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SPORTS EXTREME

Topic: Caring for our Elders

Grandpa

Is this what I'm reduced to; an unpaid babysitter for my grandson; used and neglected by my family? I look around me; the holographic playing room filled with energetic children. "Huh" I grunt, the only real thing in that playing room is the tree house I built with my own hands for my grandson when he was a toddler. Even the tree it sits in is a new solid image holograph. These kids don't even know what it feels like to have real grass to roll in and dirt under their nails. Now it's all weather resistant Domes divided into small living apartments and community services precincts.

Though times have changed and I have grown much older, it seems only yesterday that I was one of the best tennis players of all time. I could strike that ball like no one else and maneuver around that court in the blink of an eye. Man I miss those days. That's all in the past now. Maybe I should just forget it as my daughter, Claire, is always suggesting, not that I ever really spend time with her. She's always in a rush. It seems I only ever see her when we're exchanging 14 year old Simon, Claire and Charlie's son; my grandson. I look over at him. He's playing tennis on the holographic courts. It's his favorite sport. He is very good... so far he has won all his games. I laugh...must be in the genes. I amble over to him.

“Hi gramps” he says with that sparkling warm smile of his that always makes me feel like a champion again.

“Yo Simon, great volley, but time to head back to your apartment.”

“Okay, but can you stay for a little bit? I want to show you a new visual reality game dad brought called Sports Extreme”

“Cool” I say, but anxiously wonder if this will cause difficulty between me and Claire and her blasted scheduling.

Simon

I’ve always known my grandpa as someone who looks out for others... especially me. He’s just always been there; maybe I’ve taken that for granted. Today he just wasn’t himself, and when I think about it when was the last time we played tennis together. It used to be our thing, especially as grandpa was once a world famous tennis player... but somehow grandpa’s always on the sideline now. The worst thing is I’ve only just realized that this is happening. I think grandpa’s age has caught up with him, and he doesn’t want to let on. So what does the caring grandson go and do, find another tennis partner!

Grandpa

In my apartment I lie on the recliner staring at the wide screen HaVRVS (Holographic and Visual Reality Viewing Screen). My old eyes rest on the Sports Extreme game that Simon gave me. Suddenly for no reason at all I pick it up and shove it into the HaVRVS disc slot. Jamming on my visual reality head set I instantly hear a list of sports available to play and a voice over from Simon (the disc was pirated) suggesting I choose tennis. I enter my player identity with a burst of exhilaration... ‘Lightning’, the nickname my fans gave me years ago.

Suddenly I am surrounded by a blue light. I look down in amazement at my new strong body and find myself sweeping back the long golden hair I had when I was twenty. Striding onto the tennis court I see my opponent strolling over, a strong looking young man. He greets me with a small bow saying,

“My name is Leonardo...good luck Lightning.”

I am given only a small moment to wonder how he knew my name, as before I know it we are battling it out on the court. As Leonardo delivers a powerful serve that whizzes past me I notice he has a very similar style to my grandson's. I feel a twinge of guilt as I promised to take him to the pools this afternoon, though that might have meant another hour or two of my back aching after all the swimming we do. But all that is overcome when my opponent hits a great serve and I focus on delivering an even better one back!

I am up at 6:00am and quickly get dressed. This is the routine I have been in for the last couple of weeks, barely eating and hardly sleeping. I feel lousy, extremely tired and fragile but direct my thoughts to the finals of the tennis match. Staggering over to the HaVRVS I remember, as I insert Sports Extreme, that I was supposed to catch up with Simon at the holographic courts. But I really don't feel up to it. He probably wouldn't even notice I'm not there.

I quickly log on and see my friend Leonardo. He jogs over and says,

“You are lucky I am here, as in the real world my tennis game was cancelled. I wouldn't have played well anyway. The person who really inspires me... my coach... didn't turn up.”

Looking at his downcast face I instantly feel a big wave of guilt and wonder how my grandson is playing.

“Lightning, I haven't been treating this one person very well and he means a lot more to me

than just a coach. He's always been there for me and the rest of my family. Its only just occurred to me that we all need to be there for him as well. I really need to fix things up with this guy."

"Leonardo I think I know just how you feel dude. I need to do some fixing up of my own. In these fast changing times, it's so easy to neglect the people you love. Now let's get this game on the road!"

Leonardo's face broke into a relieved smile. I suppose he was happy to know he wasn't the only one making mistakes. Then following his usual routine, Leonardo preformed his quirky little bow and said

"Good luck Lightning"

And the game was under way.

After the match I congratulated Leonardo with a friendly handshake and quickly logged off. Reflecting on the shiny disc in my hand I carefully place into the Disc Keep Safe knowing it wouldn't be gathering dust for long. It's time I hitched a lift on a suction craft and got over to my daughters for a chin wag and a catch up with Simon.

"Hi Simon" I said when his family's apartment door slid open.

"GRANDPA!" he shouted, almost knocking me over in his excitement. Folding him into a bear hug, I see that smile on his face that tells me everything's going to be okay between us.

"Simon, that game you gave me is great. But what would really top it off is you joining me on the visual courts!"

"You betcha... I've got a great partner down on the holographic courts but nothing beats playing with the best grandpa in the world." A flicker of a grin appeared on his face.

“I’ll go get the game set up gramps.”

“Cool, but give me some time to talk with your mum.”

Finding Claire seated on the edge of the recliner I see the worry in her shadowed eyes.

Before I can utter a word she jumps up and says,

“Dad, have you got time to talk with me?”

“Claire, I’ve always got time for you honey.” And suddenly there’s that look on her face like I see on Simon’s and I know that we’re going to work things out.

I join Simon on the visual reality courts as my old decrepit self, but feeling great! Just before we head onto the courts Simon turns to me with that little mischievous grin and makes a small bow saying,

“Good luck ...Lightning.”