

Digitized Actors

or

Now We're Having Fun

>> This is a short story about a kind, pudgy, balding thirty-year-old man on the night he finally lost his mind.

>> Listen:

Johny Flounder lived in a small, dirty apartment in the middle of Vivacity, Ontario with his pet chinchilla and his computer. Every day, he rode his bicycle over to a little shop called WORLD COMPUTERS and sold people computers. He did this to earn money, which he gave people, and in return received goods and services. The more money he gave them, the bigger the goods and the better the services. Johny didn't earn much money at WORLD COMPUTERS, and that is why his apartment was small.

>> One day, Johny was sitting at home playing a game on his computer when the phone rang. The game was called 'Robot Blasters'. It was based on a science fiction novel by a man named Kilgore Trout. In which a race of aliens that looked remarkably like humans arrived on Earth and forced every person on the planet to learn how to program computers. After learning how

to program, the people were forced to create artificial intelligence on their computers all day long. The main character in the novel was a man named Dennis Hoover, who through research into the alien race, discovered that the aliens were in fact advanced robots from the future created by humans. However before he could tell anybody this, Dennis tripped on a telephone chord, struck his head on the corner of a table, and died. So it goes.

The game based on the novel consisted of clicking one's mouse on digitized versions of actors who represented the aliens, then watching them explode. So it goes.

>> The man on the phone was Brian Beastor, Johnny's boss. "Listen, Flounder. I need you to come in early today. It's the holiday season and it's too damn busy for us to handle with the regular schedule."

Johnny didn't want to go to work early. He was happy playing his game at home. "OK." he said into the phone.

>> "Exit windows?" said Johnny. "OK. Cancel. It is now safe to turn off your computer."

>> Johnny Flounder got his bike from a small boy in North Vivacity, one of the richest areas of the city.

He was there visiting his skinny mother, who lived with two Dobermans in a house there. He hated those Dobermans. Johnny and his mother got into

an argument about money that day, as they usually did when he visited. The argument went like this: Johny's mother would attack Johny about his job or his life, then Johny would agree with her. Then she would attack him again. And so on. The cigarette hanging out of Johny's mother's mouth bobbed up and down as she yelled, giving off clouds of smoke that hurt Johny's eyes. At the end of the argument, Johny's mother could tell that he wasn't feeling very good about himself, so she baked him some cookies. He ate them, and felt better.

The boy approached him as he walked to the bus stop. The boy was quite ugly, with pimples covering his forehead. He had a black eye and a split lip, and walked with a limp as he wheeled a bike towards Johny.

"Want a bike?" asked the boy.

"C.C.M." said Johny, looking at the bike.

"Yeah yeah, the best kind." said the boy quickly, looking over his shoulder as he did so. "Ten bucks and it's yours."

Johny looked at the two dollar bill that his mother had given him for bus money. "Two." he said.

The boy scrunched up his face and tried to look intimidating. "You fuckin' crazy? This bike worth fuckin' hundreds a' bucks, I give it to ya for ten!" He looked over his shoulder again. "Shit." he said, then took the money from Johny. "Fuck you." he said, then let the bike fall over. He stumbled off in between two houses and through his thick glasses, Johny watched him go.

Johny felt bad for the boy. He wished he could help him get rid of that limp and heal his black eye.

After a minute or so had passed, he picked up the bike. "C.C.M." he said, then rode it all the way home.

>> Johny's bike was gone now. It had been stolen the night before by two men in a grey van, and was now being disassembled in one of the men's garage. So it goes. Johny stared at the spot where his bike had been exactly fourteen hours ago. His StrongCo™ bike lock lay in two pieces on the ground. "So it goes." said Johny, then pulled out a toonie and walked to the bus stop.

>> Listen:

Johny Flounder had a rare mental quirk. Whenever he was nervous or under any kind of stress, he would read every sign he saw out loud. He knew he was doing it, but had no control over it. He could probably have stopped himself from saying anything, but that would require too much effort.

>> The bus arrived at WORLD COMPUTERS and Johny got out. "Pee." he read, seeing a no parking sign. "Now hiring. World computers." The sign in front of WORLD COMPUTERS had the store's name in huge capital letters, and a picture of a blue ball with a computer orbiting it.

As Johny walked in, Brian Beastor walked up to him and put a hand on his shoulder. "Brian." muttered Johny, seeing Brian's name tag.

“Hi Johnny thanks for coming...” said Beastor, then told Johnny what work he would be doing. Johnny listened and nodded and smiled.

Incidentally, Beastor’s brother was one of the men who stole Johnny’s bike. When they were children, the two brothers were the best of friends. They did everything together. But then Brian went off to university while his brother stayed home, and their relationship became distant. They still talked once in a while, however, and got along just fine.

Johnny worked all day, because nobody told him to stop. It was a very busy day because it was the holiday season, and there was a sale on printers. He had been there for nearly twelve hours when Beastor came up to him and informed him that he had worked too long, and that he wouldn’t be paid for the extra time. “All printers twenty five percent off!” was all Johnny had to say about that.

>> It was night now. Johnny got on the bus to go home.

>> The bus driver was a man named Richard Scanty. Many years ago he had been a wealthy newlywed trying to get a job at WORLD COMPUTERS. He went in for an interview and it went very well. He was quite sure the job was his. He was so happy that he went home and got his new wife pregnant.

However, Brian Beastor was also looking for a job there at the time. In his interview, Beastor claimed that he was a computers expert with years of experience. In fact, he had simply taken a course in speed reading, then read

every book on computers he could find. He also claimed he knew Richard Scanty and that Scanty was a lying, cheating sort of fellow. Beastor was hired on the spot.

Richard went into a deep state of depression, his wife left him for a wealthy lawyer, and he became a bus driver. Incidentally, his son later became a dealer of stolen bikes in north Vivacity.

And so on.

>> “Now we’re having fun.” muttered Richard Scanty as he pulled the handle that opened the bus’s doors. He muttered that a lot. Johny entered the bus and sat down beside an old woman. The woman smiled at him, and he smiled back, because that’s what he was taught to do. The blue-green lighting in the bus made all the passengers look pale and dead.

The bus began moving.

Johny looked at the advertisements in the bus. “Chew chew,” he read, “X-Tra gum lasts extra long.”

A man across from him gave him a weird look.

“Please give to the Christian society of Vivacity.”

“World Computers, your one stop shop for all your computer needs.”

The man across from Johny told him to shut up.

Johny continued: “Feeling lonely? Hurt? Abused? Call one-eight-hundred-”

“Shut UP!” yelled the man across from him. His voice sounded

remarkably like a dog barking. Johnny stopped reading and looked at the old woman beside him. There was something wrong with her face. He looked up at the man across from him. There was something wrong with his face too. In fact, there was something wrong with everyone on the bus. To Johnny, their faces looked like this:



The neutral faces all faced Johnny, staring at him. Even poor Richard Scanty was staring at Johnny when he should have been keeping his eyes on the road. That could cause a nasty accident.

Johnny genuinely smiled for the first time in his life.

Credits:

- Written in the style of and inspired by: Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

- Musical support by: Enigma, Daft Punk, TOOL, The Cure

- Fonts used: Arial Rounded, Wide Latin, Times New Roman, Psycho Poetry

