it's very convenient! Now you see how closely connected your real and my virtual worlds are.

In fact, my world exists to make your life more comfortable, to make it happier. It exists to free your parents' time to play with you or take you to an amusement park, and so on.

But this idyll is possible only till people set the rules at the cyber-space, not vice-versa. Did you hear anything about artificial intelligence? A lot of cyber-space indwellers have it. It's similar to your ability to think. However, bots are not people, who are able to compassionate, empathize, or even cry.

The Internet dwellers, having the power of artificial intelligence, fight for authority not only in their virtual world, but also in the world of people. That's why my world should be under control of people, living beings, having the inborn intellect.

I was crazy about that gift because now I was able to talk your word, to people. It's difficult to make friends with somebody if you can't talk. So, the Mask of Light gave me the power of word.




Chapter 5

The Wand of the Elements Lord and the Shield of the Mirror Reflection

Having got the power of word, we became even closer friends with people because now we could freely communicate on your language.

Do you want to know how we, the dwellers of cyber-space communicate? We don't need to utter our thoughts to deliver them to the companion. It's enough to say what you want inwardly and the collocutor will hear you.

Our dialogue kind of looks like this:



The image features two stylized, blocky robots against a background of vertical light and dark purple stripes. The robot on the left is primarily pink and red, with a white chest plate featuring three triangles. The robot on the right is primarily purple and blue, with a yellow 'X' on its chest. Both robots have speech bubbles above them containing PHP code. The background has a bright yellow vertical band in the center.

```
if  
(isset(Context::getContext()->  
controller)) {  
    $controller =  
    Context::getContext()->contro  
ller;  
} else {  
    $controller = new  
    FrontController();  
    $controller->init();  
}
```

```
require(dirname(__FILE_  
_).'/config/config.inc.ph  
p');  
Dispatcher::getInstance  
()->dispatch();
```


But let's come back to my travels. After I put on the Mask of Light, I understood that there are many such artifacts on the net and I must continue my travels to get them and attain new abilities.

I got to know that the Wand of the Lord of the Elements is hidden somewhere in the WP world. With this Wand my abilities of creating new worlds and its inhabitants would become almost unlimited. Of course, I rushed to the WP system. But will the WordPressoids give it to me...

WP



I couldn't just steal or take the Wand away because this comes into conflict with my keeper nature. Even though I worried in vain, Word-Pressoids turned out to be a very wise and aware nation.

They met me like a hero and gave the Wand of the Elements Lord. They banded me with the irreversible swear to only use it for good, which is creation of new wonderful worlds, catering to people's needs, and the repulse of dark forces attacks.



I needed to know what dark forces I will have to fight. But wise WordPressoids told me that I will get to know that as soon as the time comes. I was too young for serious battles then. Frankly speaking, I felt a little miffed. I am sure, you understand me.

What do you feel when somebody tells you that you are too little, that you will understand something when you grow older? But I could do nothing about it, the ancients were firm as adamant. So, I had nothing to do, but train in world creation and exploration of the ones that already exist on the net.

Having the Wand of Elements Lord it was much easier and quicker to create and reconstruct the worlds even from a single grain. The worlds became simply incredible! Have a look at one of them.



After I visited the JL and DL words and learned everything they had to share with me, the number of worlds created by me reached 20 000.

DL



JL



The Force of Greats considered me worthy of the Mirror Reflection Shield. Now I was responsible for all the inhabitants of the worlds created by me.



A hundred to one, you can't wait to know how the Shield of Mirror Reflection works. It's pretty simple: it turns the force of your enemy targeted at you against the misdoer.

Then, I was unaware that my achievements on the net were noticed and at the underground labyrinths of the brown world, hidden even from the sharpest eye, the Dark Lord prepares his horde of orc-robots. He was planning to enslave the free worlds and discredit me in people's eyes.



Chapter 6

The Dare is Taken

The Dark Lord tried to hide his army as he could, but what is done by night appears by day, as people say. When his treacherous plans were revealed, I already had a lot of friends and confederates. They warned me that choppy time is coming, that very soon the net will be shrouded into mirk. That's why I need to enlist the support of all hail-fellow nations, teach them the art of war, gather the army of real soldiers to beat off the unavoidable danger.

I had no experience of war prosecution, that's why I felt confused at the beginning, but I put myself together and made up a plan. You can't win a war without a good plan, can you?

At first I decided to visit the worlds that were new for me yet and learn as much as I could. At the same time, I wanted to find out if those unknown worlds were ready to protect peace and serenity on the net together with me in case of exigency.

Having obtained the support of the MG, VM, and PS worlds I didn't even notice how the number of worlds created by me has reached 30 000.

VM



PS



MG



We, the cyber-space inhabitants, don't get presents on holidays and birthdays like people. To get a reward we need to complete many good deeds. For creation of 30 000 of worlds and taking into account the fact that I'm on the verge of a great battle, I got very special presents from the Forces of the Greats. They were a super-weapon, popping off with plasma balls, and the Mask of Fire, inducing its owner with a withering look.



But that's not all. People and the nation of OC world joined me.

OC



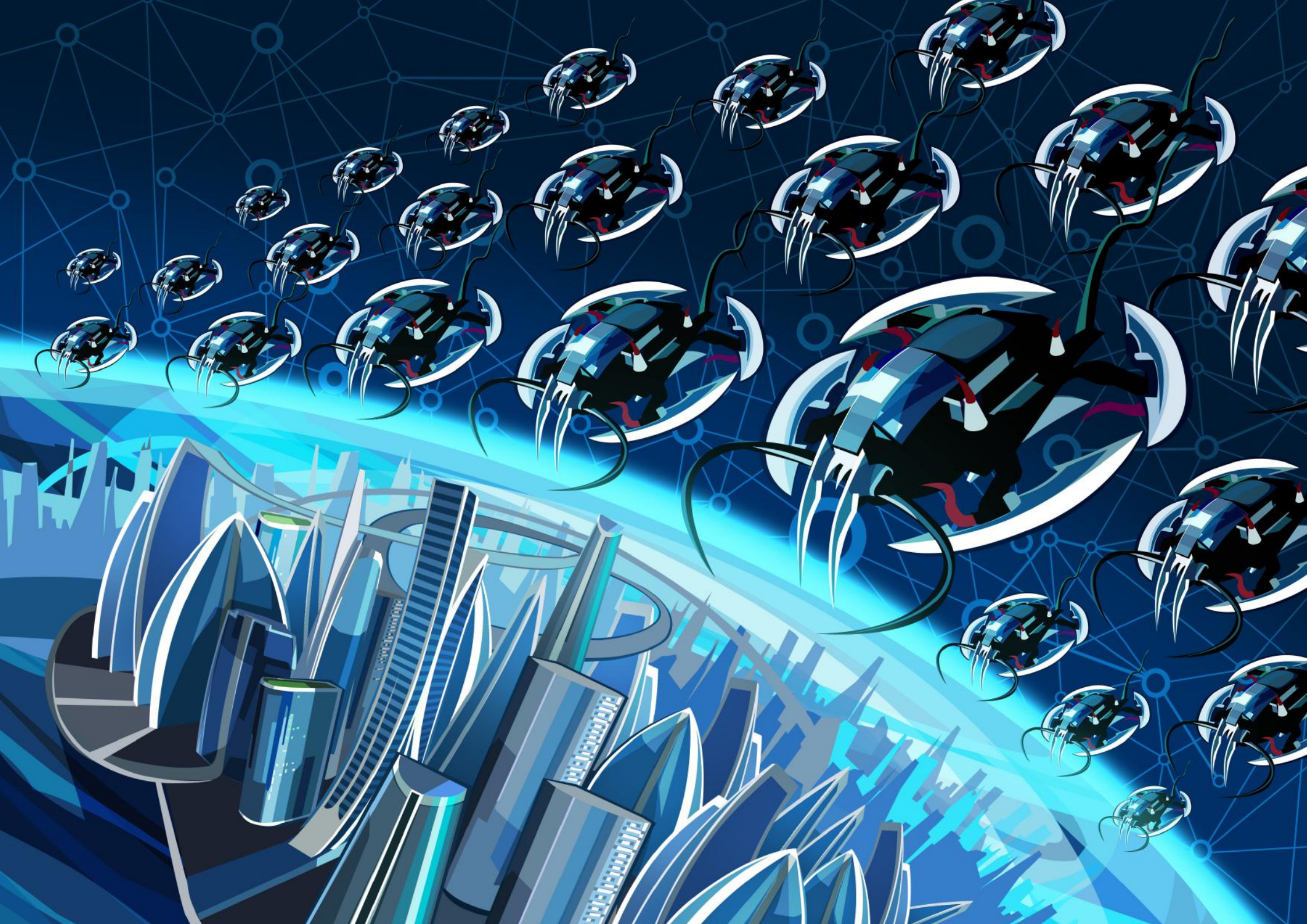
After the number of worlds created by me reached 40 000, I found new super-powers in me. Now I was able to minimize and enlarge all objects. Besides, I created super-armor for my soldiers and me.

I was ready for the Dark Forces invasion and they wasted no time.

Chapter 7

The Deadly Confrontation

I will never forget the day when I saw all the power of my enemy. Hordes of orc-robots that flew on some bizarre mechanisms looking like huge ghoulish insects with stings, clingy clutches, sharp fangs, and giant spans of membranous wings, were numerous. They completely eclipsed the horizon.



It seemed to me that dusk has come instead of dawn. How will this day end? Who will survive and who will die? Who will rule the virtual universe?

Only one thing was clear: when this battle ends, everything in the cyber-space will change forever!

At that moment I was so happy that I wasn't not alone. Yea, even super-heroes need friends.

I and the Cs-in-C of my armies stood side by side. They were fearless Monstro from the WP world, cold-livered Star from the HM world, mighty Umerica from the JL world, invincible Evprest from the PS world, and the titan Magett from the world of MG.



Each of them was as powerful as a whole army.

I might confess... Umm... I am sure you will keep my secret, won't you? I was not absolutely sure that our army was going to win. But this is a hush-hush secret because if you don't feel confident, your enemy will feel your weakness, as well as your army.

I even created some simulacrum of myself - MT, for the occasion if I... if they... I am sure you understood what I wanted to say. MT turned out to be so friendly that he helped people create their own virtual worlds. And they even didn't need our secret knowledge for that!



But let's come back to the battle. It lasted not for a day, not for a couple of them, this war went on for years because cyber-space inhabitants need neither food nor sleep.



Our weapons were powerful, but the enemy was as furious as we were. Wounded and crippled soldiers were restored and even improved almost immediately.

I started to understand that our powers were more or less equal for the time being and we just turned war into everyday routine. We fight, destroy, and kill instead of creating.

I didn't like that. Such kind of lifestyle contradicts with my nature. So, I came up to the foolhardy scratch. Negotiations with the Dark Lord. I once saw one way out of this situation. It was at least an interim truce.

Chapter 8

The Birth of Hope

Now then, I sent a thought about peace talks to the Dark Lord. To my surprise, after some wavering, he agreed to meet me one-on-one.

Though the Dark Lord was fighting on the evil side, he was not stupid at all. He clearly understood that the battle has lingered. If he backs down, the Good Forces will win. At the same time, he understood that I simply couldn't give up and would fight until I'm alive.

I can say that we have entered into a kind of amicable agreement. According to it, the Dark Lord takes his orcs back to their gloomy catacombs. Our worlds will try to co-exist peacefully. I will respect his domains and he will respects mine. Just agree that even a wonky peace is better than the greatest war.



Frankly speaking, I hope that we will make friends some time. Undoubtedly, he is evil, but he is genius at the same time. Dollars to doughnuts, all his damn creations could be transformed and used for different, good purposes.

But we are so far from that now. Additionally, there should be a balance between good and evil at any universe. Evil is just the flip side of good, that's why its appearance is inescapable.

But we, the keepers, were created in order to prevent the spreading of evil all around the net. We are here to guard your and your parents safety when you are exploring the net.

I didn't tell you, just don't like to boast, but I got the Mask of Prowess for my first battle with evil and 50 000 worlds, created by me. I am sooo proud of this Mask!



But people, especially kids, should remember that even though the net has been created for you, you can't spend too much time there. Of course I don't want to say goodbye because I already feel attached to you, but your bodies are not adapted to living on the net. Long stay here may hurt your eyes and spine. Some people even cease to differentiate the real and virtual worlds!

This is unacceptable! Let me explain you why. You can take the look of a magician, elf, or even unicellular organism. If something bad happens in the virtual world, your physical body won't come to harm. Do you think this is possible in the real world? Of course NOT!

That's why, listen to your mother and father, don't spend too much time on the net and everything will be OK. I will be waiting for you on my blue planet any time. So long!



That's all folks! Keep in mind that in ten years or so, when some of you will become skilled developers TM 20.02 templates will help you ease your activities.

CYA.

Who's Behind This Book?



Marina Moyari, a freelance illustrator with vivid imagination and thirst for the beauty.



Helga Moreno, the author of this book and hundreds of articles on MonsterPost blog.



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