

THE MAN CAVE
A Parable for Our Times

By

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Dramatis Personae

Doug Silver – A successful entrepreneur in his mid-twenties. Owns the apartment, has made his fortune on the internet and is content to while his days away supporting his friends.

Tom Couch – Doug’s best friend, also mid-twenties. He lives with Doug permanently and is currently sleeping on the sofa. He has no intention of leaving as long as Doug is footing the bill.

Will Freeman – Recently divorced mutual friend of Tom and Doug. He has moved into the apartment and sleeps in the spare bedroom. He is in his early to mid thirties.

Ned Parsons – A permanent houseguest of Doug’s and a man of few words.

THE STAGE

The scene is the basement man-cave of Doug Silver, a self-made internet millionaire. Doug has secluded himself from the world in this well-appointed abode for as long as he can remember. A cushy sofa is located just to the right of CS, positioned in front of a large blank white wall. Above and behind the couch is a projector unit, shining on the wall. Numerous state-of-the-art game systems and controllers are piled around a stand in front of the wall. Various beer signs and posters for video games, recent sci-fi/fantasy movies, and a few scantily-clad women adorn the walls.

SR there is a door with the sign "NOT AN EXIT" written on it just US of the viewing wall. USR of this door is another, leading to DOUG SILVER's bedroom. USL of the chute is a door leading to a bathroom (currently closed) and another SL of it leading to the spare bedroom, where WILL FREEMAN currently sleeps (the door to this room is also closed). USC there is a metal chute coming into the room from a hole near the ceiling of the back wall of the basement.

A kitchenette decked out with trendy gadgets, a regular fridge, and a beer cooler is located a few paces SL of the sofa/video gaming area. A small table and three chairs (modern style) are located on the kitchenette side of the room. The kitchen and couch areas are covered in wrappers, empty cans and bottles, open pizza boxes with half-eaten pizzas in them, and other domestic debris. A bookshelf is located near the table against a wall, full of gaming manuals and other books, as well as some other more "serious" books piled neatly on top. A bust of Plato sits on top of the fridge.

Note: This play is organized into two acts, subdivided into French scenes. Thus, the designations of "FS" and then a numeral appear throughout the script to mark the beginning of the next French scene and the end of the previous one.

ACT I

FS 1

As the lights come up, DOUG and TOM are sitting on the sofa playing a video game. The image from the overhead projector behind them is positioned so that the audience cannot quite see the screen, although images and movement are visible from time to time in the dimly-lit room. The door to the bathroom is open just beyond the kitchenette and the door to the spare bedroom is closed. A large bowl of cheese balls is nestled perfectly between the men, within easy reach of either.

DOUG

(Jumping off couch in triumph, to TOM)

Hah! That's seven in a row! Eat that!

TOM

(Whining a bit)

Hey, I'm getting better!

DOUG

Sure, Tom. Another hundred years or so and you might have a chance against me. *Might.*

TOM

First-person tactical combat games just aren't my thing, Doug. Can we go back to playing the Legend of the Orc Lords now? I mean, we've got all day, right?

DOUG

(Rummaging around in the bowl and grabbing the few remaining cheese balls)

That's true. But LotOL? I dunno. I'm kind a burnt on those online role playing games. Besides, all you gotta do is pretend you're a hot chick and all those loser guys hanging out in their mom's basements will give you the best magic stuff for free—especially if you're wearing the right outfit. Everybody knows that.

TOM

Yeah, I guess you're right. I wondered why there were so many girls playing online all of a sudden. Shoot! I *knew* I should have kept that Sword of Dispatchment +10!

DOUG

(In shock)

You offloaded a Sword of Dispatchment? What is your deal, man? You know you need that thing to beat Orc Lord Hrothgar at the end of the game, right? Talk about gullible!

TOM

I know, I know! What can I say? I'm a sucker for a chainmail bikini and a big pair of.... blue eyes.

(Grabs the empty bowl and heads for the kitchenette, changing the subject)

On a positive note, though, Klarissa487 said she might want to meet up with me later—you know, in real life.

DOUG
(out)

I'm sure he did.

TOM
(half-listening)

What's that?

DOUG
(shaking his head)

Oh, nothing. What should we play then? Besides that.

TOM

How about Ripple Matrix 3D?

DOUG

Definitely not! You kick my can so bad at that game it's not even funny. How can you stand those multi-color puzzle games, anyway? They make my eyes *and* my brain hurt.

TOM

I dunno. They just make sense to me. They have an internal beauty and logic I really enjoy and really expand the mind, you know....

DOUG

All I see is colors and shapes—a twinkling, tumbling confusion, if you ask me. What's the point? You clear one level and then you're on to the next which is even harder. And don't even get me started on the so-called 3D. Talk about cheesy!

TOM

Speaking of cheesy, (lifts bowl for DOUG to see), I'm going for a refill. Good? (Crossing to kitchenette with bowl) So, you're not impressed with the illusion of reality in the game?

DOUG

Is that what they're calling it? No, not really. Don't get me wrong, though. I mean, they've really pushed the limits of the game system's processors with it, but it still lacks a little... something. It's good enough for a puzzler, I guess. It's not like your squad buddies are depending on realistic 3D to survive in Ripple Matrix. Not like in TacSquad Frenzy. (Changing subject) Speaking of... I'm switching to solo mode online. You mind?

TOM
(rummaging around in the cabinets)

Not at all. I needs me some more of those cheese balls. Where are we keeping them again?

DOUG
(donning a headset with integrated microphone and turning his attention to playing a video game again)

Check the cabinet near the fridge.

TOM
(sets bowl down on counter and rummages in the indicated cabinet with both hands, dumping various boxes out on the floor in the process—all of it is junk food, canned food, and “instant” mixes)

OK. Nope. Nothing. Anywhere else they could be?

DOUG

Not really. If they're not there, then we're out.

TOM

You've *got* to be kidding! We've gone through six bags already?

DOUG

Sounds about right. We have been hitting them pretty hard lately. I swear they put crack in the flavoring—it's *so* good (hastily barks into headset) Delta Leader, move to our three o'clock and hump it over to that warehouse! We've got machine gun nests in there that need to be fragged!

TOM
(crossing over to beer cooler)

I'm getting another brew, “Alpha Leader”. Want one?

DOUG
(still barking into headset, angrily)

Great! They've taken out Beta Squad! Say again? The machine gunners, Einstein! (Placing hand over the mic on the headset, to TOM, totally cool): Yeah, man. Bring me one. (Agitated, back into headset). Where's the support, guys? You lazy apes moving or not?

TOM

Roger that. Any particular flavor?

DOUG

Um, anything but Lite. That stuff is for cleaning tables in Tijuana, if you ask me. (Back to headset, elated) Yes! That'll teach 'em! That should buy us just enough time to find the weapons depot. Well done, Delta Squad!

TOM

(grabbing a couple of brews and closing the cooler with his foot, turning back toward the couch in one fluid motion)

Really? I thought the Lite stuff was yours.

DOUG

(harried, into headset)

Air strike! What the.... Who did we miss? Who's got anti-aircraft stingers with them? (To TOM, calmly, placing hand over mic) Naw, man. Will likes that stuff. He says he's watching his weight or some such blabdadabba. Tell you the truth, I think Debs is still controlling his mind a little on that.

TOM

Debs? Didn't she kick him out? Isn't that why he's here?

DOUG

(back into headset, abruptly and loudly)

Open fire, you lazy dogs! You wanna die today? (A pause) Then open up the stingers and *take out those birds!* (Back to TOM, in normal tone) Yeah, she says she fell in love with somebody else and that ... hang on. (Suddenly, back to game) Yeah!! Now, off to the depot. No, no, no! It's over by the rail yard. The *rail* yard! Were *any* of you guys at the debriefing?

TOM

Oh, yeah. That's right. He still sleeping?

DOUG

(Into headset)

You mooks go back and read the mission dossier. What? DOSS-EE-AY. It's French, I think. Never mind, noobs, I'm taking some R&R. Alpha Leader off coms.

(Puts the headset away, turns back to TOM)

Yeah, probably. Thanks for letting him have the spare bedroom. He needs his privacy, you know. To emote and stuff.

TOM

No problem. I don't mind sleeping on the couch, anyway. I'm kinda used to it.

DOUG

Well, it *is* your last name.

(TOM and DOUG both half laugh at DOUG's bad joke)

TOM

Gosh, that never gets old, Dugger. Tom Couch on the couch! (Opens a brew and takes a swig). Anyway, I love it here. I've never felt so alive! I'd sleep on the floor if I needed to.

DOUG

No need for that, my friend. I've always wanted to set up a man cave for me and my buds and now, thanks to my highly successful internet venture, I'm livin' the dream! Thanks for sharing it with me, man.

TOM

It's my highest honor. Anyway, we've been friends since forever and it's always a party at your place... Except we're out of cheese balls now.

DOUG

Hop on the laptop and order up some more, then. In the meantime, there is a bag of pretzels over there. We could have some of those to tide us over.

TOM

I'm not digging the pretzels right now, man, I can hold out for the good stuff. How long will it take to get the cheese balls if I order now?

DOUG

Not long. I'm a VIP Customer on TropicalRiver.com, so they usually deliver pretty fast.

TOM

(producing a laptop, brushing some trash from the table onto the floor and setting up the computer)

VIP, eh? Nice! I'll bet those guys are honored to have the great Doug Silver as a customer.

DOUG

That's why they installed the chute, my friend. It leads to a series of pneumatic tubes that come directly from the nearest TropicalRiver warehouse.

TOM

(clicking away on the keyboard and mouse)

That's totally cool, man. Like you said, living the dream! Payment method?

DOUG

Just put in my name and the password. The account information should pop right up.

TOM

Oh! OK. There it is.

DOUG

Got it?

TOM

Order is in. Just now. (Closes laptop) So, now we wait, right?