A Truly Immersive Simulation

Society has forever changed since the adoption of computers and games. With all the technological advancements we have seen in the previous few years, a whole new level of immersion and detail has been achieved. The government was always interested in simulations for use in training, but ten years ago they decided it was time to take a more active stance on computers and video games. It was ten years ago where a new type of genre was created. Simulator games began to evolve and take on a new level of immersion never before seen. This technology made virtual reality more like an alternate reality. Games felt so real because in a sense, they actually managed to put you into the world of the game. Early prototypes caused players to truly become lost in the world of the game, feel emotions like never before, and truly feel the consequences of their actions. For some, this was an excellent experience of escapism. For others, the real world became dull and boring which eventually led to much higher reports of video game addiction. For me and many others, it became the most stressful job ever imagined in the history of mankind. For you see, it was ten years ago where tensions between the countries began to grow at an all-time high.

No one can truly say when things began to change. People say the news was secretly adding hidden propaganda. Others say our technological advancements in weapons finally went too far. Others say it is some sort of resource depletion. However, this growing tension always came up every once in a while. It was something that just happened and eventually passed. Sure several people were afraid, but for the most part life went on as normal. Only a select number of people truly knew how terrible the
underlying problem was. It turns out that the government hired the top developers of the time to create something truly spectacular. That created a game which simulated the current world and its problems. I remember the advertisements looking for people to beta test the game. The pay was fairly high and I was interested in these alternate reality games. I signed up and in a week I was accepted for the position. I began my first day at the job two years ago.

I arrived and joined the group of people already waiting for the orientation to begin. After orientation, we soon learned our goal for the game. We were to play a “game” which simulated the real world and its problems. The game included an AI so powerful, that our decisions in the game would accurately portray what would happen in the real world. However, humans were needed to carry out these decisions since computers were unable to “progress” in the game since they would attempt to see the results of every single action possible. We played as the leader of the country who had complete control over everything. We, of course, did not know all this information at the time. All we were told is that the primary objective was to stop a war from occurring and the first one to do so would receive an extremely high bonus. I put on the device and started playing the game.

The game was fun at first. I would make whatever decision I felt was best, had time accelerating to the next interesting point, and continued with what I felt best. My first play through resulted in war. I awoke from the game somewhat upset as I went home. The next day, my second play through began. I managed to delay the start of the war by a month this time. The third time, war began months earlier than the second time. This cycle of trying to figure out how to best prevent war continued for months. I began to obsess about the game and all my decisions in it. Why did this decision delay the war by several months? Why does changing this one decision cause the war to start on this date? I asked myself these questions every day. You may wonder why I continued to play the game even when I realized how stressed it made me and how immersed I was in the world of the game. I made it my mission to find the answer and complete the game.
I was at home during the weekend, watching TV when suddenly I “woke up”. I opened my eyes and looked around the room in confusion. My hair had grown and I had the beginnings of a full beard growing. I began to panic and the door to the room opened. Several people came in, all with this terrible look on their face. “His world crashed and he woke up! Quick use the backup and send him back!” The environment changed and I am back at my house watching TV. However, I remembered those words. I was stuck in a simulation, probably from day one. Every time I finished my “shift” at work, I experienced a simulation of going home and living life as normal. How long was I in this simulation? Days? Weeks? Months? Perhaps even years? Am I to stay in this simulation until I find a way to stop the war from happening? Knowing that going home was not real, I decided to work overtime in the hopes that completing the game will cause me to really wake up.

Eventually, I completed the game. Finally, I avoided war and I woke up. My hair goes down past my shoulders and all my movements felt slow and odd, as if my body did not feel as my own. In a way, it really wasn’t quite my body. I was quite healthy in the world of the game, but even modern medicine could not keep me in pristine condition after two years. For my “services” to the country I was set for life. I did not have to work another day for the rest of my life. A small consolation for the amount of time I spent in the game. I was cleaned up and went to rehab to adjust myself to “real life”. I went home and lived life as normally as I could.

A few months passed and I still couldn’t stop thinking about the game. Every dream was about that simulation. I constantly forgot that I was in the real world. I kept wondering if I could have avoided the war faster. Therapy didn’t help, and the days dragged on and on. Nothing felt real, and I began to question my current existence. I asked myself, why did I instantly wake up and was sent through rehab and sent home as seen as I completed the game? Shouldn’t I have had to stay at the facility while they made my decisions in game a reality? I realized then, that this world seemed too perfect and I set out to return to the facility where the game testing took place.
I was not sure what happened when I returned there, but I have some ideas. It seemed that the AI did not know what to do when I returned to the facility. When I opened the door, I was blinded by a light illuminating an entirely empty room. Suddenly, the room changed and I saw myself laying down and playing the “game” the government created. In a fit of rage, I attempted to destroy the computers controlling and maintaining the world of the game. It seemed that destroying the computers that controlled the simulation in a simulation itself caused it to malfunction. I awoke once again. Once again, people quickly rushed into the room and told me I must wait until the decisions are carried out in reality and to enjoy the simulation. I arrived back at my home.

This is my final entry to my journal. I do not know how much time has passed since my first day in the simulation. I eventually “woke up” in that same room, where the people came in and congratulated everyone on helping them prevent the war from happening. I still do not know if I am in a simulation or in reality. Seems that prolonged immersion in such a simulation as I was in does that to you. The days drag on but everything seems as normal as it could be. I still occasionally dream about the game, but I’ve managed to stop constantly questioning myself on whether this is still a simulation or reality. It’s better for me to just accept things as it is.